

Belgium

As of 31 December 2009, the foreign population amounted to 9.8% of the total population of Belgium, that is to say 1 058 000 persons out of a total of 10 839 000. The share of the population accounted by foreigners was up by 0.4% compared with the previous year. The number of immigrants (Belgians and foreigners) who entered Belgium in 2009 was down by 1.9% compared with 2008, falling from 119 200 to 117 000.

The number of first-time work permits issued to migrant workers (that is to say, all foreigners coming to Belgium to work), fell sharply in 2009. From around 25 000 first time permits awarded in 2008, the number fell to 13 000 in 2009. This significant decline is due to the liberalisation of the movement of workers who are citizens of new EU member countries, which entered into force on 1 May 2009. The citizens of eight of the ten new EU member countries no longer need to apply for a work permit to come and work in Belgium as they now benefit from the freedom to circulate and exercise any type of profession. Solely Bulgarian and Romanian nationals are still required to apply for a work permit. If the figures for these eight countries are disregarded, the number of permits issued has remained stable.

The proportion of highly-skilled workers among migrants entering for work-related reasons climbed to 26%, after falling from 19% to 15% between 2007 and 2008. However, this increase is due more to the liberalisation of worker movement than to a significant increase in highly-skilled workers. Over half of the permits issued to highly-skilled workers went to Indian, Japanese or US citizens.

In 2008, there were 37 700 naturalisations, an increase of 4.5% compared with 2007. Morocco and Turkey still remain the two main countries of origin of naturalised Belgians, although their share is falling

while the shares of the Russian Federation and the countries of the former Yugoslavia are rising. The figures for 2009 indicate a resumption in the downward trend with 32 800 naturalisations.

Just over 17 000 applications for asylum – covering around 22 800 persons – were received in Belgium in 2009. This figure is 40% up from 2008, but remains close to the average for the past twenty years. Afghanistan and the Russian Federation were the main sources of refugees, with each country accounting for around 10% of applications. The number of favourable decisions granting refugee status amounted to almost 1 900 in 2009, of which 270 were for Iraqi citizens.

In 2010, a draft Royal Order aimed at both clarifying and ensuring that legislation relating to workers' employment was consistent with that regarding the right of residence was drawn up. This draft legislation was approved by the Advisory Council for the Employment of Foreign Workers dated 3 June 2010. The amendments provided for in this Order are aimed at making the legislation clearer and at increasing its legal safety. The concept of spouse, for example, has been broadened to include registered partners. To comply with EU Directives 2004/38 on the right of free movement and 2003/86 on the right to family reunification, registered partners and spouses will be placed on an equal footing with regard to access to the labour market.

For further information:

www.emploi.belgique.be

www.ibz.be

www.dofi.fgov.be

<http://statbel.fgov.be/>

Recent trends in migrants' flows and stocks

BELGIUM

Migration flows (foreigners) National definition	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level ('000)			
					2000-04	2005-09	2009			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
Inflows	5.6	7.4	9.9	9.5	6.5	8.7	102.7			
Outflows	3.5	3.7	..	..	3.3	..	..	
Migration inflows (foreigners) by type	Thousands		% distribution		Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners					
Permit based statistics (standardised)	2008	2009	2008	2009						
Work	10.7	7.4	24.4	19.6						
Family (incl. accompanying family)	14.3	14.2	32.7	37.7						
Humanitarian	2.1	1.9	4.9	5.0						
Free movements	16.7	14.2	38.1	37.7						
Others	..	..	..	..		
Total	43.9	37.7	100.0	100.0						
Temporary migration	2005	2008	2009	Average 2005-09						
<i>Thousands</i>										
International students	..	..	..	..		
Trainees	..	0.4	0.2	0.3						
Working holiday makers	..	..	..	..		
Seasonal workers	2.7	19.9	4.8	10.4						
Intra-company transfers	..	..	..	..		
Other temporary workers	2.8	14.3	0.7	7.8						
Inflows of asylum seekers	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average 2000-04	Average 2005-09	Level 2009			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
	4.2	1.5	1.1	1.6	2.3	1.3	17 186			
Components of population growth	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average 2000-04	Average 2005-09	Level ('000) 2009			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
Total	2.4	6.3	..	..	4.0	..	..	
Natural increase	1.0	1.4	..	..	0.9	..	..	
Net migration	2.5	4.5	..	..	3.6	..	..	
Stocks of immigrants	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average 2000-04	Average 2005-09	Level ('000) 2009			
<i>Percentage of the total population</i>										
Foreign-born population	10.3	12.1	..	..	11.1	..	..	
Foreign population	8.4	8.6	9.5	9.8	8.3	9.2	1 058			
Naturalisations	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average 2000-04	Average 2005-09	Level 2009			
<i>Percentage of the foreign population</i>										
	7.2	3.5	3.7	3.1	5.6	3.5	32 767			
Labour market outcomes	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average 2000-04	Average 2005-09				
<i>Employment/population ratio</i>										
Native-born men	70.8	69.3	69.1	68.1	69.4	69.0				
Foreign-born men	62.2	61.2	63.5	61.4	60.1	61.6				
Native-born women	53.8	56.0	57.8	58.2	53.6	57.1				
Foreign-born women	37.3	39.7	43.0	43.4	37.6	41.5				
<i>Unemployment rate</i>										
Native-born men	4.2	6.5	5.5	6.4	5.1	6.0				
Foreign-born men	14.7	15.7	15.3	16.3	15.6	15.8				
Native-born women	7.4	8.4	6.8	7.0	6.9	7.5				
Foreign-born women	17.5	18.9	15.7	16.1	16.5	17.4				
Macroeconomic indicators	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average 2000-04	Average 2005-09	Level 2009			
<i>Annual growth in %</i>										
Real GDP	3.7	1.7	1.0	-2.8	2.0	1.1				
GDP/capita (level in USD)	3.4	1.2	0.2	-3.5	1.6	0.4	29 445			
Employment (level in thousands)	2.0	1.4	1.7	-0.3	0.9	1.1	4 517			
<i>Percentage of the labour force</i>										
Unemployment	6.9	8.5	7.0	7.9	7.5	7.8				

Notes and sources are at the end of the chapter.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932441078>