

Belgium



Migration flows continued to increase in 2006, with official figures showing that more than 83 000 foreigners had immigrated to Belgium. This was 8% more than in 2005 and was the highest level recorded

for over twenty years. Just over half of these entrants came from European Union countries, with French and Dutch nationals accounting for the bulk of migrants, the latter two nationalities representing more than one-fifth of new entrants. It should be noted, though, that immigration flows from Poland continued to rise steeply (a little over 6 500 people, i.e. an increase of nearly 40% compared to 2005).

Where labour migration is concerned, more than 12 000 new temporary permits were issued to wage-earners (i.e. not including self-employed workers), twice the number issued in 2005. About 63% of these permits went to EU8 workers, with the vast majority (over 90%) going to Polish nationals. A large proportion of these permits are granted only for occupations suffering from labour shortages, listed by region, to nationals of the new member States. Although Belgium extended restrictive measures during the second phase of the transition period, nationals of the new member States (including Bulgaria and Romania) benefit from more favourable conditions for granting work permits. They are now able to obtain a permit within five working days without an investigation of the job market, provided the permit in question relates to one of the listed occupations. The bulk of the increase is thus attributable to the ever greater number of work permits issued in Flanders to Polish nationals for seasonal work in horticulture and agriculture. At the same time, 7 000 highly skilled workers – half of whom were Indian, Japanese and American – were issued with temporary work permits.

Nearly 11 600 asylum applications were filed in 2006, which was the lowest recorded figure since 1995 and was almost 30% lower than the previous year.

Following the very large number of naturalisations in 2000 and 2001 (in the region of 62 000), prompted by the change in the nationality

code, the number of people who acquired Belgian nationality stabilised in 2006 at 31 800. In the same year, over 42% of the foreign-born population resident in Belgium acquired Belgian nationality. This high percentage has triggered a debate in Belgium about the relevance of having “ethnic statistics” based, for example, on the country of birth or even on the parents’ country of birth, which can be used to gauge labour market integration and discrimination against immigrants. A number of laws on the entry, stay and departure of foreigners, and also on asylum, came into force in 2007. Noticeable in the new legislation was the tougher conditions on family reunion. From now on, a foreigner who has settled in Belgium and wishes to marry a national of a non-EU27 country has to be 21 years old instead of 18. Once family reunion has been granted, checks on whether people are actually living together may be carried out over a three-year period.

The new legislation also concerns asylum application procedures. The old procedure involved two phases which were handled by two different bodies, the Office for Foreigners examined the form of the application to check that it was admissible and, if it was, the General Commission for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRA) examined the substance of the application. The new procedure, in operation since 1 June 2007, involves only one phase and the CGRA is now responsible for considering both the form and the substance of applications.

Subsequently, the CGRA is now the only authority with investigative powers. In simplifying the procedure, the aim of the authorities is to speed it up so that every asylum applicant knows the outcome within a year at the most. One consequence of the reform is that, with the procedure now lasting a maximum of a year, asylum applicants can no longer be awarded a temporary work permit, as was possible previously during the second phase of the old procedure when asylum applicants could hope to obtain a temporary work permit.

For further information...

<http://ecodata.mineco.fgov.be/>
www.statbel.fgov.be/

Flow data on foreigners

Migration flows (foreigners) National definition	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)			
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
Inflows	5.2	5.6	7.4	7.9	5.2	7.0	83.4			
Outflows	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.4	3.4	39.4			
Migration inflows (foreigners) by type Permit based statistics (standardised)	Thousands		% distribution		Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners					
	2005	2006	2005	2006						
Work	2.3	2.9	6.5	8.2						
Family (incl. accompanying family)	13.6	12.8	38.8	35.4						
Humanitarian	3.1	2.4	8.7	6.6						
Free movements	16.1	18.0	46.0	49.8						
Others	-	-	-	-						
Total	35.0	36.1								
Temporary migration	2000	2005	2006	Annual average						
				2000-2005						
<i>Thousands</i>										
International students	..	..	..	..		
Trainees	..	..	..	..		
Working holiday makers	..	..	..	..		
Seasonal workers	..	2.7	8.0	3.0						
Intra-company transfers	..	..	..	..		
Other temporary workers	..	2.8	7.8	3.1						
Inflows of asylum seekers	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)			
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
	1.1	4.2	1.5	1.1	2.2	1.7	11.6			

Macroeconomic, demographic and labour market indicators

Macroeconomic indicators	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006
Real GDP (growth, %)	2.4	3.7	1.7	2.8	2.7	2.0	
GDP/capita (growth, %) – level in US Dollars	2.2	3.5	1.1	2.2	2.5	1.5	29 780
Employment (growth, %) – level in thousands	0.7	2.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.5	4 310
Unemployment (% of labour force)	9.7	6.9	8.4	8.2	8.9	7.9	
Components of population growth	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)
					1995-2000	2001-2006	
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Total	3.6	3.4	5.9	6.7	3.4	5.2	
Natural increase	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.9	1.0	1.1	
Net migration	2.7	2.5	4.5	4.8	2.4	4.1	
Total population	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006
<i>(Annual growth %)</i>							
Native-born	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	9 229
Foreign-born	0.2	1.6	4.0	4.0	1.5	3.5	1 319
National	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	9 616
Foreign	-1.4	-3.9	3.4	3.5	-1.1	1.9	932
Naturalisations	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level
					1995-2000	2001-2006	2006
<i>As a percentage of foreign population</i>							
	2.8	6.9	3.6	3.5	3.7	4.6	31 860
Labour market outcomes	1995	2000	2005	2006	Average		Level ('000)
					1995-2000	2001-2006	
<i>Employment/population ratio</i>							
Native-born men	67.8	70.8	68.7	69.0	68.3	69.0	
Foreign-born men	59.1	62.2	61.1	60.8	60.7	60.1	
Native-born women	46.9	53.8	56.7	56.2	49.5	54.5	
Foreign-born women	31.7	37.3	38.9	40.1	34.9	38.3	
<i>Unemployment rate</i>							
Native-born men	6.3	4.2	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.6	
Foreign-born men	16.8	14.7	14.8	15.8	16.1	15.6	
Native-born women	11.2	7.4	7.5	8.0	10.2	7.1	
Foreign-born women	23.8	17.5	20.3	19.3	20.1	17.6	

Notes and sources are at the beginning of the Chapter.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/433852047416>