

Muslim Migration to Europe
Case Study: BELGIUM

Historical Immigration/Citizenship Policies

- 1945-1960s: labor recruitment from Italy, Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia for the coal industry.
- 1974: Due to the economic downturn in the 1970s, instituted an immigration stop policy that allowed foreign workers only if a Belgian citizen was not available. Family reunification was supported as a means to encourage resettlement and integration of migrants. During this time the government also legalized undocumented migrants living in the country at the time.
- 1980s: Vlaams Belang, a Flemish nationalist political party, gained power (with other similar groups) and pushed for stricter immigration policies. Called for the forced repatriation of immigrants. Eventually the Vlaams Belang was dissolved for inciting racial hatred.
- Since the 1980s, many anti-discriminatory laws have been used to challenge racism and xenophobia directed towards immigrants.
- Belgium nationality has traditionally been based on *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) and *jus soli* (law of ground) meaning that people must have Belgian parentage or were born in Belgium in order to claim Belgian citizenship.

Sources:

- <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=164>
- <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=606>

Recent Immigration/Citizenship Policies:

- The foreign-born population in Belgium has stayed consistent since the 1980s at about 8-10% with Muslim migrants a small percentage of the overall number.
- Today: strong anti-immigrant sentiment prevails in most of Belgium in spite of attempts to fight it.
- Since 1985 Belgium citizenship is available to those born in Belgium or of Belgian parents but immigration laws have also opened up citizenship to immigrants who have permanently settled in Belgium and who make a declaration of citizenship. Refugees and asylee seekers can make a declaration for citizenship after two years of residence in Belgium.

Source:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgian_nationality_law#Naturalisation_as_a_Belgian_citizen
- <http://www.immigrationcitizenship.eu/2005/12/belgian-citizenship.html>

Key Issues:

- A lot of resistance to Muslim immigration has been based in the perception that Muslim immigrants do not want to integrate into Belgian society.
 - Belgium has recently passed a ban on burkas. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8652861.stm>
 - The Belgian government has tried to institute stricter citizenship policies by requiring immigrants to prove their “desire to integrate” as well as making a declaration for citizenship.
 - Immigrant marriages (often with young women from a home countries) have become a source of tension. Belgian immigration laws require that an immigrant partner must be 18 years old and have an income before they arrive in Belgium.
- <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2007/01/belgian-marriage-immigration.html>
 - <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2005/11/belgian-route.html>

Other Sources: <http://www.immigrantvoting.org/World/Belgium.html>