

**The correspondence between education levels and quality of the professions
of the national and foreign labour force in Belgium**

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1.Introduction

The higher the ratio of qualified manpower in immigration flows, the greater the gain for all categories of residents in of host countries. This raises the question of how to recruit this manpower and then make the best use of its potentialities.

One of the most appropriate ways of measuring this input of foreign manpower is to compare the average level of remuneration of migrant cohorts with that for nationals during their working life. The many studies carried out produce divergent outcomes according to the methods used. The main factor is the migrants' level of education and training. This varies with different periods and also according to receiving countries. Borjas (1999) has shown that the U.S. has crossed over in the last decades from a situation where the education level of immigrants was higher than that of nationals to a situation where today it is distinctly lower than that of the resident population (those born in the country and old immigrants). For the E.U. countries, the proportion of foreign-born individuals with a low standard of education is markedly greater than among nationals whereas this proportion appears to be much lower for higher levels of education (UN, 2004). Various factors explain

these differences. Immigration policies play a fundamental role ; the composition of flows according to competencies depends on whether a country practices a quota system based on types of qualification as in Canada or whether it admits immigrants according to national origin, family reunion or humanitarian considerations. In the European countries, including Belgium, recruitment mainly concerned unskilled labour. There have, however, been important changes in recent years and immigrants with medium or high qualifications are in growing demand. In addition, a noteworthy proportion of asylum seekers are more highly qualified than the general flow of immigrants.

Today, host countries face severe competition on the world market for recruitment of intermediate-level staff (in the health sector) as well as the highly qualified (IT). However, this concerns in priority those countries which receive large and permanent immigrant flows. Other countries, like Belgium, are placed in a widely different context. Annual immigration flows are small, the labour component of these flows is minimal, while, on the other hand, there is a large supply of foreign labour as a result of the waves of immigration that have been taking place over several decades.

The annual net balance of external migration into Belgium has represented for many years about 30,000 individuals while the total resident population of foreign nationality is 850,000 persons, or +/- 8.5% of the total population. The foreign working population stood at 355,000 persons, or 8% of the country's total labour force which was 4,441,000 persons.

Foreign labour in Belgium is composed of three groups more or less equivalent in size: 30 % of foreign workers were born in Belgium, 34% immigrated during the last 10 years and 36% are workers who arrived more than 10 years ago. The priority is therefore rather the measurement of the human capital component of this stock of foreign labour and how it is managed for increasing the productivity of the economy than the migratory policy itself. In order to analyse the foreign labour supply in Belgium, the quite exceptional particulars of this market must be taken into account.

An overall analysis would not supply a pertinent answer. It is clear that situations differ according to nationality of origin and gender as well as area of residence.

A comparison with the situation of Belgian workers is enlightening. It shows that the approach to this issue should be nuanced, for nationals themselves are not the most advantaged in relation to the labour force as a whole.

Firstly, this labour force is very mixed, as to its origin, distribution, length of residence and nature.

A distinction is made between labour from neighbouring countries, that from former emigrant countries in the South of Europe, countries bordering the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and that from sub-Saharan Africa which show a great diversity of skills and modalities of insertion onto the labour market. It would therefore be a mistake, as is often the case, to distinguish only two categories, native or foreign workers. It must be added that concentrating on two groups of foreign workers, those from the EU and those from outside the E.U., as do certain international organisations (EU, Eurostat), is hardly more satisfactory.

Secondly, an analysis at national level is not pertinent in the case of Belgium. Regional differences are too wide, with regard to economic structure, employment and unemployment levels, between Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia; and these differences, sometimes accentuated, are to be found in the characteristics of the foreign labour force in the three regions.

Consequently, this analysis proceeds according to gender, nationality and residential region.

Furthermore, unlike in other countries which have detailed statistics on occupational profiles and the changing remuneration of immigrants over time (for example: wage progression ¹), the performance of the foreign labour force cannot be gauged by a comparison of their level of productivity with that of nationals at a similar level of qualification.

The measure of foreign labour's contribution to human capital in Belgium must therefore be taken by other means.

In order to measure the contribution of foreign labour (immigrants and born in the country) to human capital in Belgium, we investigate the optimal use that could be made of the skills of the foreign labour force by comparison with that for nationals. Are these workers mainly employed in activities that correspond to their level of education and qualifications? Do they find themselves systematically doing jobs that are below their level of competence? Or the opposite, getting an up-grading (are they doing jobs that may require higher qualifications than they have themselves obtained)

We first present the method and data used, then the characteristics of the labour force, both national and foreign, with regard to education level, unemployment, employment and sectorial distribution and then the analysis of the correspondence between education level and occupational categories.

¹ Unlike in other countries, the Belgian census includes no information on income.

2. Data

All the data presented here come from the processing and analysis of unpublished individual information collected at the time of the last population census, called the 2001 socio-economic enquiry. The 2001 census enables the treatment of data concerning the foreign labour force, distinguishing nationality, gender, region of residence and education level, activity or unemployment and economic sector. Unlike previous censuses, there are for the first time data on occupations. These data are broken down under the ISCO nomenclature and then regrouped according to the required level of skills.

3. Characteristics of the national and foreign labour force.

3.1 Education level of the labour force in Belgium

Three education levels are considered, corresponding to the highest diploma held by an individual. The level *lowr* corresponds to the primary school diploma, *medium* to secondary school and *high* to higher education, whether at university or not.

Generally speaking, Belgians have a medium level of education while foreigners are at a low level.

At regional level (see Figures 1 to 6), the majority of the male labour force is highly qualified in Brussels and at a medium level in Flanders and Wallonia. As to higher education, the differences between the Belgian group and that of foreigners of whatever nationality are narrow in Brussels (43.2% for Belgians against 40.6% for foreigners) and in Flanders (30.3% against 29.6%), but more marked in Wallonia (29% and 19%). Education level differences according to nationality are of course considerable in each of the three regions. North Africans and especially Turks are the most poorly qualified in each of the three regions (between 64 and 58% have only a primary diploma) and between 5% and 6.5% are highly qualified in Brussels and Wallonia; On the other hand, migrants from the ex-EU15 countries, Asian and American people are mostly qualified in Brussels and Flanders (except for the French) and in Wallonia.

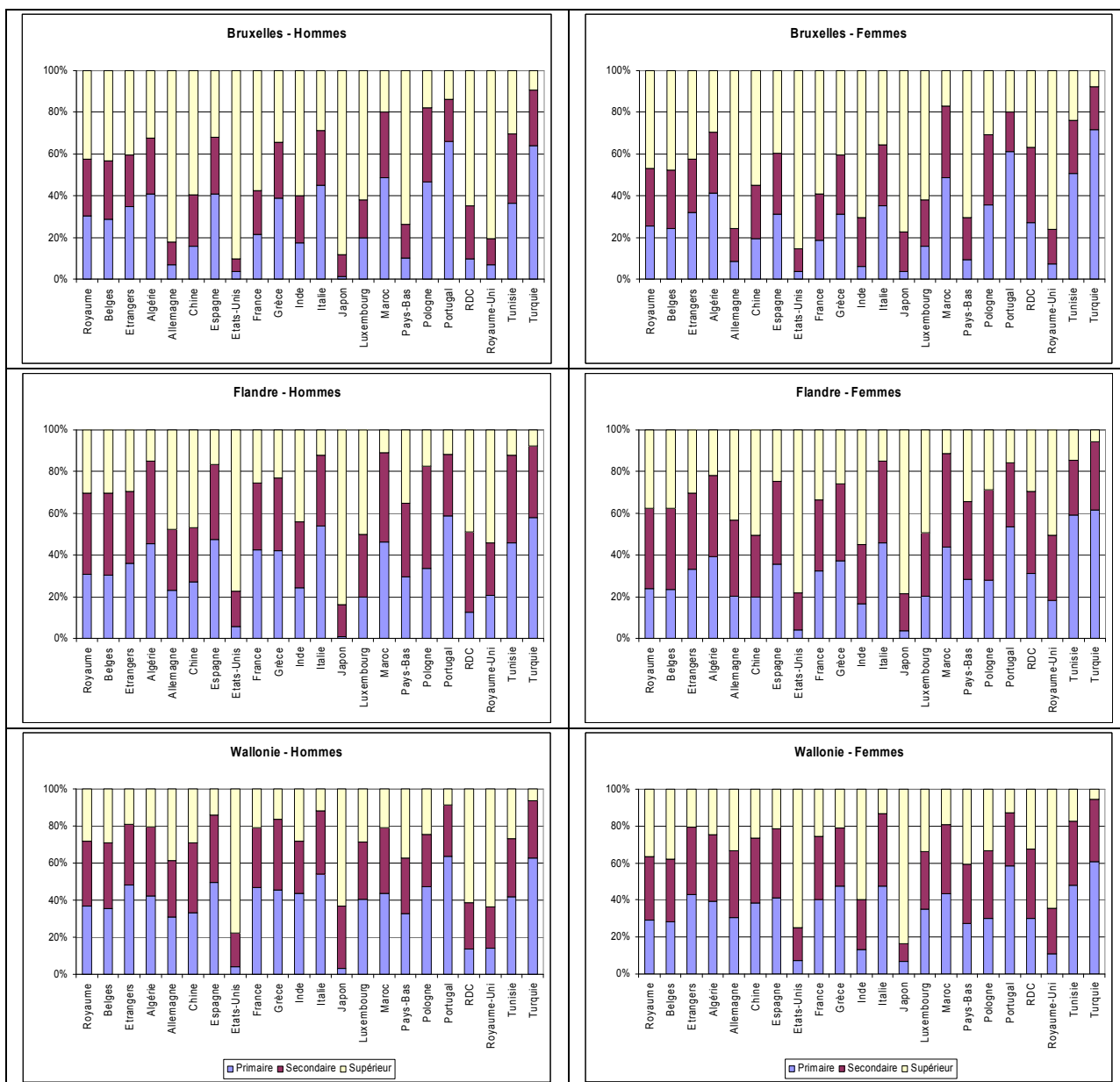
The female work force is generally more highly qualified, mainly in Brussels. In Flanders, the majority of women have a medium level of qualification. In Wallonia, foreign women workers differ from Belgians in that the majority hold only primary school diplomas (43%

against 28%). American, English and Asiatic women (Indians and Japanese) stand out by the fact that they are mostly highly qualified in the three regions.

The majority of North African and Turkish women have a primary school education in the three regions except for Moroccans who have a medium level in Flanders. Only in Brussels are the majority of women workers from the South of Europe highly qualified; in Flanders and in Wallonia their education level is generally poor or medium.

In sum, it is clear that whatever the gender or nationality, the level of education is nearly always the highest in the Brussels-capital region.

Figures 1 to 6
Diploma per region, gender and nationality



Source : GRESP-Uig 2008, calculs propres à partir des données du recensement 2001

3.2. Unemployment and employment.

While, generally speaking, the unemployment rate for foreigners is twice as high as that for Belgians in 2001, this is not corroborated either at regional level or for all nationalities (see table 1). The unemployment rates of Belgians and foreigners show less difference in Brussels and Wallonia than in Flanders. In fact, the unemployment rate is lower in Flanders compared with the two other regions, for Belgians and foreigners as well as men and women. Nationals of neighbouring countries and Anglo-Saxons have a lower unemployment rate than Belgians in Brussels and Wallonia. Generally speaking, the unemployment rates for nationals of European countries are lower than for those from outside Europe (Moroccans, Congolese and Turks).

Table1.

Unemployment rates for men and women according to region of residence.

	Men			Women		
	Brussels	Flanders	Wallonia	Brussels	Flanders	Wallonia
Belgians	14,3	4,5	11,5	17,6	8,5	19,7
Foreigners	22,4	11,8	18,2	29,0	23,5	34,3
(by country of origin)						
Germany	5,1	6,5	7,7	8,9	16,7	14,6
Spain	13,3	8,1	13,1	18,9	15,7	26,8
United States	6,7	9,6	6,8	15,5	23,2	22,2
France	12,6	8,3	14,1	19,4	17,8	28,6
Greece	19,0	10,7	21,1	21,8	20,9	34,7
Italy	15,4	9,7	16,2	22,5	23,0	35,5
Maroc	38,6	28,4	45,1	57,5	50,0	64,4
TheNetherlands	7,1	4,1	6,7	13,4	10,8	16,4
Poland	18,4	13,1	22,1	45,0	37,0	44,8
Portugal	13,0	8,1	10,0	24,6	17,0	25,3
RDC	44,0	36,3	48,3	52,7	52,3	65,3
UnitedKingdom	6,0	7,1	7,5	8,8	14,4	17,2
Turkey	40,0	24,0	44,9	52,3	51,4	74,7

Source : GRESP-Ulg 2008, own calculation from 2001 census

Belgium shows relatively low employment rates in comparison with other OECD countries (OECD, Sopemi 2005) : in 2001, the employment rate was 67% for Belgian men and 60% for Belgian women. These rates are higher than those for foreigners (men and women).

As in the case of unemployment rates, Flanders has better employment rates than the two other regions (see Table 2). There are differences according to nationality. In particular, the Germans, Spanish and Portuguese have higher employment rates in Wallonia while Poles have a higher rate in Brussels. Women of American, English, Italian, Moroccan, Dutch and Turkish nationality have higher participation rates in the Brussels-capital Region.

The employment and unemployment data illustrate the difficulties for foreigners trying to enter the labour market, especially for those from outside Europe. Education level is a key factor for occupational insertion. It is important to emphasize that the groups of foreigners facing the greatest difficulty on the labour market are also those whose educational attainments are medium or poor. Feld and Nantcho (2007) have shown that for certain groups of nationality, the chances of employment are better with a high standard of education. Differences persist, however, according to region of residence. The public sector is one of the most important employers in Belgium. The fact that no foreigner from outside Europe has access to public sector employment together with a poor knowledge of the national languages may also explain the employment and unemployment differences between Belgians and foreigners, as well as the need of a work-permit for certain groups of foreigners² before they can take up an occupation. This situation is not specific to Belgium. Richard (2000) has shown that in France the fact of being foreign constitutes a handicap for the occupational insertion of North African men. More generally, the work of Munz and Fassmann (2004) for the European Union before the 2004 enlargement confirmed this result. Immigrants, especially Turks and those from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as those from Asia had the lowest employment rates in the different member-countries of the ex EU15.

² Note that those groups of foreigners (Congolese, Moroccans and Turks) who are subject to conditions for access to the labour market are those who are in the most unfavourable position.

Table 2
Employment rate per nationality according to gender and region of residence

	MEN			WOMEN		
	Brussels	Flanders	Wallonia	Brussels	Flanders	Wallonia
Belgians	58,87	70,65	63,01	50,90	55,22	47,34
Foreigners (par country of origin)	44,57	59,06	54,73	30,70	33,72	30,96
Germany	53,36	59,13	65,57	44,21	37,21	47,56
Spain	53,40	61,86	63,55	41,73	46,59	40,45
United States	41,54	48,83	39,32	27,36	20,58	9,90
France	48,76	62,77	56,79	38,44	44,08	38,58
Greece	43,42	56,89	50,26	34,68	34,83	29,05
Italy	55,12	64,10	59,22	41,74	40,53	32,11
Marocco	35,58	44,78	29,02	11,71	10,52	9,40
The Netherlands	61,63	70,72	65,55	48,81	48,10	45,05
Poland	52,60	48,94	48,28	28,88	33,16	23,41
Portugal	56,19	58,00	65,18	38,92	42,68	39,40
RDC	25,08	32,19	26,55	20,23	20,67	14,00
United Kingdom	53,10	64,00	63,51	43,81	38,09	31,45
Turkey	34,83	46,90	34,44	17,38	11,24	5,69

Source : GRESP-Ulg 2008, own calculation from 2001 census

The situation of foreign women on the labour market is markedly less favourable than that of men. This difference is explained by cultural factors, the personal choice of certain women who come to join their husbands, and also by the difficulty foreign women face in trying to enter the labour market. The discrimination of which they are victim and the resulting lack of motivation may encourage these women to prefer withdrawing from the labour market. The family situation plays different roles according to nationality. Employment traps also have an incidence on the participation rate of foreign women on the labour market.

But the regional disparities observed show up the differences between levels of economic activity and economic structures specific to each region. The best results of foreigners of every nationality in the Flemish region illustrates this situation.

3.3 Sectors of activity

There are 15 sectors of activity in Belgium³ (within the different sectors, Belgians are relatively more often present in industry, commerce, the health sector, public administration, education and construction. The foreigners are mostly to be found in industry, commerce, construction and catering.

Figures 7 to 10 present the sectors in which foreign workers are over-represented in comparison with Belgians.

This situation has been measured by an index of sectorial concentration.

This index represent the weight of foreign workers of a given nationality in a certain sector in relation to the weight of Belgian workers in the same sector

$$ICI = \frac{NF_{ji}}{NFi} \cdot \frac{NBi}{NB}$$

NF_{ij} = number of foreign workers of j nationality in the I sector

NF_i = total number of foreign workers in I sector

NB_i = number of Belgian workers in sector i

NB = total number of Belgian workers

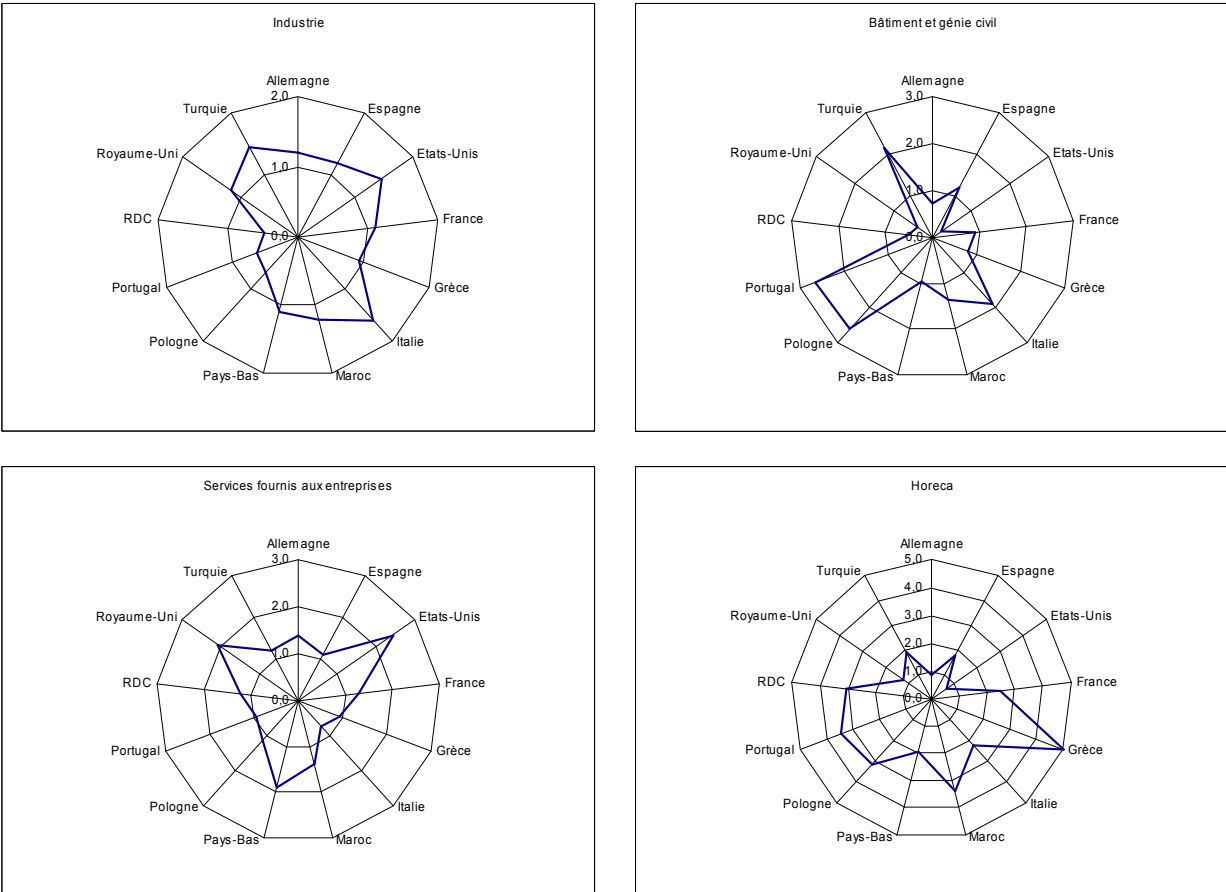
The Figures 7 to 10 are a good illustration of the traditional patterns of foreigners' occupations on the Western Europe labour market in the industrial sector; Americans, Italians and Turks are clearly over-represented in comparison with Belgians. In the construction and civil engineering sector, Italians, Poles, Portuguese and Turks are

³) agriculture, forestry and fishing, (2) industry, (3) construction and civil engineering, (4) commerce, (5) repairs to property or vehicles, (6) transport, warehousing and communication, (7) catering, hotels and restaurants, (8) finance (banking and insurance), (9) business services, (10) domestic services, (11) public administration, (12) education, (13) international organisms, (14) health and social services, and (15) other services³.

distinctly over-represented as compared with Belgians. In the catering sector, the various foreign groups are over-represented in comparison with Belgians except for Americans and English. The Americans, English and Dutch, however, are over-represented in the business services sector.

Figures 7 to 10

Indexes of sectorial concentration of foreigners as compared with Belgians



Source : GRESP-Ulg 2007, own calculation from 2001 census.

4. Measure of correspondence between education and occupation

4.1 Occupations

The distribution of national and foreign workers by sectors of activity has been the object of several international comparisons, especially by the OECD but at a very aggregate level. Analysis according to types of occupation gives much more specific information on how the labour force is used. The 1988 (CITP-88) international classification of occupation divides occupations into 10 large groups, then into sub-groups, from manual to intellectual occupations according to the level of skills required⁴. These data are for the first time available for Belgium.

Table 3 presents the principal group of occupations held by Belgians and foreigners by gender and region of residence. In Brussels, unsurprisingly, its status as capital and administrative centre influences the distribution of occupations. Belgians are relatively more numerous in intellectual and scientific professions; machine operators' and assembly workers' occupations; and as heads of public administration or business directors and managers. In Flanders and Wallonia, they hold mainly manual and semi-skilled jobs (large groups 7 and 8) and intellectual and scientific professions (16% and 19% respectively in Flanders and Wallonia)

Foreigners in Brussels work in a greater number of manual occupations (large group 8). They are relatively fewer than Belgians working in intellectual and scientific professions, while almost 20% practice professions belonging to large group 1. In Flanders and Wallonia, the majority of foreigners work in jobs belonging to large groups 7 and 8 (46% and 55% respectively in Flanders and Wallonia).

It is to be noticed that in Brussels and Flanders, the proportion of foreigners working in large group 1 professions (business, directors top managers,) is relatively greater than the proportion of Belgians belonging to the same group.

⁴ (1) Members of the executive and legislative bodies, directors of public administration, business directors and top managers; (2) Intellectual and scientific professions; (3) Intermediate professions; (4) Administrative employees; (5) Service workers and shop or market vendors; (6) Farmers and skilled agricultural or fishing workers; (7) Artisans and artisan-type workers; (8) Machine and installation operators and assembly workers; (9) Unskilled workers and employees (10) Armed forces.

The majority of Belgian women hold intellectual rather than manual jobs and this applies to the three regions.

They work mainly in large groups 2, 4 and 8 and in particular are relatively more numerous in large groups 2 and 4.

The distribution of foreign women is somewhat different from that of nationals. While they are found in the same occupational groups as Belgian women, they are, however, more numerous in the large group 8 rather than large group 4 in Brussels. In Flanders and Wallonia, they are proportionally more numerous in large groups 8 and 4 occupations rather than in large group 2.

When a distinction is made among foreigners according to the economic level of the country of origin, a highly significant and foreseeable difference appears. Group *a* foreigners (from OECD countries except Turkey) are markedly more numerous in intellectual occupations (large groups 1,2, 3 and 4) as compared with group *b* foreigners (from countries outside the OECD and Turkey) who are relatively more numerous in manual and unskilled occupations.

Table 3 Distribution of Belgians and foreigners by region and gender according to occupational group

MEN	Brussels			Flanders			Wallonie					
	Belgians	foreigners	Total	Belgians	foreigners	Total	Belgians	foreigners	Total			
1 Heads of Publ.admin., business directors and top managers	15,7	19,2	23,2	5,3	12,9	19,8	22,8	6,5	11,1	9,7	9,9	4,8
2 Intellectual and scientific professions	27,1	22,0	25,5	7,4	15,9	13,4	15,0	3,1	18,5	10,7	10,6	6,2
3 Intermediate professions	11,2	7,5	8,0	6,3	12,9	9,7	11,0	3,8	13,6	12,5	13,1	3,9
4 Administrative employees	13,7	9,9	10,6	7,1	12,7	8,9	9,6	5,7	11,0	7,1	7,2	5,7
5 Service workers and shop/market vendors	2,5	1,6	1,3	2,6	2,1	2,1	2,1	1,8	2,3	2,2	2,2	1,9
6 Farmers and skilled agricultural or fishing workers	0,7	0,4	0,3	1,3	1,7	1,8	1,2	4,6	2,2	0,8	0,7	2,4
7 Artisans and artisan-type workers	9,2	13,9	12,7	19,5	19,0	17,5	16,1	25,6	18,7	30,9	31,1	32,9
8 Machine and installation operators and assembly workers	19,1	24,7	17,9	48,5	21,5	25,5	21,1	45,0	21,5	24,4	23,6	39,5
9 Unskilled workers and employees	0,7	0,8	0,5	2,0	1,3	1,3	0,9	3,9	1,2	1,7	1,7	2,7
WOMEN												
1 Heads of Publ.admin., business directors and top managers	10,4	16,3	18,4	5,7	7,4	12,5	13,9	3,7	6,8	7,8	8,0	2,4
2 Intellectual and scientific professions	32,2	26,3	28,0	12,4	25,6	18,8	20,0	12,2	30,7	17,5	17,4	19,0
3 Intermediate professions	10,3	6,1	6,4	5,2	8,5	6,7	7,2	3,3	10,6	8,2	8,3	4,0
4 Administrative employees	26,8	21,3	22,9	9,9	25,2	22,3	24,4	8,9	22,8	20,4	21,0	4,8
5 Service workers and shop/market vendors	5,2	5,3	4,7	9,4	6,5	6,7	7,2	5,6	8,8	13,5	13,6	14,3
6 Farmers and skilled agricultural or fishing workers	0,1	0,1	0,0	0,6	0,9	1,3	0,6	6,3	0,6	0,3	0,3	0,8
7 Artisans and artisan-type workers	1,2	1,7	1,6	2,7	3,2	2,9	2,8	0,7	1,6	3,5	3,7	0,8
8 Machine and installation operators and assembly workers	13,9	22,9	18,0	53,9	22,2	28,3	23,4	58,5	17,7	28,4	27,4	54,0
9 Unskilled workers and employees	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,6	0,5	0,4	0,7	0,3	0,4	0,4	-

Note : a :OECD member-countries including EU15, the United States, Japan and Poland.

b : non-OECD members including Algeria, China, India, RDC, Morocco, Tunisia, Yugoslavia and Turkey

Source : GRESP-Ulg, 2008, own calculation from 2001 census data.

4.2 Education level and occupation

For the first time, the data collected in the 2001 census allow an analysis of the occupational distribution of the foreign labour force according to nationality, gender and region of residence as well as level of education.

The analysis can be made from two standpoints: on one hand, the means of access to the labour market, measured not only by unemployment and employment rates but also by the match between qualifications and jobs ; and, on the other hand the objective of an optimal use of the labour force's qualifications.

This second approach, which raises the question of a proper correspondence between investment in education and worker productivity, concerns more particularly foreign labour, whether immigrant or native.

A phenomenon to be found in most European countries is that of overeducation of foreign workers. An over-qualified individual is one who holds a job that requires lesser qualifications than would theoretically be available to him at his education level

The OECD has recently produced one of the rare studies on the level of overeducation of "foreign born" and "native born" workers⁵(OECD 2007b). The situation of Belgium appears particularly unfavourable as concerns the comparison between employment rates of " foreign born and native born" men and women and over qualification rates. Furthermore, it is the only country where the over qualification level of the foreign born population is increasing according to the duration of their stay in the country.

The procedure adopted here consists of examining how far a national group, in its majority, works in occupations which require the level of skills it has obtained or, conversely, finds itself mostly in occupations which are inferior to its skills ;

Two levels of education have been considered: higher and medium (the primary level is of no interest here) and two categories of occupational activity have been established.

Group A includes all activities considered as intellectual professions requiring special competence or high qualifications¹. Group B includes occupations requiring medium or low qualifications.(Elias P.1997)

⁵ The OECD report distinguishes between « foreign born and native born » whereas our analysis is based on workers' nationality. The comparisons are therefore simply an indication of a tendency and nothing more. The OECD data come from the Eurostat Labour Force Surveys, ours from the population census. The OECD provides interesting international comparisons but the « foreign born » category is very heterogeneous. Analysis by nationality offers fewer possibilities for generalisations but allows specific situations of different categories of migrants to be highlighted.

The results appear very clearly in figures 11 to 16 which take into account only highly qualified labour in employment.

Correct interpretation of the tables depends on the following precisions. The more often highly qualified persons are working in a profession corresponding to their level of training, the more often they appear in the South- East corner of the table (e.g. UK in Brussels 93% in A jobs against 7% in B jobs). The more often these persons are working in professions below their qualifications, the more often this overqualification appears in the North- West corner (e.g. Moroccans and Turks in all possible cases about 15% in A job and 85% in B jobs). Highly-trained persons coming from neighbouring countries or Britain are in employment that corresponds to their qualifications and are mainly working in group A professions, whereas persons coming from Southern Europe or outside Europe are mainly working in group B occupations.

This result is confirmed in the three regions and both genders.

The general phenomenon of overqualification affecting female labour can also, to a certain extent, be observed here. It essentially concerns women of nationalities that are in the highest class for men.

There are several possible explanations for the more frequent under-use of the North African and Turkish labour force. The problem of recognition of foreign diplomas may partly explain this result. As has recently been stressed (OCDE 2007), foreign qualifications obtained in countries where education systems are different and of doubtful quality are not generally range.

This point should, however, be considered in a relative general context.

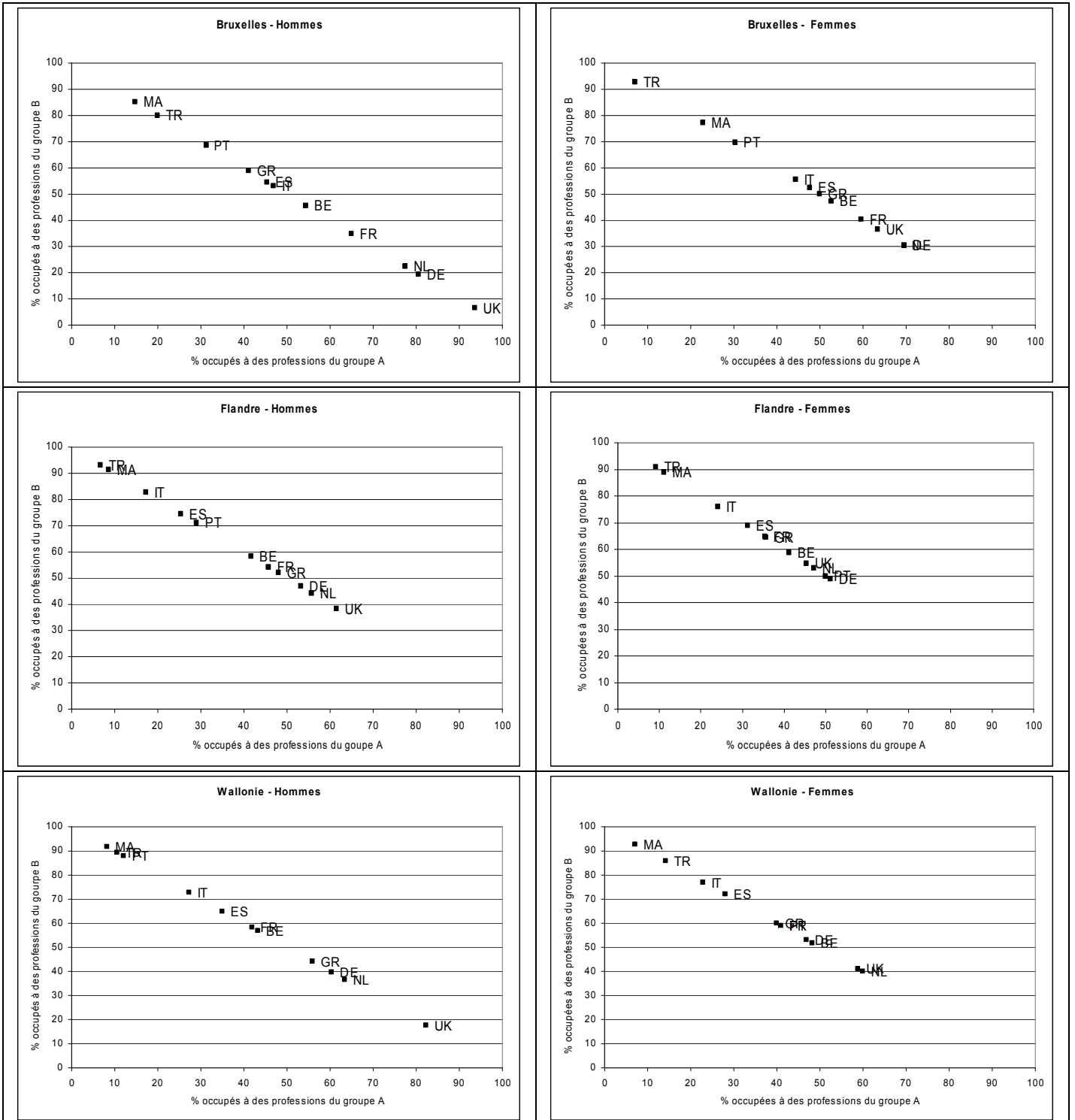
Even a large number of Belgian workers are in occupations that do not require the education level obtained. Roughly 50 % of highly qualified Belgians labour in an "intellectual" professions.

Figures 17 to 22 illustrate a phenomenon of another nature and which can, to a certain extent, be considered positive. Only workers with a secondary education are taken into account. In this case, a South-East position means that for this nationality a majority of workers with a medium education have been able to find jobs normally allocated to holders of a higher education diploma.

This opposite approach measures the up-grading phenomenon. Through various procedures: personal qualities, experience, complementary training or recycling courses,

Tables 11 –16

Distribution of highly-educated persons according to their occupational group and according to gender and region



Note : BE : Belgium, DE :Germany, ES Spain, FR : France, GR : Greece, IT : Italy, MA : Maroc, NL :Netherlands, PT : Portugal, TR : Turkey ; UK : United kingdom.

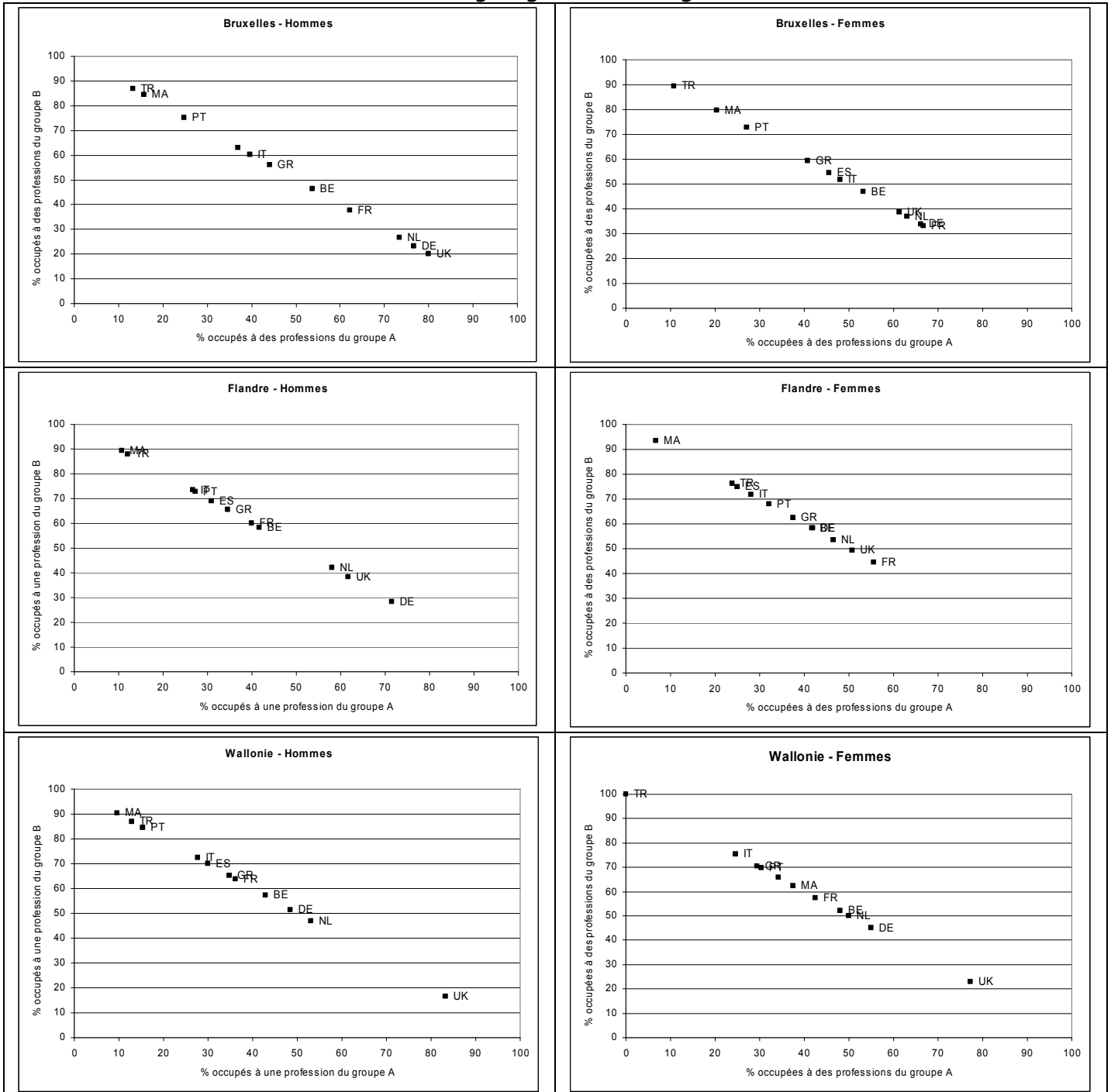
Group A : occupations in group 1, 2 et 3

Group B : occupations in group 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 et 9.

Source : GRESP-2007,own calculations from Census 2001

Tables 17 à 22

Distribution of secondary educated persons according to their occupational group and according to gender and region



Note : BE : Belgique, DE : Allemagne, ES : Espagne, FR : France, GR : Grèce, IT : Italie, MA : Maroc, NL : Pays-Bas, PT : Portugal, TR : Turquie ; UK : Royaume-Uni.

Groupe A : professions des grands groupes 1, 2 et 3

Groupe B : professions des grands groupes 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 et 9.

Source : GRESP-2007, calculs propres à partir des données du Recensement 2001

some workers are employed in posts above their initial level of formal education. The distribution of foreigners is almost identical to that of the highly qualified. Workers from neighbouring countries or Britain are mainly employed in group A professions while Moroccans, Turks and persons from Southern Europe are, in their majority, employed in group B occupations. A great proportion of Germans, Britons and Dutch work in jobs above their level of education.

North Africans, Turks and workers from Southern Europe more generally hold employment corresponding to their level of qualification.

Belgians fall between the two groups of foreigners in that they are equally divided between groups A and B for their employment.

In Brussels, a slightly larger number belong to the A group while in Flanders and Wallonia, the opposite is true. This is confirmed for both genders.

This segmentation phenomenon on the Belgian labour market can be seen in the use of the foreign labour force. Group A professions seem to be mainly reserved for persons from neighbouring countries and Britain. Even with the corresponding level of qualification, few North Africans or Turks achieve A group employment nor, though to a lesser extent, do the Portuguese, Spanish, Italians or Greeks, who are often over-qualified for the jobs they do.

In conclusion, the measurement and mobilisation of human capital in Belgium mainly concern the foreign labour force. A too general approach does not allow identification of the specificities of this labour force.

This analysis presents for the first time the evolution of education level, unemployment or employment of the main nationalities on the labour market in Belgium, distinguishing them according to gender and in the three regions of the country.

It presents considerations on the measure and correspondence between education level and types of occupational activity, an important step towards a better mobilisation of all the skills of the foreign labour force, whether immigrant or born in the country.