

This item is the archived peer-reviewed author-version of:

Marriage migration and the labour market : the case of migrants of Turkish descent in Belgium

Reference:

Timmerman Chris, Wets Johan.- *Marriage migration and the labour market : the case of migrants of Turkish descent in Belgium*

Nordic Journal of Migration Research - ISSN 1799-649X - 1:2(2011), p. 69-79

E-info: doi:10.2478/v10202-011-0009-x

Handle: <http://hdl.handle.net/10067/924210151162165141>

Marriage Migration and the Labour Market

The Case of Migrants of Turkish Descent in Belgium

Christiane Timmerman *CeMIS, University of Antwerp*

Johan Wets *HIVA, Catholic University of Leuven*

Key words: marriage migration, labour market, Turkey, Belgium, family

1. Introduction

The persistently high popularity of migration marriages within large immigrant populations in Western Europe is an interesting phenomenon. Since the bilateral agreements between Western European countries and Turkey in the 1960s, the Turkish diaspora has steadily grown, even though legal provisions in the host countries are limited. On the one hand, Turkish men and women in Western European countries are looking for brides and grooms in the home country of their parents or grandparents. On the other hand, young people in Turkey are still deciding to leave their country of birth and to move to countries like Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, in short, to move to live and work abroad.

In this article we ask whether economic motivations are sufficient to explain fully why so many young people who are born and raised in Western Europe opt for a relatively unknown partner from a region that is by and large unknown to them, even though it is where their parents or grandparents came from. Conversely, why do so many young people born and raised in other countries like Turkey opt for an unknown partner living in a far away country? We develop our arguments using Turkish marriage migration to Belgium as a case study. Belgium is a small country centrally located in Western Europe, and the challenges it has to face in relation to ongoing migration flows are generally comparable with those in the surrounding Western European countries. On the other hand, Turkish migration has affected Western Europe, especially Germany, but also France, the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium for several decades already. We will demonstrate that the case of Turks in Belgium can offer us several interesting insights which are helpful in understanding the dynamics of marriage migration.

In order to situate Belgium, we will first look at its relationship with contemporary international migration, and specifically Turkish migration and Turkish marriage migration. To evaluate the relevance of economic motivations in the context of marriage migration, we will further elaborate on the economic situation of the populations involved in Turkish migration and especially Turkish marriage migration. For this we will rely on secondary data, but also on empirical data gathered in the context of some recently concluded studies. To conclude, we will point to some alternative explanatory perspectives, described in earlier publications, in order to grasp fully the dynamics of this phenomenon.

2. Belgium and its foreign population

Belgium is a highly developed welfare state with well-developed social security programmes.

The welfare system Belgium has adopted is an expensive one, providing broad coverage that might attract immigrants and consequently give rise to anti-immigrant sentiments. On the other hand, the system might need immigrants' labour power to keep it going in the future (United Nations Population Division, 2001).

Belgium is a country of about ten million and is home to many immigrants and asylum-seekers. More than 9.1 percent of Belgium's population is of foreign nationality. However, if one takes into account the total number of people who did not have Belgian nationality at birth, the population of foreign origin is much higher, reaching almost 13 percent of the Belgian population (Martiniello and Rea, 2003). Nonetheless immigration into Belgium was and still is mainly European, due to its strong attraction for many EU citizens, especially the French and the Dutch. Almost 69 percent of foreigners in Belgium are EU nationals. The largest non-EU migrant communities are the Moroccans and the Turks (see statistics Belgium: www.statbel.fgov.be/).

Turkey became involved in labour migration after the Second World War in response to a labour shortage in the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany and Turkey signed a bilateral agreement in October 1961 regulating the short-term emigration of Turkish workers. The economic situation in many other European countries was similar to the German one, and shortly afterwards Belgium too started importing foreign labour to fuel the post-World War II economic boom, specifically to meet the demand for coal workers.

The Belgian government established several bilateral agreements to bring in foreign labour to compensate for the declining domestic work force. The agreement with Turkey was signed on 16 July 1964 (see e.g. www.socialsecurity.be).

The oil crisis of 1973 and the economic downturn of the 1970s led to a recession. The following year, 1974, Belgium and its neighbours established strict immigration legislation. It was difficult for the Turkish miners to adapt to the labour market after the mines closed down for they were unable to speak Dutch or French. However, despite the fact that work opportunities ceased to exist and that there seemed to be no future prospects due to the new restrictive policy, immigration was not brought to a halt. The law of 1974 limited labour migration on the one hand while permitting immigrant family reunification and formation on the other (Bayar, 1992).

In the mid-1980s, the Belgian government accepted the fact that the planned temporary migration seemed to have a more permanent character and began to develop policies to encourage immigrants to settle in the country and to integrate into society. The law on entrance, residence, settlement and the return of foreigners, which is still in force, was passed in December 1980. The Nationality Code introduced the principle of *jus soli* in 1984, and this was revised again on 1 March 2000. Since then, any foreigner legally residing for at least seven years in Belgium who has a permanent residence permit can become Belgian by means of a simple declaration, without any verification of his or her 'desire to integrate.' Of all the naturalisations effected in 2007, 8% were for Turks to acquire Belgian nationality. The Turkish community remains the second largest community when it comes to asking for naturalisation, after Moroccan citizens (CGKR, 2009, p. 93).

Belgian immigration legislation is still largely defined by the migration stop of 1974, measures that were taken all over Europe. This implies that access to the country is restricted. There are four official ways to enter the country: (1) labour migration, (2) family reunification or formation, (3) asylum, and (4) non-migration such as student mobility and tourism. The fifth way – irregular migration – is the same as in most European countries.

Migration policy is to a large extent demand-driven. The possibilities to enter the country legally are fairly limited. Labour migration, other forms of migration such as student migration and family migration are all subject to strict legislation.

Nevertheless, the latter has by and large been the most important form of migration for the last three decades since 1974. Asylum migration gives a better chance to enter the country, but not a better chance to stay: only a limited percentage (15%) of all applicants finally acquires refugee status and a permit to stay.

3. Turkish migration and marriage migration

After Moroccans, Turkish residents form the second largest community in Belgium from outside the EU. In 1998, there were 79,460 Turks (7.9 percent of the total foreign population) living in Belgium. In 2000, the number of Turkish nationals went down to 56,172 when in the same year 17,282 Turks acquired Belgian nationality. Since 2007 the number has dropped below 40,000 (39,419 in 2007). By 2005 the majority of people of Turkish origin had acquired Belgian nationality (Statistics Belgium). It is estimated that the number of people of Turkish descent exceeds 100,000 by far. Between 1991 and 2005, 100,898 Turkish nationals adopted Belgian nationality (CGKR, 2007, p. 54). And there is still an annual inflow of roughly 3000 Turkish citizens a year. According to the data of the Belgian statistical service, 2,965 Turks entered the country in 2007.

Chain migration is one of the legal ways, mentioned above, of entering the country and obtaining a long-term residence permit. Where chain migration is a matter of the reunion of (future) spouses, we refer to it as *marriage migration*. Contrary to expectations, the tendency within Turkish communities in Belgium to marry someone who grew up in the country of origin has remained (Lesthaeghe, 1997). However, the pattern of Turkish chain migration into Belgium has gradually changed, and nowadays it is divided equally between male and female migrants. Population data show that from 1 January 2001 until 15 April 2005, 46 percent of Turkish newcomers who entered Belgium on the basis of marriage were women (Deschamps, 2005). Initially chain migration applied exclusively to women and children joining their husbands or fathers who were already in Belgium as guest workers. Before 1974 economic migration was male and chain migration was female. In general, men chose to migrate, while women and children merely followed their husbands or fathers. Gradually this pattern changed as the second generation grew up in Western Europe and started to marry (Timmerman et al., 2009).

In recent decades, chain migration has become by far the most popular way to enter Belgium; in other words, the majority of newcomers have arrived in Belgium as the (future) spouses of Belgian residents. This certainly applies to Turkish migration. What is particular to Turkish residents in Belgium, including the second generation, is that the

majority still end up marrying someone who grew up in Turkey (Timmerman, 2008; Timmerman, Lodewyckx and Wets, 2009).

For this we rely on a data set extracted from the National Register of Belgium. The data set contains records of all married couples or couples living together in Belgium on 1 January 2004 in which one of the partners has ever had Turkish nationality. The dataset consisted of 19,251 couples (Yalçın et al. 2006). We see that, among Belgian male residents who once had Turkish nationality, nearly three quarters of the 'in-between' generation and 60% of the second generation married a partner from Turkey. The percentage of women of Turkish origin marrying a partner from Turkey is even higher: nearly 80% of the women who arrived in Belgium between the age of 7 and 18 years, the so-called 'in-between' generation (in-between the first and second generations), against 60% in the second generation.

Within the Turkish community in Belgium, 60% of both men and women of the second generation are married to a partner who lived in Turkey until the marriage. In other words, 6 out of 10 youngsters with a Turkish background who are raised in Belgium opt for a partner who lives in the country from which their parents or grandparents came (Timmerman et al., 2009).

A study from the 1990s (Reniers, 1997) shows that Turkish migrants mainly originate from a cluster of central Anatolian provinces. According to data on migrants from the State Institute of Statistics in Ankara, the three provinces that provided the most Turkish immigrants are Afyon, Eskisehir and Kayseri. Almost one-third of the Turkish immigrants in Belgium originate from Afyon, in particular Emirdag (Reniers, 1997). This district consists of about 70 villages, of which the town of Emirdag (approximately 20,000 inhabitants) is the administrative centre. This town is situated in a poor, arid area that is greatly affected by emigration (Timmerman, 1999; 2000).

Being the most important Turkish region of emigration for Belgium, the region of Emirdag - is an important location for understanding the dynamics of marriage migration. As can be expected, a lot of young people leave Emirdag as marriage migrants heading for Western Europe. A data set from the marriage register in Emirdag, which gives data about the wedding, the birthplace of the partners, their nationality, age, the age of marriage, the civil status of both partners before the wedding and the place of residence after the marriage, gives us more accurate information on this issue. For the period

between January 2004 and June 2005, the marriage register showed that the majority (57%) of the couples who married also emigrated to Western Europe. The majority of these migration marriages are contracted in the summer, the holiday period when West European Turks visit their region of origin (Timmerman et al., 2009).

On the basis of the material mentioned above, it is clear that Turkish marriage migration remains popular. In order to understand the dynamics that might explain this phenomenon, it is relevant to consider the socio-economic situation of those involved.

4. The socio-economic situation

In Turkey

In Turkey itself, the socio-economic situation has been improving drastically over the last few years, even if it is still lagging behind Western Europe. According to World Bank data, Turkish Gross National Income per capita rose between 2000 and 2007 from US\$ 3,930 to US\$ 8,030. Turkey still trails the rest of the OECD countries, but its GNI/c is higher than that of Bulgaria and Romania – two EU member states – and continues to rise. Compared with other important non-European immigration countries such as Morocco, the economic situation in Turkey is remarkably good. Turkey's GNI/c is nearly three times higher than that of Morocco.

According to different theories of economic migration, it is assumed that people leave their country in order to improve their socio-economic situations (Faist, 2000, McDowell and De Haan, 2000, Wets, 2001, De Haas, 2008). In theories of the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), migration is not regarded as an individual decision, but as a decision taken by a larger group of people such as a household. According to this theory, a household in a migrant-providing country will decide to assist one of its members in their bid to emigrate in order to compensate for a shortage in various markets and for the risk related to agricultural activities. Furthermore, such a decision is dependent on the relative status of the household in the community. The decision is therefore based on relative rather than absolute deprivation (De Haas, 2008, p. 40).

On the basis of previous research (in footnote: in the context of doctoral research on socio-cultural praxis and ethnicity in the context of Turkish migration, we conducted extensive fieldwork in Turkey in the period 1990–1995) conducted in Emirdag, we know that people there feel that they are well informed about the economic differences between

Emirdag and the Turkish communities in Belgium (Timmerman, 2000). In conversations with local people in Emirdag, the incomes of the Turkish residents in Belgium are a popular topic. People in Emirdag are convinced that Belgian Turks have an easy time of it. These opinions are based upon the spending habits of the Belgian Turks when the latter return to Emirdag. Compatriots living abroad own substantial houses in Emirdag, drive expensive cars, go on holiday in the popular Turkish tourist resorts, hold costly weddings and provide financial support to relatives left behind in Turkey. All in all, people in Emirdag see plenty of evidence that the socio-economic conditions of Turks living in Western Europe – and specifically in Belgium, where the overwhelming majority of emigrants settled – are better compared to their own situation in Turkey (Timmerman 1999; Timmerman et al., 2009).

Sometimes, respondents in Emirdag indicated that they were aware that the life-style their European compatriots flaunted in Emirdag is not representative of their life-style in Belgium. They confirmed that they were aware of the economic hardships many of their compatriots encounter in Belgium: unemployment, low-skilled employment and the high cost of living in Western-Europe, including Belgium. Despite the fact that this information is available in Emirdag, it seems generally to be ignored, or at least not taken into consideration. Is there therefore a real basis for this assumption?

In Belgium

There is a lot of evidence that the socio-economic situation of Turkish migrants in Belgium is indeed problematic compared to that of mainstream Belgian society. Data from the Belgian National Health Survey for 2001 indicate that 59% of people of Turkish origin in Belgium are living below the poverty line (van Robays, 2006). Unemployment among people with a Turkish background is high, especially amongst young people. Research also shows that ethnic minorities – often Turks – meet with considerable discrimination, in addition to their under-representation in the labour market, due to their poor educational background.

The educational level among the second and third generations, especially compared to other groups, still falls short. Recent research has mapped the school achievements of children with a foreign background (Groenez, van den Brande and Nicaise, 2003; Duquet, et al., 2006; De Meyer, 2007; Hermans, Opdenakker and van Damme, 2004). This research reveals the socio-ethnic gap in the field of education in Flanders, despite the notable position of the Flemish system in international comparative research. The

position of youngsters of Moroccan and/or Turkish descent is especially problematic. According to Duquet et al. (2006: 51) they score worse than other pupils of foreign descent on every indicator of success. In sum, they are far behind their classmates and are confronted with persistent and cumulative arrears, even before the age of compulsory education. All the different pieces of research record that the school careers of 'immigrant' youths are characterized by low achievement, failure, being left behind, moving on less frequently to better disciplines and post-secondary education, more (unqualified) school drop-outs, etc. (Levrau, 2009).

A direct consequence of poor schooling is the lack of vocational qualifications. Compared to mainstream society, the socio-economic situation of Turkish migrants in Belgium is problematic. Unemployment is high, especially among young people. Research from 2005 demonstrates that ethnic minorities—mostly Moroccans and Turks—encounter considerable discrimination (Martens et al., 2005), in addition to their under-representation in the labour market, due to their poor educational backgrounds (Timmerman, Vanderwaeren and Crul, 2005). The average unemployment rate among Turks in Belgium is much higher than the overall unemployment rate. An analysis of some labour market data for Flanders in 2003 illustrates the poor position of the Turkish population on the labour market. The Turkish population represents only 0.5 percent of the labour population in Flanders, but represents 1.9 percent of the unemployed. If the overall unemployment rate was eight percent, for people with a Belgian nationality it was seven percent, for non-Belgians it was 15 percent, and for the Turkish population it was 29 percent.

Turkish labourers in Belgium work more than any other group as blue-collar workers, earn less than the Belgians or other migrant groups, are mainly active in industry and the service sector, and are seriously over-represented in agriculture and horticulture, metallurgy and the waste-processing industry (Verhoeven, 2000). Male Turks have a much lower employment rate than the male Belgian population. In addition, Turkish women are less represented in the labour market. And yet research by Martens and others found that Turks with Belgian nationality do slightly better than Turkish nationals working in Belgium (Martens, Ouali, Van de maele, Vertommen, Dryon and Verhoeven, 2005).

Those involved in marriage migration

It is evident that the overall economic situation of Turkish residents in Belgium is far

from rosy, but what of those involved in marriage migration? For this we can rely on a dataset of the Crossroad Bank of Social Security. Almost everybody living in Belgium is registered in one way or another: if you are working, if you receive unemployment allowance, if you are ill or handicapped, if you receive child benefits or a pension. All this is registered by different institutions within the social security system. Since 1989 all this data has been linked in the Crossroad Bank of Social Security, although it is only partially accessible to researchers as a rather severe privacy law defines these restrictions. However, the data set was used in research on marriage migration in Belgium (Heyse, Pauwels, Wets and Timmerman, 2007).¹

The data of the Crossroad Bank of Social Security only gives information on social security and does not include civil status. It contains enough information, however, to create a proxy for 'marriage migration'. The family situation as such is classified in what is called the LIPRO code, which makes a distinction between people living alone, living with parents, living with a partner (married or unmarried), living with a partner and with children, etc.

We selected, independently of their nationality, men and women who were living with their parents or alone in the reference year of 2000 and whose position had changed in 2001. In our cases, the household positions of these people changed to a category code which indicated that they were living together with a partner they had selected. Next, the new partners of this selected population were checked. Only those people who were living together with a foreigner who had not been living in Belgium the previous years were selected for the research. The data were gathered for 2001, 2002 and 2003 and consisted of, 8,942, 9 579 and 11,333 couples respectively. These data allow us to draw a picture of the socio-economic profile of the immigrants and their partners in Belgium. Privacy regulations prevented information on specific nationalities being disclosed, so instead migrants had to be grouped in *nationality clusters*. The largest group of immigrants who entered the country with the purpose of settling with a person residing in Belgium were citizens of the wider region of the Mediterranean and the Arab world. The great majority of people within the cluster 'Mediterranean and the Arab world' originate from Morocco or Turkey.

An analysis of the data showed that, for Flanders, 'marriage migration' in general is more

¹ In this inter-university research, we investigated marriage migration into Belgium from Morocco, Turkey, Eastern Europe and South-East Asia, using quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

female (6/10) than male (4/10), although there are important regional differences. Southeast Asian and Eastern European migration is, at 97% and 81% respectively, predominantly feminine. Migration from the southern rim of the Mediterranean shows contrasting figures, however, and is slightly more male than female (53% versus 47%). All marriage migrants are young, with three quarters being under 35 and 21% under 25. A small percentage (2%), virtually all of whom originate in Morocco or Turkey, are even younger than 20. There is a strong correlation (Cramer's $V = 0.33$; $\text{chisq} < .0001$) between age and gender in this group from the southern rim of the Mediterranean. All migrants under the age of 20 are female, and almost eight out of ten (79.1%) of the newcomers under the age of 25 are women. The male weighting can be found principally in the age groups between 30 and 44 (65%).

A focus on the data of the partners living in Belgium tells us that more than eight out of ten (83%) have Belgian nationality. We have to bear in mind that, as stated earlier, Turks very often opt for Belgian nationality, and in doing so, they disappear statistically. An analysis of the nationality of those migrants coming from the southern rim of the Mediterranean shows that they either marry Belgians or other Europeans or else people from the same region of origin. In a further analysis, we based the examination of the labour market position of the partners living in Belgium on the region of origin of their newly arrived brides or grooms. Nevertheless, this gives us a good idea of the socio-economic situations of the Belgian Turkish population who marry brides or grooms coming from Turkey.

One relevant observation that can be derived from the data set is that, in Belgium, one of every five people marrying a foreigner coming from abroad was unemployed at a time when the overall unemployment rate was less than one in ten. A focus on the cluster of people who 'marry' somebody from the sub-region of the Mediterranean and the Arab world reveals an even more important deviation from the average: one of every three of the partners living in Belgium who marry into this group is unemployed.

A large proportion of those who are employed have a low income. The average monthly income for people who marry somebody from the area of the Mediterranean is remarkably low. Almost half of them (45%) have a monthly gross income of less than €1,250 Euro, compared to 29% for the overall group. Two out of three (66%) earn less than €1,500 a month before taxes. Only 8 percent of the employed have a gross income of more than €2000 a month (compared to 33% of the overall group). The new migrants who are working earn even less than the partners living in Belgium: 54% have a gross

income of less than €1,250 a month.

The data also shed new light on some of the myths that circulate around new migrants. One of these is that they come to Europe to enjoy the benefits of the social security system. In our sample, newcomers can hardly be found in the social security databases at all (e.g. the welfare system). If they come to ‘profit’, there would have to be a time lag. The *new migrants* in our research population are also hard to trace back on to the labour market. Two of every three new migrants do not enter the labour market during the first year after their arrival: they are not (officially) working, and are neither unemployed nor self-employed. Women especially stay away from the labour market. In the case of a spouse from the Mediterranean and a partner living in Belgium who has nationality from the same region, the figures show that 93% remain inactive (82% if the partner has Belgian or other European citizenship) in the years analysed. An analysis of the family situation of the couples one year after the year of arrival of the new partners reveals that 64% of all couples with at least one partner coming from the southern or eastern rims of the Mediterranean consist of partners and children. Although the figures do not show whether the children are born in the time span analysed or joined the family together with their father or mother (one of the spouses may have married a partner with children), it is most probable that this is the case. Further analysis of the family data also shows that, after three years, 3 to 4% of the research population is registered as a one-parent family and between 6 and 7% as a single-person household. Apparently, such relationships do not prove very stable.²

These results from the study of Heyse, Pauwels, Wets and Timmerman (2007) show that Turkish marriage migrants on average marry Belgian residents with a weak socio-economic background (albeit most probably of Turkish descent). This makes us confident in concluding that the socio-economic situation of the Turkish community in Belgium into which Turkish marriage migrants marry is rather problematic.

5. Beyond economic explanations

In several of our ethnographic studies³ it was demonstrated that in Emirdag, young people associate the advantages of marriage migration specifically with living in a

² See Heyse et al. (2006). These data result from an analysis of administrative databases. Further information on who and why cannot be derived from the available statistics.

³ One of the authors, Christiane Timmerman, conducted extensive fieldwork in the Turkish immigrant communities in Flanders/Belgium and in a region of emigration in Emirdag from 1990 till 1995 and brief periods in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010 (see bibliography)

modern, democratic and prosperous country. Men are particularly motivated to emigrate in order to improve their socio-economic situations. They are convinced that earning a living will be much easier in Western Europe. This also applies to girls, but they often stress the broader advantages of living in a democratic, prosperous country with a sound social security system: access to health care, more social rights for women, better financial provisions in cases of sickness, unemployment, retirement and also greater socio-cultural opportunities (Timmerman, 1999; 2000; Yalcin et al., 2006). Notwithstanding this economically motivated discourse on marriage migration voiced by residents in a region of emigration, i.e. Emirdag, it is clear from the previous chapter that economic reasons alone are not sufficient to explain the success of this ongoing marriage migration. Although economic reasons remain relevant for local people in Emirdag as a cause of emigration, the improving economic situation in Turkey and the feeble economic condition of the Turkish communities in Belgium must both be acknowledged, specifically for those who enter Belgium for reasons of marriage migration.

We have mentioned already in previous articles (Timmerman, 2008; Timmerman et al., 2009) that it is necessary to look for complementary clarifying mechanisms to explain the consistently high popularity of migration marriages within the Turkish communities in Flanders or Belgium and in Turkish regions of emigration. Let us briefly recapitulate the most convincing ones. Many migration theories underline the importance of transnational networks in understanding migration processes (Faist, 2000, Van Heelsum and van Amersfoort, 2007; Nell, 2004; Levitt, DeWind and Vertovec, 2003; Ostergard-Nielsen, 2003). The mere existence of transnational Turkish communities is an asset that smoothes out the process of migration. Another element that enhances the existence of transnational networks between the emigration areas and the diasporas is the strong feeling of Turkish nationalism, secular as well as religious. This is also an important factor in understanding the strong ties between areas of emigration and the Turkish diaspora (Kandioty, 1991, 1995). We can observe that this commitment within the Turkish diaspora in Europe seems to have become even stronger with Turkey's ambition to join the EU (Rochtus, 2008).

As stated earlier (Timmerman, 2008; Timmerman et al. 2009), the existence of a 'culture of migration' that binds Turkish regions of emigration with the Turkish diaspora might offer the most promising explanatory scheme for understanding the success of marriage migration. The rosy 'imagnations' of Western Europe that are created, as well as the 'tradition' of migration towards Western Europe, have an significant appeal for people

who dream of improving their socio-economic and socio-cultural positions in Emirdag. On the other hand, within the Turkish diaspora in Flanders or Belgium, language, religion, social networks, family relations and ethnic identities are all still extensively inspired by the migrants original regions of emigration. This 'culture of migration' is nurtured by a migration which is still ongoing and with very close communication between the Turkish communities in Flanders or Belgium and the regions of origin, as well as by the creative memory of the 'authentic' places of origin.

As already noted, family migration, and more specifically marriage migration, is the most popular emigration regime in Emirdag, and has been for several decades. As demonstrated in previous publications, unravelling this 'culture of migration' is crucial for understanding the dynamics of marriage migration (Timmerman, 2008; Timmerman et al. 2009). There it was demonstrated that the specific characteristics of the concepts of 'family' and 'marriage' within the socio-cultural praxis of these Turkish communities – both within the regions of origin and at their destinations – are key elements in explaining the success and centrality of marriage migrations within contemporary Turkish communities in Western Europe. In the local culture of Emirdag, as elsewhere in Turkey, marriage is one of the key social institutions (Yalcin et al., 2006; Delaney, 1991). As noted already, in recent years half the marriages contracted in Emirdag have been migration marriages (Timmerman et al., 2009). Migration opportunities have a major impact on changing conceptions of 'family' and 'marriage', not only within the local praxis in Emirdag, but also within Turkish communities in Western Europe (Manco, 1999). This implies that marriage also plays a crucial role within the local 'culture of migration' of Emirdag and the Turkish communities in Flanders and Belgium. In addition, the traditional praxis of 'marriage' within (semi)-rural Turkish communities proves to fit well within contemporary migration aspirations.

Therefore, as we argued earlier, the popularity of marriage migrations has to be understood by taking the dynamics related to family formation as a starting point (Timmerman et al., 2009). The traditional concept of the 'arranged marriage' – marriage first seen as a negotiated contract between two families – fits perfectly within the conditions in which a migration marriage has to be negotiated. Given the restriction that the parties involved live in different countries, a contemporary migration marriage greatly resembles the traditional arranged marriage.

Another facilitating element in the popularity of marriage migration can be found in its

power to alter existing gender roles; to rebalance power relations to ones own benefit (Beck- Gernsheim, 2007). Turkish girls in both Belgium and Turkey see in a migration marriage an opportunity to emancipate themselves. Girls in Emirdag aspire to take advantage of the more liberal gender roles that prevail in the West; Turkish girls in Belgium aspire to greater independence by having their parents-in-law in Turkey, too far away to intervene directly in their new established household (Luyckx, 1999). The wish of Turkish men in Belgium to marry a girl from Turkey might also be motivated by the desire to alter their own gender roles in Flanders and Belgium. It was found that men often aspire to have a bride who confirms more to the patriarchal ideal of traditional gender roles, so that a match with a girl from Turkey seems most promising (Yalcin et al., 2006).

In line with other studies, in the Turkish diaspora is the discourse on marriage migration mainly dominated by emotional and socio- cultural motivations (Riano & Bagdadi, 2007). For all parties involved in the Turkish immigrant communities in Flanders/Belgium marriage with partners from the original homeland strengthens their sense of continuity. This fits well with theories on ethnicity which stress the importance people attach on preserving an ‘authentic’ ethnic identity especially within situations of uncertainty (Roosens, 1996).

But apart from the ‘cultural’ reading, there are other, more trivial or economic mechanisms that can be relevant in explaining the preference of Belgian Turkish parents for their children to marry a partner from their region of emigration: debts towards relatives who stayed behind in Turkey (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007), the assurance of a ‘dependant’ daughter- or son-in-law, occasional financial benefits (a high brideprice or dowry, a cheap labour force (Timmerman et al., 2009)).

Conclusion

The main focus of this article has been the relevance of socio-economic explanations in understanding why so many young people who are born and raised in Western European countries – in this case in Flanders in Belgium – opt for a marriage with an unknown partner coming from a region that is by and large unknown to them, even though it may be the region of origin of their parents or grandparents. Because of this, one can raise the question as to why so many young people born and raised in countries like Turkey opt for an unknown spouse in a far away country. The historical situation – the ties between Turkey and Belgium can be traced back more than four decades – and the fact that, apart

from marriage migration, there are few possibilities of entering a Western European country like Belgium, does not provide a full explanation: they only sketch out the institutional setting. Another part of this setting is the presence of Turkish communities in Flanders or Belgium for whom Turkish identity remains a relevant frame of reference and which remain well-connected with their regions of origin and their compatriots in the European Turkish diaspora. Although they are apparently in Belgium to stay, the younger generation continues to import its spouses.

Potential emigrants in Emirdag – especially men, but to lesser degree also women – clearly aspire to improve their socio-economic situations by engaging themselves in a migration marriage. Indeed, there is still a big difference between the socio-economic situations of countries like Belgium and Turkey, but according to World Bank figures, the situation in Turkey is steadily improving and is even better than the situations in other countries that recently joined the EU like Romania and Bulgaria. However, the socio-economic situation of the Turkish community in Belgium – even for those who are naturalised – is far from favourable. Turks and Belgians of Turkish descent are less represented in the labour market, and if they are, they are often unemployed or employed in less attractive trades, earning considerably less than other groups, even less than other non-European immigrant groups. It has been demonstrated that people in Belgium – the large majority of Turkish descent – who marry spouses coming from Turkey are living in relatively difficult socio-economic conditions.

Economic reasons obviously play a role, but it is clear that alone, however important they are, they do not fully explain this phenomenon. All this demonstrates that the reasons for migration go beyond mere economic benefits and allows us to conclude that the popularity of marriage migration can only be explained by taking multiple frames of reference into account. Given the poor prospects for Turkish migrants in their future host countries, and given the poor performance of their spouses - born/raised in Belgium - in the labour market, economic motivation seems a far from adequate explanation of the phenomenon in general. It is clear that the existence of a ‘culture of migration’ that binds the region of origin with the region of destination, one in which ‘the family’ as an institution is capable of bridging the traditional praxis and the challenges linked to international migration, is complementary to understanding the enduring popularity of marriage migration between Emirdag and Flanders.

10. References

- Akbar A. (1995), 'Ethnic cleansing': a metaphor for our time?. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18, pp. 26-45.
- Bailey A.J. and Boyle, P. (2004), 'Untying and Retying Family Migration in the New Europe'. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30, 2: 229-242.
- Barth F. (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Oslo, Scandinavian University Press.
- Barth F. (1994), Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity. In: Hans Vermeulen, H. and Govers, C. (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*. Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 11-32: 15.
- Bayar A. (1992) Une aperçue économique de l'immigration turque. In: Morelli, A. (ed.), *Histoire des Etrangers et de l'Immigration en Belgique de la préhistoire à nos jours*, Editions Vie Ouvrière , Brussels, pp. 311-328.
- Beck-Gernsheim E. (2007), 'Transnational lives, transnational marriages: a review of the evidence from migrant communities in Europe', *Global Networks*, Volume 7 Issue 3, Pages 271 – 288
- CGKR – Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en racismebestrijding (2008), *Migratie: jaarverslag 2007*, Brussel, Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en racismebestrijding, www.diversiteit.be, 176 pp.
- CGKR – Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en racismebestrijding, (2009), *Migratie: jaarverslag 2008*, Brussel, Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en racismebestrijding, www.diversiteit.be, 176 pp.
- De Haas H. (2003), *Migration and Development in Southern Morocco: The Disparate Socio-Economic Impacts in the Todgha Oasis Valley*. PhD Thesis, University of Nijmegen.
- De Haas H. (2008), *Migration and development: a theoretical perspective*, *IMI Working papers*, Paper 9, International Migration Institute, Oxford, 61 pp.
- De Meyer I. (2007). *Wetenschappelijke vaardigheden voor de toekomst: de eerste*

resultaten van PISA 2006, Universiteit Gent.

- De Weerd Y., De Witte H., Catellani P. and Milesi P. (2004), *Turning Right? Socio-economic changes and the receptiveness of European workers to extreme right. Report on the survey analysis and results*, Leuven, HIVA.
- Delaney, C. (1991), *The seed and the soil: gender and cosmology in Turkish village society*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford, University of California Press.
- Deschamps L. (2005), De Internationalisering van de 'Vlaamse' Huwelijksmarkt, een Oriënterende Schets ['The Internationalization of the 'Flemish' Marriage Market, an Exploratory Sketch']. In: F. Caestecker (ed.), *Huwelijksmigratie: een Zaak voor de Overheid?* [Marriage Migration: A Matter for the Government?]. Leuven, Acco.
- Duquet N., Glorieux I., Laurijssen I. and Van Dorsselaer Y. (2006). *Wit krijgt schrijft beter. Schoolloopbanen van allochtone jongeren in beeld*, Garant, Antwerpen, Apeldoorn.
- Epstein, A.L. (1978), *Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity*. London, Tavistock.
- Eriksen T. (1993), *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London/Boulder, Pluto Press, p.149-150.
- Flemmen A. B. (2008), Transnational Marriages: Empirical Complexities and Theoretical Challenges. An Exploration of Intersectionality. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 16, 2, pp. 114-129.
- Friedman J. (1990), Being in the World: globalisation and localization. In: Featherstone, M., (ed.), *Global Culture*. London, Sage, pp. 311-328.
- Groenez S., Van den Brande I., Nicaise I. (2003). *Cijferboek sociale ongelijkheid in het Vlaamse onderwijs – een verkennend onderzoek op de Panelstudie van Belgische huishoudens*, Steunpunt LOA, Leuven.
- Gsir S., Martiniello M. and Wets J. (2003) Country Profile: Belgium, In: Niessen J. and Schibel Y., *EU and US approaches to the management of immigration*, MPG, Brussels, pp. 47-76
- Gsir S., Martiniello M., Meireman K. and Wets J. (2005), 'Belgium', in Niessen J.,

- Schibel Y. and Thompson C. (eds.), *Current Immigration Debates in Europe: A Publication of the European Migration Dialogue*, Migration Policy Group, Brussels/Warsaw
- Hermans D., Opendakker M.-C. and Van Damme J. (2003). *Ongelijke kansen in het secundair onderwijs in Vlaanderen. Een longitudinale analyse van de interactie-effecten van geslacht, etniciteit en socio-economische status op de bereikte onderwijspositie met aandacht voor het effect van de school: een vervolg*, Steunpunt Studie- en schoolloopbaan, Leuven. <http://www.site.kifkif.be/quality/onderwijs/oglkso.pdf>
- Heyse P., Pauwels F., Wets J. and Timmerman C. (2006), *Liefde kent geen grenzen: een kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve analyse van huwelijksmigratie vanuit Marokko, Turkije, Oost Europa en Zuid-Oost Azië*. OASeS,/CeMIS, 275 p.
- Hooghiemstra E. (2003), *Trouwen over de Grens. Achtergronden van Partnerkeuze van Turken en Marokkanen in Nederland* [Cross-border Marriage: Background to the Partner Choice of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands]. Den Haag, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, SCP-publicatie, 2003/4.
- Kandiyoti D. (1991), End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey. In: Kandiyoti, D. (ed.), *Women, Islam and the State*. London, Macmillan, pp. 22-47.
- Kandiyoti D. (1995), Patterns of Patriarchy: Notes for an Analysis of Male Dominance in Turkish Society. In: Tekeli, S. (ed.), *Women in Turkish Society: A Reader*. London, Zed Books Ltd, pp. 306-318.
- Lesthaeghe R. (ed.), *Diversiteit in sociale verandering: Turkse en Marokkaanse vrouwen in België*. Brussel, VUBPRESS, 1997, p.119.
- Levitt P., DeWind J., and Vertovec S. (2003), International perspectives on transnational migration: an introduction, *International Migration Review*, Special Volume on Transnational Migration'. Vol. 37 no. 3, pp 565-575
- Levrouw F. (2009), *Het janusgezicht van het onderwijs: een literatuurstudie over het onderwijs in een interculturele samenleving*, Steunpunt Gelijke Kansenbeleid, Antwerpen.
- Lorkovic H. (1993), Culture Conflicts and Types of Nationalism, *History of European Ideas*, 16, 241-243: 245.

- Luyckx K. (1999), *Liefst een gewoon huwelijk? Creatie en conflict in levensverhalen van jonge migrantenvrouwen*, Leuven & Amersfoort: Acco
- Manço A. (1999), *Intégration et identités. Stratégies et positions des jeunes issus de l'immigration*, Bruxelles-Paris, De Boeck-Université, 245 p.
- Manço A. (2000), 'Sociographie de la population turque et d'origine turque: quarante ans de présence en Belgique (1960-2000). Dynamiques, problèmes, perspectives (Sociological description of the Turkish population and the population of Turkish origin in Belgium (1960-2000). Dynamics, problems and perspectives) » (Brussels : Centre de Relations Européennes, Ed. Européennes, 2000).
- Manço U. (2000), 'Turcs d'Europe: de l'image tronquée à la complexité d'une réalité sociale immigrée (The Turks of Europe : from a truncated image to the complexity of an immigrated social reality) ' in *Hommes et Migrations*, n° 1226, July-August 2000, Paris, pp. 76-87.
- Martens A., Ouali N., van de maele M., Vertommen S., Dryon Ph. and Verhoeven H. (2005), *Etnische discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest: onderzoek in het kader van het Sociaal Pact voor de Werkgelegenheid van de Brusselaars* (Ethnic discrimination on the labour market in the Brussels Capital Region: research on the framework of the Social Pact for Employment of the Brussels Population, Brussels/Leuven: ULB/K.U. Leuven.
- Martiniello M. and Rea A. (2003), 'Belgium's Immigration Policy Brings Renewal and Challenges, Country Profile Belgium', *Migration Information Source*, 2003, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=164>;
- Massey D.S., Arango J., Hugo G., Kouaouci A., Pellegrino A. and Taylor J.E. (1993), Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19, 3, Sep. 1993, pp. 431-466.
- Massey D.S., Arango J., Hugo G., Kouaouci A., Pellegrino A. and Taylor J.E. (1998), *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- McDowell C. and de Haan A., *Migration and Sustainable Livelihoods: A Critical Review of the Literature*. Sussex, IDS, 1997.

- Meeker M. (1994), Oral Culture, Media Culture and the Islamic Resurgence in Turkey, In Archetti E. (ed.), *Exploring the Written in Anthropology*, Oslo, Scandinavian University Press, pp. 31–63.
- Neels K. and Stoop R. (1998), Social mobility and equal opportunities: the case of Turkish and Moroccan minorities in Belgium, *IPD Working Paper* 1998-3.
- Nell, L.M. (2004), Conceptualising the emergence of immigrants' transnational communities. In: *Migration Letters*. Vol. 1, pp. 50-56.
- OECD (2006). *Where immigrant students succeed: a comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003*. Paris: OECD.
- Ostergard-Nielsen E.K. (ed.) (2003), *International Migration and Sending Countries: Perceptions, Policies and Transnational Relations*, London, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 246 pp.
- Ouali Nouria (2003), *Immigratie in België, aantallen, stromen en arbeidsmarkt: rapport 2001* (Immigration in Belgium, numbers, flows and the labour market: report 2001), Brussels, Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.
- Petersen W. (1958), 'A General Typology of Migration', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 23.
- Reniers G. (1997), On the selectivity and internal dynamic of labour migration processes: a cross-cultural analysis of Turkish and Moroccan migration to Belgium, *IPD-Working Paper* 1997-7, Ghent.
- Riaño Y. & Baghdadi N. (2007), " 'Je pensais que je pourrais avoir une relation plus égalitaire avec un Européen'. Le rôle du genre et des imaginaires géographiques dans la migration des femmes". *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, Special issue on 'Genre et frontières - frontières de genre', Lausanne: Editions Antipodes, Vol. 1, pp. 38-53.
- Riaño Y. & Baghdadi N., (2007), "Understanding the Labour Market Participation of Skilled Immigrant Women in Switzerland: The Interplay of Class, Ethnicity and Gender". In *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Special Issue on 'Accessing the Higher Echelons of a Host Country's Labour Market: Policy Directions from the Personal Experiences of Skilled Immigrants', Springer, Vol. 8, N. 2, pp. 163-183.

- Riano Y. (2005), Women on the Move to Europe: A Review of the Literature on Gender and Migration. In: da Marroni, M.G. and Salgado, G. (eds.), *Latin American Diaspora: Migration within a Globalized World*. Autonomous University of Puebla (Mexico) and Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (Japan), 2005, pp. 207-239.
- Rochtus D., European hesitation: Turkish Nationalism on the rise? In: Timmerman, C.; Rochtus, D. and Mels, S. (eds.), *European and Turkish Voices in favour and against Turkish accession to the European Union*. P.I.E. Pieter Lang, 2008, pp. 25-32.
- Roosens E. (1994), The primordial nature of origins in migrant ethnicity. In: Vermeulen, H. and Govers, C. (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*. Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 1994, pp. 81-104.
- Roosens E. (1998), *Eigen grond eerst? Primordiale autochtonie: Dilemma van de culturele samenleving*. Leuven, Acco, 227 p.
- Roosens, Eugene (1996), "The primordial nature of origins in migrant ethnicity" in *The Anthropology of Ethnicity. "Beyond Ethnic groups and Boundaries"*, H. Vermeulen and, C. Govers (eds), Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Sammons P., Sylva K., Melhuish E., Siraj-Blatchford I., Taggart B. and Elliot, K. (2002). Measuring the Impact of Pre- Schooling on Children's Cognitive Progress over the Pre-School Period. *Technical Paper 8a*, London: Institute of Education/Department for Education and Skills.
- Schoorl J. (2005), *Information needs on stocks of migrants for research on integration* Paper submitted at the UNECE/Eurostat Seminar on 'Migration Statistics', Geneva, 21-23 March 2005.
- Smith A. (1992), Chosen people: why ethnic groups survive. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15, pp. 436-456.
- Soede A., Vrooman C., Ferraresi P. M. and Segre G. (2004), *Unequal Welfare States: Distributive Consequences of Population Ageing in Six European Countries*, The Hague: Social and Cultural Planning Office, June 2004.
- Soysal L. (2003), Labor to Culture: Writing Turkish Migration to Europe. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2003, Vol. 102, 2/3, pP. 491-507.

Stark O. ('1991), *The Migration of Labour*. Cambridge and Oxford, Blackwell, 1991.

Statistics Belgium, <http://www.statbel.fgov.be/>

Stirling P. (1965), *A Turkish Village*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Timmerman C. (1999), *Onderwijs maakt het verschil: socio-culturele praxis en etniciteitsbeleving bij jonge Turkse vrouwen*. Leuven, Acco, 279 pp.

Timmerman C. (2000a), Secular and Religious Nationalism among Young Turkish Women in Belgium: Education May Make the Difference. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, pp. 333-354.

Timmerman C. (2000b) 'Creativiteit binnen conformisme: huwelijksregelingen van Turkse migrantenmeisjes'. In: Luyckx, K. (ed.), *Liefst een gewoon huwelijk?*. Leuven, Acco, pp. 117-138.

Timmerman C. (2001), The Revival of Tradition, Consequence of Modernity: The Case of Young Turkish Women in Belgium. *FOLK: Journal of the Danish Ethnographic Society*, 42, pp. 83-100

Timmerman C. (2006), 'Gender dynamics in the context of Turkish marriage migration: the case of Belgium'. In: *Journal of Turkish Studies*, pp. 125-143.

Timmerman C. (2008), Marriage in a 'Culture of Migration': Emirdag Marrying into Flanders. *European Review*, Vol. 16, 4, pp. 585-594.

Timmerman C. and Vanderheyden K. (2005), Turkish and Moroccan Newcomers in Flanders. In: De Smedt H., Goossens, L. and Timmerman, C. (eds.), *Unexpected Approaches to the Global Society*. Leuven and Apeldoorn, Garant, pp. 87-104.

Timmerman C., Vanderwaeren E. and Crul M. (2003), 'The Second Generation in Belgium'. In: *International Migration Review*, Vol. 37, 4, pp. 1065-1090.

United Nations Population Division (2001), *Replacement Migration: Is It a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?*, New York, United Nations Publications, 160 pp.

Van Craen M., Vancluysen K. and Ackaert J. (2007), *Voorbij wij en zij? De sociaal-culturele afstand tussen autochtonen en allochtonen tegen de meetlat*. Brugge, Vanden Broele.

- Van Heelsum A. J. and van Amersfoort J.M.M. (2007), Moroccan Berber immigrants in the Netherlands, their associations and transnational ties: a quest for identity and recognition. In: *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol. 25, pp. 234-262.
- Van Robaeyns B., Perrin N., Levecque K. and Dewilde C., Armoede bij allochtonen: een verkenning. In: Vranken, J. (ed.), *Armoede en sociale uitsluiting: jaarboek 2006*. Leuven, Acco, 2006, pp. 303-318.
- Van Robaeyns B., Vranken J., Perrin N., Martiniello M. (2007), De kleur van armoede: armoede bij personen van buitenlandse herkomst, Leuven/Voorburg, Acco.
- Verhoeven H. (2000), *De vreemde eend in de bijt: arbeidsmarkt en diversiteit* (The stranger in our midst: labour market and diversity), Leuven: Steunpunt WAV.
- Wets J. (2001), *De internationale migratiedynamiek* [International migration Dynamics]. Koning Boudewijnstichting, Leuven, 99 p.
- Wets J. (2006), The Turkish community in Austria and Belgium: The Challenge of Integration. In: *Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol 7, 1, p.85-100.
- Yalçın H., Lodewyckx I., Mareynissen R. and Van Caudenberg R. (2006), *Verliefd, verloofd ... gemigreerd: een onderzoek naar Turkse huwelijksmigratie in Vlaanderen*. Steunpunt Gelijke Kansenbeleid, Antwerpen, 2006.