



Diversity policy in employment and service provision

Case study: Antwerp, Belgium



[Click for contents](#)



Contents

Background	1
Profile of Antwerp	5
Approaches to diversity	8
Employment policy, practice and outcomes	16
Diversity in service provision	23
Key challenges and lessons for CLIP	31
Bibliography	35

Background

Brief history of migration to Belgium

After the Second World War, Belgium signed several bilateral agreements in order to organise the recruitment of migrant workers for its coal mining sector first and later for other sectors. The first was concluded with Italy in 1946, followed by others with Spain and Greece in the 50s, Morocco, Turkey and Tunisia in the 60s and at the beginning of the 70s with Algeria, Yugoslavia and Portugal. So migrants came from these countries, but also from neighbouring countries like France and the Netherlands. In 1974, like other European countries, the Belgian government decided to halt the immigration of workers. However, data on immigration during the following decades show that, in spite of this decision, immigrants still arrived in Belgium. This happened particularly through six patterns of migration: mobility of EU citizens, asylum applications, foreign students' mobility, highly skilled workers' migration, irregular migration and, not least, family reunion (Gsir, Martiniello and Wets, 2003).

In 2004, Belgium's foreign population was 8.3% of the total population. This is less than in the 90s, when it was around 9%. This figure did not include either foreigners residing irregularly in Belgium, or Belgians of foreign origin. So the immigrant population (including offspring) has grown. The foreign population is spread unequally around the country. In 2004, 26.3% were located in the Brussels-Capital Region, 9.1% in Wallonia and 4.8% in Flanders. In this last, the foreign population is especially concentrated in the provinces of Limbourg and Antwerp, while in Wallonia, it is concentrated mainly in the old industrial provinces of Liège and Hainaut (Martiniello and Rea, 2003). Most of the foreigners are EU nationals (66% at the end of 2004), mainly Italians, French, Dutch and Spaniards. The number of Poles is on the increase since 1990. The other foreigners widely represented are Moroccans (81,279) followed by Turks (39,885). But numbers have greatly diminished since the change of nationality law in 2000 which has facilitated access to Belgian nationality.

Between 1990 and 2004, women represented less than 50% of the foreign population whereas they constitute around 51.3% of the Belgian population. Nevertheless, the distribution of women varies, for example, with a higher rate among Greek population (58% women) and the lowest (42.6%) in the Algerian population. The greatest number of foreigners are between the ages of 25 and 50 (Direction générale Emploi et marché du travail, 2006).

National policy context

Diversity policy at the federal level

At the federal level, Belgium has progressively developed diversity policies and antidiscrimination policy, with the creation of a specialised body: the Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism or CEOOR is an autonomous federal public service created in 1993. It started by being in charge of monitoring of the policy of integrating immigrants but its mandate has been progressively extended. Indeed, in 2003, a law was adopted to combat all types of discrimination (Law of 25 February 2003 aiming at combating discrimination and modifying the Law of 15 February 1993 for the creation of the Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism, published in Belgian Monitor, 7/03/2003). According to this law, all types of direct or indirect discrimination are prohibited in access to work, selection, employment conditions, appointment and promotion.

The centre aims to promote 'the equality of opportunities and to oppose any and all forms of distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on: 1) so-called race, skin colour, heritage, background or nationality: 2) sexual orientation, marital status, birth, fortune, age, creed or philosophy of life, current and future state of health, disability or physical trait' (<http://www.diversite.be>). The CEOOR website, for several years called <http://www.antiracisme.be>, has been renamed <http://www.diversite.be>. Finally, the Commission for Intercultural Dialogue, set up by the federal government in 2004, encouraged diversity plans at all levels of public administration.

Set up in 2004 by the federal government, the Commission for Intercultural Dialogue had to think about Belgium as a multicultural society and consider recommendations to encourage living together in diversity. The commission wrote a report with several recommendations. One chapter is on policies of affirmative action and combating discrimination in the public service. There are three recommendations: (1) information and awareness campaigns; (2) positive action to improve cultural diversity through facilitating recruitment of people with migration backgrounds and by identifying more precisely jobs prohibited to foreigners because they involve the exercise of public power; (3) initiatives to improve the working environment to allow employees to live according their culture or religion but respecting the principles of secularity. It insisted also on non-discrimination in the provision of public services.

According to the Belgian constitution, statutory jobs in the civil service are limited to Belgian citizens and to those of the Economic European Area and Switzerland, insofar as the jobs are not linked directly or indirectly to the exercise of state sovereignty. Foreigners can occupy contractual jobs that are not included in these two exceptions. In 2004, only 0.55% of more than 70,000 civil servants were non-nationals and most of them were from EU Member States. Three-quarters of them have a level D job – in other words no diploma is required (CEULEMANS E. et al., 2005 quoted by Service public fédéral Personnel et Organisation, 2005).

The federal diversity policy has also been developed in the framework of an Action Plan 2005–2007 for valorising diversity inside the federal public service (Service public fédéral Personnel et Organisation, 2005). This plan has been designed by the Minister of the Public Office after consulting academics, public servants and the CEOOR. In this Action Plan, diversity is defined as ‘respecting differences in the attitudes, values, cultural frameworks, lifestyles, skills and experiences of each member of a group’. Promoting diversity in the federal public service aims at reflecting the composition of the whole society, for example, increasing the service’s quality through a respectful working environment and promoting a culture where differences are not seen as sources of conflicts but of gains (Service public fédéral Personnel et Organisation, 2005). Three aspects are particularly stressed: gender, and employment of people with migration background and of disabled people. Nevertheless, it is pointed that other groups could be further targeted such as youth, elderly people, poor people, etc.

The diversity department inside the Federal Public Service Staff and Organisation (FPS SO) coordinates diversity policy inside the federal public service. It implements the Action Plan in the FPS SO and in other federal public services with a network of diversity officers (responsible for developing a diversity policy through pilot projects in each federal public service). The diversity department collaborates with SELOR (Federal office for the selection and recruitment in the public service) over recruitment and with IFA (Training Institute for the federal public service) over training on diversity (<http://www.pourladiversite.be> and <http://www.belgium.be>). Finally, the diversity department funds some pilot projects promoting diversity inside the federal public service. Furthermore, different tools have been set up to support the diversity policy such as a website www.pourladiversite.be, a video clip, different booklets (one of them is entitled ‘Respect for multiculturalism’), a poster and a diversity charter of the federal public service. Most of these tools are available online at the website mentioned above or on the website of the FPS SO.

In 2005, the Minister of Employment and the Minister of Equal Opportunities set out to promote diversity in employment. An Equality Diversity Label for companies was created in collaboration with the regions. Its main objective is to strengthen diversity in the workplace and to combat discrimination and stereotypes by creating and implementing a diversity policy inside the company. It targets the public and private sectors and associations located in Belgium. It means that the company has (1) to respect the law regarding equal opportunities and discrimination; (2) to develop a diversity policy including the creation of a company culture and human resources management in favour of diversity; (3) followed an analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation process of its diversity policy with the participation of the employees; and (4) to be continually improving (<http://www.emploi.belgique.be>). Since 2006, 15 organisations (companies and cities) have committed to promoting diversity and equality within their organisations and

in 2007, the Equality Diversity Label was granted to some of them, and also to three cities: Gent and Leuven in Flanders and Liège in Wallonia.

Diversity policies in the regions

Diversity policies are also developed at the regional level. The Ministry of the Brussels Capital Region (BCR) has developed its own diversity policy and considers that the BCR has to play a role as employer in promoting diversity. Within the framework of the Territorial Pact for Employment in the BCR (TPE) various steps have been taken to combat discrimination and promote diversity. One of the directions of the first TPE in 1996 was to combat discrimination in employment and several steps have been taken (<http://www.pactbru.irisnet.be/site/diversite/nondiscri/>). The TPEs that followed have pursued this policy. At the end of 2005, the Minister in charge of Employment and Economy presented a Charter for Diversity in the Company. More than 100 companies located in BCR have already signed it. This charter aims at promoting a policy of equal opportunities and diversity management. This charter encourages the implementation of a diversity plan (a plan to develop diversity management in the company) which could be achieved with the support of the BCR's diversity consultants. Furthermore, the jobs at the Ministry of the BCR, except those relating to the exercise of public power, are open to all nationalities. The BCR is a bilingual region. Nevertheless, the RBC administration works according the following principle: bilingualism of the services and 'unilingualism' of the civil servants. One does not need to know both languages because one will be dealt with in one's own tongue (Région de Bruxelles-Capitale). This principle in itself can encourage diversity because knowledge of both French and Dutch can be an obstacle for people with migration background.

In Flanders, diversity policies have been developed since the 80s in particular through measures to help jobseekers with migration background and to raise their level of employment. Since 2004, Flanders has had a Minister of 'integration' or *inburgering* (Marino Keulen). He is the first Minister whose title bears this competence explicitly. Previously, minorities policy was more implicitly part of other competences. In his policy document 2004–2009 the minister drops the 'old' formulation 'minorities policy'. The focus has shifted from the minorities approach to living together, managing diversity and promoting common citizenship and equal opportunities. The policy also focuses on a more result-oriented and thus more quantitative approach to integration: less of a target group approach, more living together in diversity, more emphasis on the (responsibilities of the) individual citizen.

The priorities of Flemish diversity policy are encouraging cooperation between the employment sectors, investing in social economy, promoting policies of equal opportunities and supporting the organisations in developing their diversity policies. The Flemish region supports initiatives and projects encouraging diversity management. For example, in 2002–2004, it supported the Project 'Building on Diversity - Persuading SMEs to Hire "Non-Native" and Older People' (also supported by the European Social Fund in the programme EQUAL). This project aimed at facilitating the integration of foreigners and people over 45 years old into the labour market. It was the result of a partnership between the VDAB (Flemish Public Employment Service), Vitamine W (NGO with good contacts and experience with the target groups), a temporary employment agency Randstad and the think-tank IDEA Consult. It was carried out in Antwerp (*Les succès d'EQUAL. Exploiter le potentiel d'emploi des PME*).

Furthermore, the Flemish government aims to reach a proportionate share of ethnic minorities in the labour market in 2010. The 2005–2010 plan, 'Diversity works' (*Diversiteit werkt*) aims to make Flemish public services a model for recruitment of people from disadvantaged groups. The groups targeted by this plan are women, disabled person, ethnic minorities (*allochtoon*) and unskilled workers. The plan's method is to fix quantitative objectives for each group (4% of ethnic minorities in the Flemish public sector to be reached before 2015) (Van Brempt, 2007). Regarding ethnic minorities, diversity measures focus particularly on recruitment policy (*Les Services publics flamands et la diversité au travail*). The Flemish government will for example target, among others, ethnic minorities when recruiting for a first job. The Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities, who is also in charge of the transport, affirmed her will to reach

quantitative objectives for example in Flemish public transport (*De Lijn*) (Van Brempt, 2007). The region also supports the Equality Diversity Label (see above). Last May, the Flemish Ministers of Integration on the one hand and of Employment on the other hand, in partnership with Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) launched the guide 'Diverse talents, added value for your administration' (*Divers talent, een meerwaarde voor uw bestuur*), which highlights 15 good practices of diversity policy in Flemish local public services.

Combating discrimination and promotion of equal opportunities are among the priorities developed in the framework of the Contract of Future for Wallonia, a strategic plan for regional development which has existed in Wallonia since 2000. The Walloon government has developed specific measures for some target groups. Diversity management is also an issue. Some EQUAL projects such as job coaching have been also developed in Wallonia (<http://www.acfi.be>). At the end of 2006, a general orientation policy document on diversity and combating discrimination in employment was presented. Until recently, measures mainly targeted disadvantaged groups (women, disabled, foreigners, youth and the elderly). A shift was announced for 2007 and further measures would also target companies. In other words, diversity was first approached from the point of view of equal opportunities and now it is also approached from the point of view of the economy.

The diversity policy of the Walloon government and in particular of the Minister of Employment and Economy aims at combating discrimination and promoting diversity management in companies and local public services (General Directorate of Employment and Economy). Five tools were tried out in 2007. Firstly, the signature of the Charter of Diversity for equality in rights and treatment of employed and unemployed workers by the Walloon Government and the social partners of the Social and Economic Council of the Walloon Region. Secondly, the signature of the Charter of Diversity by companies and organisations that commit to developing diversity management. Thirdly, the Diversity and Human Resources Prize in Wallonia which will be granted annually to relevant initiatives in diversity management in companies in the public or private sectors or NGOs (1 SME, 1 big company, 1 public service and 1 NGO). Fourthly, granting the Equality and Diversity Label in partnership with the federal level (see above). And, finally, granting financial support to diversity in human resources management in Wallonia.

Profile of Antwerp

Brief description of Antwerp

Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders, is situated between the Netherlands, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, and is the centre of Europe's most densely populated area. The central location ensures optimal links to the hinterland. Antwerp is Europe's second port and the world's fourth. The port is also home to the second largest concentration of petrochemicals industries in the world. The port of Antwerp is essential to the European Union import and export trade and is a major global trade hub. The city is also part of the Automotive Regions network, which was set up to strengthen the competitive position of the existing car-making industry in Europe. One of the four major car assembly plants in Belgium is in Antwerp. Moreover, Antwerp has grown into one of the world's leading trendsetters in fashion and is home to many designers with an international reputation. The city is also an important diamond centre, with various fairs and traders. More than 50% of the world's production of rough, polished and industrial diamond passes through the city. The diamond trade is responsible for 8% of Belgian exports, and 12% of Flanders' exports. The city also offers a wide range of high-quality education with one university, five colleges of higher education and several international schools.

The city of Antwerp is made up of nine districts: Antwerp, Borgerhout, Merksem, Berchem, Berendrecht-Zandvliet-Lillo, Ekeren, Wilrijk, Hoboken and Deurne. The District of Antwerp can be split into various neighbourhoods: Antwerp Central, Antwerp North, Kiel, Luchtbal and Europark/Linkeroever. There are 42 neighbourhoods. They are sometimes broken down into sectors, including Spoorwegemplacement, Atheneumbuurt, Stationsbuurt, Schipperskwartier etc. There is also a distinction between locations inside and outside the main ring (the old city wall), which circles the area sometimes known as the city centre. The most disadvantaged neighbourhoods are located in Antwerp North and the social housing neighbourhoods (Kiel, Luchtbal, Europark/Linkeroever). The least disadvantaged neighbourhoods are concentrated in the Antwerp periphery.

Antwerp's population was 473,265 as of January 2007. On average there are 2,420 inhabitants per square kilometre. The population of Antwerp is fairly old. It dropped for a long period, but has been rising since 2001 due to positive birth and relocation balances. The latter is mostly due to the influx of new inhabitants from outside the EU. The city has 13% of foreigners of whom 8% are non-EU nationals. In a globalised world international tensions are felt at local level too. That certainly goes for Antwerp, which is home to a large community of Jews and Muslims. In recent years, the city has sometimes been a crystallisation point for a general unease about multicultural society.

Economically, Antwerp is characterised by a large number of tertiary (service) sector businesses. Compared with other cities, the share of the secondary and quaternary sector is low. Important industries are trade, hospitality industry (hotels, restaurants, etc.) and manufacturing. Of all job vacancies, 46% are for 'problem jobs' – jobs for which there are insufficient qualified or interested candidates. This is higher than the Flemish average (41%). In Flanders there are six jobseekers to every open vacancy. In Antwerp the ratio is one to eight. The number of unemployed jobseekers has been on the rise since 2001 and was 32,676 at the start of 2005. The unemployment rate in Antwerp is 15.9% or almost twice that of Flanders as a whole. Women are slightly overrepresented in the unemployment figure (53%). Twenty-two percent of jobseekers are younger than 25 years of age, 44% are 25–39 years of age, 37% are older than 40. Almost four in 10 unemployed are from a non-EU member state – 12.3% are Turkish or Moroccan nationals. The unemployment burden is divided unevenly among the neighbourhoods of Antwerp. Most jobseekers on benefit live in Antwerp North. The employment ratio is lower in the city centre than on the periphery. Most self-employed live in the city centre and in sector South. And more than 140,000 people make their living in one way or another from the port. Moreover, almost one in three employed people living in Antwerp work outside the city.

Antwerp's migrant population

The history of migration in Antwerp reflects Belgian migration history but with some specific features due mainly to the presence of the harbour and to the activities around it. As the first migrants were recruited to work in the coals mines, they arrived mainly in Wallonia where the coalfields were. As soon as the Belgian state allowed migrants to work in other sectors like industry and services, further migrants (Spaniards, Greeks and latter Moroccans and Turks) were distributed throughout all other major Belgian cities – Brussels and cities in Flanders such as Antwerp with its port, and Gent. The Moroccans more than the Turks went to Antwerp (Kesteloot, 2006). After the EU enlargement of 1985, migrant workers from Portugal also arrived in Antwerp and in larger numbers in Brussels. (Kesteloot, 2006). Furthermore, and this is a typical feature of local migration history, Antwerp has attracted Jews for centuries. After Belgian independence, Jewish migrants arrived from Central and Eastern Europe and their community developed. Before the Second World War, more than half the 100,000 Jews in Belgium lived in the city. Nowadays, the orthodox Jewish community of Antwerp (around 15,000) is one of the largest in Europe.

Following a breakdown by nationality, 13.3% of the inhabitants of Antwerp are registered as foreigners in the population register. The main nationalities are Moroccan, Dutch and Turkish. Otherwise foreign nationals typically come from other EU Member States, former Yugoslavia, Russia, Congo, China and India.

However, the percentages do not really measure the ethnic diversity of the city because a large number of inhabitants of foreign origin have taken Belgian nationality in the past few decades. Inhabitants with a migratory background (foreign national or Belgian nationals born with a foreign nationality), represent 26.6% of Antwerp's population. This percentage has been rising since 2000. Those of Moroccan origin constitute the largest group, followed by the Dutch, Turks, Poles, nationals of former Yugoslavia, Indians, Congolese, Russians and Western Europeans. Of the inhabitants with a migratory background, 18.4% are non-EU (Official survey, Sociale Zaken / databank planning, 2007). No data on distribution according the religion are available but the number of Muslims is roughly estimated at 12% and the number of Jews around 3%. The age pyramid of Belgian nationals in Antwerp is fairly flat at the top, which indicates that this group contains many older people. The age pyramid for people with a migratory background is narrow at the top and broad at the base – the age group 20–24 years. There are relatively few people under 20 years of age among EU nationals.

Family-related migration has risen sharply since 2000. As a result of marriage or family reunion, 1,742 new migrants registered in Antwerp in 2001. In 2004 that number rose to 3,929. The number of asylum seekers (registered inhabitants) is 7,727 – 1.6% of the population. Following the general trend in Belgium for some time, the number of asylum seekers is dropping. This cannot be said for the number of people without official permission to live in Belgium. Of the 24,780 newcomers registered in Antwerp in 2005, 51% were Belgian.

Unemployment is higher among non-EU nationals. It is highest in Antwerp North, Luchtbal, Linkeroever and Borgerhout. The number on benefit among non-EU nationals of working age is almost 10% compared with 1% among Belgians and 3% among EU nationals. Of jobseekers on benefit, 72.2% have non-EU nationality; this is just 15.2% among other jobseekers. Jobseekers of Maghrebian or Turkish origin are the least well educated on average (just 5% are highly trained). Unemployment among young adults is highest among jobseekers of Maghrebian or Turkish origin. Unemployment among older adults on the other hand is more common among jobseekers from EU Member States. Barely 2% of waged employees are nationals from the Maghreb or a Middle East country. Finally, among the self-employed, there are more foreigners than among waged employees (official surveys).

The City and the Integration Service in particular has opted to use the terms 'allochtoon' and 'autochthonous' rather than immigrants, foreigners or Belgians with foreign origin. The term allochtoon is applied to ethnocultural minorities and includes people with a foreign nationality and Belgians born with a foreign nationality. People with migration

background such as youngsters from the third generation and later who are often born Belgians are not considered as allochtoon but as Belgians.

The city authorities

As mentioned previously, Belgium is a federal state with three regions (Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels Capital) and with three language communities (French, Dutch and German). Competencies are shared among the various tiers of governments. The country is also divided into 10 provinces and 589 local authorities or communes. The commune is the tier of government closest to the individual. ‘Communal autonomy’ refers to the extensive autonomy local politicians have in the context of the power that they exercise, under the supervision of higher authorities, mainly the regions. The responsibilities of the communes are quite extensive and cover the collective needs of the inhabitants. They cover public works, social welfare, maintaining public order, housing, education, etc. The communes also have also to implement the policies of higher authorities. The Mayor is the head of the local police in performing administrative police tasks. The Social Welfare Service (OCMW) operates at communal level (<http://www.belgium.be>).

Approaches to diversity

Historical background

For several years there have been services in the city administration, each with the task of stimulating and supporting the policy with respect to a specific target group, such as the Urban Poverty Department, the Disabled People Service, the Integration Service etc. They now all have the explicit task of working on broad diversity policy (see below). Diversity policy is approached horizontally. It is in practice a matter of the IS and in principle it is a matter of each city service.

Development of diversity policy

The previous local government agreement 2001–2006 said that an ‘inclusive policy, aimed at the whole population and all city authorities, including the Social Welfare Service (OCMW) and the specific disadvantaged position of ethnic minorities also requires strong measures’. In 2002 the administrative agreement included these points of departure in a City Council decree. Pursuant to this decree ‘diversity policy is a point of departure for the entire city policy’. It instructs the directors of all city companies to determine priorities for dealing with diversity. They also have to appoint a diversity officer. One year later the City Council instructed directors to include diversity in operational company plans. The broad range of diversity is the point of departure, with a specific emphasis on ethnocultural diversity. In the second policy memorandum 2003–2005, the IS described the need to combine the diversity management and the equal opportunities policies. Diversity management is described as an inclusive task for all city services, with the IS as supporting element. In the most recent policy memorandum 2006–2008 of the IS this is reconfirmed and the tasks are described. In other words, the IS does not have an explicit mandate to implement the diversity policy. Broad diversity is the central theme in the new local government agreement 2007–2012 and in the Local Social Policy Plan (see below).

Diversity policy and the integration service

The IS was established at the end of the 90s from a combination of the Reception Office, the Interpreters Service and the Integration Officer. The mission of the IS is ‘promoting living in diversity by investing in social cohesion, equal opportunities and active citizenship’. The mission was split into four key concepts: diversity, social cohesion, equal opportunities and citizenship. They are the four poles of the vision of the IS on living in diversity: (1) Antwerp is a city where there is a room for differences; (2) Antwerp is a city where we live not next to each other but with each other; (3) Antwerp is a city where all inhabitants have the same opportunities and (4) Antwerp is a city with active citizens who assume their responsibilities (Integration Service, Atlas Document, 2006–2008).

For the past five years, two IS diversity consultants were instructed to support the city services in dealing with diversity. In addition, other Integration Service Departments had contacts with the city services (for instance, around networking and contacts, and intermediation). The IS starts from the idea that diversity and equal opportunities go hand in hand. The success of a positive policy also depends on the improvement of the disadvantaged and unequal situation in which a lot of Antwerp ethnic minorities find themselves. Furthermore, some – but certainly not all – city services appointed a diversity officer (at best, it was an explicit task, usually it was an additional task).

It is also important to highlight that the Integration Service has developed its own expertise on diversity and consequently this has led the IS to formulate its own vision and analysis of diversity.

First, the IS considers diversity as an opportunity and puts forwards a number of arguments: (1) The demographic argument: Flanders and Antwerp will grow older without further immigration and births among immigrant groups. If the job market and the city are to continue to operate at the same pace an immigrant population is necessary. (2) The economic argument: there are still many problem jobs, which brings opportunities for new niche markets and groups. (3) The image argument: visitors are probably more excited by a Córdoba on the Scheldt than a grey city without variety.

Córdoba on the Scheldt (Antwerp's river – *Cordoba aan de Schelde*) refers to a campaign that took place in Antwerp in 2005. Antwerp as a city with an important share of various religious communities aimed at presenting itself as an example of peaceful and harmonious cohabitation like Córdoba, the Spanish city where three different religious communities (Muslims, Christians and Jewish) lived together peacefully. Since 2005, Córdoba has been the name of the secretariat for philosophical beliefs and dialogue of the city of Antwerp (<http://www.vmc.be>). Diversity can be used as an asset to market the city. This is a condition if Antwerp wants to be Flanders' most go-ahead city. And finally, (5), the city dynamism and innovation argument: those that are able to respond to trends and turn problems into opportunities will prosper.

In other words – setting apart the moral, social and political aspects – dealing with diversity is about effectiveness, efficiency and competitiveness (a business perspective).

Finally, the approach of the city seems quite fragmented. The IS is consulted on diversity issues but not systematically. According to the city experts, this shows the importance of a clear mandate and internal procedures. This is foreseen in the new governmental agreement.

Diversity policy in relation to the federal and regional levels

It seems that there is no real cooperation with the other levels of government regarding diversity policy. Federal proposals are not always adapted to the local and specific realities of the city of Antwerp. At the regional level there is a strong emphasis on integration and individual emancipation, whereas Antwerp above all stresses the importance of diversity (society/services/organisations that are expected to take diversity as a basis for the policy as a whole; the concept of obligations, but also rights). Antwerp only uses the term diversity policy. Integration policy and equal opportunities policy etc. are parts of a broader diversity policy in Antwerp. Furthermore, at the Flemish level, arrangements are made in the umbrella organisation VVSG (Flemish Association of Cities and Municipalities) on city and local government policies. These arrangements are laid down in sectoral agreements. Regulations with respect to personnel management are also laid down in these agreements. These regulations are mostly binding and therefore they also define the applicable personnel policy. Diploma requirements and appointment conditions are two examples. In conclusion, it seems that there is a problem of internal fine tuning between the different levels of government.

Diversity policy in relation to the media

The influence of the media is considerable. Diversity and equal opportunities have definitely been issues in recent years. The discussion about living in a multicultural society is present everywhere. Newspapers are filled with articles about the difficulties of living in diversity. The news is seldom good and negative images dominate. Image formation about ethnic minorities in the Flemish media is often one-sided. A lot of Antwerp (ethnic minority) residents hold the media responsible for negative public sentiment after the riots in Borgerhout, the appearance of the Arab European League, the head scarf debate and so on. In various media, however, there is also coverage of diversity and equal opportunities (e.g. recently a newspaper dedicated sections to Islam and religion). The approach of the city council is also scrutinised mainly in the regional and local press. In general, it is not about overall diversity policy, but about real stories, such as the commotion around the memorandum on the 'clothes rules for city personnel' (such as the prohibition to wear headscarves) and the decision to serve halal meals during school trips. The influence of this coverage should neither be underestimated nor overestimated, according to the city experts.

Objectives of the policy/approach

Broad diversity is a central element of the new local government agreement 2007–2012. The concept of broad diversity has to be understood as different from specific diversity, which includes various policies targeting different groups discriminated against for different reasons: disabled, ethnic minorities, etc. Broad diversity is featured as an inclusive policy. In other words, diversity policy concerns all residents of Antwerp. Diversity policy has to target all disadvantaged

groups: ethnic minorities, holebi (gays, lesbians and bisexuals), women, disabled and poor. Nevertheless, as city experts underline, some groups are not included and there are still specific policies for them. This is the case with youth and elderly people. Moreover, the slogan of the city is ‘the city belongs to everyone’ and this is like a flag of diversity policy and inclusiveness. This new way of approaching diversity without specifying target groups shows a significant shift from a categorical model of integration (target groups) to a more inclusive approach.

Diversity is also defined as a horizontal objective. The scope of the horizontal objective ‘diversity’ includes: (1) a diverse personnel policy in the city as a reflection of the diversity of the city and its related bodies (2) considering systematically and actively the diversity of the residents in all services delivered by the city and related bodies (through products and processes). Related bodies include those where the city participates through the inter-municipal cooperation agreements, social housing companies, autonomous city structures city managed non-profit associations and other agencies. According to the city all these bodies perform city tasks. The city council wants the city representatives to monitor the execution of the policy lines for the city.

The city also enters into agreements with the civil society, with schools etc., for instance the agreements of the city youth service with youth work partners. These agreements sometimes also include criteria with respect to diversity.

In a memorandum on the occasion of the City Council elections, the Integration Service argued for encouraging private companies to promote diversity in the workplace. With this, the IS endorsed the vision of the Work and Economy Service (WNE, city department responsible for work and economy) to consider social and ethnic objectives such as increased labour market participation and the training and guidance of minority groups in tenders for contracts for major investment works. At the same time the IS asked for the application of this method also in the short term to smaller investment works.

Responsibility

Responsibility for diversity policy was designated to the elected representatives, for the first time, after the last local elections. Since 1 January 2007, diversity has been one of the explicit competences of the aldermen. Monica de Coninck is the alderman for social affairs, diversity and counter services.

Each service involved is responsible for its own diversity policy; each department has its own manager (administratively responsible). The Integration Service is a supporting element. In the near future, a new city service ‘diversity’ service will be the supporting element. It was decided in the new local government agreement to establish a new city service in the social affairs department – including the present Integration Service. This team collects specific and updated experience on broad diversity and offers this to the departments. The team gives advice and follow-up. It develops instruments (for example a checklist ‘limits to diversity’ and an evaluation instrument).

Regarding diversity policy in employment, the alderman for personnel is the person politically responsible and the manager of the personnel management department is the person administratively responsible. The agent responsible within the human resource management department is the staff officer and member of the executive committee. He is supported by the workgroup, Human Resources Management and Diversity (HRM), which is a think-tank on the implementation of the diversity policy in the personnel policy of the city and the Social Welfare Service (Tactical objective Pm04 and memorandum ‘Antwerp, a socially responsible city’).

Collaboration with social partners and non-governmental organisations

Firstly, the city consults with the Higher Advisory Committee and the Basic Advisory Committee of the Trade Unions when structural changes are introduced in city policy. Diversity is sometimes, but not always, one of the subjects. There is no structural consultation with the trade unions on diversity.

Secondly, there is structural cooperation with the Social Welfare Service (OCMW) in the workgroup HRM and Diversity, in the Local Social Policy Plan and in the horizontal objective 'diversity' (new city service).

Thirdly, on selection policy the city (WNE) collaborates with partners from civil society who concentrate on the training of people without a job and on their route to a job.

For many years, the city of Antwerp has invested in financing and supporting an Ethnic Minorities Council (*allochtone overleg en adviesraad*) in which the different migrant community organisations were represented. This council was never successful in profiling itself as an advisory body that could influence political decision-making. The council struggled with a double function: advisory body on the one hand, pressure group for migrant issues on the other. This led to a deep crisis in the council. Everything points to the actual council being dismantled in the future; it is considered an old-fashioned categorical model that increases polarisation rather than strengthening the dialogue. This is considered together with other councils that can still have a place in new models of advice. In the meantime, the IS maintains bilateral relations with different federations and organisations, for example through the intensive follow-up of some 30 projects that these organisations carry out with municipal subsidies. New forms of dialogue and collaboration emerge from these projects.

Policy and practice on monitoring progress

Progress on general policy

The city participates in the city monitor for liveable and durable Flemish cities (University of Gent). It is a learning instrument for the 13 Flemish centre cities, for the Flemish city policy and for everyone involved in the city. The figures show how liveable the cities are and how durable their development is. This instrument includes 190 indicators based on a vision consisting of the city's targets and intentions.

During the summer of 2004 the City Council laid down the strategic objectives to update the administrative agreement and establish priorities. Each priority was divided into strategic, pursued and operational objectives and projects. This was linked to an extensive reporting process: per project/action two-monthly reports had to be made about the evolution (intermediate steps, time and means spent ...), about the results (indicators) and about the availability of means/willingness/motivation etc. for the further development of the project. At regular intervals this was collated and submitted (with key issues and opportunities) to the management team of the city and the City Council. The same reporting logic is included in the translation of the new local government agreement into objectives and projects.

In addition, each city service also presents an annual report and submits a report for the purpose of the Flemish City Fund (every year there is a report about action taken and every two years there is a report on operational and strategic objectives). The databank social planning (DSP) of Antwerp presents a report (evolutions and trends) every two years that supports the reports for the Flemish City Fund.

Progress diversity policy and progress with respect to personnel and service

In the formulation of objectives for city policy in the past few years, the IS had its own objective around integration. Another objective 'service in diversity' imposes on all city services an overall task: provide a customer-oriented tailor-made service for each resident of the city. Equal results by appropriately dealing with each customer is the target. The term 'customer' is used by the city to designate the user. An additional diversity consultant was recruited. And this is set out in the city service reports (see above).

As mentioned previously, diversity is also in the new objectives that are a translation of the governmental agreement. All substantive objectives of the city also have to take diversity into account. The objectives are defined and worked out but it is already clear that a complete reporting process will follow also for the objectives with respect to personnel and services. Diversity will be monitored separately (diversity report). It was also decided to develop a 'diversity scan'.

Moreover, the IS has also been reporting since 2000 to the Flemish Government for the purpose of Flemish accreditation and to the City Fund, for instance about progress with respect to diversity policy. Reports will also be submitted for the Local Social Policy. Here too, diversity constitutes a horizontal element. To screen the objectives, a broad diversity test was developed. This too is included in the annual report per city service.

Key challenges faced in implementation and broad lessons learnt

Positive results and pitfalls

During the last few years there have been a lot of positive actions and projects with respect to diversity and equal opportunities. Occasionally there was a rapid development. Sometimes it was as a result of a crisis on the street, so that the IS was asked to coordinate all city actions with respect to diversity and equal opportunities. Sometimes it was as a result of new plans and opportunities, as during the summer of 2004 when the city council worked out strategic objectives to update the local government agreement and identify priorities. Furthermore, there have been a lot of intensive and good contacts between the IS (and also other services such as the Urban Poverty Department) and the city services. And in a number of them they have worked hard to include the diversity of the population in their policy. In November 2006 the IS was asked to organise a two-hour training session around 'systematic diversity management in the city' for the city's management team. It was a good opportunity to explain the need for this kind of policy, the pitfalls and the crucial steps.

Despite these positive results, according to city experts, the city needs to develop a clear vision of its diversity policy, top-down support and a translation into mandates and tasks at all city levels, in monitoring and evaluation. For some time there was a city workgroup on diversity – led by the IS – with, in principle, all city services, but it became paralysed by a lack of mandate.

The IS points to some misunderstandings and pitfalls in diversity policy and management: (1) Ad hoc constructions built on sympathy, understanding and goodwill can lead to big problems. They are well meant, but they can trigger trends or be considered rights that are unmanageable in a policy context. (2) Respect means that everything is all right. To experience one's identity one has to participate in urban society. Living together in diversity means that not everything is possible. Therefore, the core of the common elements and the limits to diversity have to be defined. (3) Several actions form one big picture. Diversity management goes beyond an ad hoc policy and requires a permanent change process. Hasty work and symbolic interventions are often counterproductive.

So the city of Antwerp still has important challenges and difficulties to face.

Key challenges

Firstly, there is structural under-financing of the diversity sector in the city from the Flemish government. Hopefully, the results of an ongoing audit will bring changes and Antwerp, as the biggest Flemish city, will receive a fair deal from 2008 onwards. As a consequence of the insecure financial situation, the IS has to put a lot of energy into financial worries (search for money, temporary projects, etc.).

Secondly, at the local level there is a need for a common policy framework on diversity based on a clear, not fragmented vision of society (not ad-hoc decisions), and more structured, systematic diversity management in municipal and OCMW services. The local government agreement 2007–2012 has the ambition to realise this.

Thirdly, until now, the city has not succeeded in recruiting enough allochtoon (ethnic minorities) into the municipal structures. An adapted human resources policy that consciously aims at a higher involvement of allochtoon workers is an absolute necessity. This point is also included in the new local government agreement as a priority.

Fourthly, the presence of a strong far right and anti-immigrant political party in the city council makes the topic of migration and foreigners politically heavily loaded.

Fifthly, Antwerp, as a big city, attracts many undocumented migrants. This leads to problems in the municipal health care, housing and social welfare programmes. It is the city's opinion that the federal government is unable to consistently implement its migration policy, and the consequences are passed on to the big cities. That is why Antwerp asks for an unequivocal but humane federal asylum and repatriation policy.

Conditions for good diversity policy

According to IS expertise, the conditions for good diversity policy can be expressed as follows: (1) a clearer vision of diversity; (2) support and involvement of management (with anchoring in missions and principles); (3) a more diverse workforce; (4) an organisation in which employees are able to deal with diversity in a professional way (the organisation culture); (5) accessible service; and (6) communication policy (internal and external).

According to the IS, diversity policy stands for a policy that gives due consideration in all of its aspects (mission, vision, policy concepts, communication, substantive choices with respect to services etc.) to the diversity of population/customers and employees. This needs to find robust responses in all policy fields to new social challenges faced by city management as a consequence of the growing diversity of the population. It is a policy that finds a balance between the advantages of diversity and the need for shared goals and values.

Diversity management translates this policy into management focused on creating added value based on diversity. This added value relates to both internal and external aspects, to both personal and organisational benefits: improved career opportunities, improved service, more mutual respect (between employees and between employees and citizens), improved internal functioning and improved image etc. The essential goals of diversity management are:

- All employees at every level must be able to maximise their opportunities and talents;
- The City must be a potential employer of people from all target groups represented in the city's population (all levels);
- Employees should be able to deal with diversity among customers;
- Every target group should feel it is included in the City's policy.

As indicated in the following section, the new local government will bring some changes regarding diversity policy for 2007–2012. There are major changes in the organisation in order to implement the broad diversity policy. Diversity experts for different specific target groups will work together in the same structure. In the future, one can assess whether or not these changes help face the city's challenges.

Potential future policy development

Currently the entire new local government agreement 2007–2012 is translated into a number of strategic, tactical and facility objectives (all objectives have to be worked out at the operational level). In the Local Social Policy Plan (draft approved in March 2005) which was prepared for 2008–2013, diversity is one of the 'horizontal fields' connected to the contents of all domains. The policy plan is structured according to the following objectives: right to 'activation', right to housing, right to leisure time, right to means, right to justice, right to health, right to a place where people can meet, talk about personal beliefs and render services. Diversity is one of the three evaluation themes (apart from ageing and cooperation/consultation).

In March 2007 the workgroup 'diversity' (civil servants and externals), led by the city service Social Affairs, departed from its remit: 'in its ambition to guarantee the basic rights, the city also wants to pay attention to diversity. This means that time after time, the city has to ask the question whether everyone, regardless of sex, origin, physical condition, sexual inclination or age can participate'. The workgroup screened the objectives of the local social policy plan mentioned above on the way they work on diversity.

The workgroup 'diversity' asked to and were authorised to establish a new city service 'broad diversity' (under the direction of the city service, Social Affairs). This new city service will combine specific and up-to-date experience with respect to broad diversity (knowledge of and contact with target groups; policy and vision development around diversity and equal opportunities; tailor-made advice and support in change processes). This is offered to the departments. The new team will give advice, follow-up and/or programme leadership and develops instruments (example: a checklist 'limits to diversity' and an evaluation instrument). Nevertheless, the city service involved is and will remain 'owner' of the necessary change processes resulting from diversity management. For actual diversity projects in a substantive domain a service agreement (SA) and a functional workgroup can be established. The team will also take care of the diversity report (monitoring) and the importance of internal and external communication is emphasised.

The predecessor of the new diversity service worked out a vision, a number of boundary conditions and the scope. Firstly, the vision is that the city (city services, city daughters, OCMW) deliver a quality service to all residents in Antwerp, regardless of their sex, origin, age, handicap, inclination, socio-economic situation. To this effect the city is developing a systematic diversity policy and diversity management. Secondly, it requires a number of boundary conditions:

- Diversity policy and diversity management are an inclusive policy. Target group policy (actions according to category) is an instrument, but cannot replace this.
- Diversity policy and diversity management have an internal as well as an external perspective (internal management, external service and products).
- The city needs to formulate a clear vision of diversity and integrate this vision in its mission.
- Diversity policy and diversity management are anchored at all city levels in clear mandates and tasks, and in evaluation procedures.

- Top-down support from the executives (vision, mandate, space, attention in plans and actual operation, etc.) – in the city as a whole and in the city services – is crucial.
- And, finally, the object is a diverse personnel policy, a diverse provision of services through products and processes, internal and external communication.

Employment policy, practice and outcomes

Profile of city employees

The City had a total of 7,993 regular employees in 2006. The employment level is difficult to map since at national level there is still no agreement on the definition (of allochthonous/autochthonous people) to be used on the one hand and there is a lack of consensus on the measuring method to be used on the other hand. This discussion is ongoing at Flemish level. In 2005, a consultation with migrant platforms in Flanders and migrant organisations panels in Wallonia was organised by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to racism. It focuses on the collection of ethnic statistics in order to combat discrimination at work and during selection procedure. The result of this consultation was that even these kinds of statistics could be dangerous: they can also be an important tool to combat discrimination, but the collection of this data should be precisely regulated and on a volunteer basis. The organisations consulted also suggested alternatives to this collection, such as implementing voluntarist diversity policies in enterprises and in particular in the administrations, anonymous CVs for selection processes, etc.

In Antwerp, the term 'ethnic minority employee' covers employees who are not Belgian citizens and who are citizens of a South European, East European, Latin American, African or Asian country and Belgian citizens with a 'foreign' first and last name. Employees with only a foreign first or foreign last name are not considered as ethnic minority employees. And the country of birth is included as an additional criterion for determining ethnic origin.

The share of ethnic minorities in the Antwerp working population is 30%. Out of 7,805 employees, 457 ethnic minority employees worked for the city at the end of 2005. They represent 5.85% of the city's employees. This share is increasing each year: 2.23 % (1998), 2.54% (1999), 2.98 % (2000), 3.59 %, (2001), 4.22 % (2002), 3.97 % (May 2003) with 313 ethnic minority employees out of 7,871 employees, 4.85 % (end 2003), 4.43 % (2004) with 345 ethnic minority employees out of 7,786 employees.

These figures include every city job status including different types of social forms of employment such as 'activa' jobs (a part of the benefit received by long-term unemployed is activated as salary and the balance is paid by the city), social 'Maribel' (jobs with a reduction of the employers' contribution), Wep+ (work experience plan, an employment project in cooperation with the Flemish Employment Service), Article 60 (employment by the Social Welfare Service), etc. According to IS experts and official survey, about 25% of these social employment forms are converted into regular employment within the city – either statutory or with a contract of indefinite duration.

Employment diversity policy

The city wants the composition of the city personnel to be a reflection of the active working population. The city has to set an example as the largest employer in the area. The city applies the principle of 'equal opportunities for each resident of the city of Antwerp'.

Since 1999 the city has worked on the adjustment of personnel policy. The diversity consultants encountered a lot of resistance. It has been a long process to gain confidence and to convince key figures of the importance of diversity policy. After a number of poor results in the selection exams for unskilled workers which made it clear that the city did not manage to recruit ethnic minority employees and that, apart from the question of applications, exclusion mechanisms also played a role, under political pressure, the workgroup and the steering group HRM and Diversity was established (June 2006), with the task of changing the situation.

For the realisation of the principle of equal opportunities the personnel management department, in consultation with the workgroup HRM, produced a memorandum 'Antwerp, a socially responsible city' and later a tactical objective (PM T04: tactical objective 04 'Antwerp, a socially responsible city' – MVA, maatschappelijk verantwoord Antwerpen – status:

council decree). The tactical objective is a programme that ensures the notion of diversity is stimulated and made possible throughout the personnel management of the city. It stipulates how the city will continue to introduce more diversity among the city personnel. Areas for action in this programme are the following:

- To adjust the HR instruments to the target groups starting from broad diversity, including ethnocultural diversity. This means, inter alia, adjusting selection procedures, adjusting training policies, and introducing competence management which allows diversity, in order to achieve an actual influx of diversity through recruitment and selection.
- To support and cooperate with initiatives aimed at competence development and reinforcement with, as the final goal, the transition to a regular job (for instance: providing opportunities for employment projects and competence-enhancing practice).
- Diversity is a basic value within the city and is actively included in training policy. It is included in all relevant training and explicitly present in training for executives and selection personnel.
- To eliminate thresholds in the selection process.

In its diversity policy the city addresses the broad diversity target groups. No quotas are used. In practice, the influx is the largest for unskilled jobs. This has to do with the fact that for unskilled jobs, such as street sweeper or gardener, there are no diploma requirements. The influx to jobs with diploma requirements is more difficult. This can be explained partly by the issue of diploma equivalence for members of ethnic minorities who have been educated abroad. The road to get the equivalence of foreign diplomas is long and hard. Only a small number from ethnic minorities educated in Belgium have obtained a diploma at high level.

For contractual recruitment there are no nationality requirements (jobs are open to all foreign nationals who have their legal residence in Belgium), except if the job is related to the public authority and the protection of the interests of the local government; for instance, a civil servant who issues births, marriages and deaths certificates, environmental police, building police, employees with the authority to draw up contracts that commit the government, etc. (Article 10 of the Belgian Constitution). Temporary recruitments are also contractual recruitments (this is a contract of definite duration or a temporary contract instead of a contract of indefinite duration).

For statutory recruitments the nationality requirement is to be a Belgian or EU citizen, unless again it concerns a job which is directly related to the execution of public authority or includes activities which have to protect the general interests of the government. In this last case only Belgian citizens qualify (for instance, city secretary or fire officers).

Challenges in development and implementation of policy

First, a stumbling block for implementation is the personnel time that can be spent. There is a structural personnel shortage at the department of personnel management and there are so many other problems to solve which also require personnel time and which are also crucial for the proper operation of the department.

Secondly, there is resistance to the elaboration and implementation of diversity measures. This resistance is found at various levels. People are willing to change either if key figures are convinced of the importance and usefulness of the change or if the political and executive pressure is high. In the first place, willingness to change is only possible if each individual realises the usefulness of this change and if each individual feels like the owner of the change process. Hence the policy of the IS to put the results and the responsibilities with the departments. In the second place, the organisation culture in the city does not yet create space for initiatives and experiments. For diversity policy, experiments and initiatives are very important. If personnel are afraid of the consequences in case of failed initiatives and experiments, they are less willing to change.

In other words, within a strong hierarchical organisation the middle management will only implement and support changes if it is convinced this is what the higher management and politics want. According to city experts, vagueness blocks the creation of a platform for change.

Recruitment, training and promotion

Recruitment

To make the influx of ethnic minorities more successful with the aim of letting the city personnel be a reflection of the working population in Antwerp, the memorandum 'Antwerp, a socially responsible city' gives some specific recommendations regarding appointment conditions, recruitment and selection procedures.

Regarding the recruitment and guidance of applicants, it recommends strong cooperation with guidance organisations for different target groups and briefing them regularly on city selection procedures. The guidance organisations have to train the long-term unemployed and help them to find jobs.

On selection procedure, it recommends: (1) executing the conclusions of the optimisation audit 'recruitment and selection', for instance by the creation of a file owner and a selection-owner for selections. (2) paying attention to value-related competence 'dealing with diversity' in selections. (3) paying attention to the use of culture-fair tests in selections, so that for instance ethnic minorities are not disadvantaged. And (4) protecting the opportunities of disabled persons in selections, for instance by reserving specific jobs for them or by adjusting the selection procedure (for instance, adjusting the duration of tests).

Training and promotion

In February 2007 the training and development section of the personnel management department established a workgroup 'diversity and personnel development'. The task of this workgroup was to make sure that, where relevant, diversity is included in training and, where necessary, specifically offered – for example in the training project for executives, dealing with customers for counter employees.

The education department of the IS also offers special training to city services in cultural communications and views. According to the IS, there is a need for more specific training of executives.

At present the policy mainly focuses on an immediate influx and there is no specific measure to encourage promotion within the diversity policy.

Equal pay and working conditions

Wages are determined objectively and linked to a job. The rule is that starters begin without seniority and that seniority is built up at the city. Everyone starts at the salary linked to their status. For a few problem jobs an exception is made and seniority can be granted. The seniority of employees coming from another municipal administration counts as well. Wages vary according to job status. City employees mainly have a statutory job. A number of employees have a contractual job. The salary is not different between both statuses but pension and other benefits may vary.

Harassment

Cooperation, customer-friendliness, the approach of diversity, motivation and involvement and integrity are the core values which have to be respected by every city employee. These values are described in a code of conduct for personnel, and an integrity office was established in order to protect these values in a neutral way and advise the city apparatus in case of irregularities or questions. Personnel members with questions or complaints can address the integrity officer who will deal with the issue. With the establishment of the integrity office and the creation of a code of conduct for its personnel, the city clearly defines the attitude it expects. Racist behaviour is included in the code under the denominator 'the approach of diversity'.

Moreover, the personnel management department uses the service 'Sowel'. The task of this service is to guide conflicts at work to the best possible solution. The IS and Sowel agreed to cooperate on the solution of conflicts with ethnocultural aspects. The IS informs Sowel of any problem directly reported to it and Sowel informs the IS in case of a conflict with a possible ethnocultural component. These cases are conducted jointly. The combination of experience has a double advantage. The cases are handled with more insight and there is a mutual learning process between the two services. This agreement is effective, but it has not yet been ratified at a higher level.

Accommodation of cultural and religious needs

The neutrality of the office is a basic value. Neutral authorities are politically neutral. In the local government agreement 2007–2012 this is clearly specified in article 430: 'the city authorities want to encourage diversity of personnel. It must be possible for a lot of people with very different personal beliefs to work for the city. But the external signs of their personal beliefs may not be shown in direct contacts with the customers. In these contacts the neutrality of the service and respect are primary. External symbols of personal, religious, political or other beliefs are not worn in direct contacts with customers.'

Members of the staff of the city of Antwerp cannot express their personal beliefs in their contacts with the customers. In March 2007, in accordance with article 430, the city published the memorandum: 'Diversity: clothing regulations for city personnel'. It stipulates that:

- Personnel in uniform do not wear any other clothes or marks, with the exception of the symbols of the city house style.
- Personnel in work clothes or safety clothes do not wear any other clothes or marks, with the exception of the symbols of the city house style.
- Personnel in direct contact with the public, customers or external partners wear respectable, non-showy clothes. External symbols of personal, political, trade union, sports ... preferences are not worn during working hours, not even for charity. So no cross, yarmulke, head scarf, turban, HIV pin, mark of a service club or association, etc. are permitted.
- Other personnel members also have to wear respectable, non-showy clothes which express courtesy. Earrings for men are possible, but heavy nose piercing are not. A head scarf is possible but a covering veil is not.

In line with this article of the new local government agreement is also the attitude of personnel management with respect to adjustments as a result of questions asked by staff which find their origin in culture or religion. In practice, the questions asked by staff are sometimes answered ad hoc, sometimes with long-term negative consequences. According to the IS, the city needs a thinking frame to deal constructively with this issue.

The IS designed a testing frame that can be used by those involved. It consists of about ten questions that have to be asked with each decision whether or not to introduce a specific measure for a certain group (for instance: may you pray at work or not?). For example: is the measure in conflict with the existing legal frame or not? does this specific measure undermine the joint responsibility and the citizen's ability to try and solve problems or to prevent problems? with this action will we have to cut down on the basic quality of our services?

Health and safety

The city has not yet made any adjustments regarding health and safety, targeting people with migration background.

Induction and language tuition

This is not included structurally. The city imposes language requirements on its personnel. In principle, the required knowledge of Dutch is so high that new collaborators fit in easily. In practice, however, through temporary employment statuses there may be an influx of people passing from one status to another so that the temporariness continues. For these people, on the initiative of those responsible at the city services, courses on 'Dutch at work' are organised. These Dutch classes are given by an external partner during working hours. At work, there is also a language coach who stimulates the employees to practice the language in the work context.

Recognition of qualifications

At present the city cannot recruit people based on their skills.

With respect to the fulfilment of diploma requirements, the IS recommends pushing the higher authorities (Flemish Community) to create the possibility of opening jobs through a double entrance gate: either a diploma or Previously Acquired Skills (PAS). In April 2005 the Antwerp City Council wrote a letter to the Minister for integration with a request to create the possibility of opening city jobs based on the acquisition of skills. This was included in the sectoral agreements of 2005–2007. It is possible to recruit for predetermined jobs based on PAS and only based on PAS. The skill screening test has to be done by a partner acknowledged by Flanders. In practice, the problem is that as a result people with a diploma cannot be acknowledged and also have to pass a skill screening test. In addition, there is still no partner capable of organising skill screening tests.

The city of Antwerp wants to plead for a double entrance gate for specific jobs. As a result it would be possible for people who acquired the necessary skills as well as for people with the appropriate diploma to participate in the exams. At the Flemish level there is already a decree on the acquisition of a title of Vocational Qualification (30 April 2004). This decree also stipulates that each year the Social Economic Council for Flanders (SERV) has to draw up a list of problem jobs for which it is possible to recruit without diploma requirements.

With respect to the required level of Dutch, it recommends determining the required language level and developing specific language tests in cooperation with the Flemish Employment Service and the House of Dutch (Sources: the tactical objective PM 04 'Antwerp, a socially responsible city', sectoral agreement 2005–2007, city council decree number 4552 Diploma requirements and diversity policy of 22 April 2005, decree on the acquisition of a title of Vocational Qualification of 30 April 2004).

Complaints

For complaints and complaints procedures the same structures apply as with 'harassment' (see above). The city opted for a conflict mediation approach so that there is no separate complaints service which only deals with complaints.

Special initiatives

Work and Economy (WNE) is a non-profit association connected to the city. Its steering committee is composed of aldermen. It was established by the city of Antwerp to advise the city council on the elaboration of the socio-economic policy and help with the execution. WNE was created because the Flemish policy on employment was not really adapted to the specific situation of Antwerp (language problems, discrimination). The three areas of WNE are the labour market, social economy and entrepreneurship (SMEs and big companies). A fourth area, tourism, hotels and catering will be added soon. By bringing various spread initiatives in these domains together under one umbrella organisation, the City Council wants to achieve an integrated and coordinated approach to socio-economic policy. The two tasks of WNE are, first, co-financing training initiatives and, second, structuring the training sector in order to avoid overlapping among NGOs' projects.

WNE cooperates with the human resource management department on the influx of diversity, for example by preliminary training for problem jobs and cooperation between the city and the job guidance network ANTONE (*het Antwerps Toeleidingsnetwerk*), a network of around 250 organisations. Some projects are organised with 'toeleiders', guides helping and orienting jobseekers in the first stage of their search for a job. Some toeleiders with migration background are prone to orientate jobseekers from ethnic minorities towards the job shops (*werwinkels* or 'the first step to a job'). They are specific to Flanders. They are offices where representatives of different bodies are present (OCMW, VDAB, and others). They simplify the task of the jobseeker by offering direct access to different bodies in the same place.

The influx of diversity is more a consequence than the objective. Indeed, the perspective has changed with the new local government agreement. Initially, the objective was oriented toward the people (the target group) and the purpose was to include them in labour market. Now the objective is oriented toward the labour market and especially vacancies or the *knelpuntenberoepen*, the jobs where it is difficult to find someone. The WNE will collaborate with the Belgian National Bank and other data banks in order to know precisely the city situation regarding these specific vacancies and also to predict them.

For example, the WNE has carried out a project that aims at filling the vacancies in the City and in particular its mobility department. WNE had observed that, in the one hand, it was difficult to find workers with good bases in mechanics and that, in the other hand, the exams of the City were difficult. Finally, people with the requested profile preferred the private sector which is more attractive financially. The WNE organised training for preparing people for the City exams in mechanics. This included two days a week training, an internship in the City and another one month internship in another department. The project is not yet completed but it seems that it will give a concrete opportunity to people with migration background to pass the City exams and to get a City job.

Monitoring

The changes required in the HRM policy of the city are included in the tactical objective personnel management 03: 'the city of Antwerp is an exemplary socially conscious employer'. This tactical objective consists of a number of strategic and operational objectives where planned actions are worked out. This tool is used to monitor the progress of the process. Each year the personnel management department measures the number of ethnic minority employees.

Impact of policy and lessons learnt

Ethnic minorities represent 30% of the active population in Antwerp, but many of them are unemployed. Only 5.85% of the members of staff of the city of Antwerp are of ethnic minority origin. Yet the city has a large offer of low skilled jobs.

The language barrier / their limited knowledge of Dutch and the excluding selection procedures and HRM tools of the city as employer have a negative influence on their employment. According to the IS, the percentage of the employed from ethnic minorities is remarkably higher in the non-profit associations of the city, where there is more freedom in the selection procedures. The latest figures date from May 2003. The percentage of ethnic-minority employees in the city's non-profit associations was 16.6% against 4.5% if the non-profit associations and regular services of the city are taken together.

With respect to employment, there is an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in temporary jobs. According to the IS, this is not good for the image of ethnic minority employees. Moreover, the concentration is sometimes too high so that the base of support on the work floor is overloaded and this may result in a negative attitude towards influx.

Diversity in service provision

Services provided and contracted out

The task 'provision of services' is spread over various city departments. Each city department is managed by a director. There are eight operational departments directly at the service of the residents (in bold in the following list) and three logistic departments insuring that all city departments can operate in the best circumstances. The city departments are :

- Culture, sports and recreation (cultural and sports activities and city infrastructure, the daily operations of museums, cultural centres, libraries, swimming pools, sports fields, etc.).
- District and counter services (administrative services in nine district houses and five city offices).
- Finance (city tax money, city accountancy and the allocation of the necessary financial resources to the other departments).
- Overall safety (cooperation between the different departments with respect to safety and liveability in all neighbourhoods of the city).
- Learning City (organisation of local education, the coordination of local childcare and the elaboration of youth policy, management of the policy domains education (general education policy), youth (city youth service) and childcare). The city of Antwerp organises education (local schools as from the age of 2.5) and also pursues a general education policy for all schools (city, county, Catholic and state schools) on its territory.
- Marketing and communication (internal and external communication for and from the city of Antwerp, marketing and planning, relations with customers and press and the creation, production and distribution of communication means, the strengthening of the city's international image).
- Heritage maintenance (fulfils the logistic and material needs of the departments, also delivers the city car parks and arranges accommodation for city services).
- Human resource management (recruits city personnel, makes sure that personnel are paid, organises training and gives employees guidance throughout their careers).
- Social affairs (administrative and social assistance to the residents, housing and accommodation, work, health, environment, diversity and equal opportunities and participation).
- City and neighbourhood maintenance (green areas, city cleansing, cemeteries, snow and frost prevention, etc.).
- City development (tourism, urban planning, environment, mobility and traffic, construction, archaeology, business information desk, etc.).

The next sections focus on two departments and analyse them separately: the city counter services (district and counter services department) and the education (part of the Learning City department).

'Administrative affairs' support the city bodies. They are responsible for the decision-making of the City Council, the board of Mayor and Aldermen and the management team. They also take care of the correspondence addressed to the board of the Mayor and aldermen and the internal mail delivery.

In addition, there are also independent services which operate independently from the other city departments. They monitor finances, the integrity of the organisation and operations such as the integrity service, the finance inspection, the internal audit, the fire brigade, the local police and the ombudswoman.

Considering services in the broad sense (i.e. everything the city offers to its residents) the city subsidises a number of non-governmental organisations to render certain parts of these services to ethnocultural minorities. This can be realised by means of short-term projects and activities grants as well as by means of grants from regular resources, such as the City Fund.

- Through the City Fund the Antwerp minority centre *De Acht vzw* receives grants for its refugee project, HAVEN. Refugees are included in the agreement as an umbrella term for various groups in our society, including undocumented immigrants and people with a precarious residence status.

Specifically around the theme ‘education’, the non-profit association *De Schoolbrug*, by order of the city council, carries out educational development projects in a number of schools. With these projects they try to avoid school lateness and unqualified leavers by working on permanent changes with the parents and students as well as the school. The projects are not aimed at ethnic minority students but in practice most of the time they work with this target group and with the underprivileged in general.

The city is also looking for providers to offer certain groups easily accessible classes of Dutch. The Adult Basic Education Centre is such a service provider that offers easily accessible courses to more than 100,000 extra students. In addition, various service providers also offer Dutch to non-native parents who are not yet registered for a normal course of Dutch.

- The IS manages a fund that gives grants for activities and projects which support living together in diversity. Ethnic minority associations as well as ‘other associations’ (cooperation with an ethnic minority association acknowledged by the city) can apply for a grant. The association must be acknowledged by the IS (at this moment 184 associations). The activities grants are meant to offer well-defined support to sensitising and/or educational, once-only socio-cultural activities of associations in view of the emancipation of their own constituency and a positive approach to diversity in the city. Project applications also have to be aimed at the promotion of living together in diversity and/or the increase of equal opportunities, but these projects run for a longer period of time with a maximum of three years. Each year the IS also describes and defines a number of priority areas.

With respect to the theme ‘counter services’ and ‘education’, with every grant round, some associations present applications for activities or education projects. With their initiatives these associations play an emancipating role with respect to parents and youngsters, they promote the introduction of its members to educational initiatives and influence policy, the latter also by participating in consultancy forums. At present there are three educational projects presented by associations and supported by the IS. All this is in close consultation with the city service involved, General Education Policy and other partners such as *De Schoolbrug*.

- Various city services have a grant system such as culture grants or grants for youth and sports activities or grants for ‘*opsinjoren*’ (initiatives by the residents). In principle, this is an inclusive scheme. It means that there are no separate grants for ethnic minority associations but the pursuance of an accessible general grant policy. In some cases a ‘temporary’ grant fund is maintained. For example, up to last year the City Culture Service had a fund to support cultural activities organised by ethnic minority organisations (FOCA). At the beginning of 2007 it was transferred to the districts. In 2007 associations could not apply to this separate fund, but the districts could spend the FOCA resources on ethnic minority associations. As from 2008 this special fund will be part of regular culture resources.

Considering diversity is sometimes an extra criterion for the approval of grants. For instance, this criterion is included as an item in agreements with the youth service.

- In addition, the city service General Education Policy has (a) a ‘education, innovation and cooperation projects fund’, (b) a ‘working-learning’ fund and (3) an ‘incentive broad school fund’. Schools can apply for project resources to work around (a) attractive learning and living environments, (b) real life learning and working experiences and (c) in cooperation with partners from the neighbourhood, youth work and the world of sports and culture, a project to help socially vulnerable youngsters to discover the regular range of leisure/cultural/sports activities or start creative processes which have to increase their attraction to vulnerable target groups. The projects are not specifically aimed at ethnic minority children and youngsters, but in view of the diverse reality in the city centre, in practice, it often concerns this target group. The social fund is also accessible to all less wealthy Antwerp students. Through the intervention of the school director, parents can get a reduction for school trips (one or several days) which are required to achieve the school’s objectives or development targets. Each year the city of Antwerp puts 135,000 euro at the disposal of this fund.

Diversity policy in services

City counter services

In general, all Antwerp citizens are the target group of city counters (a lot of counter products are laid down by law). The aim is to make the general services as accessible as possible. In addition, there are a few counters specifically aimed at foreign nationals, such as the aliens office, the sham marriages unit and the asylum seekers unit. In general, the city tries to make sure that more people can claim their rights. A network of Social Information Points (SIP) is active in six neighbourhoods or districts. The aim is to create more SIPs in other districts. The SIPs help everyone with a social question, but focus on socially vulnerable citizens. The people who come to a SIP receive the correct information and a clear explanation so that they know which service could help them and what can be expected. If necessary (and with consent of the customer) the SIP contacts this service beforehand (and the customer does not have to repeat the whole story). The SIPs are working with intermediaries to have contact with target groups and to deal with language and other problems. The biggest advantage of a SIP is the networking of partners that engage themselves for the same goal. By doing this, every organisation can become stronger and able to deliver a more adapted service.

The city authorities described the objective in the new local government agreement as follows: ‘The city wants to render the highest quality service to a broad range of customers by offering services which combine equal treatment and tailor-made services, with convenient opening hours and easy accessibility for our customers, with unique and effective contacts, through all the channels our customers prefer.’ The city wants to implement a broad diversity policy: services and opportunities for everyone (regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, origin or socio-economic situation).

Currently, District and Counter services is working on implementing strategic, planned and operational objectives that should improve the quality and the relationship with users. Already, in 2005, the main goal of the district and counter services was described as follows: ‘the city wants to offer high-quality services and guarantee an equal result for all customers’. To achieve this, the city wants to develop a diversity policy in the services offered by the city that focuses on counters and front offices. That is why a diversity consultant was recruited at the end of 2005. She joined the diversity team of the IS. Together with the future city service ‘broad diversity’, she will play an important role in the support of these objectives.

In the framework of a discussion on ‘general or specific services’, the IS was asked whether or not the city has to accede to requests for specific services such as separate Dutch classes for Jewish men and women. The IS is working on a kind of testing schedule or testing framework (described above) that can be applied to all policy questions. In the IS policy documents up to now the line is: ‘inclusive if possible, in categories as long as necessary’. The question here is how to determine precisely when a specific service is needed rather than a general one. The IS considers that there is a crucial need of a manageable tool to deal with these policy questions. According to the IS experts, a ready-made solution is not

possible. The tool should enable them to deal consciously and sequentially with these policy questions and to have well-founded discussions. But one standard answer to all questions is neither feasible nor desirable. Then the IS worked out 10 'signals', 10 questions to be asked, from 'is this measure a violation of the existing legal framework?' and 'can this measure be carried out, is it workable and payable?' to 'does it contribute to living together in diversity?'.

Education

The education policy of the city of Antwerp is aimed at all Antwerp children and youngsters. In the elaboration of the policy measures a lot of attention is paid to the fact that the measures are good for everyone and do not exclude a new group. At the same time the 'general education policy' (AOBA, the city service in which the education policy is worked out for all educational institutions) is also considered as a social policy in which special attention is asked for groups which are especially threatened by exclusion – in other words, not only ethnic minorities, but also the underprivileged and others. Here, the broad diversity approach also applies, though sometimes specific measures are taken for specific groups. For instance: AOBA also has a team 'education opportunities', which supports education teams in their approach of the issue of the underprivileged at school.

Within the group 'ethnic minorities' no distinction is made with respect to education policy, only with respect to specific measures for 'newcomers' in the context of the welcome classes. This is also realised in the Local Consultation Platform on Education (LOP), in the context of the decree Equal opportunities in education, minor newcomers are here considered as a separate target group in conformity with this decree.

In principle, schools are also accessible to everyone. In Antwerp there are a few official Jewish schools.

In Antwerp one quarter of the population has recent foreign roots in one way or another. This multicultural reality is reflected in the education figures:

- 53.1% of Antwerp students are 'indicator students' (this means that at least one of the five indicators apply to these students: parents belong to the migrating population; the mother does not hold a secondary school diploma; the student is temporarily or permanently raised outside the family; the family receives a replacement income; Dutch is not the language spoken at home).
- 43.1% are GOK students (GOK stands for Equal Education Opportunities: at least one of the four socio-economic factors applies to these students and sometimes also the indicator 'Dutch is not the language spoken at home').
- 40.8% of the students are marked as 'Dutch is not the language spoken at home'.

The figures vary considerably between the districts. In the city centre the figures are always the highest (71.4% indicator students, 57.1 GOK students, 63.3% Dutch is not the language spoken at home).

Employment profile of service providers

First of all, it is important to note that there is no official definition on 'persons of ethnic minority origin'. The data provided have to be seen in this light.

City counter services

The personnel policy and therefore also the HRM and diversity policy of the city are also applicable to the city counter services. Of a total staff of 500, 23 with migration background (not born in Belgium) are employed in the district and counter services department.

Education

The HRM and diversity policy of the city is also applicable to the service General Education (Learning City department). Strictly speaking, some of the staff do not work for the city but for the non-profit association BAOBAB vzw. This non-profit association manages general education resources. The City Council as well as the educational networks are represented in this association. The advantage of the non-profit association recruitment is that they can apply the selection criteria with more flexibility, because they do not fall under the city recruitment procedures. The Learning City LS/AOB employs four people with migration background (ethnicity minority origin): one traffic employee (starter's job – D), two school spotters (starter's job D) and one administrative employee (indefinite duration – D). And BAOBAB employs two people with migration background: one administrative employee (indefinite duration – C) and one educational employee (indefinite duration – C).

Recruitment at schools is organised by the educational networks and does not come under the city's human resources department (freedom of networks). Nowadays the local city schools have the authority to decide on recruitment. It means that certain schools explicitly look for teachers and administrative employees of ethnic minority origin. Finally, General Education has no survey of the number of staff of ethnic minority origin at schools.

Access to services

The IS gives advice on the removal of thresholds for services, with respect to (internal and external) communication, personnel policy, organisation culture and the range offered (products and processes).

City counter services

New objectives are worked out in various stages to promote the accessibility of the services for everyone (see above). With respect to the actual rendering of services, a number of efforts were recently made to ensure high-quality, accessible and effective services. These efforts consist of:

- a social information centre where each customer is helped. An important achievement is the establishment of a local network of associations to which customers are referred and which increasingly cooperate.
- Multi-channel services: counters, telephone, electronic, by post, etc.
- Training: front office employees attend special courses.

Education

In the education policy of the service general education policy (AOBA) there are efforts at various levels to remove the thresholds with respect to access to the services. This does not mean that all thresholds have been removed or that 'attention on thresholds' in all policy steps is more than clear. At this moment AOBA has a department 'opportunity groups' which develops specific action for groups which in one way or another experience difficulties with respect to education. For example: the 'Studiewijzer' service which is an information point for everyone with questions about primary, secondary, higher and adult education. Studiewijzer tries to make its service generally known, it also explains its services to ethnic minority associations (see <http://www.studiewijzer.antwerpen.be>).

Regarding access to education organised by the schools, according to the IS, there is – also in Antwerp – a permanent problem of admission to certain schools or departments. The equal education opportunities decree (GOK) of the Flemish government regulates the right of subscription. Parents and students who are refused entry on grounds of colour, origin or image can still go to the school of their choice thanks to this decree. Reasons for refusing a student or referring a student to another school are limited. In accordance with the decree, the local consultation platforms for primary and secondary education (composed of educational and non-educational partners) have the task to make arrangements on the

organisation of joint subscription periods. This was also done in Antwerp. As from the school year 2007/2008 all Antwerp schools apply the same subscription period. In general, there are three periods with priority measures: 1) priority measures for brothers and sisters (primary and secondary education) as of January 2007; 2) rules to give priority to children with or without GOK indicator as of February 2007 (only for primary schools). Schools decide which group they want to give priority. 3) an open subscription period as of March 2007. This restriction of the subscription periods should inform underprivileged and ethnic minority parents better when the children can be inscribed and should also limit the number of abuses by schools. A lot of students, however, encounter problems with subscription at the school of their choice. The increasing phenomenon of ‘concentration’ schools (also white schools) continues to be an important element.

In addition, schools are asked to present their information about subscriptions as clearly as possible to the parents (at Studiewijzer, at the school gate, etc.) and a number of non-educational partners from the Local Consultation Platform on Education started to register ‘stories about disguised refusals’. The subscription period is still open at the time of writing this report and it is difficult to draw conclusions at present.

Monitoring of access and outcomes identified

City counter services

In the period from 31 January 2006 until 10 March 2006 a customer satisfaction questionnaire was organised on the services delivered at the counter services and the operation of the district houses and city offices. Following a service provided by the city, 1,585 customers were interviewed. In general, there were no specific target groups (>80%). There were no interviews of specific target groups but 10% of the interviewees were foreign nationals. Points of improvement were: (1) electronic or telephone counters were not sufficiently known about; (2) during the evening hours customers are generally less satisfied with the language used and the friendliness and waiting times than at other times; (3) the comfort of the waiting space can be improved at some places; and (4) the employee responsible for the customer has to be more widely known.

Moreover the Pina Reception Office (part of the IS) has figures on the number of people referred by district houses to the reception office and on the number of people who report to the reception office. It is also possible to count the number of tickets issued at the counters of the aliens office, for instance.

The new objectives of the department, district and city counter services, to implement the articles of the new local government agreement applicable to this department also include a number of measurable elements. Thus, the City and the Social Welfare Service will guarantee a service which complies with predetermined and measurable quality standards (by means of a quality guarantee on the service and the definition of service standards/guarantees). The quality of the service will be measured systematically and periodically as well as monitored and adjusted.

Education

An environment analysis is one of the tasks of the Local Consultation Platform on Education in the context of the equal education opportunities decree. In Antwerp this is done by the Social Planning Database. It presents the situation of the GOK indicators (parents with migration background, mothers without a secondary school diploma, student temporarily or permanently raised outside the family, family receiving a replacement income, Dutch is not the language spoken at home), at the level of sub-areas (for instance Antwerp intra muros, or district Berchem, etc.) and at school level (the number of students in a school who do not speak Dutch at home). These figures are also used to determine whether the school may exercise the right to give priority to a student with a GOK indicator or not.

The Antwerp Local Consultation Platform on Education uses the VRINT-system, i.e. the Full Groups Instrument. Schools report to the Local Consultation Platform on Education the refusals of students and specify which groups are full. The VRINT instrument registers the refusals and the full groups. Schools can use this instrument to refer students to other schools. Schools also have to inform the Local Consultation Platform on Education whether they exercise the right to give priority to students with a GOK indicator or not.

For the purposes of the translation of the new local government agreement, the Service General Education policy has defined a number of strategic, planned and operational objectives. Some are specifically related to the creation of equal education opportunities regardless of the ethnocultural origin (and regardless of other diversities). It is the intention to report in detail about all these objectives in the next six years of this management team. The new city service 'broad diversity' including the present diversity management of the IS is asked to draw up a diversity report.

Since 2003 the central registration centre has registered all problematic school careers in Antwerp schools. The general education policy is developed based on the information received so that youngsters are given a new opportunity to round off their school career in a positive way and/or move on to the labour market.

Regarding education, very little information is available on the outcomes of the policy. In 2006 Studiewijzer saw 2,161 customers of whom 1,008 do not speak Dutch at home. For the first four months of 2007 there were 835 customers of whom 283 do not speak Dutch at home. As mentioned above (5.2) 53.1% of the Antwerp students are 'indicator students'; 43.1% are GOK students (GOK stands for Equal Education Opportunities); 40.8% of the students are marked as 'Dutch is not the language spoken at home'. The figures vary considerably between the districts. In the city centre the figures are always the highest (71.4% indicator students, 57.1 GOK students, 63.3% Dutch is not the language spoken at home).

Cultural awareness of staff

City counter services

It is important that the employees gain an insight into their own reference framework and into the extent it influences their thoughts and actions. Moreover, if they are aware of the customer's specific profile, a lot of misunderstandings and annoyance can be avoided. For instance, in some cultures it is normal to negotiate. A front office employee may interpret this as if this person tries to get a preferential treatment. The city's training services takes measures to embed diversity in the standard courses organised by the city. Moreover front office employees attend special courses:

- 'How to deal with language' (*taal aan de balie*), focusing on the procedure when a non-native speaker comes to a city counter. This is an example of diversity practice according to the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (*Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten*, VVSG).
- Target group communication, a compulsory course for each communication employee.
- *Stadsklap* (meeting between newcomers and 'Antwerp citizens'), an opportunity for front office employees to have an informal meeting with newcomers. As a result they can notice that what is evident for them is not always evident for newcomers and by listening to their experiences they learn to understand / gain insight into their problems.
- Dealing with the public, a course for each front office employee during which the diversity of the customers is discussed in detail. The employees acquire skills to deal with the customers in a constructive and customer-friendly way.

Education

The City Service General Education Policy itself does not organise training courses on 'diversity', but explanatory notes on 'deprivation and education' are available. Apart from this, there is also a broad range of training courses with respect to interculturalisation and diversity for schools, such as the courses organised by ICI, the Centre for Diversity and Learning (intercultural education), or by DocAtlas (the documentation centre with learning tools for intercultural education). These include 'intercultural training courses' (insights into cultural diversity, explanation on different cultures, etc.) as well as 'diversity management' training courses (skills to deal with diversity in an organisation). There is no survey available on the schools/teachers/headmasters who attended these trainings and the effect this had.

Discrimination against service users

Until now, Antwerp had autonomous accessible information or a declaration point where racism or discrimination could be declared and followed-up. The distance to the Federal Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism is too far for the ordinary citizen. After the racist murders in May 2006 the call for a similar structure, promised for a long time, sounded louder. A working group has since developed an idea. The new structure will be a part of the service of the ombudsman of the city. It will be operational in 2008.

Special initiatives

Regarding education, two initiatives to deal with the discrimination against service users can be highlighted:

- The Education Hotline maintained by de Acht (Antwerp Minority Centre)

As mentioned above, the equal education opportunities decree regulates inscription policy at schools. The latter may only refer or refuse students in very specific cases. In practice, however, the strict compliance of these rules and arrangements is not so obvious. Therefore, De Acht has created the Education Hotline. It aims at assisting parents and students to exercise their rights regarding education and help them to find solutions for their problems and complaints. At the same time it informs the authorities of the parents' experiences and emphasises existing problems. Parents and students can call the Education Hotline to ask questions and file complaints about education.

- Intermediary Department of the Antwerp Local Consultation Platform on Education

The equal education opportunities decree also provides for the organisation of local consultation platforms (LOP), and stipulates that the Local Consultation Platforms have to establish an intermediary department to act as intermediary for inscriptions. In addition, parents may also file a complaint with the students' rights committee if they do not agree with the refusal (because the school is 'completely full' or because the child 'was excluded' – a child may be refused if during the past two school years in the school involved it has been excluded by a disciplinary procedure).

Impact of policy on access to and quality of services

There is no information available on the impact of policy on access to and quality of services. However, Antwerp is faced with the consequences of the more severe policy in the Netherlands. The federal policy around migration (for employment purposes) and asylum is also felt strongly in the city.

With respect to the services the obstacles clearly include the language problems, the complexity of the legislation and the impartial attitude towards customers of the front office employees. According to the IS, the job of a front office employee may not be underestimated. They need support and appreciation.

For the first time in Antwerp the new management team has implemented a dress code to guarantee neutrality. As a result, for instance, people with a head scarf may no longer perform a front office job.

Key challenges and lessons for CLIP

Introduction

The largest city in Flanders, Antwerp with more than 470,000 inhabitants has around 13% foreigners following a breakdown by nationalities. Yet a quarter of the inhabitants have a migration background and they represent 30% of the working population. Moreover, the city attracts, more than other Flemish cities, a significant number of asylum seekers and of irregular migrants. The city is active economically with a large tertiary sector and some employment hubs such as the harbour, the car industry, and the diamond trade. Nevertheless, its unemployment rate is almost twice that of the region and the unemployment is higher among non-EU nationals. Politically, it is important to remember that topics related to immigration are heavily loaded in a city where one third of the population votes for the far right party Vlaams Belang, represented in the City Council.

Until recently, the diversity policy adopted by the city focused on specific target groups – people with a migration background was one of them. It was a categorial diversity policy. And specific departments were in charge to stimulate and support the policy through specific measures and actions with respect to each specific target group. Therefore the Integration Service was supporting diversity policy with respect to people with migration background. The IS and in particular the IS diversity consultants developed intensive contacts with some other services such as the Urban Poverty Department. There were a few meaningful steps but there were still challenges. Despite the adjustment to human resources policy since 1999 with the support of diversity consultants, the city could not reach its objective of recruiting people with a migration background in a proportion that would reflect their share of the city working population. In 2005, the city as an employer had a total of 7,805 employees of whom 457 had a migration background, only 6%. And the people with a migration background were overrepresented in temporary jobs. This situation can be explained by several reasons, among others the language barrier and the selection procedures of the city. Therefore, since 2006, the personnel management department has been supported by the workgroup Human Resources Management and Diversity.

Regarding the services delivered by the city, city counters are supposed to respect a principle of neutrality and thus provide equal services to all residents including people with a migration background. And in order to reach this objective the city has undertaken different actions (network of Social Information Points, customer satisfaction questionnaire, specific training to raise the cultural awareness of front office employees, etc.). Nevertheless, some challenges remain such as language problems, the complexity of the legislation and impartiality towards the public. Furthermore, the city also organises education for local schools and pursues a general education policy for all schools on its territory. This is a general policy aimed at all Antwerp children and youngsters. It is also a social policy that pays attention to groups threatened by exclusion. Specific attention is given to minors who can be oriented towards welcome classes and to education. The city has developed actions to implement the equal opportunities Flemish decree that regulates the right of subscription at schools. Finally, considering services in the broader sense, Antwerp subsidises a number of non-governmental organisations to render certain parts of these services to ethnocultural minorities. This is realised by means of short-term projects and activities grants as well as by means of grants from regular resources, such as the City Fund.

Currently, there is a change of the approach, the specific diversity policy shifts to the broad diversity policy. Following the local elections of October 2006, the new local government agreement 2007–2012 develops the broad diversity policy and diversity management. Moreover, for the first time, diversity policy has been the specific responsibility of an alderman of the city. The approach ‘broad diversity and diversity management’ is featured as an inclusive one. It means that the policy should target all residents and consequently all disadvantaged groups including ethnic minorities in Antwerp in a non-differentiated way. Target group policy can only be an instrument of this policy. Broad diversity is also defined as a horizontal objective which means that, on the one hand, diversity in staff of the city and related bodies should reflect the city diversity population and on the other hand, all their services should consider systematically and actively the diversity of the city population. The city wants to develop a systematic diversity policy and diversity management internally (internal management) and externally (external services and products). A new city service, broad

diversity, will support this policy by providing advice and developing tools for the city's departments. It will also monitor the diversity process.

Lessons and learning – good practices

Firstly, it is important to highlight the dynamism of the city regarding diversity policy and diversity management for several years. From a general standpoint, this has brought some positive consequences such as the development of expertise in diversity policy, rising awareness of the city personnel about diversity management, and developing networks with organisations outside the city. More specifically, the Integration Service dealing with ethnocultural minorities diversity has developed important expertise in the field (knowledge of the problems and of how to deal with them). The IS has also developed a large network outside and inside the city. First, outside the city, it has many contacts with non-profit organisations, with ethnic minorities associations, NGOs etc. This is quite important to implement diversity policy. Inside the city, the IS has developed contacts with other services supporting them in developing and implementing diversity.

From a specific standpoint, the city appears particularly active in setting up structures (various workgroups on diversity) and encouraging dialogues among its services in order to improve diversity. This dynamism is sometimes unproductive (the city workgroup on diversity stopped its activity because of lack of a clear mandate) but most of the time it is fruitful. For instance, the Personnel management department in consultation with the workgroup HRM and Diversity worked out a document with recommendations on appointment conditions, recruitment and selection procedures. The document was followed by a tactical objective that has to ensure that the notion of diversity is spread in all city departments. Actions areas have been defined consequently. Furthermore, the personnel development department set up a workgroup on diversity and personnel development with the task of ensuring the inclusion of diversity in training. Finally, the general education policy service has a department 'opportunity groups' which develops specific actions for groups experiencing difficulties with respect to education. Setting up workgroups on diversity with specific and clear mandates to develop reflection and dialogue on diversity policy and diversity management can be considered a good practice that could be developed in other cities.

Secondly, the city approach to diversity is innovative. The city has addressed a request to the Flemish government to be able to recruit staff for the city on the basis of skills as well as diplomas. The city will propose a double entrance gate for specific jobs: either a diploma or previously acquired skills. This proposal aims at improving recruitment for critical vacancies but could also open opportunities for people with a migration background, since some of them encounter problems with diploma recognition. This double entrance gate procedure could be a good practice transferable to other cities.

Thirdly, the city diversity policy is based on partnership with other organisations in different ways. For example, the Personnel management department cooperates with a non-profit association connected to the city (Work and Economy – WNE) in order to rise the influx of diversity in the city. The WNE organised specific trainings for critical city jobs and most of the public was from migration background. The city also collaborates closely with a non-profit association managing the general education resources. Consequently part of the staff selection of the Learning City department is organised by this association and they can apply the selection criteria with more flexibility than under the city recruitment procedures; reducing consequently obstacles for the potential candidates with migration background or not. Developing various partnerships with other organisations is also a good practice for cities that develop diversity plans.

Fourthly, the city intends to include diversity insofar as it is relevant in all training for its employees. And it gives particular attention to the cultural awareness of staff who have direct contact with the public. Special courses are organised for front office employees. Some focus, for example, on the procedure when a customer is a non-native

speaker or on the way to deal with diversity. Others give the opportunity to employees to meet newcomers informally and to exchange experiences. Organising specific training courses on diversity for front office employees is also a practice that could be relevant in a diversity policy plan and is transferable in other cities.

Finally, it could be useful to have a framework that could help to define the limits of the discussion of the topic.. It seems that the testing frame developed by the IS goes some way in this direction and could be put forward as good practice. A testing frame for city diversity is a transferable practice for other cities, provided that it is shaped and formulated by each city and adapted to their own objectives.

Key challenges

Although some good practices have been highlighted, questions remain.

First, as mentioned above, the city and in particular some services like the IS have gained important experience and expertise in diversity. Now that the city has opted for a new approach called ‘broad diversity’, there is a question mark over the extent that the expertise of the different services have been taken into account in formulating this broad diversity policy. Developing a new policy at the political level without basing it on the previous expertise of the implementation pole could undermine the objectives and above all the results of the new policy.

Second, the broad diversity policy in Antwerp is described as an inclusive objective. In other words, all substantive objectives of the city have to take diversity into account. This is important. The diversity scan appears as an important tool in dealing with this. Nevertheless, is it clear why diversity is an inclusive objective? And is the link between diversity and all the other objectives of the city clear enough in particular for city employees at all levels (top management included)?

Third, developing and implementing diversity policy has shown to the IS that diversity management requires flexibility and a process of permanent change. Managing diversity is not an easy task – especially in an organisation which tries to include more diversity in a difficult political context. Introducing more diversity obviously lead to raise the array of situations and questions and possible problematic situations that the city will have to face. Resistance at various levels of the employees themselves is observed for several reasons (lack of conviction, etc.)

Fourth, dealing with diversity is touching the norms and values that are accepted by the majority. Changing norms or introducing new standards could encounter misunderstandings. So this process needs dialogue, specifically intercultural dialogue, and periodic consultation.

The city’s first major challenge regarding diversity policy, either in its elaboration and formulation or in its implementation within the entire city services, could be called a communications challenge. The absence of clear communication can lead to misunderstandings. Diversity policy has to be supported by open communication and regular information at all levels including the top management.

In addition, with regard to diversity policy in employment, the city pursues a voluntarist policy to introduce more diversity in the city staff. An effort has been made to bring in people with a migration background and this is an important first step. However the next one would be to keep them in the city and to offer them career opportunities (promotion). The percentage of people with a migration background employed by the city is still low. But the percentage of jobseekers with a migration background is quite high and some jobs stay vacant.

So the second major challenge is one of selection and recruitment. In order to introduce more diversity to the city, it could facilitate access to city jobs on the one hand and on the other hand adapt the selection procedure by, for instance, guaranteeing diversity awareness.

Learning for CLIP

The experience of the city of Antwerp leads to crucial questions about diversity policy. Diversity policy as understood by the CLIP project team has been defined as a public policy at the municipal level which aims at generating added value out of cultural difference. 'Furthermore, diversity policy is also different from the local implementation of a national minority or multi-ethnic policy in a traditionally multi-ethnic state. It is further different from policies such as affirmative action, quota regulations or group rights approaches. It finally has to be distinguished from anti-discrimination policies'. Diversity in this approach is thus seen as an objective and not as a means. The objective of a diversity policy is to introduce, support and encourage cultural diversity but it is not a struggle against discrimination based on a migratory or ethno-cultural background.

In the context of Antwerp, the broad diversity policy purports to include all citizens who could be disadvantaged. Two remarks here. First, the target groups described for broad diversity include women, ethnic-minorities, LGBT (gays, lesbians and bisexuals) and, disabled people and from now on youth and elderly people. Age is now part of broad diversity. This is an important point because youth with migration backgrounds or elderly people of foreign origin will be taken into account in a wider perspective. Second, and this would be the main difficulty of the broad diversity approach, to what extent is it possible to target equally these disadvantaged groups by generating added value out of their specific differences?

In conclusion, widening the notion of diversity at this point in the context of diversity policy and in the even more critical context of diversity management seems to eliminate/filter out the diversity. How should one regard the cultural specificities and differences that a diversity policy is supposed to respect and valorise? There is a risk of eliminating the differences in a norm that is still defined and formulated by the majority. In other words, difference is denied instead of being valorised by a policy that purports to valorise and support all differences (cultural, gender, health, sexual orientation). The risk is that of erasing the characteristics of the 'target groups' – if it is still relevant to use this term anymore – in order to give them the same opportunities as a 'standard worker'. So, the pitfall is that the 'standard worker' is the autochthonous worker and there is no space anymore for differences. Finally, does this broad diversity approach mean implicitly the development of assimilationist trends at least regarding ethnic minorities?

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