

SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the qualitative part of the research project « *BruVoices: Social cohesion in Brussels according to its inhabitants* ».

The **first chapter** of the report sets out the theoretical perspective adopted regarding social cohesion, based on the Kearns and Forrest article of 2000. Social cohesion is approached from a number of dimensions such as social networks, relationships in public, diversity, solidarity and belonging/citizenship. These are studied, for this research, based on the experiences, perceptions and portrayals given by the 499 Brussels inhabitants we talked to in this part of the study.

The **second chapter** presents the methodology used for the research, notably a speech analysis.

Before proceeding to an analysis of each of the dimensions, **chapter 3** presents the way in which inhabitants perceived, qualified and represented Brussels. This threw up a number of paradoxes and contradictions when inhabitants talked about their city (international small-scale city, liberty and anonymity, green but dirty, chaotic ...). In this chapter we see participants' mental maps of Brussels.

Chapter 4 is devoted to respondents' social networks (associations, shared relationships, neighbourhoods etc.) and shows the importance these have for participants as devices for 'meetings' and 'social contacts', leading to perceptions of 'conviviality' and 'quality of life' in the city.

Chapter 5 is concerned with relationships in urban public spaces between city dwellers who do not know each other. This dimension was not much present in participants' discussions: the public space thus represents a 'background' to the experience of urban life, which is only really visible when it becomes the scene of key events, whether happy or unhappy.

Chapter 6 presents the dimension of ethno-cultural diversity in Brussels. Whilst the 'multicultural' nature of Brussels was central to participants' accounts, the city was also seen as an agglomeration of different and somewhat unconnected bubbles. This chapter looks both at the experience of urban diversity - which varies greatly according to the group under consideration - and the feelings of fully belonging to an urban community for those with an immigrant background.

In **chapter 7**, the issue of solidarity is examined - one that participants did not much talk about. This factor is more often seen as the provision of assistance rather than under the angle of socio-economic inequalities. It was observed that there was a line that separated those in vulnerable situations from those in more well-off environments, with the latter being little aware of the formers' living conditions. Government bodies were often perceived as those expected to be in charge of poverty and exclusion but participants often spoke of their lack of effectiveness.

Chapter 8 deals with feelings of belonging and citizenship. Brussels being characterised by its plurality, the identity of Brussels was seen as diverse and combinatorial. The threads of belonging and citizenship are also many and stretched between their politico-judicial nature and their practical dimension.

Finally, the conclusion examines the differential weight of each of these dimensions in this approach to social cohesion, which leads to privilege a specifically ethnically-cultural reading of living together in Brussels whilst neglecting some other challenges.