

## SUMMARY

This report presents the quantitative phase of the project *BruVoices: social cohesion in Brussels according to its inhabitants*. The research took the form of an opinion survey conducted between August and December 2017. 526 citizens of Brussels, who were part of a representative sample of the population of the Brussels-Capital Region, answered a questionnaire in face-to-face interviews lasting around thirty minutes.

The interviews covered 5 dimensions of social cohesion: common values and civic culture, social order and social control, solidarity and inequalities, social relationships and finally, the sense of belonging and identity. The key findings of the research are given below in function of these dimensions.

### **Common values and civic culture**

- Most people in Brussels have confidence in the following institutions: healthcare, local government, the judicial system, the police and teaching, but they declare to have little confidence in the Brussels government and its politicians.
- Respondents show moderate citizen participation, but the degree of participation increases in function of respondent s' level of education. The great majority of people in Brussels do not play an active part in associations or politics and a large number of them are disinterested in local politics and the government and Parliament of Brussels.
- The citizens of Brussels think that traffic rules and cleanliness are not sufficiently respected in Brussels. Inhabitants generally think their own neighbourhood is cleaner than the city, whilst in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, people think that their neighbourhood is not well maintained.

### **Social order and social control**

- The majority of inhabitants in Brussels feel safe at home, in the city and in their own neighbourhood, although a number of respondents claimed to feel unsafe in these three places.
- The people of Brussels feel safer in their neighbourhood compared with the city, but the feeling of security depends not on the neighbourhood, but rather on respondents' socio-demographic profile. Women feel less safe than men and people with a lower level of education feel less safe than those with a higher level of education.
- A section of respondents said that they avoid public places, public transport and places of meeting in Brussels following the terrorist attacks of 22 March 2016, even though this is not the case for the majority of people in Brussels.

- The citizens of Brussels said that they have confidence in the other residents of their neighbourhood as well as people in other neighbourhoods. The majority of those interviewed appreciated the human diversity present in the city and said that they respected people from other social groups than their own. This was particularly the case for respondents with a high level of education.

### **Solidarity and inequalities**

- The inhabitants of Brussels said that they were generally satisfied with what their neighbourhood offered them. However, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, support from government bodies and the facilities for children, young people and the elderly were felt to be less satisfactory. More help was believed to be provided by local residents than by the city.
- Respondents perceived certain tensions between the well-off and the less well-off in Brussels. Almost one third of respondents believed that their income was insufficient to live a good life in Brussels.
- More than half of those living in Brussels thought that people of the same cultural origin, nationality, language, religion, skin colour or even the same type of person as them, were the targets of unequal treatment in the labour market, at school and in the public space.

### **Social network and social capital**

- Respondents believed that it is relatively easy to make friends in Brussels and they are happy with their circle of friends in the capital. Those with a higher level of education were more satisfied in this respect. New residents and people of other nationalities than Belgian are those who would most like to meet new people and/or enlarge their circle of friends.
- Most of the respondents' friends lived in Brussels, even though they often lived in another commune or neighbourhood, whilst their family most often lived outside the Brussels Region. The great majority of Brussels residents believed that they could count on someone in Brussels if ever they had a problem.

### **Feeling of belonging and identity**

- Most of the respondents identified with Brussels: in fact they felt strong ties to Brussels and its inhabitants, as well as great solidarity with the people of Brussels. They said that they were happy and proud to be 'Bruxellois'. Most of them also said that they had already had an occasion to defend the reputation of Brussels or their own commune. The majority believed that being 'Bruxellois' was an important part of their identity and this was particularly the case for people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

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- Those people with a higher level of education and of Belgian origin felt they had a stronger link with Europe than other respondents. People of Belgian origin felt stronger ties with Belgium than other respondents, whilst those people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods felt stronger ties with Brussels.

Finally, the conclusions of this report also highlight a number of findings that were observed across more than one of the dimensions used in the research to define the concept of social cohesion.