THE IMPACT OF EU CITIZENSHIP ON MIGRANT INTEGRATION

The Case of Highly Skilled Migrants from Southeast Europe in Brussels

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Migrations undertaken by highly skilled persons assume an important position in knowledge societies, especially in large global cities where there is a need for their work. This article is based on qualitative research conducted in Brussels in 2014, working with a sample (N=20) of highly skilled migrants from Southeast Europe. Through applying Bosswick and Heckmann's (2006) analytical framework, this research examines the influence of European Union citizenship on the system and social dimension to the integration of the researched group. Under system integration, the gaining and enacting of citizenship rights receives special attention, while with social integration, the identificational dimension to integration is in focus. The research results demonstrated that the possession of EU citizenship influences the integration outcome – to a greater extent in the case of system integration, and to a lesser extent with social integration. Given that the integration of highly skilled migrants in Brussels occurs within "international strata", rather than a national culture framework, the classic integration model does not function in Brussels. In the case of the integration of highly skilled migrants in a global city such as Brussels, it was shown that migrants do not attach an importance to (national) citizenship as long as they have EU citizenship. Highly skilled migrants from third countries do attach an importance to national citizenship so long as they do not have a work permit with which they are regulating their stay and provided that they plan to settle for a long time in Belgium.

Keywords: highly skilled migrants, integration, Southeast Europe, EU citizenship, Brussels

Introduction

In step with globalizing processes, there has been a trend over the past few decades towards an acceleration in and intensification of migratory movements, especially those connected with the economic activities of migrants (Freeman 2006; OECD 2016). The mobility of highly skilled persons occupies an important position in knowledge societies, especially in large global cities and their competitive economies (Sassen 1991; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Plöger and Becker 2015). But alongside research into the mobility and migration of highly skilled elites (Favell 2008b), an increasing number of studies deal with the mobility of highly skilled members of the "normal" middle class (Scott 2006), namely "the middle-class cohort of mobile professionals" (Colic-Peisker 2010). Because of the increasingly large demand for the employment of highly skilled professionals, large cities are becoming a magnet

attracting them. As concerns European countries, European integration processes have driven the arrival of highly skilled migrants in large European cities from EU member states in the framework of the common EU labour market (intra-EU labour mobility), as well as from third countries,[1] both European and from outside of Europe (Favell 2008a; Bailey and Mulder 2017). Global cities have thus become a kind of "elevator" in career development and the production of individuals' material prosperity (Beaverstock 2012).

Scott (2006) lists five structural turns that ought to be taken into account when researching migrations of educated people. These are: *social* (there is an increasing number of educated migrants because of the increase in material wealth and the educational level of the post-industrial middle class); *economic* (a strengthening in power of transnational corporations and ruling elites and the constant need for a highly skilled workforce in global cities); *technological* (the hyper-connectivity of global cities with international socio-economic and cultural networks); *cultural* (the world becomes a global market, and transnational networks widen; the international becomes culturally "normal" and is marked by the globalization of the English language, the commodification of "Otherness" and a growth in uniformity) and *geopolitical* (facilitating mobility inside the EU outside of transnational corporations on the basis of the Schengen Agreement and other European postwar agreements) (Scott 2006: 1108).

Due to their attracting a large number of different categories of migrants, not only in recent years but also throughout history, global cities are multicultural. Hence the question of the integration of various ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups imposes itself as a challenge that these cities and the migrants themselves face. The multicultural EU cities, apart from being fertile ground for researching the social integration of migrants on the local level, are becoming places where the functioning and roles of EU citizenship can be analyzed as one of the indicators of structural (system) integration. This article is based on the results of qualitative research conducted in Brussels at the end of 2014, among highly skilled migrants from the countries of Southeast (SE) Europe.

Research to-date on highly skilled migrants in Brussels has focused on the so-called *Eurocrats* – EU officials within European Union institutions (Gatti 2009; Rozanska 2011), *Expats* – highly skilled migrants of various professions who reside in Brussels for a fixed period of time (Gatti 2009) and on the mobile highly skilled elite from EU countries, the so-called *Eurostars* who work in multinational firms, the IT sector, lobbying firms, the financial sector and similar (Favell 2008b). Given that the research to-date has largely not dealt with the post-migratory phenomena of highly skilled migrants from Southeast European countries, be it those from the EU or those from third countries, this research strives to fill in these gaps.

After the introduction, the following section explains the subject, research approach and methods used, and the sample is described. The next section is dedicated

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[1] A third-country national is a citizen of a state that is neither a member of the EU nor a citizen of Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

to the theoretical-conceptual framework. Following this, the reasons why Brussels attracts highly skilled migrants are stated, alongside the features of the researched group. In the centre section, an overview of the research results is given, with respect to the system and social dimensions of integration. In the section on system integration, special attention is given to the role of (national) citizenship and EU citizenship in the integration process, while in the section on social integration, the emphasis is on feelings of belonging and the identificational dimension to integration. The final part strives to offer a reply to the basic research question of whether and how EU citizenship influences the integration of highly skilled migrants from Southeast Europe in Brussels. In addition, the need for a reconceptualization of the European perception of the idea of integration in plural, multicultural societies is indicated.

Research methods

The article is based on qualitative research conducted in 2014 among highly skilled migrants who live and work in Brussels, and who are originally from the countries of Southeast Europe. The research was conducted from September to December 2014 in Brussels. The average age of the research subjects was 37 years. Twenty interlocutors participated in the research; twelve women and eight men. All interlocutors had a university degree and one interlocutor was completing doctoral studies. Given that the research goal was to ascertain whether or not EU citizenship influenced the system and social integration of highly skilled migrants, the sample consisted of some interlocutors with an EU country of origin, and others from countries that were not (yet). Of the EU member countries, interlocutors participated from Croatia (4), Bulgaria (3), Romania (6); and of the non-EU countries, from Serbia (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), Kosovo (1) and Northern Macedonia (2). As concerns the length of stay, four interlocutors (20% of the sample) had lived and worked in Brussels for between one and three years, eleven of the interlocutors (55% of the sample) for between three and ten years, while five of them had lived in the city for longer than ten years (25% of the sample). As regards marital status, nine of the interlocutors were married, and ten were single, while one interlocutor was a single-parent living as a single-parent family. Five of the interlocutors had children. The reasons why the interlocutors had chosen Brussels as a migration destination – as a place in which they wished to work and live – were most frequently connected with their employment and career development. Three of them came to Brussels due to marriage, while there were also those in the sample who came because of a desire for a lifestyle change, or as an "escape" from societies burdened by ethnic divisions and clientelism.

As it is the capital of the EU, Brussels attracts a large number of officials who work in EU institutions. In the sample there were five such persons, of which four were originally from EU countries, while one interlocutor had Croatian citizenship

although she nationally identified as a Macedonian and her country of origin was Northern Macedonia. Besides EU institutions, the interlocutors were employed in various economic and public sectors such as the IT sector, intergovernmental and international organizations, lobbying firms, think-tank institutions, multi-national firms, educational (university) institutions, while one interlocutor was self-employed.

The interlocutors were found through a network of acquaintances from Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, later widened using the snowball sampling method. A representative sample was striven for by taking into account the length of stay in Brussels, the age, gender and the sector in which they were employed. The interviews were conducted in Croatian and English. The discussions were recorded, with the interlocutor's permission, and later transcribed.

The discussion with the interlocutors took the form of a semi-structured interview based on questions split into four areas. After an introductory section in which the interlocutors were asked for general details about their education, interests, reasons and motivations for coming to Brussels and the length of their stay there, questions followed about system (structural) and social integration. Questions on system (structural) integration related to their employment, how they came to be employed, their position on the labour market, how they legally regulated their stay, whether they had applied for Belgian citizenship, and what their living conditions were like. The questions relating to social integration concerned cultural, interactional and identificational integration, namely the acquisition of linguistic and socio-cultural competences in the host society. Interactive integration related to the acceptance and inclusion of migrants in social relations and the social networks of the host society, such as friendships, partnerships, marriages and membership of various associations, organizations etc. Identificational integration was examined through the expression of feelings of belonging and identification at the local and ethnic/national levels.

Theoretical-conceptual framework

Integration is a highly contentious concept, to be understood in various ways. The integration of migrants cannot be unambiguously determined because it is a process of social change, which is long-lasting and multidimensional (Penninx 2007). The term integration is often replaced, but sometimes also confused, with terms such as inclusion, incorporation, acculturation, adjustment, assimilation, and social cohesion. However, these terms do not, as integration does, include in them a vision of the ideal and of a homogeneous society in the normative sense. And while in North America, the term most often used for the integration of migrants is incorporation (Soysal 1994; Freeman 2004; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009), sometimes alongside assimilation, the term integration has come to be commonly used in the European

context. Despite attempts to rehabilitate the term "assimilation" in Europe, integration continues to be the most frequent means through which the process of migrants' adaptation is described in the framework of public policy, on the normative and empirical, i.e. experiential level. Besides that, the concept of integration is present in the European context because it implies historical, political and social processes connected with the emergence of nation-states and with national self-understanding (Geddes 2003). In this article, the term integration is used because, in contrast to the terms incorporation and/or inclusion, it contains in itself an institutional and normative dimension to the process of the adaptation of immigrants to the culture and institutions of the host society. It also seems suited to the analysis of various dimensions of the adaptation process (Penninx 2007; Favell 2010).

According to one very general definition, integration is a process through which one becomes accepted in a society. In such an understanding, the emphasis is on openness, rather than on a defined "situation" with an expected outcome. In the same way, the state here does not set special requirements for immigrants as concerns their integration into the host society. It instead leaves the final outcome open (Penninx 2004: 141).

Bosswick and Heckmann (2006) define integration as the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into key institutions, relations and social positions in the host society. Alluding to Lockwood, who differentiates between system and social integration, Bosswick and Heckmann analyse integration in a multifaceted fashion, extracting a structural, cultural, interactive and identificational dimension from it. According to their definition, *system* integration relates to the functioning of institutions, state organizations and mechanisms, the legal system, market and financial sector. It encompasses a structural dimension, while the *social* encompasses a cultural, interactive and identificational dimension. *Social* integration is aimed at the inclusion of individuals in the system, on creating relations between individuals, the formation of attitudes towards society as a consequence of consciously motivated interactions and collaborations, of individuals and groups (Bosswick and Heckmann 2006: 2). The distinction between *system* and *social* integration is a fertile analytical tool for social research and served for this research as well.

Questions concerning citizenship and the naturalization process are an integral part of political integration whereby it is possible to reconceptualize citizenship in several ways. One way relates to the traditional understanding of citizenship as membership in a state as a clearly defined unit (Brubaker 2010; Bauböck 2010). Such an understanding brings into question the newer approach that suggests differentiated or multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka 2003) and other approaches that view citizenship as a new post-national form based on universal human rights (Soysal 1994; Habermas 2001). When researching the system integration of migrants in host societies, especially in relation to the acquisition of rights to citizenship, it is important to research – alongside personal choice – the reasons why migrants choose or refuse to accept host society citizenship. In contemporary societies, naturalization is an individual decision and the motives for reaching such decisions should be analyzed

chiefly on the micro-level. Acquiring citizenship can be understood as an expression of loyalty to and acceptance of the new society and its values on the level of identity, or as a product of rational calculations leading to economic or political advantages (Marger 2006: 884). In that sense, naturalization, as one of the dimensions of system (structural) integration, can become the rational reply of an actor to the social environment of the host society (Esser 2003). Integration often also has a normative meaning and serves as its own kind of middle option between multiculturalism and assimilation (Bivand Erdal and Oeppen 2013: 869).

In contrast to citizenship defined in accordance with the national laws of certain states, European Union citizenship is governed in the Charter of the European Union, in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and in Article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union). According to Article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty and Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, "every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union". It is important to emphasize that EU citizenship does not replace but rather supplements national citizenship, and that every person who possesses citizenship of an EU member state is a citizen of the EU. While it does not require the existence of a people, EU citizenship is based on the existence of a single European political space from which stems rights and obligations. In the conceptual sense, EU citizenship is separate from national citizenship because it does not assume the existence of a certain nation. In that sense it is a new concept based on the fact that "the Union possesses and forms citizens who by definition do not share the same citizenship". It is therefore a citizenship undetermined by national citizenship.[2]

Research on the integration of migrants is often focused on the differences between groups and especially on the differences between migrant/ethnic minority groups and the majority population. Such an approach has been subject to numerous critiques, including among them those relating to a false perception of immigrant societies as homogenous. The famous theoretician of multiculturalism Bhikhu Parekh (2008) explains that immigration is just one source of cultural difference and that if immigration ceases, societies will continue to be culturally heterogeneous. On the other hand, neither immigrants nor immigrant groups are homogeneous entities and between themselves they differ in many aspects (Parekh 2008: 71).

Certain authors such as Axel Honneth (2007) consider that in plural, multicultural societies, integration is not based on fixed values and norms but is rather focused on the good of liberal civic rights. Post-traditional communities are "minimal" and not homogeneous. When gathered together, their members do not retain a set of common experiences nor a feeling of belonging to a collective identity, but rather "an abstract value horizon" (Honneth 2007: 258). It is therefore important to avoid an essentialist approach when defining integration, whereby the national is the most important signifier both for the majority and also for the minority (ethnic/immigrant) population. Integration increasingly becomes a process of negotiation and a

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[2] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/hr/sheet/145/gra% C4% 91ani-unije-i-njihova-prava (accessed 7. 7. 2019).

dialectic relationship between groups and individuals. Importance is not so greatly attached to the difference itself between the groups, but to the reasons why some differences are considered acceptable, yet others unacceptable (Bivand Erdal and Oeppen 2013: 870).

Using Bosswick and Heckmann's (2006) sociological analytical framework, in this study the influence of EU citizenship among highly skilled migrants from SE Europe in Brussels on system (structural) and social integration is examined. Given that the concept of integration, especially in the European context, contains within it the idea of society as a bounded, functional and structured whole (Castles 2002; Joppke and Morawski 2003; Favell 2010), the research goal was to examine the appropriateness of the concept of integration in plural, multicultural societies. The main research question in this study reads: for highly skilled migrants from SE Europe, does possessing European Union citizenship impact on their integration into Belgian society, or relatedly the *Brussels Region*?

Why Brussels?

Global cities can attract migrants for a variety of reasons, which need not always be of an economic nature nor connected with career development. The migrations of educated experts are connected as much with the global economic system as with individuals' autonomous decision making (Scott 2006).

Brussels has a reputation as a global city in the sense of corporative and political networks because within the city, apart from European Union institutions, there are numerous other international organizations such as NATO, Eurocontrol, WCO, as well as the representative offices of numerous international organizations. It is the capital of the European Union and because of the powerful mobility of EU citizens, especially after the EU enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013, it experienced great transformations in a demographic,[3] cultural, political and spatial sense. Besides Flemish and Walloon, it represents the third (Brussels) federal unit, i.e. an autonomous region encompassing 19 city municipalities, transformed into the *Brussels Region* from 1989 and emerging as a separate political entity. The official languages in Brussels are Dutch and French. While English is not an official language, it is present at all levels in the work, political and social life of the city (Van Parijs 2007). Tensions in the *Brussels Region* connected with the language question – following the official introduction of Dutch in certain Brussels municipalities with a majority Francophone population – dominated up until the middle of the 1990s. At that time, attention increasingly shifted to the socio-economic problematic of the relations between the Walloon and the Flemish. Because of the increased immigration

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[3] According to the data on population structure in relation to country of origin, in the region *Region de Bruxelles Capitale* on 1 January 2015 there were 264.738 inhabitants from other EU countries living there, while there were 11.387 inhabitants from other non-EU European countries (http://www.statistics.irisnet.be/themes/population/population#.VrZOIxgrKOO, accessed 25. 4. 2019).

of foreigners and the increasing presence of the English language, as well as the bi-lingualism of the majority of local people from Brussels, both among the Walloon and Flemish, Brussels today represents a specific combination of a multinational, multilingual and multicultural environment, which influences the transformation of the city at all levels (De Winter and Baudewyns 2009; Favell 2008b: 48). Because of its multinational character, the city is not so burdened by national divisions and history in the way that some cities in the South of Belgium in Wallonia, or further to the North in Flanders are, or as are certain key cities in other states. It is also a rare example of a capital city that is not the centre of a single dominant national society. Namely, it is not the capital city of Wallonia, although 85% of the inhabitants are Francophone (Favell 2008b: 47). After Dubai (83%), Brussels is the city which, on a global scale, has the largest portion of foreign-born inhabitants (62%) and is therefore quite rightly considered the (European) multicultural city *par excellence* (International Organization for Migration 2015: 38–39). The proportion of foreign inhabitants is much larger in Brussels than in large European metropolises such as London, Amsterdam, or Paris (ibid.). Brussels also has a convenient geographical position and is well-connected via fast trains (Thalys, Eurostar, TGV) with Paris, Amsterdam, London, Cologne and other large European cities.

The research showed that achieving career goals and finding desired employ-ment were the most important reasons for interlocutors' moving to Brussels. Brus-sels was chosen due to employment in EU institutions, as a logical continuation to the completion of university studies. Having completed studies in European Law, European Studies, or in Business Administration, they were qualified for work in EU institutions.

> I didn't move to Brussels as such. I moved to the European Commission. I wanted to work for the European Commission. The fact that the European Union is headquartered in Brussels brought me here. So if the European Com-mission was in another city I would be there. My choice was not Brussels but the European Commission. I am happy with this. I like the job a lot and Bel-gian society is also very nice. The people here are very relaxed and they stick to the rules. (F, 45, from Romania)

> I have a Masters in European Studies and Business Administration and Eco-nomics. You are very well qualified to work in Brussels if you study European Studies and Business Administration. (F, 31, from Romania)

The corruption of society, clientelist politics and a "bad" atmosphere in their coun-tries of origin were also reasons the interlocutors considered important when reach-ing a decision on migrating:

> The reason why I came here is that I didn't like the atmosphere in Croatia. It wasn't so much about money as about the social environment. Even today, lit-tle has changed as concerns corruption, nepotism and so on. I was sick of the lack of professionalism. (F, 51, from Croatia)

Four interlocutors from the ex-Yugoslav republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia) emphasized how they had wanted to leave their countries not only because of the lack of employment prospects, but also because of the marks that the military conflicts and ethnic divisions had left on their societies.

> I was a witness to the atrocious events in Sarajevo. We were, my family, in Sarajevo in 1992 and we lived through all that horror […] Though the war is behind us, socially the consequences of the conflict are still felt. (M, 39, from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Migrants from Eastern Europe who work in Brussels or in other Western European cities tend to be from a higher social background than the majority of their co-patriots in their country of origin than is the case with migrants who come from Western European countries (Favell 2008a). This is also the case with the interlocutors in this study. The average highly skilled migrant from SE Europe comes from a family with a high level of social and cultural capital in which at least one of the parents has a university degree, while there are some interlocutors who have two university degrees. The majority speak at least two foreign languages, while some also had experience of living abroad before their arrival in Brussels.

> I have moved around and changed schools a lot in life. I come from an educated family. The way in which we lived in Sarajevo before the war is not so different from the way in which local Belgian people live here. My life before and now does not differ drastically because I am a workaholic and the majority of my time is spent in the office and there are no big differences here. Work-home and doing jobs around the house is the norm. Although Brussels offers many more cultural opportunities and events, Sarajevo is now waking up in this sense too. (F, 39, from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

System integration

Drawing on Bosswick and Heckmann's (2006) analytical framework in which system and social integration is analyzed through structural, cultural, interactive and identificational dimensions, the research results will be analyzed. System (structural) integration, according to Bosswick and Heckmann's model (2006: 9), relates to immigrants' approach to positions and rights inside of key social institutions such as the labour market, education, housing, social rights, the health system and the acquisition of citizenship.

In the research, special attention has been paid to the position and satisfaction of interlocutors with their employment and with regulating their stay, i.e. with gaining the right to citizenship as key indicators of system integration.

The freedom of movement of persons, goods, services and capital is one of the greatest achievements of the European Union, upon which the EU single market

is based. Inside the European Union space, "individuals can now build their own lives, careers, networks, relations and families beyond the nation-state containers that once defined personal identities and personal histories" (Favell 2008b: 3). Such a kind of freedom of movement is not a global, but a European phenomenon *par excellence*. It is a unique legal and political construction in the modern world in which the individual has the right to move, travel, live, work, study and retire – unrestricted (ibid.).

The research showed that the interlocutors most definitely "feel" the advantages of EU citizenship and of the freedom of movement, employment and settling, which the EU has made possible for them. The mobility the EU passport facilitates is visible in various areas. Apart from the labour market, the euro-integration process and the increased mobility (conditional on it) has influenced the areas of sport, tourism, culture etc. (Delanty 2005).

> The only problem is with the access. When you have exercised your right to free movement and then you have realized how lucky you are to be an EU member. There is no border, no different currency, no problem. Nobody will stop me or do a check on me. You just don't feel that you are going to a new country, a different country. With a non-EU passport it is always a matter of what kind of permit you have, how long was the duration of the permit, what does the permit allow you to do? (F, 33, from Bulgaria)

However, several interlocutors with third country origins (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia), employed in firms and international corporations, bore witness to the special mechanisms and employment procedures whereby gaining a work permit was a condition for gaining a residence permit. Hence, regulating the right to reside was strictly connected with a work permit.

> I came to work for an international organization and independently applied to work in a European organization and when I arrived, they sorted out my residence, which was strictly connected with my work, i.e. my work permit. I don't have a work permit because I work in an international organization. I have a special identity card. (F, 39, from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

> At the time when I arrived, there was great demand for IT experts, and so everything was arranged for me and my family, even our plane ticket was paid for. We had a special employee benefits package. We didn't even have to pack our things. They sent an agency who did it all for us. (M, 46, from Serbia)

Outside of such corporate schemes, some interlocutors from third countries came to Brussels through marriage or through family reunification mechanisms. For them, despite being highly skilled, it was more difficult to find suitable employment, especially as in addition to English and French, they did not speak Dutch. They also encountered, as did some EU citizens, the problem of having their university degrees recognized, e.g. those with degrees in fields such as law or medicine. Those who did

not succeed in finding work in line with their interests, used different knowledges at their disposal in order to work and acquire a certain income.

> I play the piano and offer private piano lessons. I have a problem with getting my degree recognized as I completed university studies in law in Serbia, but my husband, who is an IT expert, hasn't had any problems with university or degree recognition. In order to have mine recognized, I would have to pass a load of exams and speak French and Dutch fluently. (F, 45, from Serbia)

While Brussels is a city in which the highly skilled can find work, even if – English aside – they do not speak French and Dutch, the probability of finding work is much higher if they speak those languages. Interlocutors coming from third countries are especially conscious of this; especially those who did not come to Brussels under head-hunting and similar employment schemes.

> It is easier if you are EU, chiefly because of the work permit. I haven't looked for work in my area of expertise, because I have to learn French well first, and knowledge of Dutch would also be desirable. I came here because my wife got a job in the European Commission as she has EU citizenship. (M, 32, from Northern Macedonia)

Interlocutors who have lived for longer than ten years in Belgium had come across a variety of experiences on the labour market, especially in situations where they were looking for new employment, but also when searching for accommodation. They also mention how Brussels differs from other cities in Belgium, where discrimination exists when finding employment via agencies, as some agencies do not favour employing foreigners.

> I was unemployed for 13 months after being dismissed from DHL. If you are Belgian and looking for work, you will get it immediately, if you are a foreigner you have to be really persistent and have some luck. Everyone finds employment here via agencies, after two years in J&J, I got a permanent contract. I have lived in Leuven for a long time and there you have to know Dutch, not just have some knowledge of the language, but really know it. This is because normally, irrespective of your degree, you will do poorly paid jobs. Some agencies tell you explicitly that they do not want to employ foreigners. (F, 35, from Croatia)

Because of the high pressure exerted by EU officials on certain parts of the city, it is extremely difficult to find affordable accommodation. Some interlocutors emphasize that discrimination exists on the flat rental market, with respect to gender, country of origin, and length of employment contract. For all those who have a more modest income, who are at the start of their career, such as the so-called *stagiaires*, Brussels is a very expensive city, especially for accommodation costs.

> I found a place, it was crazy. This is not like in Bulgaria where you meet with a landlord or meet with an agent, one-to-one. Here it is like open to all the

candidates and I went to look at an apartment along with 50 [other] people. Everyone goes there. The landlord requires documents, my CV, my passport, my work contract. They pick the best. It almost felt like a second job interview. What didn't help me was that I was Bulgarian, I was single, and I had a one-year contract. Lot of "stagiaires" are looking for an apartment in Brussels. (F, 33, from Bulgaria)

The role of citizenship

One significant feature of Brussels is the fact that it is home to many who will never become Belgian, i.e. never seek citizenship and become Belgian citizens. In his exhaustive study *Eurostars and Eurocities*, Favell (2008b) also states that Brussels has many inhabitants who feel like that city is their home, but who will never be integrated in a formal manner through gaining citizenship. Interlocutors who have EU citizenship and an employment contract of indefinite duration connected with their residence permit, generally do not apply for Belgian citizenship as they do not feel Belgian, while the residence permit fulfils all their civic demands.

> I didn't seek citizenship as it absolutely isn't crucial for me. I have a residence permit and that is exactly what I need. I didn't seek citizenship as I don't feel like a citizen of Belgium even though I have been living here since the year 2000. A permanent residence permit completely satisfies me for what I am here. (M, 48, from Croatia)

Most interlocutors, irrespective of the length of their stay in Brussels, do not identify as Belgian in an ethnic/national sense, but rather feel a continued belonging to their ethnic/national group. The reasons for this lie, on the one hand, in the strong connection with family living in their country of origin, and on the other, in the possibility that they will return to their country of origin at some point.

> I grew up in Sarajevo and I don't have a reason to apply for citizenship as I feel like a Bosnian. I have come to love Belgium and feel that my home is here, but I miss my parents and my family. I am still single and I don't know what turns my life will take. I am quite flexible, I accept the possibility that I might meet somebody tomorrow, desire to go somewhere different, desire to return home to Bosnia. (F, 39, from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

> Citizenship doesn't interest me as I sincerely hope that I will return to Croatia. This is what I hope for, but it doesn't mean I will. Definitely not before I retire. Yet it's questionable at what age I will be able to retire, because the reason I came here was because I didn't like the [social] atmosphere in Croatia. My return depends on this. Perhaps I will spend my retirement here but stay a month or two each year in Croatia. (F, 51, from Croatia)

Four interlocutors have Belgian citizenship and in the political sense they are Belgian. Irrespective of whether they come from EU or non-EU countries, these interlocutors do not feel Belgian, nor do they identify as such. Acquired citizenship, along with the fact that they are Belgian in the political sense, does not make them Belgian in the identity sense. Because of the possibilities of taking dual citizenship, the majority of them have not foregone the citizenship of the state in which they were born. Instead, they strategically choose in which situations they make use of citizenship gained through naturalization, and in which that acquired through birth. Based on the example of the interlocutor from Croatia, it is obvious that citizenship can be sought for instrumental reasons and it need not reflect political sentiments. In such cases, the passport becomes a means of facilitation, making travel less troublesome or offering security in a politically unpredictable world (Marger 2006: 894).

> I always say that I am a Croat. In Jordan and Israel when they asked me where I was from, I would say I was a Croat who lives in Belgium, although I now have Belgian citizenship. I have two passports and dual citizenship and I choose. I went to Iran on my Croatian passport, and to Jordan on my Belgian one. (F, 35, from Croatia)

While the interlocutors who gained Belgian citizenship continue to feel like members of the ethnic/national group of their origin on the level of identity, they do not deny their satisfaction with their life in Brussels and the fact that they are not defined by ethnic/national belonging. In addition, some of them state that they came to Belgium in order for their children to grow up in an environment that is, in their opinion, more prosperous than the one they have left behind.

> Here there are many foreigners. You, here, do not have the impression that you are a foreigner. Belgium is a state that really offers you a lot, here you can really achieve a great deal. We didn't come here for a few years, we didn't come here to later return to Serbia, but to start a new life because the situation there was too much for us […] When we arrived, I was pregnant with a child […] There is not a single moment here when I feel like a foreigner as I walk the street. And my children are completely integrated. They speak the language; in school they are excellent pupils. (F, 45, from Serbia)

Social integration

According to Bosswick and Heckmann's definition, social integration relates to the inclusion of individuals in society, the creation of relations between individuals, the formation of attitudes towards society, motivated interaction and the collaboration of individuals and groups (Bosswick and Heckmann 2006).

Irrespective of whether they had Belgian citizenship or not, the research participants emphasized that they had very little contact with Belgians, i.e. with locals. One

reason, among others, for this was that many foreigners had settled in Brussels, both those who had come for work and also other categories of migrants, while the local inhabitants were leaving Brussels (Favell and Martiniello 1999: 17), partly due to an increase in everyday living costs.

Numerous studies show that the work environment is key for establishing social interaction between local and migrant workers, and in the case of highly skilled migrants, the workplace significantly influences social incorporation on the local level (Beaverstock 2002; Plöger and Becker 2015). The results of this research show that the interlocutors have contact with Belgians in the workplace, but that this contact is very superficial and cannot be called friendship. All interlocutors emphasize that they socialize most of all with persons of migrant origin, irrespective of country of origin, while a small number state that they have Belgians among their friends.

> At work most of us are foreigners because it's an American multinational firm and Belgians are in the minority. My team at work organizes dinners and we go out on the town together, but Belgians hardly ever oblige. This is because they have their own life, their own friends; they are really organized and they aren't spontaneous like us. With them you have to arrange everything three weeks in advance so that they can write it in their diary and they aren't spontaneous at all. So in general they don't join us. But I have Belgians among my friends because I have been here a really long time, though I am not really that close to them. My best friend is a woman from the Philippines and I know I can always count on her. (F, 35, from Croatia)

Establishing friendships, socializing etc. happens in one's free time as well, through engaging in various kinds of activities.

> I go to mass in English at the *Sacre Coeur* Church. I am the only Croat there. There are around a hundred of us there and the same people keep coming. They have all got to know each other and have become close in the meantime. The priest is from India. For Christmas, we had a small buffet and hung out together. It's a nice small community. (F, 34, from Croatia)

> At the beginning I was more focused on the Romanian community. It comes in very handy and can give you a bit of advice. But I have a lot of friends and a wide circle of acquaintances from all over the world because I do a lot of extra activities. I have friends from Russia, Latvia, Peru, the Balkan region, Rwanda, the USA. My boyfriend is Euroasian, his mother is from Indonesia and his father is from Belgium. (F, 31, from Romania)

The interlocutors also mention that there is an evident trend of local Belgians not mixing with so-called *Expats* in terms of places to go out, like bars, restaurants etc., and that the Belgians do not wish to "mix" with Expats.

> But all the international friends that I know here, they don't have Belgian friends or very few. Belgians, they have their own social environment with the

people they grew up with, they studied with. They have their own surround-
ings. I would say my impression is that the two communities, the Belgium
community and international one, do not mix much. Even the places where
you would go out in the evenings, the restaurants and bars. They are also kind
of stamped as expat bars. Expat restaurants, and proper Belgians won't mingle
with Expats. (F, 31, from Bulgaria)

As concerns language, the interlocutors emphasized that besides English as the
language dominating in their private and work communications, knowledge of
the French language is also desirable, given that Brussels is a predominantly Fran-
cophone environment. Although, alongside French, Dutch is the official language
of the *Brussels Region*, only a few interlocutors speak Dutch. The majority of them
agree that it is also possible to function "normally" in Brussels without knowledge
of Dutch. However, the interlocutors – especially those coming from third countries
– emphasize that knowledge of Dutch increases one's chances on the labour market.
Just as earlier research has shown (Favell 2008a; Gatti 2009; Rozanska 2011), the
integration of highly skilled migrants in Brussels has an international character. It
occurs within "international strata", which are a kind of social cocoon (Rozanska
2011: 295). Thus, in multicultural, global cities, it is not possible to apply a defini-
tion of integration or "local incorporation" through becoming anchored in the social
networks of citizen – "locals" as some authors suggest (Beaverstock 2002).

A feeling of belonging

It is necessary to grasp how increasing mobility and the globalization of migrations
influence personal biographies and the life trajectories of individuals in the sense
of moving from one place to another. Multilocality, i.e. finding a place for different
worlds, nations, religions, cultures and continents in a person's individual life should
also be considered. Due to technological advances, especially the development of
communications technologies (ICTs), new transnational social habitus are emerg-
ing, suited to the development of cosmopolitan values, deterritorialized identities
and special kinds of belonging (Nedelcu 2012: 1340–1343).

People ask me do you feel Bulgarian? I tell them that I feel cosmopolitan. I
feel that I am a citizen of the world. Of course, I say I am Bulgarian. But If you
ask me do you feel you belong to Bulgaria I will tell you I belong to the world;
I don't feel attached to Bulgaria. This is really funny because I don't feel any
homesickness. And I feel that I am in the right place, finally. My family is also
very mobile. When I have the chance, I go home, my parents also come to visit
me. Lots of my colleagues have come to work here in Brussels. The circulation
is so intense. (F, 33, from Bulgaria)

Interlocutors who had moved around a lot and who come from ethnic/nationally
mixed families, some possessing dual citizenship, experienced a feeling of belonging

to a specific nation, country/place, or ethnic group in a very fluid manner and were not burdened by such belonging. The migrations in which they participate are often temporary and very fluid (*liquid migration*) (Engbersen and Snel 2013). The case of the Macedonian woman with Croatian citizenship – thanks to one Croatian parent – and who had moved around and lived in several countries during her life, is an example of a deterritorialized identity.

> Yes, I feel that I belong here, I don't have a problem with that. I have lived in Croatia, Macedonia, Austria and now Belgium. I lived in Macedonia for 22 years, in Austria for 6 years. My father and mother live and work in Luxembourg, they are also translators, my brother studies in Holland, I am in Belgium and my grandmother and grandfather are Macedonians living in Slavonia, Croatia. I don't have a problem with belonging. With me it is really flexible and I have moved many times. (F, 32, from Northern Macedonia with Croatian citizenship)

Among the interlocutors who had lived in Brussels for longer than two years, a feeling of belonging to the city was present. The majority of them stated that they did not feel like foreigners, given the very diverse composition of the population, but also the "welcoming politics" of Belgian society towards immigration. The openness of Belgium towards immigrants' in-migration was also manifest through the liberal migration policies, especially the citizenship policy (Martiniello 2003). It can be concluded that for the interlocutors who had Belgian citizenship, as well as for those who had lived in Belgium for longer than five years, a feeling of belonging to the city or relatedly, to the local environment, was more prominent than national belonging (see Sassen 1991). In part, the reason for this was the specificity of the national context, i.e. the bi-nationality of Belgian society. Some of the interlocutors, nevertheless, did not experience Brussels as a place towards which they felt a sense of belonging, and in which they were integrated. Yet they also no longer felt a belonging towards their country of origin, i.e. to the places where they had earlier lived. That loss of home was felt by some interlocutors as a double absence (Sayad 1999), which generated a feeling of lethargy, frustration and apathy in them:

> I can't say that I am integrated here. We [he and his wife] are not integrated. We are just living here, but not for good. My home is not in Romania anymore, but I don't feel that I am at home here. We are just living here. I can't say that I have a home anymore. Home is where we are but I don't feel that my home is here. It is a kind of, I don't know, losing home. (M, 53, from Romania)

Conclusion

Global cities that attract migrants are becoming places in which not only *elites* and *subclasses*, i.e. *lower social strata* (Sassen 1998; Hamnett 1994) find their home, but

also groups who are part of the *"normal" middle classes* (Scott 2006). Highly skilled migrants from Southeast European countries living in Brussels are a heterogeneous group with respect to their countries of origin, types of interests, domains of employment, motives for coming to Belgium, gaining the right to work and residence permits, gaining citizenship rights, social competences, feelings of belonging etc. Therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the "type" of highly skilled migrant from Southeast Europe in Brussels and their kind of integration. For most interlocutors, the main reason for their coming to Brussels was work-related. Several of them stated that they had left their country of origin due to clientelist politics and that their professional advancement had been blocked. For them, moving abroad meant the beginning of their being fairly valued in accordance with their individual talents and achievements. In addition, Brussels attracted a number of migrants because of its environment, whereby there was no assimilatory pressure from a dominant national culture. This was especially important for migrants coming from the ex-Yugoslav republics affected by the ethnic conflicts and wars of the 1990s.

In relation to the research question of the influence of EU citizenship on the integration of the researched group, it can be concluded that possessing EU citizenship, i.e. an EU passport, does influence the integration outcome.

All interlocutors were conscious of the benefits an EU passport offers. Apart from making it easier to cross state borders and facilitating mobility, EU citizenship facilitates the easier finding of work on the labour market, namely automatic access to the labour market without needing to get a work and/or residence permit. Migrants who do not have EU citizenship must dispose of a large amount of human, social and cultural capital in order to succeed in achieving international mobility without significant difficulties (Favell 2008a). This research has confirmed that highly skilled migrants from third countries must have greater linguistic competences (speaking French, Dutch and English) than citizens of EU member states in order to improve their employment prospects and to secure a work permit. Besides that, the problem of having university degrees recognized was evident, although this also affects EU citizens. Interlocutors from third countries who cannot find adequate employment and/or get their university degrees recognized, use their own cultural capital for employment purposes. The research results show that naturalization becomes an issue of one's "personal relationship with the state", with the decision on the (non-)acceptance of citizenship being made on the micro-level. Yet in previous times, citizenship was awarded or rejected on the basis of membership of an ethnic group (Marger 2006: 893).

The impact that EU citizenship has on the integration of the researched group is smaller in the case of social integration than system integration. For migrants not included in the labour market, social interaction is somewhat weaker than for those who are employed: both contact with the local population and with foreigners. It has been shown that the work environment is important for highly skilled migrants' establishing of contacts, and that most migrants spend a significant amount of time at work. Interlocutors who had been in Brussels for longer than five years had de-

veloped a feeling of belonging to the city as a place in which they have a home, but alongside that, no change had occurred on the level of identity. It has been shown that the migration experiences of interlocutors who had often changed their place of residence, studied abroad and travelled a lot, encouraged the development of a cosmopolitan identity, multifaceted belonging and transnational social habitus. However, for some there was also a so-called feeling of a "double absence".

Given that Belgium is sharply split between Flemish and Walloon culture and is not even itself integrated into a single national society, it should not be expected that the immigrants would have integrated into a national culture. The idea of a nationally directed concept of migrants' integration, which reigns in European nation-states, does not function in Belgium (Favell 2008b: 3). The integration of highly skilled migrants in Brussels has an international character and, as earlier research has shown, occurs within "international strata". This is the reason why it is not possible to apply a classic definition of integration in Brussels. If, in contemporary societies, there generally does exist something like a dominant culture that immigrants ought to adopt in order to integrate into the host society, the question can be posed of what it contains and who practices it? For the many among the highly skilled migrants who do not intend to settle permanently in the country they have moved to, nor manage to develop deep relationships with the local population, integration occurs in a selective and strategically deliberate fashion.

It has been shown that with the integration of highly skilled migrants in a global city such as Brussels, migrants do not attach an importance to (national) citizenship so long as they have EU citizenship. Highly skilled immigrants from third states (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia) attach an instrumental importance to national citizenship, because acquiring citizenship enables them to have greater work mobility and more opportunities on the labour market, as well as the other benefits of a welfare state. This especially relates to interlocutors who do not plan an imminent return to their country of origin.

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Utjecaj građanstva Europske unije na integraciju migranata. Primjer visokoobrazovanih migranata iz jugoistočne Europe u Bruxellesu

Migracije visokoobrazovanih zauzimaju važno mjesto u društvima znanja, posebno u velikim svjetskim gradovima gdje postoji potreba za njihovim radom. Rad se temelji na kvalitativnom istraživanju provedenom 2014. godine u Bruxellesu na uzorku (N=20) visokoobrazovanih migranata iz jugoistočne Europe. Primjenom analitičkog okvira Wolfganga Bosswicka i Friedricha Heckmanna (2006) u istraživanju se ispituje utjecaj građanstva Europske unije na sistemsku i socijalnu dimenziju integracije istraživane skupine. Posebna pažnja u okviru sistemske integracije pridaje se stjecanju i realiziranju prava na državljanstvo, a kod socijalne integracije identifikacijskoj dimenziji integracije. Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su da posjedovanje građanstva Europske unije utječe na integracijske ishode pri čemu u većoj mjeri u slučaju sistemske integracije, a u manjoj kada je riječ o socijalnoj integraciji. S obzirom na to da se integracija visokoobrazovanih migranata u Bruxellesu odvija u okviru "međunarodne strate", a ne u okviru nacionalne kulture, klasični integracijski obrazac u Bruxellesu ne funkcionira. Pokazalo se da u slučaju integracije visokoobrazovanih migranata u globalnom gradu kao što je Bruxelles migranti ne pridaju važnost (nacionalnom) državljanstvu ako imaju građanstvo Europske unije. Visokoobrazovani migranti iz trećih država pridaju mu važnost tek tada kada nemaju radnu dozvolu kojom reguliraju i boravak te ako se u Belgiji planiraju trajno nastaniti.

Ključne riječi: visokoobrazovani migranti, integracija, jugoistočna Europa, građanstvo Europske unije, Bruxelles