

Belgium

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European election results

The number of seats for Belgium in the European Parliament (EP) was further reduced from 24 to 22 in 2009 (it was 25 in 1999). As for the European elections, the country is divided in three electoral colleges, which means that the two main language communities sent one MEP less than in 2004, while the guaranteed German-speaking seat remained. In French-speaking Belgium, both of the two largest parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and the Reform Movement (MR), lost one seat, whereas the Greens gained one. In Flanders, the Socialists also lost one seat, and so did the extreme-right Flemish Interest (VB). The Lijst De Decker therefore managed to get its first elected MEP. In the German-speaking community, the Christian Social Party kept its mandate.

Changes in cabinet

For composition of Van Rompuy I, see Rihoux et al. (2009: 906–907); this cabinet was installed on 30 December 2008 and received a vote of confidence in Parliament on 2 January.

There was a major reshuffle in the aftermath of June's regional and European elections, and more precisely in mid-July at the time of cabinet formation at the regional level. After the reshuffle, the federal government consisted of 15 ministers, seven secretaries of state and one government commissioner (the latter was added to the previous situation). The balance of forces within the coalition also changed. The Christian-Democrat and Flemish Party (CD&V) now had five full ministerial posts (instead of four previously), increasing its overall weight in government to seven (instead of six previously) and the Open

Table 1. Elections for the European Parliament

Date of election:	7 June 2009			
Total number of seats:	22			
Electorate:	7,760,436			
Total votes cast:	7,014,415 (90.4%)			
Total valid votes:	6,571,802 (93.7%)			
Party	Number and percentage of votes	Change since 2004	Number and percentage of seats	Change since 2004
<i>Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams</i> – Christian-Democrat and Flemish (CD&V), Flemish-speaking	948,123 (14.4)	-3.0 ¹	3 (13.6)	0 ²
<i>Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten</i> – Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD), Flemish-speaking	837,884 (12.8)	-0.8 ³	3 (13.6)	0
<i>Parti Socialiste</i> – Socialist Party (PS), French-speaking	714,947 (10.9)	-2.7	3 (13.6)	-1
<i>Vlaams Belang</i> – Flemish Interest (VB), Flemish-speaking	647,170 (9.9)	-4.5	2 (9.1)	-1
<i>Mouvement Réformateur</i> – Reform Movement (MR), French-speaking	640,092 (9.7)	-0.6	2 (9.1)	-1
<i>Ecolo</i> – Ecologists (Greens), French-speaking	562,081 (8.6)	4.9	2 (9.1)	+1
<i>Social Progressief Alternatief</i> – Social Progressive Alternative (SPa), Flemish-speaking	539,393 (8.2)	-2.8 ⁴	2 (9.1)	-1
<i>Nieuw-Vlaams Alliantie</i> – New Flemish Alliance (NV-A), Flemish-speaking	402,545 (6.1)		1 (4.5)	0
<i>Centre Démocrate Humaniste</i> – Democrat Humanist Centre (CDH), French-Speaking	327,824 (5.0)	-0.7	1 (4.5)	0
<i>Groen!</i> – Green!, Flemish-speaking	322,149 (4.9)	-0.05	1 (4.5)	0
<i>Lijst De Decker</i> – De Decker's List (LDD), Flemish-speaking	296,699 (4.5)	-	1 (4.5)	+1
<i>Front National</i> – National Front (FN), French-speaking	87,706 (1.3)	-1.5	0 (0.0)	0
<i>Christlich Sozialen Partei</i> – Christian Social Party (CSP), German-speaking	12,475 (0.2)	-0.05	1 (4.5)	0
Others	192,555 (3.0)	-1.3	-	-

Notes: ¹ In comparison with the CD&V/NV-A alliance in 2004. ² The fourth MEP of the CD&V/NV-A electoral alliance was an NV-A member in 2004, who kept her seat as NV-A candidate in 2009; hence, the CD&V kept the same number of MEPs as they had in 2004 and the NV-A actually kept its only MEP. ³ In comparison with the VLD-Vivant alliance in 2004. ⁴ In comparison with the SPa/Spirit alliance in 2004.

Table 2. Cabinet composition of Van Rompuy I

For composition of Van Rompuy I, see Rihoux et al. (2009: 906–907).

Changes during 2009:

- Prime Minister/*Eerste minister*: H. Van Rompuy (1947 male, CD&V) *resigned* on 25 November to become President of the European Council, and was *replaced* by Y. Leterme (1960 male, CD&V)
- Minister of Foreign Affairs/*Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken*: K. De Gucht (1954 male, Open VLD) *resigned* on 17 July and was *replaced* by Y. Leterme (1960 male, CD&V)
- Minister of Social Integration, Pensions and Urban Policy/*Ministre de l'Intégration sociale, des Pensions et des Grandes villes*: M. Arena (1966 female, PS) *resigned* on 17 July and was *replaced* by L. Onkelinx (1958 female, PS) for Social Integration and by M. Daerden (1949 male, PS) for Pensions and Urban Policy
- Secretary of State of the Disabled (attached to the Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health)/*Secrétaire d'Etat aux Personnes handicapées (adjointe à la Ministre des Affaires sociales et de la Santé publique)*: J. Fernandez-Fernandez (1972 female, PS) *resigned* on 16 July and was *replaced* by J-M Delizée (1959 male, PS)
- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Budget/*Vice-Eerste Minister en Minister van Begroting*: G. Van Hengel (1958 male, Open VLD)
- Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy/*Minister van Migratie- en asielbeleid*: A. Turtelboom (1967 female, Open VLD) *resigned* on 17 July and was *replaced* by J. Milquet (1961 female, CDH), the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities who also took joint charge of Migration and Asylum Policy, by H. Van Rompuy (1947 male, CD&V), the Prime Minister who also took joint charge of the coordination of Migration and Asylum Policy, and by M. Wathelet (1977 male, CDH), the Secretary of State who also became Secretary of State for both these competencies, adjunct to the Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister, respectively
- Minister of Home Affairs/*Minister van Binnenlandse zaken*: G. De Padt (1954 male, Open VLD) *resigned* on 17 July and was *replaced* by A. Turtelboom (1967 female, VLD). G. De Padt became Government Commissioner, attached to the Minister of Budget/*Regeringscommissaris, toegevoegd aan de Minister van Begroting*
- Secretary of State of Struggle against Poverty (attached to the Minister of Social Integration, Pensions and Urban Policy)/*Secrétaire d'Etat à la Lutte contre la pauvreté (adjoint à la Ministre de l'Intégration sociale, des Pensions et des Grandes villes)*: J.-M. Delizée (1959 male, PS) *resigned* on 17 July and was *replaced* by Ph. Courard (1966 male, PS), but this time attached to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, L. Onkelinx (1958 female, PS), who became also took charge of Social Integration
- Secretary of State charged with the Preparation of the European Union Presidency (attached to the Minister of Foreign Affairs)/*Secrétaire d'Etat chargé de la Préparation de la Présidence européenne (adjoint au Ministre des Affaires étrangères)*: O. Chastel (1964 male, MR) became Secretary of State for European Affairs, attached to the Minister of Foreign Affairs/*Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires Européennes (adjoint au Ministre des Affaires étrangères)*
- Secretary of State of Budget (attached to the Prime Minister) and Secretary of State of Family Policy (attached to the Minister of Employment) and regarding aspects of Personal and Family Law (attached to the Minister of Justice)/*Secrétaire d'Etat au Budget (adjoint au Premier Ministre) et Secrétaire d'Etat à la Politique des familles (adjoint à la Ministre de l'Emploi) et en ce qui concerne les aspects du droit des personnes et de la famille (adjoint au Ministre de la Justice)*: M. Wathelet (1977 male, CDH) became Secretary of State of Budget (attached to the Minister of Budget), Secretary of State for Migration and Asylum Policy, (attached to the Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy), and regarding the Coordination of Migration Policy, attached to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State of Family Policy (attached to the Minister of Employment) and regarding aspects of Personal and Family Law (attached to the Minister of Justice), and Secretary of State for Federal Cultural Institutions (attached to the Prime Minister)/*Secrétaire d'Etat au Budget (adjoint au Ministre du Budget), Secrétaire d'Etat à la Politique de Migration et d'Asile (adjoint à la Ministre chargée de la Politique de Migration et d'Asile), et en ce qui concerne la Coordination de la Politique de migration et d'asile, adjoint au Premier Ministre, Secrétaire d'Etat à la Politique des familles (adjoint à la Ministre de l'Emploi) et en ce qui concerne les aspects du droit des personnes et de la famille (adjoint au Ministre de la Justice, et Secrétaire d'Etat aux Institutions culturelles fédérales, adjoint au Premier Ministre)*
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Table 3. Cabinet composition of Leterme II

A. The party composition of Leterme II: Date of investiture: 25 November 2009		
Party	Number and percentage of parliamentary seats	Number and percentage of cabinet posts ¹
<i>Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams</i> – Christian-Democrat & Flemish (CD&V), Flemish-speaking	23 (24.5)	7 (30.4/29.2)
<i>Mouvement Réformateur</i> – Reform Movement (MR), French-speaking	23 (24.5)	5 (21.7/20.8)
<i>Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten</i> – Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD), Flemish-speaking	18 (19.1)	4 (17.4/16.7)
<i>Parti Socialiste</i> – Socialist Party (PS), French-speaking	20 (21.3)	5 (21.7/20.8)
<i>Centre Démocrate Humaniste</i> – Democrat Humanist Centre (CDH), French-speaking	10 (10.6)	2 (8.7/8.3)
B. Cabinet members of Leterme II:		
Prime Minister, coordination of Migration and Asylum Policy/ <i>Eerste minister, belast met de Coördinatie van het Migratie- en Asielbeleid/Premier ministre, en charge de la coordination de la Politique de Migration et d'Asile</i> : Y. Leterme (1960 male, CD&V)		
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Institutional Reforms/ <i>Vice-Premier ministre, Ministre des Finances et des Réformes institutionnelles</i> : D. Reynders (1958 male, MR)		
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, in charge of Social Integration/ <i>Vice-Première ministre, Ministre des Affaires sociales et de la Santé publique, chargée de l'Intégration Sociale</i> : L. Onkelinx (1958 female, PS)		
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Institutional Reforms/ <i>Vice-Eerste Minister, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken en Institutionele Hervormingen</i> : S. Vanackere (1964 male, CD&V)		
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities, in charge of Migration and Asylum Policy/ <i>Vice-Première ministre, Ministre de l'Emploi et de l'Égalité des chances</i> , chargée de la Politique de Migration et d'Asile: J. Milquet (1961 female, CDH)		
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Budget/ <i>Vice-Eerste Minister en Minister van Begroting</i> : G. Van Hengel (1958 male, Open VLD)		
Minister of Pensions and Urban Policy/ <i>Ministre des Pensions et des Grandes villes</i> : M. Daerden (1949 male, PS)		
Minister of Justice/ <i>Minister van Justitie</i> : S. De Clercq (1951 male, CD&V)		
Minister of Small and Medium-sized Companies, the Self-employed, the Agriculture and Science Policy/ <i>Ministre des PME, des Indépendants, de l'Agriculture et de la Politique scientifique</i> : S. Laruelle (1965 female, MR)		
Minister of Defence/ <i>Minister van Landsverdediging</i> : P. De Crem (1962 male, CD&V)		
Minister of Climate and Energy/ <i>Ministre du Climat et de l'Énergie</i> : P. Magnette (1971 male, PS)		
Minister of Development Cooperation/ <i>Ministre de la Coopération au développement</i> : Ch. Michel (1975 male, MR)		
Minister of Civil Service, Public Companies and Institutional Reforms/ <i>Minister van Ambtenarenzaken, Overheidsbedrijven en Institutionele Hervormingen</i> : I. Vervotte (1977 female, CD&V)		
Minister of Enterprise and Simplification/ <i>Minister voor Ondernemen en Vereenvoudigen</i> : V. Van Quickenborne (1973 male, VLD)		

Table 3. Continued.

Minister of Home Affairs/*Minister van Binnenlandse zaken*: A. Turtelboom (1967 female, VLD)

Secretary of State of Mobility (attached to the Prime Minister)/*Staatssecretaris voor Mobiliteit (toegevoegd aan de Eerste Minister)*: E. Schouppe (1942 male, CD&V)

Secretary of State of the Coordination of the Struggle against Fraud (attached to the Prime Minister) and Secretary of State attached to the Minister of Justice /*Staatssecretaris voor de Coördinatie van de fraudebestrijding (toegevoegd aan de Eerste Minister) en Staatssecretaris, toegevoegd aan de Minister van Justitie*: C. Devlies (1953 male, CD&V)²

Secretary of State of the Modernisation of the Finance department, of the Environmental Tax Policy and the Struggle against Tax Fraud (attached to the Minister of Finance)/*Secrétaire d'Etat à la Modernisation du Service public fédéral Finances, à la Fiscalité environnementale et à la Lutte contre la fraude fiscale (adjoint au Ministre des Finances)*: B. Clerfayt (1961 male, MR)

Secretary of State for European Affairs, attached to the Minister of Foreign Affairs/*Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires Européennes (adjoint au Ministre des Affaires étrangères)*: O. Chastel (1964 male, MR)

Secretary of State of Budget (attached to the Minister of Budget), Secretary of State for Migration and Asylum Policy, (attached to the Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy), and regarding the Coordination of Migration Policy, attached to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State of Family Policy (attached to the Minister of Employment) and regarding aspects of Personal and Family Law (attached to the Minister of Justice), and Secretary of State for Federal Cultural Institutions (attached to the Prime Minister)/*Secrétaire d'Etat au Budget (adjoint au Ministre du Budget), Secrétaire d'Etat à la Politique de Migration et d'Asile (adjoint à la Ministre chargée de la Politique de Migration et d'Asile), et en ce qui concerne la Coordination de la Politique de migration et d'asile, adjoint au Premier Ministre, Secrétaire d'Etat à la Politique des familles (adjoint à la Ministre de l'Emploi) et en ce qui concerne les aspects du droit des personnes et de la famille (adjoint au Ministre de la Justice, et Secrétaire d'Etat aux Institutions culturelles fédérales, adjoint au Premier Ministre*: M. Wathelet (1977 male, CDH)

Secretary of State for Social Affairs, in charge of the Disabled (attached to the Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, in charge of Social Integration)/*Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires Sociales, chargé des Personnes handicapées (adjoint à la Ministre des Affaires sociales et de la Santé publique, en charge de l'Intégration Sociale)*: J.-M. Delizée (1959 male, PS)

Secretary of State of Struggle against Poverty (attached to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, in charge of Social Integration)/*Secrétaire d'Etat à la Lutte contre la pauvreté, (adjoint à la Vice-Première ministre, Ministre des Affaires sociales et de la Santé publique, en charge de l'Intégration Sociale)*: Ph. Courard (1966 male, PS)

Government Commissioner, attached to the Minister of Budget/*Regeringscommissaris, toegevoegd aan de Minister van Begroting*: G. De Padt (1954 male, Open VLD)

Notes: ¹ Including seven Secretaries of State (deputy/junior ministers). The fourth Open VLD in the previous government was downgraded to the non-formalised function of government commissioner. The second figure in the parentheses is the percentage of posts excluding this position.

² Note that this Secretary of State has had the exact same competencies since the start of the Van Rompuy I government in late 2008, contrary to what appears in Rihoux et al. (2009: 907).

Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD) kept four posts but one was downgraded (the new position as government commissioner instead of a full minister position) as a consequence of the appointment of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel De Gucht as European Commissioner. The French-speaking parties all kept their previous number of executive positions.

On 19 November, Herman Van Rompuy was selected as first President of the European Council by the heads of state of the 27 European Union (EU)

countries. Therefore he submitted his resignation to the King on 25 November, and was immediately replaced by fellow CD&V Yves Leterme. The Leterme II Cabinet was formed on that day. Inge Vervotte (CD&V), who had quit when the Leterme I Cabinet had to resign on 19 December 2008 (Rihoux et al. 2009: 909), returned to the cabinet as minister on 25 November as well.

Changes in Parliament

Only a few changes occurred in the federal upper and lower chambers as an indirect effect of the regional and European elections held in June. Concerning the allocation of seats between parties, some minor changes were brought about by defections. The PS Senator Anne-Marie Lizin, (see below) was expelled by her party while continuing to sit in the upper house. The alliance between the SP.a and a small left-wing regionalist party (SLP; see Rihoux et al. 2009: 910) split in December, when the latter joined Groen!. This defection was not a big deal since both parties are in opposition at the federal level, and since the SLP only had one senator: G. Lambert. Besides these two changes, the allocation of seats between parties for the federal chambers did not change as an agreement between all main parties determines the allocation of the 21 senators that are indirectly elected through the regional elections.

More important are the changes concerning individual MPs. Some of them renounced their federal seat to take up what they regarded as a promotion. For example, Jean-Marc Nollet and Philippe Henry (Ecolo) resigned to enter the Walloon government; Freya Van Den Bossche (SP.a) did the same in order to enter the Flemish government. Bart De Wever, head of the autonomist Flemish party NV-A, quit the federal parliament to sit in the Flemish parliament, and so did Isabelle Durant (Ecolo) in order to become vice-president of the EP.

Issues in national politics

The Flemish party system was confronted with a couple of leadership changes. First, Bart Somers, the leader of the VLD, tried to bribe a remote backbencher of the LDD to defect to his party. This would have cost the LDD a considerable part of its public finance, sinking under the minimum number of MPs to get fully subsidised. When the details of the secret deal came out in the press, it created a scandal. Somers eventually resigned after his party's heavy defeat at the Flemish elections. Hence, new party leader elections were organised in

December, with a former Flemish minister, Marino Keulen, backed by the *troika* that had controlled the party for twenty years (Verhofstadt, De Gucht and Dewael) facing young Alexander De Croo (son of a very prominent secondary leader). The latter won with 55 per cent of the members' votes. His victory symbolised the end of the reign of the *troika* and the take-over of the party by the more Flemish-oriented generation.

Jean-Marie Dedecker (LDD) became mired in his own scandal when it came out that he had hired a private detective to discover potential criminal behaviour on the part of VLD vice-PM Karel De Gucht and his family with regard to insider trading following the Fortis crisis. In the SP.a, the president Caroline Gennez then managed to dump the most popular and experienced minister of her party, Frank Vandenbroucke (former party president and federal vice-PM). While he was, as incumbent Flemish vice-minister president, one of the main negotiators of the new Flemish government agreement, he was replaced as minister by a technocrat. When the shady manoeuvres organised by the Gennez's entourage leaked into the press, her already shaky leadership position was further eroded. As for the Flemish greens of Groen!, they elected a new president, Wouter Van Besien after the long-serving *de facto* leader, Mike Vogels, took responsibility for the party's poor performance at the Flemish elections. This *apparatchik* (incumbent vice-chair, but holding only a local elected office) was the only candidate and was endorsed by 90 per cent of the party members.

Overall there was less turbulence in the less competitive French-speaking party system. CDH strongwoman Joëlle Milquet, both party president since 1999 and vice-PM in the federal government, promised to hold elections to find a successor. Eventually, in December, a 'ticket' between herself and Benoît Lutgen (Minister of Agriculture and Environment in the Walloon government) won with 87 per cent of the party members' vote. The arrangement was that Milquet would remain president up until the formation of the next federal government after the next general election (i.e., 2011 at the latest), after which Lutgen would take over. In Ecolo, a smooth transition also took place: Isabelle Durant having been elected as MEP in June (see above), she was replaced in November as party 'co-president' (together with Walloon Jean-Michel Javaux) by young Sarah Turine from Brussels. Indeed the party statutes stipulate that the two party co-presidents must be male and female and must originate from the two different regions (Wallonia and Brussels).

The situation was much more tense in the MR, where the leadership of Didier Reynders (also vice-PM and Minister of Finance in the federal government) was contested after disappointing results at the June regional elections and a prolonged stay in opposition both in the Walloon and Brussels regions. A group of 'rebels' called for an '*aggiornamento*' congress and questioned

Reynders' line and position. Eventually, after three months of open crisis, Reynders managed to save his position in September and remain president, but intra-party tensions continued.

On 29 November, a significant new party was created with the ambition of becoming a 'national' party (i.e., presenting lists on both sides of the linguistic border): the *Parti Populaire – PersonenPartij* (PP – People's Party). It was launched by Mischaël Modrikamen, prominent French-speaking lawyer and opinion leader during the 'Fortisgate' scandal (Rihoux et al. 2009: 909), and Rudy Aernoudt, a Flemish intellectual who has served in ministerial cabinets both in Wallonia, Flanders and at the federal level. The PP had ambitions to cover the whole right-wing side of the political spectrum, like the French UMP and the Spanish *Partido Popular*, and also to fight against political corruption. The first indications in 2009 were that the PP was gaining much more momentum in French-speaking Belgium.

Naturally, 2009 being an electoral year with the regional elections, ethnolinguistic debates remained high on the agenda as the main parties campaigned on their respective sides of the 'linguistic border'. The core adversarial issue was which institutional model to negotiate within the next few months and years. While most Francophone parties still privileged a 'modernised federalist' model, most Flemish parties campaigned in favour of a confederal model, although more radical Flemish parties (NV-A, the VB and the LDD) pushed further, the ultimate goal being to obtain independence for Flanders. The continued failure (since the 2007 elections) to reach an overall agreement on this fundamental issue in spite of the continuation of rounds of negotiation, and in particular the stalemate on the issue of the bilingual 'Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde' constituency and on the issue of the non-nomination of three francophone mayors in the Flemish periphery of Brussels (Rihoux et al. 2008: 924) allowed the more radical parties to gain ground during the respective regional campaigns.

In terms of other substantive topics across the country, just as in 2008, the most important themes in 2009 were the economic, the judicial and social. On the economic and financial front, the preceding year's downturn led to a record number of bankruptcies and redundancies in both Flanders and the Walloon Region. The major social movement revolved around milk producers and livestock farmers. They demonstrated with tractors and organised dramatic protests (dumping milk in fields, for instance) against their lost revenues and unemployment due to the drop in milk prices.

In 2009, the state deficit grew to some 6.5 per cent of the GDP. The social security deficit doubled year on year. In October, however, the federal government reached an agreement on the 2010/2011 budget, without any new taxation and without social security cuts. The electricity and banking sectors

will contribute to the budget effort, the former because the closure of nuclear plants scheduled for 2015 will be postponed for ten years, and the latter because the state has become the banks' insurer and given them a guarantee to bail them out in case of crisis.

On the judicial front, the soap opera of affairs and political-financial scandals connected to the PS proceeded apace, involving this time Didier Donfut, the Walloon Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health. Senator Anne-Marie Lizin (PS) was accused of misappropriating funds (Rihoux et al. 2009: 911) and stepped down in March. She had been suspended from the PS in January and was expelled from the party in November. In fact, this year the political world was not alone in being involved in scandals: Francine De Tandt, President of the Brussels Trade Court, was suspected of making false entries, and Christine Schurmans was accused of a breach of secrecy of proceedings in favour of the government in the Fortis affair, which eventually led to the takeover of the Belgian bank by the BNP Paribas Group (Rihoux et al. 2009: 911).

At the end of December, the Court of Appeals of Brussels gave its verdict in the trial of the DHKP-C, a Turkish left-wing political organisation. It was the fourth and last resumption of this trial on the basis of Belgium's new antiterrorist law (Rihoux et al. 2007: 896–897). By refusing to recognise this organisation as a criminal one, the court highlighted the difficulties in applying this anti-terrorist legislation while respecting the Constitution and democracy.

In July 2009, Van Rompuy's new cabinet finally reached an agreement implementing the government's March 2008 commitment to regularise a number of categories of undocumented immigrants (Rihoux et al. 2009: 912). Despite the Council of State's challenge to the legality of this agreement, the new Secretary of State of Migration and Asylum Policy, Melchior Wathelet (CDH), was able to enforce it by exercising his discretionary powers.

In September, what is referred to as the 'Islamic scarf' was forbidden in the Flemish community school system. Worthy of note, in Belgium, the debate on the headscarf has become a major issue in the media and political debate.

Sources and further information

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- Detailed electoral results: www.ibz.rrn.fgov.be/index.php?id=4&L=0 [official results, all elections]