

# PUMOMIG

## Public opinion, mobilisations and policies concerning asylum seekers and refugees in anti-immigrants times (Europe and Belgium)

### DURATION

15/03/2017 – 15/06/2019

### BUDGET

689 844 €

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The European challenges in the field of migration have an impact on society, since the division between them opposed to newcomers and welcoming them has been continuously increasing. The project addresses the perceptions of the Belgian and European population about refugees/migrants and vice versa as well as their interactions with the policy agenda of asylum and migration with a European comparative perspective and a specific focus on Belgium. As Europe face important migratory challenges and political difficulties we have seen an increase of the public opinion's polarisation regarding asylum and refugees, it is important to address this question. Including teams from our project will analyse this polarisation and its links to policies, as it is necessary for a better understanding of the current debate on migration in Europe and Belgium. The 2015 asylum crisis will be considered as indicative of the general European and Belgian citizens' reactions about migration. The focus is then on attitudes, representations, discourses and practices about refugees, on the interactions at the local level between the majority populations and newly arrived migrants. The project will follow two objectives. First studying public opinion towards asylum seekers and refugees with a European cross-national perspective but also how these groups perceive Belgium, its asylum system and its reception policies. The second objective is to analyse the polarisation of the public opinion by focussing on pro and anti-refugees' actions at the local level. This will allow understanding the links between public opinion and the implementation of asylum and reception policies. In order to fulfil these objectives, our project is based on 5 Work Packages that each focus on a specific dimension. The first two ones aim at developing a European comparative perspective on perceptions towards migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This then includes a quantitative analysis of public opinion's perceptions towards new immigration flows as well as a comparison of 5 European case studies (Sweden, Italy, Grece, Hungary and Germany). The three other work packages aim at a deep analysis of the Belgian situation. First, they consist of understanding actions and reactions towards asylum seekers and refugees at a local level. This implies to study the opposite reactions with an in-depth analysis of their content, justifications and determinants but also to focus on interactions between social groups (pro vs. anti migrants groups; ional citizens & refugees) as well as the interactions between the population's reaction and the implementation of asylum and receptions policies. Second, studying the Belgian situation implies to analyse asylum seekers and refugees perceptions regarding the country's asylum and reception policies. Lastly, it implies to realise a policy evaluation of those policies.

The aim of this project and the main questions it addresses focus more on the relations and on the dynamics existing between the citizens and the migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Hence, we propose to broaden the scope of what is usually done by extending the focus on actors that are often not implied in migration studies: the majority population and the impact of new migration waves on social cohesion. The expected results concerns:

- an in-depth and comparative knowledge of attitudes towards migrants and refugees in Europe;
- an analysis of the factors influencing the attitudes of rejections, disregards and support;
- an in-depth analysis of the specificities of the current wave of migration compared to the last ones;
- an in-depth analysis of citizens' and migrants' discourses, representation and practices and of their reaction on social cohesion at a local level;



# PUMOMIG

- the identification of arguments justifying rejection or support of asylum seekers and refugees;
- the analysis of the impacts of the federal policies on the constructions of discourses, representations and actions and on the impact of those discourses on the redefinition of the political agenda.

Grasping public opinion and mobilisations about migrants, asylum seekers and refugees implies to use mixed methods. Rather than a collection of separate surveys, the added value of mixed methods relies on the links and interactions between the various parts of the analysis. The mixed methods will enable a cross national comparison between Belgium and other European countries as well as a historical comparison with the Belgian public opinion measured in the last European migration peak (1999-2000). We will outline the perceptions towards migration from both majority and minority groups as well as their main determinants (gender, age, socioeconomic and migratory background, environmental factors, and political opportunity structure). Five methods will be employed :

- Comparative quantitative analysis of public opinion towards migrants;
- Comparison of five European case studies (Sweden, Italy, Greece, Hungary and Germany);
- Focus groups;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Analysis of public Facebook data.

Regarding societal and political impacts, the project will give:

- Good practices to improve social cohesion at a national and local level;
- Establishing policy recommendation on the asylum system and on receiving ne migrants and refugees.

The project intends to product international outcomes and deliverables. Regarding the scientific level, we will organise an International Conference at the end of the project. We will present the main findings of the research. This International Conference will be opened to experts, policymakers stakeholders, citizens, migrants, so to to wide audience. Intermediate results will be presented in International Conferences and Workshops. Our research network also intends to produce publications. For a best dissemination, we will write a policy brief on the main findings of our research for European and Belgian policymakers and stakeholders.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Coordinator

Prof. dr. Andrea REA  
Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB),  
Group for research on Ethnic Relations, Migration and  
Equality (GERME)  
[area@ulb.ac.be](mailto:area@ulb.ac.be)

### Partners

Prof. dr. Bart MEULEMAN  
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven),  
Centre for Sociological Research  
[bart.meuleman@kuleuven.be](mailto:bart.meuleman@kuleuven.be)

Prof. dr. Marco MARTINIELLO  
University of Liège (ULiège),  
The Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies  
(CEDEM)  
[M.Martiniello@ulg.ac.be](mailto:M.Martiniello@ulg.ac.be)