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MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND AND THE BENELUX

P. A. PATAPEIKA^a

^a*Travel House Company, 15/4 Lahojski Road, Minsk 220113, Belarus*

This article examines the origins and evolution of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Benelux countries, selected as case examples for the region. Their Muslim communities' characteristics and similarities are examined, along with the composition and structure of their Muslim communities. The analysis revealed several related but sometimes contradictory trends. The rise of polarisation and radicalisation coexists with the search for dialogue and interaction, and the failure of multiculturalism coincides with relatively successful integration paradigms. The study of Muslim societies in countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Ireland seems very important, even urgent, for any European country.

Keywords: the United Kingdom; the Benelux; Ireland; Muslims; community; ethnicity; Islam; migration; multiculturalism; interculturalism.

МУСУЛЬМАНСКАЯ ДИАСПОРА В СОЕДИНЕННОМ КОРОЛЕВСТВЕ, ИРЛАНДИИ И БЕНИЛЮКСЕ

П. О. ПОТАПЕЙКО¹⁾

¹⁾*ТрэвэлХаус, Логойский тракт, 15/4, 220113, г. Минск, Беларусь*

Рассматривается возникновение и развитие мусульманской диаспоры в Великобритании, Ирландии и государствах Бенилюкса. Исследуются состав и структура мусульманских общин этих стран, их особенности и схожие черты. В ходе анализа выявлены некоторые взаимосвязанные, но отчасти противоречивые тренды: поляризация и радикализация сочетаются со стремлением вести диалог и взаимодействовать, провалы политики мультикультурализма – с примерами довольно успешной интеграции. Изучение мусульманской диаспоры в таких странах, как Великобритания, Нидерланды, Бельгия, Люксембург и Ирландия, представляется несомненно важным и актуальным для любой европейской страны.

Ключевые слова: Великобритания; Бенилюкс; Ирландия; мусульмане; община; этническая принадлежность; ислам; миграция; мультикультурализм; интеркультурализм.

Introduction

The EU member states have large and visible Muslim communities. Contemporary European societies exhibit ethnic tensions in their relations with host populations. In this article, we explore these patterns, using several patterns of migration, inequities, multiculturalism, and European states as case examples.

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Автор:

Павел Олегович Потапейко – кандидат исторических наук; редактор.

Author:

Pavel A. Patapeika, PhD (history); editor.

The countries in this study were among the founders of the European Union. The United Kingdom has since left the union. The Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg form the Benelux group. The fifth is the Republic of Ireland. The history and status of the Muslim communities vary across these states, but there are also important similarities. Awareness of these differences and commonalities may deepen our understanding of inter-ethnic politics in Western Europe.

The research can contribute to the ongoing debate in Europe about multiculturalism. Some scholars and politicians have been sceptical of its achievements, while others have been defended it. But is the perceived success of multiculturalism related in any way to the history of colonialism? Britain and the Netherlands were great colonial empires, with countries like France, Spain, Portugal among their main historical rivals. British and Dutch Muslim communities began to form early through

immigration from the colonies. Belgium's African colonies had almost no Muslims. Luxembourg had no colonies altogether while being almost identical in most other respects to the Netherlands and Belgium. Ireland, on the other hand, appeared to many Muslims almost like a "fellow victim" of colonialism.

This research is based on statistics, opinion poll data and publications in the European media. In addition, H. Ansari's monograph on the Muslim community in the UK [1], O. Sharbrodt's monograph on the Muslim community in Ireland [2], J. S. Nielsen's monograph on Muslims in Western Europe [3], and J. Rath [4], K. Damhuis [5], S. Teich [6], T. De Raedt's monograph on Muslims in the Benelux states provided insights and observations [7]. Russian-language scholarship on the subject has been limited so far. However, we have been influenced in our findings by scholars such as R. Landa [8], L. Sadykova [9], S. Altukhova [10].

The Muslim communities

Muslim immigration to Britain and the Netherlands began as early as the 16th century. By the 19th century, the foreign dominions of both countries had large Muslim populations, but the number of Muslims settling in both metropolises was still too small to be called diasporas.

By the 19th century, Muslim quarters had appeared in Britain in the East End of London and several large industrial cities in the Midlands, including Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool [1, p. 4]. There were also significant numbers of settlers from Malaya, Yemen, Somaliland and Cyprus, whilst the majority came from British India (which then encompassed present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh). Muslim immigration to Britain was distinct by this diversity, despite the prevalence of migrants from Hindustan. Most were traders or sailors, but there was also a growing number of students settling in Britain after completing their studies. Muslim arrivals increased with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, but they were still quite small.

The first mosques in Britain were established in 1860 in Cardiff (Wales) and in 1889 in the town of Woking (Surrey, England) soon followed by one more in Liverpool (designed by a British convert to Islam), though the first London mosque was built only in 1924. By that time, a moderate inflow of Muslim immigration took place after the World War I when significant numbers of officers and soldiers mobilised in the colonies and decided to stay in Britain.

Ottoman merchants (Jews, Christians, Muslims) first arrived in the Netherlands in the 16th century and settled mostly in Amsterdam and other major ports. The first "provisional" Dutch mosque was established in Amsterdam in the 17th century, centuries before the country's first "permanent" mosque opened in Almelo, a small provincial town, in 1975. The Netherlands exhibited remarkable tolerance towards the newcomers,

encouraged by its alliances with the Ottomans and Morocco against the common enemy, Spain. Both Islamic states enjoyed trade privileges from the Dutch. In the Netherlands, Turks and Moroccans predominate among Muslims for historical reasons. Some new Muslim immigrants were refugees from Spain and Portugal who had adopted the religion of their ancestors, and some were sailors returning from Muslim captivity where they had converted to Islam. In the 18th–19th centuries, they were joined by a small number of Muslims from the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). At the beginning of World War II, however, the Muslim community in the Netherlands remained small: less than 0.1 % of the total population. Still, it was influential enough to establish the Dutch Islamic Association in 1932¹.

Overall, pre-World War II, Muslim immigration to Britain and the Netherlands was ongoing, even if small and barely visible. In contrast, Belgium and Luxembourg received no Muslim immigrants, and Muslim immigration to Ireland (a part of the UK until 1922 and then its dominion until 1938) was sporadic.

In Britain, the situation changed dramatically after World War II. A Labour government came to power in 1945 to pursue an agenda of social reforms and decolonisation. The first wave of immigration began, including from Muslim countries. The 1948 British nationality act created the status of national of the United Kingdom and colonies, granting its subjects born in the colonies equal residence and employment rights with its British-born nationals. Part of the motivation was to satisfy the post-war demand for labour. The act coincided with substantial population movements from India and Pakistan (which then included Bangladesh before it became independent in 1971), and most Muslims who settled in Britain at that time came from that region. Hindustan alone accounted for approximately 10 000 Muslim immigrants annually in the 1950s [3, p. 39]. Significant

¹Islam in the Netherlands (factsheet). Berlin : Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002.

numbers of immigrants were also coming from British possessions in Africa, the Middle East, West India, Ceylon, Malaysia, Cyprus, etc. Ethnic Hindustani formed a significant proportion of the immigration from Britain's colonies in East Africa and South Africa, where they had settled before independence.

In Ireland, the Muslim community emerged by the late 1950s, consisting mainly of college students from Pakistan, India, Malaysia, and the Arab states. Many Muslims arriving from South Africa were of Hindustani origin. The Irish Muslims established the Dublin Islamic Society in 1959. Subsequently renamed the Islamic Foundation of Ireland, it became Ireland's first Muslim association. In 1976, it opened the Dublin mosque, the first in the country, with support from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia [2, p. 52].

Immigration to the Benelux was also rising. The Netherlands signed bilateral labour force agreements with Turkey (1965), Morocco (1969), Algeria, Tunisia and Yugoslavia. Belgium entered similar agreements with Turkey and Morocco (1964), Tunisia (1969) and Algeria (1970). Luxembourg signed a labour force agreement with Yugoslavia in 1970 and received its first Muslim immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sanjak and Kosovo. As in Britain, the motivation was to meet the demand for low-skilled labour, as the host country nationals were increasingly training for service and high-skilled jobs. However, unlike Britain, most Muslim immigrants to Benelux were from Maghreb, Turkey and Yugoslavia. By comparison with Britain and the Benelux, the situation in Ireland was remarkably different. Still a country of emigration, not immigration, its demand for an immigrant workforce remained low until it reinvented itself as the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s.

The United Kingdom was the first of five countries to experience the downside of mass immigration. Liverpool, Manchester, and London were the first cities to see clashes between immigrants and British youth in the late 1940s and in the 1950s. Groups of right-wing radicals established a White Defense League and launched the keep Britain white campaign [11, p. 40]. Working-class Britons feared competition for jobs, housing and social benefits with the immigrants. Because the immigrants were more prepared to accept lower pay and harsher working conditions, some working-class Britons were concerned for their welfare. In response, the Conservative government initiated legislation to limit migration. The Commonwealth immigrants act of 1962² set an annual immigration quota of 61 000 for holders of Commonwealth passports. However, despite its electoral support among immigrant populations, the

following Labour government reduced this quota and introduced a new Commonwealth immigrants act³ – which was enacted in 1968 – further reducing the right of Commonwealth citizens to migrate to the UK. Children born outside the UK and those with foreign-born parents lost their automatic right of abode. The act's unintended effect was to encourage migrants to bring in more of their family members. The Immigration act of 1971⁴ and the British nationality act of 1981⁵ further tightened the restrictions: for example, the 1981 law abolished the automatic acquisition of British citizenship by those born in the territory of the UK. Instead, the law provided that a person born outside of the UK or the qualifying territories on or after 21 May 2002 was a British citizen at birth only if, at the time of their birth, either parent was a British citizen otherwise than by descent [12, p. 102]. Human rights activists and organisations including the European Commission of Human Rights have criticised this legislation as discriminatory. Critics were ignored so that the act could serve its purpose – to stem immigration from former British possessions.

With this new legislation, the situation of the Muslim community in Britain changed. Natural growth and the entry of migrants' families now drove its expansion. In the mid-1970s, the oil crisis and the turbulence in the Middle East, Libya, Afghanistan and Iran created another wave of Muslim migration. In response, the Conservative government introduced the Immigration act of 1988⁶, which imposed the sufficient sustenance requirement on overseas family members of UK residents. As a measure against polygamy, the law allowed only one wife or widow of a UK resident to enter.

In the Netherlands and Belgium, the situation of the Muslim community also changed in the mid-1970s, albeit more slowly and gradually. As the economy deteriorated, the previous policy of "benevolent neglect" towards immigration was no longer feasible. Both countries tightened the rules for the entry of unskilled workers and discontinued the overseas recruitment of unskilled workers. Apart from that, citizenship and family unification policies remained liberal. In Belgium, up to 113 800 migrants from Muslim-majority countries (not all of them Muslims⁷) became Belgian citizens from 1985 to 1997. In the mid-1990s the Netherlands and Belgium experienced a sharp increase in the number of asylum applications received from nationals of Islamic countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia.

"Benevolent neglect" was succeeded by multiculturalism, and the Benelux states became its strongholds. For Muslims, it meant an official acknowledgement of

²Commonwealth immigrants act. 1962 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.freemovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CIA1962.pdf> (date of access: 12.08.2020).

³Commonwealth immigrants act. 1968 [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/9/pdfs/ukpga_19680009_en.pdf (date of access: 22.08.2020).

⁴Immigration act. 1971 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/77/contents> (date of access: 19.08.2020).

⁵British nationality act. 1981 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/61> (date of access: 24.08.2020).

⁶Immigration act. 1988 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/14/contents> (date of access: 30.09.2020).

⁷Islam in Belgium [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/> (date of access: 22.05.2022).

their presence. In 1974, Belgium was the first Western European state to recognise Islam as one of its official religions. This decision created, among other things, the right to government subsidies for Muslim communities and clergy [13, p. 9]. As well as Roman Catholicism, Belgium also recognised Protestantism, Anglicanism (as distinct from other Protestant denominations), Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and secular humanist groups by 2008. Each recognised denomination receives state subsidies and incentives through its coordinating body, and the government pays salaries and pensions for their clergy.

The Dutch government followed the Belgian example. In 1983, it published a memorandum on its Ethnic minorities policies, acknowledging the presence of new religions for the first time in Dutch history [14, p. 54]. Historically, churches had played dominant roles in both states. Belgium was considered a purely Catholic state, and in the Netherlands, even trade unions and political parties were organised along religious lines, with Catholic or Protestant chapters among them. By the late 1970s, this situation changed as a result of immigration and the decline of industrial labour: in the Netherlands, for example, the share of manufacturing industries in total employment declined from 18 % in 1979 to only 2 % in 1985.

Both states named the integration of their immigrant minorities – including Muslims – as a key task of their multiculturalism policies. In a 1994 programme document called “Ethnic minorities’ integration policy”, the Dutch Christian democrat government outlined a vision for a multicultural society in the Netherlands. The policy called, among other things, for state funding of Muslim associations, schools and media, the introduction of minority language education and the study of minority cultures and religions, focusing specifically on Turks and Moroccans as the largest ethnic communities.

Belgium and the Netherlands classify their populations as autochthons (of Dutch or Belgian origin) and allochthons (of foreign birth). Allochthons are further divided into Western and non-Western. In 2010, there were more than 1.5 mln non-Western allochthons in the Netherlands, including 800 000 to 850 000 Muslims [13, p. 161]. This division was criticised in both countries because it led to de facto segregation in education, housing, and other key sectors, thereby undermining multiculturalism.

The Belgian nationality law of 2000 granted the right to citizenship to every person born in the country to a Belgian citizen or a permanent resident of Belgium of at least seven years if they met certain linguistic criteria. In 2004, legislation was enacted to give the right to vote in local elections to foreigners residing in Belgium for five years subject to a written pledge to respect Belgian law. Up to 120 000 people have used this right. Similar laws were introduced in the Netherlands, Ireland, and the Scandinavian states.

In the 2000s the Benelux states tightened their immigration policies in the wake of the 11 September attacks in the United States and several acts of terror committed by young Muslim radicals. The Netherlands introduced a law in 2004 limiting family reunification: foreigners who marry Dutch now had to take a language and culture test in their country of residence, and their partners in the Netherlands must be at least 21 years old, with an income of at least 120 % of the subsistence level. In 2007, the Dutch law on integration obliged most migrants (including spouses or relatives of Dutch citizens) to learn the Dutch language and pass an exam a few years after their arrival [13, p. 10]. Amendments to Belgium’s law provided that an immigrant from outside the EU could fill a job vacancy only if a candidate from an EU country has not claimed this vacancy⁸. In 2011, Belgium tightened the family reunification rules and introduced new provisions to immigration under the guise of a fake marriage.

Immigration to the Benelux decreased in the wake of these measures. For example, the number of immigrants to the Netherlands from Turkey decreased from about 6700 in 2003 to 3100 in 2006, and from Morocco, from about 4900 to 2000 respectively. In Belgium, the number of asylum seekers fell from 42 700 in 2000 to 11 100 in 2007 [13, p. 12].

Immigration to Ireland – including of Muslims – was remarkably different from the UK and the Benelux. From the mid-1990s to the late 2000s, it experienced a period of intense growth that created a high demand for skilled labour. The government’s immigration policy favoured skilled workers, and the Irish Muslim community had a large number of professionals, such as medical professionals. Also, it was considerably smaller than in the UK, the Netherlands or Belgium and therefore less visible to the public. Furthermore, the government’s policy of interculturalism (as distinct from) emphasised mutual adjustment of the majority and the minorities, as exemplified in the establishment in 1998 of a National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) [15, p. 88]. Nevertheless, the Irish government eventually turned to more restrictive immigration policies like the other five states. The immigration acts of 1999, 2003 and 2004 tightened the rules on deportation, while the 2004 referendum revoked the automatic acquisition of Irish citizenship at birth. After the referendum, the children of immigrants could acquire citizenship only if their parents had lived in Ireland for at least three years, excluding the time of study or asylum seeking. After 2008, the NCCRI and other bodies responsible for the immigrants’ integration had their mandates significantly reduced or revoked [16, p. 211].

After 2001, all five countries experienced an increase in radicalism from the Muslim communities and host populations, accompanied by rising tensions and mutual antagonism. In response, governments continued to emphasise integration and multiculturalism while

⁸Islam in Belgium [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/> (date of access: 22.05.2022).

being receptive to criticism and stepping up measures to combat extremism.

Belgium, for example, declared the integration of immigrants its national priority in 2012. In 2013, it enacted new legislation with stricter criteria for naturalisation (e. g. residence in the country for at least five years, participation in the Belgian economy, knowledge of at least one official language and successful socialisation) [6, p. 9]. Previously, naturalisation preceded integration, now it became a prerequisite to integration.

In all the five states under study, it took less than a few decades for Islam to become one of the largest religious denominations after Christianity. According to the 2011 British national census, Muslims constituted 4.4 % of the UK population (2 516 000)⁹. A large European study found that Muslims numbered 5.2 % (3 372 900) of all believers in Western Europe, making Islam the third most numerous denomination in relative terms, and the sixth largest in absolute figures¹⁰. In Belgium, Islam was the fourth largest religion by the number of followers (879 400 as of 2022) and the sixth largest by percentage share (7.6 % of the total population). At the beginning of 2022, the Netherlands had Europe's sixth-largest Muslim community, with nearly 800 000 followers, or 5.1 % of the total population. The Muslim diasporas in Ireland and Luxembourg were considerably smaller, 70 900 (1.4 %) and 18 100 (3 %), respectively, as of 2022. However, in Ireland, the Muslim community doubled in size between 2006 and 2022, as it did in Belgium from 2005 to 2014¹¹.

The majority of Muslims in Britain are Asian, including Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Indians, followed by significantly smaller numbers of Turkish and Arab Muslims (including descendants from Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Jordan, etc.), African Muslims from Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, and Malaysian, Bosnian, Kosovo, Cyprus, among many others¹². Indo-Pakistani languages like Punjabi or Bengali and Arabic, are among the top ten most spoken languages in the UK. Turks and Moroccans dominate: in 2006, Turks constituted 38 %

of the Dutch Muslim community, Moroccans – 31 %, followed by Muslims ethnically from former and present possessions in the Antilles and Surinam¹³. The number of Syrians is growing in both countries. In Luxembourg, in 2013 up to 60 % of Muslims were Bosnians, Albanians or Kosovars and migrants from other Balkan countries, and 15 % more – from other European regions including native converts. Only 20 % of Muslims in Luxembourg were from the Middle East, Asia and North Africa (led by Turks and Moroccans), and about 5 % were from Sub-Saharan Africa¹⁴. According to the 2016 census, the Irish Muslim community displays remarkable ethnic diversity for its size. It represents more than 40 ethnicities, with descendants from the Middle East and Asia numbering more than 42 %. The most numerous ethnic groups are Pakistanis (11.4 %) followed by Afghanis, Bangladeshis and Arabs. African ethnicities number 17.1 %. Remarkably, 17.7 % of Irish Muslims are European, including the Irish who converted to Islam¹⁵.

By faith, most Muslims in these five countries are Sunni (80–85 %). Statistics on Muslims in the Benelux countries are approximate, as religious groups are not subject to official estimates by government organisations. British Muslims are dominated by followers of the Deobandi and Barelvi movements, rooted in British-ruled Hindustan and widespread in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In 2017, the former controlled more than 40 % of mosques in the UK, while the latter around 25 %¹⁶. The Muslim diaspora in the Netherlands is characterised by a relatively large proportion of Alevis (about 15 %) with roots in Turkey. Turks control almost half of the 475 mosques in the Netherlands, and Moroccans (mainly Sunni Muslims) about 150¹⁷. Observers point to the growing influence of Salafism and its strict Islam on the Muslim community in Great Britain and the Benelux countries. For example, the adherents of Salafism control more than 9 % of mosques in Great Britain¹⁸. In the Netherlands, the number of Salafist mosques increased from 13 in 2014 to 27 in 2018. Another prominent group

⁹2011 census: quick statistics for England and Wales, March 2011 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011censusquickstatisticsforenglandandwales/2013-01-30#tab=Main-language> (date of access: 02.02.2015).

¹⁰Muslim population of England passes the three million mark for the first time as the numbers of Christians continues to decline, figures reveal [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7850073/Muslim-population-England-passes-three-million-mark-time.html> (date of access: 02.02.2020).

¹¹Muslim population by country. 2022 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country> (date of access: 03.04.2022).

¹²British Muslims in numbers: census analysis [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mcb.org.uk/report/british-muslims-in-numbers/> (date of access: 25.02.2022).

¹³The position of Muslims in the Netherlands: facts and figures [Electronic resource]. P. 7. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2009-09/doc1_9492_789052313.pdf. (date of access: 03.04.2022).

¹⁴Muslim population by country. 2022 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country> (date of access: 03.04.2022).

¹⁵Census of population 2016 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8rnc/#:~:text=There%20were%2063%2C443%20Muslims%20in,2006%20and%2049%2C204%20in%202011> (date of access: 10.08.2017).

¹⁶UK Mosque statistics / Masjid statistics [Electronic resource]. URL: http://www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid_report.pdf (date of access: 07.05.2019).

¹⁷The position of Muslims in the Netherlands: facts and figures [Electronic resource]. P. 9. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2009-09/doc1_9492_789052313.pdf (date of access: 22.05.2022).

¹⁸UK Mosque statistics / Masjid statistics [Electronic resource]. URL: http://www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid_report.pdf (date of access: 07.05.2019).

within the Muslim community in the countries surveyed is the Ahmadiyya, who are considered infidels by mainstream Islam. Their caliph lives in London and in 2017 they numbered 30 000 in the UK. In Ireland, the Ahmadiyya has two mosques, one of which (in Galway city) is run by an Irish convert¹⁹.

There were as many as 1700 mosques in the UK in 2017, with imams mainly from Pakistan (over 50 %), Bangladesh and India (over 35 %). In Ireland, the Muslim community had about 50 mosques in 2015 [2, p. 53], 475 in the Netherlands, and 380 in Belgium in 2018. In the Benelux countries, almost half of the mosques are led by imams of Turkish origin, subordinated to the Turkish government agency "Diyanet". There are six mosques in Luxembourg's largest city and municipality.

Western European Muslims are concentrated in large urban areas. In the United Kingdom, according to the 2011 census, 37 % of Muslims live in Greater London (including 53 % of the Bangladeshi community and 41 % of the Middle Eastern diaspora), while some 25 % live in other parts of the South East of England. Large communities are present in major Midland cities such as Birmingham, Manchester or Liverpool. Thus, the absolute majority of immigrants live in England: 2 786 635, or 5 %, of the population in 2011. There are 76 737 Muslims in Scotland, 45 950 in Wales (most of them in Cardiff)

and only about 4000 in Northern Ireland. In Ireland, over 50 % of Muslims reside in Greater Dublin (27 586 in 2016), Cork (3633), Limerick (3432) and Galway (2047)²⁰.

In the Netherlands, Muslims are concentrated in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam (about 140 000 people or up to 17 % of the population), in the urban areas of Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht²¹. In Belgium, in 2016, Muslims numbered 26 % of the total population of Brussels (about 300 000, including more than half of the country's Moroccans) and 17 % of the population of Antwerp. The highest concentration was observed in the Molenbeek district of Brussels, known for its slums. Half of the Belgian Turks live in Flanders, mainly in Antwerp and Ghent. In 2008, Muslims represented 5.1 % of the population of Flanders (39 % of the Muslim community in Belgium) and 4.9 % of the population of Wallonia (21 % of the diaspora), with the rest living in the Brussels region²². In Luxembourg, 70 % of municipalities are located in the five largest cities, including the capital. Muslim communities in all five countries are relatively young. In England and Wales, for example, 33 % of Muslims are under the age of 16, according to a 2015 survey, well above the average for both regions²³. In Belgium, according to the 2020 census, 35 % of the population of Turkish and Moroccan origin is under the age of 18²⁴.

Conclusion

In our analysis of the origins and evolution of the Muslim community in the UK, Ireland and the Benelux, we have discovered a variety of interrelated but sometimes contradictory trends. The failures of multiculturalism coincide with relatively successful examples of integration, illustrating the polarisation and radicalisation of the world today.

There is no doubt that even in the context of civilisational discourse, socioeconomic factors alone do not adequately describe the situation of a Muslim immigrant to Western Europe adapting to a different civilisational context and building a new life in this novel environment. Islam remains a core part of the immigrants' identities and they consider following its norms to be important. Many Muslims have struggled to live in a secular society while following Islam's rules. Some have strengthened adherence to Islam while forming parallel structures in most spheres. Others have secularised to become full participants in the social, economic,

cultural, and political life of their new home. Some have been drifting into radicalisation and extremism.

In the UK, the Commonwealth and former colonies have been significant sources of Muslim migration. Several countries in the Benelux have signed labour agreements with Turkey, the Maghreb, and several other countries to import low-skilled labour.

In this comparison, Ireland stands out. It had more skilled workers and professionals among its immigrants than the other four countries, and mass immigration to Ireland did not begin until the so-called Celtic Tiger era of the 1990s and 2000s [17, p. 148]. The Irish Muslim population is not dominated by any single ethnic group, as is the case in Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium or Luxembourg.

Muslim immigrants to Ireland have seen it as a fellow victim of Western colonialism. This sentiment influenced Ireland's policy toward many Arab issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ireland has

¹⁹Ahmadiyya. Muslim Association. Ireland [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.islamahmadiyya.ie/about-ahmadiyya-muslim-association-ireland.php> (date of access: 07.01.2020).

²⁰Census of population 2016 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8rnc/#:~:text=There%202020were%2063%2C443%20Muslims%20in,2006%20and%2049%2C204%20in%202011> (date of access: 10.08.2017).

²¹The position of Muslims in the Netherlands: facts and figures [Electronic resource]. P. 10. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2009-09/doc1_9492_789052313.pdf (date of access: 22.05.2022).

²²Islam in Belgium [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/> (date of access: 22.05.2022).

²³British Muslims in numbers: census analysis [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mcb.org.uk/report/british-muslims-in-numbers/> (date of access: 25.02.2015).

²⁴Belgium population [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/belgium-population/> (date of access: 04.06.2021).

avoided many of the pitfalls associated with multiculturalism. Its political arena has been free from anti-Islamist or Islamist movements, or extremist rhetoric on both sides. The Muslim minority's coexistence with the host society has largely been successful, although not free from problems.

European societies are in search of their new identity in a rapidly changing world, influenced by numerous national and international factors. The position of Muslim minorities is one of these key factors that

have significant implications for European societies, culture, politics, and civilisation. While this study only included five Western European countries, any European country could benefit, including Belarus which shares a common border with the EU, hosts a sizable Muslim diaspora, and has the potential to become an important route for international migration. The results of this research can support national migration and cultural policies, depending on the specific characteristics of a country.

Библиографические ссылки

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