

Assessment programme of *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*)

Executive summary

THEMATIC ASSESSMENT 10 - WALLOON IDENTITY

This report is enshrined within the scope of the assessment programme of the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) and has been produced by the *IWEPS* at the Walloon Government's request. This work is not about assessing any precise actions of the Plan, but rather about collecting the opinions of the Walloon citizens on their political priorities, on the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) or on their regional identity. Its objective is to formulate a response to two **research questions** defined by the sponsor:

“What are the trends of regional identity and feeling of belonging?”

In an orientation paper (March 2010) defining its strategy with regard to Walloon identity, the Walloon Government affirms that an “open identity and a positive regional consciousness are today unanimously recognised as critical components of any land development strategy that is dynamic, interdependent and sustainable”. It is the first topic of interest of this work.

*“To what extent are the concerns of the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) shared by the Walloon population?”*

With the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*), the Walloon Government is in particular pursuing objectives for the revival of the Walloon economy. This Plan “is enshrined as a highlight of and as an addition to the sectoral policies consecrated by the Regional Policy Declaration, in order to focus additional means on a number of priorities and measures that are distinguished on account of their structuring nature”¹.

This is why, willing to confront the priorities defined in the Plan with those of the Walloon citizens, the Walloon Government wishes, on the one hand, to identify their concerns and, on the other hand, to appreciate the extent to which those concerns are relayed in the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*).

To answer these questions, data has been collected via an opinion survey called the “Social Barometer of Wallonia” (SBW). This tool, recurrent², includes several modules made up of questions probing the Walloon citizens on topics as varied as confidence, values, political commitment and social networks. The two research questions are the subject of two specific modules entitled “Political Priorities and *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*)” and “Identity and Feeling of Belonging”. The questionnaire of the SBW 2012 survey is founded on the one used in a previous 2007 survey entitled “Identities and Social Capital”. The methodology has been defined and implemented with a view to obtaining a sample of respondents representative of the adult population in 2012 residing on the territory of Wallonia. In all, nearly 1,300 Walloon citizens have been questioned.

The main results stemming from the citizens' opinions on the topics addressed in the research questions are presented hereafter:

¹ Extract from *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*), Page 1.

² Two surveys are already scheduled: the results presented in this report stem from the first survey's data (2012) The second survey (2013) will in particular allow observation and interpretation of the economic or social trends.

“What are the trends of regional identity and feeling of belonging?”

The perceptions of the Walloon citizens questioned in 2012 on this subject are compared with those collected at the time of the previous surveys (1991, 1997, 2003 and 2007) on the subject of identity. Three dimensions are investigated: the frequency, the intensity and the pride of the feeling of belonging. It emerges that:

- The frequency of the feeling of belonging is constantly increasing between 1997 and 2012;
- The intensity and the pride of the feeling of belonging is see-sawing between 1991 and 2012, with some progression between the last two surveys (2007 and 2012);
- Whichever dimension was analysed (frequency, intensity or pride), the Walloon citizens feel firstly Belgian, then Walloon and finally European;
- The separate measurement of the various feelings of belonging (European, Belgian, Walloon) shows that they are complementary rather than competitive.

At the time of the survey, the questioned citizens also indicated the extent to which they felt different from citizens from other regions and countries. The collected responses show us that the Walloon citizens do not feel very different from those of Brussels and France: more than one Walloon out of two does not feel different from those citizens. Conversely, the differences felt by the Walloon citizens are important when compared to the Germans (76% of Walloon citizens feel different from the Germans), to the Dutch (73%) and to the Flemish (64%). With respect to the latter, the general tendency is towards an increase in the perceived difference over the timeframe of the various surveys.

Lastly, opinions on the reasons for being proud to be Walloon or not were surveyed. It appears that the three most frequently quoted reasons for being proud to be Walloon are: the people (one citizen out of five mentioned this category, which referred primarily to the personal characteristics ascribed to the Walloons as persons: their hospitality, their tolerance, etc.), nature (the proposals contained in this category refer directly to nature as such, or very often, to the beauty of the landscapes) and the identity (this category included opinions such as: “I’m proud to be Walloon”, “I’m proud to live in Wallonia”). Concerning the three most frequently quoted reasons for not being proud to be Walloon, the answer which comes spontaneously to mind of almost one citizen out of five is the state of the roads. Followed by the categories: “Unemployment and the State of the Economy” and “Politicians and Governance”.

“To what extent are the concerns of the PM2.V (Marshall Plan 2.Green, Plan Marshall 2.Vert) shared by the Walloon population?”

Regional competences have been organised into 24 fields relating to seven themes: Environment, Social Sector, Education & Training, Services For The Population, Regional Planning and Habitat, Economy, Transport. The Walloon citizens have determined among these fields the ones which, according to them, are the three most important for the development of Wallonia.

From the point of view of the development of Wallonia, the economic and revival imperatives are resonant among its citizens. The field considered to be the most important for the development of Wallonia is “putting jobseekers into work or back into work”: 34% of the Walloon citizens have mentioned this field in their list of the three most important fields for the development of Wallonia. This is also the field for which the budgets of the PM2.V (Marshall Plan 2.Green, Plan Marshall 2.Vert) are the largest. A little more than one Walloon citizen out of four has mentioned corporate aid, research and innovation in their list of the three most important fields for the development of Wallonia. Important budgets from the PM2.V (Marshall Plan 2.Green, Plan Marshall 2.Vert) have been granted to these two fields. Roads and motorways, which do not benefit from any budgets from the PM2.V (Marshall Plan 2.Green, Plan Marshall 2.Vert), are mentioned by nearly a quarter of the citizens.

Lastly, 84% of the Walloon citizens believe that the Region is not doing enough in respect of “putting jobseekers into work or back into work”. However, this field consumes the lion’s share of the budget of the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) : A discrepancy exists between the budgetary efforts made by the Region in the context of the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) and the Walloon citizens’ appreciation of them.

The presented results are derived from the SBW 2012 survey. On the basis of the SBW 2013 survey data, analyses on new questions as well as an update of the results of the 2012 survey will be carried out. The main lessons learnt from this second work will be incorporated into the global assessment report on *the PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*), the publication of which is envisaged for Spring 2014.