

Flanders

Summary

Flanders is the Dutch-speaking northern part of the Kingdom of Belgium. It is inhabited by two-thirds of the citizens of that country. The capital of Flanders is the city of Brussels, which is also the capital of the state of, the seat of the king and the authorities of the Kingdom of Belgium, as well as the North Atlantic Alliance and most of the institutions forming the European Union. Flanders draws the attention of world during the spectacular and lengthy negotiations in forming coalition governments after every parliamentary election in the Kingdom of Belgium. Mostly, however, what surprises outsiders is the sharpness of the conflicts between the two nations inhabiting the country. The disputes about the municipalities surrounding the capital city of Brussels and the government crises in this affluent country are full of emotions. To understand their source, it is necessary to return to the most important historical events in the lands stretching from the Dover Strait to the mouth of the Scheldt estuary.

Flanders has a long and turbulent history. Its name comes from the County of Flanders, of the 9th century. As a result of many administrative divisions over the centuries, caused mainly by the succession wars of neighboring states, the lands of the former Flanders county now form part of the French Republic, the Kingdom of Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The western part of the historic county of Flanders is part of France, until recently the name Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie (now Hauts-

-de-France). Its central part is the Flemish Region of the Kingdom of Belgium, and the eastern part is called Zeelandic Flanders and belongs to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Although the lands of County of Flanders were divided between neighbors, they shared one common feature, fundamental to the national identity of their inhabitants – the same language. During the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), the inhabitants of Flanders were strongly influenced by the ideas spread by representatives of the European Reformation. Faithful to the Catholic monarchs, the Flemish remained in place, and supporters of new ideas immigrated to the nearby Netherlands, where various currents of Protestantism were spreading.

Flanders is now part of a federal state in where two great European cultures – Romanesque and Germanic – coexist on equal terms. The author of the book analyses the process of the formation of the Belgian state and the formation of the Flemish identity and the Flemish nation, as well as the history of the Dutch language. The book focuses also on the history of the entire territory of the Kingdom of Belgium, which was established in 1830 as a unitary state. In the process of political transformation at the end of the 20th century it became a federal state. The problems of the modern Kingdom of Belgium, the specifics of its federalism and the source of political disputes conducted by successive governments are also discussed. The author attempts to present to the Polish reader the process of creating awareness and the national identity of the Flemish population, whose basic components are language and Catholicism.

This book offers an inside look into intra-Belgian relations from the Flemish perspective, i.e., the Dutch language and the Dutch culture. The book includes a list of the forty most influential Flemings composed by Flemish journalists in 2015.

The choice of the facts presented and the opinions quoted in the book are of subjective nature.