

BELGIUM

ASYLUM

The so-called “reception crisis” continues, whereby for two years the Belgian government has been seriously failing to accommodate people with dignity during their asylum procedure. This leads to asylum seekers having to survive and sleep on the streets (see [here](#)). The people most impacted by this crisis are single men, including members of the LGBTQI+ community. When people requesting asylum are being granted shelter, the basic safety needs of LGBTQI+ people are usually not met in the main reception centers.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Mons [became](#) the second city where businesses will receive a label for being welcoming of LGBTQIA+ people, after a training provided by Maison Arc-en-ciel (MAC).

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Education)

The Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia) [called for urgent legal changes](#) to ensure that perpetrators of hate crimes are prosecuted in criminal proceedings.

CSOs [filed](#) a complaint with the Prosecutor against a far-right organiser and founder of the extreme right-wing youth movement ‘Schild en Vrienden’, who [demanded](#) a store take down its rainbow flag because it spreads “paedophilia”. The video of the action [went](#) viral and spread hate.

An LGBTQIA+ iftar (the fast-breaking evening meal of Muslims in Ramadan) in Antwerp had to be [cancelled](#) after [countless](#) hate messages and threats. Several politicians, including the Flanders Minister for Equal Opportunities, condemned the hate wave.

Drag story time events were [targeted](#) by hate speech and harassment this year, with at least one event [disrupted](#) by a handful of far-right [protesters](#). Drag shows were also [targeted](#) by hate.

Flemish right-wing politicians continued to use hateful speech towards LGBTI+ people. During a parliamentary session in October, MP Stefaan Sintobin (Vlaams Belang) [upheld](#) that schoolteachers should not address how gay and lesbian couples can have children.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See also under Education)

After her disappearance in December 2022, the murder of a Georgian young trans woman in Belgium was [reported](#) in January.

Unia [shared](#) that it closed 137 files relating to discrimination based on sexual orientation in 2022, a worrying figure but a slight decrease [compared](#) to 2021. It [received](#) 7,310 complaints in 2022. Unia called for a new interfederal action plan against discrimination and violence against LGBTI+ people, as the previous one expired in 2019.

UZ Gent/Transgender Infopoint’s study, [commissioned](#) by the government, [found](#) that one in three LGBTQ+ people in Flanders have experienced physical violence in the past two years and 93% have reported verbal or psychological abuse.

Three LGBTQI+ bars were [vandalised](#) in Brussels. A man in his 70s was [lured](#) on a fake date on a dating app and robbed by five young men. A man was the victim of a homophobic and autistophobic attack in Brussels. Several rainbow crossings (see under Equality and Non-discrimination) were vandalised (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The Brussels metro [received](#) several terrorist threats, which also included anti-LGBT language.

The perpetrator in a 2022 homophobic hate crime was [sentenced](#) to 18 months of prison, including nine months of probation. One of the three perpetrators of a 2018 homophobic murder was [sentenced](#) to 28 years in prison – the others stood trial in 2021.

In July, Belgium [adopted](#) the first law against femicides in Europe. It includes protections for gender minorities who do not identify as women.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In July, the parliament [adopted](#) a ban on so-called ‘conversion practices’, covering sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, in the case of both minors and adults. The sanctions will include prison sentences and/or fines.

The parliament is yet to ban non-consensual surgeries performed on intersex children, in line with the 2021 parliamentary [resolution](#) on intersex people’s rights. Civil society continued to [lobby](#) for a ban, and also for sanctions,



better access to healthcare for intersex people throughout their lives, and access to their own medical history.

In an important [judicial victory](#), the Brussels Court of Appeal held a hospital [accountable](#) for non-consensual medical interventions performed on an intersex minor. Civil society widely welcomed the ruling.

EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

The Ook Genks Wel Anders (OGWA) association's IDAHOBIT event at a school in Genk was [attacked](#) by approximately 100 far-right students, who also [assaulted](#) a volunteer and city representatives. In response, the city and OGWA [launched](#) a campaign against anti-LGBT hate in schools.

The Hasselt Sports School [suspended](#) eight teachers for racist and homophobic speech on a messaging app. An official investigation was [launched](#) and later dismissed because of a lack of evidence, but a disciplinary investigation [continues](#).

Sint-Rita college [installed](#) a rainbow crossing upon a students' initiative (see more under Equality and Non-discrimination). Students in the Herzele municipality [received](#) rainbow bracelets for IDAHOBIT.

In June, the Constitutional Court [struck down](#) the so-called 'attainment targets' for second and third-grade secondary education. The new targets don't explicitly include LGBTI+ rights and experiences. Civil society [found](#) the ruling alarming and a step back.

A survey conducted by çavaria [revealed](#) that the situation for LGBTI+ students in secondary schools in Flanders has not improved in the past five years.

Sex education (EVRAS) became mandatory in French-speaking schools. The law was voted almost unanimously but the decision was used by far-right and religious groups to stage violent protests, including a wave of disinformation on social media and the [vandalisation](#) of some schools. Some of these groups [looked at](#) bringing the new law before the Constitutional Court.

EMPLOYMENT

Civil servants in Ghent are now [eligible](#) for 20 days of transition leave.

A new study by the University of Ghent [found](#) that lesbians and gay men face little discrimination in employment, contrary to trans people. Ghent [allocated](#) funding this year to test transphobic discrimination in employment and take legal action.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The parliament and the Prime Minister celebrated IDAHOBIT again this year. Municipalities also continued to raise the rainbow flag on IDAHOBIT and organise events (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The Ministry of Mobility [announced](#) on the occasion of IDAHOBIT that municipalities can request a rainbow pedestrian crossing from the Flemish Roads and Traffic Agency - in May over a third have already done so. The municipality of Hemiksem [wanted](#) to also install a rainbow traffic light, but the traffic institute [deemed](#) it unsafe and confusing. The rail company NMBS/SNCB [ran](#) a rainbow-coloured train from Antwerp on IDAHOBIT and a #trainbow in Liège.

Civil society [petitioned](#) the parliament to ban facial recognition technology in Brussels, which disproportionately [impacts](#) LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, homeless people, and racial and ethnic minorities.

Three laws on discrimination were [amended](#) to replace "sex change" as a protected group with "medical or social transition" and to recognise multiple discrimination. The definition of sexual orientation was updated to reflect that sexual orientation can be fluid.

FAMILY

This year [marked](#) the 20th anniversary of marriage equality in Belgium.

FOREIGN POLICY

Belgium joined the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Belgium Pride was held in May (see [here](#) and [here](#)), with the motto 'Protect the Protest'.

In Flanders, Antwerp Pride [celebrated](#) its 16th edition in August.

The first Pride march in Wallonia backed by official institutions will [take](#) place in Liège in 2024. TransPédéGouines Pride,



organised by grassroots groups, [took place](#) for the second time in May.

The “anti-rioters” draft law, which would have severely restricted freedom of assembly, was eventually [dismissed](#) in November when the PS and Ecolo parties refused to vote in its favour.

HEALTH

UZ Gent/Transgender Infopoint’s study [found](#) that almost 70% of LGBTQ+ people have considered suicide. Transgender Infopoint [celebrated](#) its 10th anniversary.

An LGBTQIA+ health centre [opened](#) in Brussels and is [run](#) by three civil society organisations. In Wallonia, five such centres [exist](#) and two more will open soon. Funds were [allocated](#) to establish five more centres dedicated to trans health.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

It is now [possible](#) to change one’s name or gender marker (M/F only) any number of times. Names no longer have to align with the person’s gender identity.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The Belgian Football Association [launched](#) a campaign against racist and homophobic hate in the sport, as the number of incidents more than [doubled](#) between 2021-2022. Eight football teams [joined](#) the Jarfi [tournament](#) against homophobia and discrimination, remembering Ishane Jarfi who died in a homophobic murder in 2012.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In March, the FPS Justice, formerly the Ministry of Justice, launched an internal recommendations guide at the [Gender & Justice Colloquium](#) for the treatment of incarcerated trans people.

Transgender Infopunt [published](#) a trilingual self-help guide for trans people in Belgian prisons and an [info sheet](#) for correctional staff on how to support them during their detention.

Several members of the army [joined](#) Brussels Pride for the first time this year.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

A new shelter for LGBTQI+ youth (18-25) will [open](#) in Charleroi, funded by the City of Charleroi and a number of institutional partners. The demand for emergency housing for those kicked out from home [remains](#) high.

Ghent [became](#) the first city to fulfil all criteria on the Rainbow Ambassadors manifesto, which lists a five clear ways to support LGBTQ+ seniors, including provision of a confidential counsellor in all residential care centres and local service centres in the city, and appropriate training for care workers to deal with all forms of sexuality and orientation with respect.



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