



# BELGIUM

## ASYLUM

RainbowHouse Brussels and InQlusion launched the Q-Asyl'Home project in August, to train social assistants, caseworkers and inhabitants of asylum centres on SOGIESC issues and improve services for LGBTI asylum seekers. The project will be prolonged in 2020.

On 27 March, the Flemish Parliament unanimously approved a Resolution condemning violence against LGBTQI people in Chechnya and urging the Belgian government to provide international protection to victims.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In May, a study commissioned by the Brussels Secretary of State for Equal Opportunities, found that nine out of 10 LGBTQI people have been targeted by verbal or psychological abuse.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In February, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended Belgium to ban medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries on intersex children, provide them and their parents counseling and support, and effective remedies. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities asked Belgium about these issues in July.

## DATA COLLECTION

Upon the request of the Flemish Government, the Transgender Infopunt submitted an advisory note on how best to ask questions on gender identity in governmental surveys. The Transgender Infopunt issued "Ten tips for students on recruitment of trans people", in light of an increasing number of theses focusing on trans topics.

## EDUCATION

The Flemish parliament introduced mandatory education on gender and sexual identity for first grade students in high schools, the fulfilment of which will be monitored by school inspections. Two universities, ULB and VUB, co-organised a workshop with four other European universities, on good practices on LGBTI inclusion.

## EMPLOYMENT

Kliq vzw, a non-profit consultancy organisation on sexual and gender diversity, held its second Kliq Workplace Conference. Procter & Gamble won the Most Inclusive Employer award for the second year in a row. The Legal Diversity and Inclusion Alliance, a network of 45 law firms, won the Diversity Initiative award.

In October, çavaria adopted ILGA-Europe's LGBTI sex work policy as a policy for their own organisation.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In May, Unia (Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism) reported that it processed a total of 125 discrimination cases against LGBT people, which amounts to a 38 per cent increase compared to the average over the past five years. Earlier in February, the Institute for Gender Equality shared that they have been contacted by an increasing number of trans people, with requests for information or complaints about discrimination.

During the spring, the Flemish Red Cross banned trans people from donating blood in Flanders. Following consultations with çavaria and Transgender Infopunt, the Red Cross agreed to lift the ban from 30 September onwards. Trans people are now subject to a three-month deferral period after starting hormone replacement therapy, and twelve-month deferral after the last sexual encounter with men. The Red Cross will finance a study by the Transgender Infopunt on HIV and trans.

A total of 101 towns in Wallonia raised the rainbow flag on IDAHOT this year. In Flanders, all 309 municipalities participated.

Following their success in the Flemish and European elections, çavaria warned of the far-right populist party Vlaams Belang gaining more power.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In the largest funding effort to date, the Ministry for Development Cooperation designated 220,000EUR for SOGIE-focused project work.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Transemble, a collective of trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people, held its first Trans\* Pride Brussels on 4 May.



*“Pride must return to the essence: a protest action by one for minorities, with a focus on justice and radical inclusion.” - [Transemble](#)*

On 11 May, [Queer Pride Gent](#) organised the first Pride in the city of Ghent.

Belgian Pride took place on May 18 in Brussels, joined by 100,000 participants. The police separated the Reclaim the Pride activists who were protesting against pinkwashing and commercialisation at Pride. Belgian Pride [affirmed](#) that political parties and companies can also be allies and they have to meet certain criteria before they can participate. The organisation is investigating how it can facilitate the more critical voices within the community without obstructing Pride festivities.

Simultaneously with Belgian Pride, [For All Queens](#) held [FAQ! Pride: The Afropunk Ball](#).

On 8 August, Belgium's first [POC\\* Pride](#) took place in the city of Antwerp.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

On 3 August, the first intersex organisation in Flanders (Intersekse Vlaanderen vzw) was officially registered.

## HEALTH

The Transgender Infopunt and the Centres for General Well-being (CAW) started cooperation in January, as CAW is now mandate to specifically work on trans well-being.

The Flemish Minister of Health financed a LGBT suicide prevention project, through which [çavaria](#) and the Transgender Infopunt launched [lumi.be](#) and a specific trans suicide prevention website [gendervonk.be](#).

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

A new bridge in Brussels will be [named](#) after Suzan Daniel, an iconic figure of the local LGBT movement. A part of the city near the Brussels North station will be [named](#) after Willy De Bruyn, an intersex and trans cyclist.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The National Register announced in January that a total of 742 people [changed](#) their legal gender in 2018 (110 in 2017), following the law reform allowing for LGR on the basis of self-determination. Between January and September 2019, 397 people accessed legal gender recognition (LGR).

On 19 June, the Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in a landmark judgment that non-binary and genderfluid persons were discriminated against the new Gender Recognition Act. Both the principle of irreversibility of LGR and the absence of any recognition of non-binary gender identities were found unconstitutional. The federal parliament now needs to adopt an appropriate legal framework, which could mean introducing a third gender option. Multiple changes of registered sex/gender will also be possible. The case was brought to the Court by [çavaria](#).

In September, the family court ruled for the first time since the introduction of the law of 2018, that an applicant who had obtained a change of first name and legal gender through the administrative procedure, could return to the former name and gender registration based on experienced severe transphobia.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In September, the Flemish government [amended](#) the Flemish staff regulations: existing regulations for ‘mothers’ are now gender neutral and employees will have a total of twenty days of leave for exams and counseling related to trans healthcare. These were recommended by the Transgender Infopunt as part of its [assessment](#) of the government's trans friendliness.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Refuge, the first LGBT Shelter in Brussels has [received](#) more than 90 applications from LGBT young people since its opening in October 2018, some of them asylum seekers. In May, a second shelter [opened](#) in Liège (Wallonia).