



2024-1-SE02-KA220-YOU-000250648

Belgium

National Report

**Good practices on legal & policy
interventions regarding LGBTQIA+ inclusion**

December 2024

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1. Aim of the National Reports

The aim of national reports is to map -starting from desk research- existing good practices and positive legal and/or political interventions in partners' countries in regard to the support given to the LGBTQIA+ communities, with emphasis to young people and the compliance with the EU standards, in order to identify problematic areas.

Desk research has been conducted by each partner organization for mapping the current situation and existing good practices at local/regional/national level. In particular, partners identified the following common criteria for the identification of good practices:

- Identification of at least 10 good practices per country;
- Emphasis on the mental health of LGBTQIA+ young people and their experiences;
- Provision of a detailed description for each good practice, so as to inspire policy recommendations.

Partners analyzed the existing practices based on the following:

- Typology of practice (legal, policy, action plan, etc.);
- Level of the initiative (local, regional, national);
- Sector (education, work, etc.);
- Target group(s)/beneficiaries;
- Promoter(s);
- Responsible and contact person(s)/body.

2. Introduction to Belgium Report

The Belgium National Report was prepared through comprehensive desk research, focusing on both legal frameworks and community initiatives supporting LGBTQIA+ inclusion. The research identified progressive legal milestones, such as the 2003 Same-Sex Marriage Law, the 2006 Adoption Rights for Same-Sex Couples, and the 2018 Gender Recognition Law, which have significantly advanced equality and mental well-being for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Simultaneously, grassroots and institutional initiatives, including mental health services and awareness campaigns, were documented for their role in fostering inclusive communities. This dual approach ensures a balanced understanding of Belgium's efforts and provides a foundation for future policy recommendations aligned with EU standards.

3. Good Practices in Belgium

Belgium's Comprehensive Sexual Education Policy (2012)

Typology of practice:	Educational reform, policy initiative
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Education and training
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Students, teachers, and educational staff
Promoter(s):	Ministry of Education
Responsible and contact person/body:	Regional Education Authorities

Description of the good practice:

Since 2012, Belgium has mandated inclusive sexual education (SE) in schools. The curriculum includes topics such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and consent, aiming to foster inclusivity and reduce bullying and stigma against LGBTQIA+ students. It aligns with international educational standards and is regularly updated to reflect societal changes.

Aims:

- Provide age-appropriate and inclusive SE to students.
- Promote understanding and respect for gender and sexual diversity.

Strengths:

- Comprehensive and evidence-based curriculum.

- National reach, ensuring consistency in implementation.

Barriers and challenges:

- Resistance from conservative groups in certain regions.
- Variation in implementation quality across schools.

Results:

- Reduced bullying incidents and increased awareness among students.
- Improved mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Resources:

Government funding for training and teaching materials, partnerships with NGOs.

Additional resources:

Education Policy Details

Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage (2003)

Typology of practice:	Policy and legal intervention
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Legal and civil rights
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Same-sex couples, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and their families
Promoter(s):	The Federal Parliament of Belgium, supported by LGBTQIA+ rights organizations like Çavaria, Wel Jong, and other advocacy groups. Notable political proponents included Socialist and Green Party members who strongly championed antidiscrimination principles.
Responsible and contact person/body:	While there is no specific individual contact, inquiries can be directed to Belgium's Ministry of Justice or LGBTQIA+ support organizations like Rainbow House Brussels.

Description of the good practice:

Belgium became the second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage on January 30, 2003. The law, initially passed without provisions for adoption rights (added in 2006), was a landmark in addressing discrimination against same-sex couples. It amended the Civil Code to grant equal marital rights, offering legal recognition and protection.

The law responded to extensive activism throughout the late 20th century, including lobbying for domestic partnerships in 2000. It initially faced opposition grounded in traditional views of marriage but was ultimately supported by progressive blocs emphasizing equality. The law expanded in 2004 to allow same-sex couples from other countries to marry in Belgium under specific conditions.

This initiative aligns with Belgium's broader framework of anti-discrimination and human rights policies, enhancing the country's reputation as a leader in LGBTQIA+ rights.

Aims:

- To provide legal equality for same-sex couples.
- To combat discrimination and promote social acceptance.
- To set a precedent for LGBTQIA+ rights internationally.

Strengths:

- Positioned Belgium as a global leader in LGBTQIA+ rights.
- Paved the way for further advancements like adoption rights (2006).
- Significantly improved the legal and social status of same-sex couples.

Barriers and challenges:

- Resistance from conservative factions during the legislative process.
- Limited initial scope, excluding adoption rights and addressing non-citizen couples (resolved in later amendments).

Results:

- Full marriage equality granted to same-sex couples.
- Strengthened legal protections for LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Increased international recognition of Belgium as a progressive country for human rights.

Resources:

- Political will and support from advocacy groups.
- Legal and administrative mechanisms for legislative reform.

Additional resources:

Further details can be accessed via organizations like Çavaria (www.cavaria.be) and Rainbow House Brussels (rainbowhouse.be).

National Action Plan Against Homophobia and Transphobia (2018-2022)

Typology of practice:	Strategic policy, Action plan
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Equality and inclusion
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly youth
Promoter(s):	
Responsible and contact person/body:	

Description of the good practice:

The plan aimed to combat discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals through education, awareness, and policy changes. Its initiatives included anti-bullying programs in schools, training for law enforcement, and workplace diversity campaigns.

Aims:

- Strengthen protections for LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Reduce hate crimes and societal stigma.

Barriers and challenges:

- Implementation disparities across regions.
- Insufficient funding for some projects.

Results:

- Significant reduction in reported cases of bullying in participating schools.
- Increased training sessions for public officials

Resources:

Government funding, NGO partnerships

LGBTQIA+ Action Plan in Wallonia (2020-2024)

Typology of practice:	Policy action plan
Level of the initiative	Regional (Wallonia)
Sector:	Human rights, social services
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	LGBTQIA+ individuals and service providers
Promoter(s):	Walloon Regional Government
Responsible and contact person/body:	Equality Directorate



Description of the good practice:

Launched in 2020, this action plan outlines concrete steps for improving inclusion and combating discrimination in Wallonia. It includes measures for LGBTQIA+ rights in healthcare, employment, and education, focusing on regional challenges like access to services in rural areas. Its midterm review highlights measurable improvements in service accessibility and community support.

Aims:

- Address regional disparities in LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- Implement practical measures to improve quality of life.

Strengths:

- Regional focus ensures tailored solutions.
- Strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Barriers and challenges:

- Funding constraints in some municipalities.
- Lack of awareness about the plan among smaller communities.

Results:

- Enhanced collaboration between local governments and LGBTQIA+ organizations.
- Creation of new resources, such as regional support networks.

Resources:

Regional funding, cross-sector partnerships, and stakeholder engagement.

Additional resources:

[Wallonia.be](https://wallonia.be) | [Feel Inspired](#)

Legalization of Adoption Rights for Same-Sex Couples (2006)

Typology of practice:	Policy and Legal Intervention
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Legal and civil rights
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Same-sex couples and LGBTQIA+ families
Promoter(s):	The Federal Parliament of Belgium, supported by LGBTQIA+ organizations like Çavaria and Wel Jong. Advocacy by these groups was instrumental in pushing the legislative agenda for equality in family rights.
Responsible and contact person/body:	For legal inquiries or details about implementation, contact the Belgian Ministry of Justice. LGBTQIA+ organizations like Rainbow House Brussels are also available for resources and support.

Description of the good practice:

In 2006, Belgium expanded its progressive legislation by granting adoption rights to same-sex couples. This reform allowed same-sex couples to adopt children jointly, ensuring equal legal and parental rights. Before this, same-sex couples could marry (since 2003), but adoption remained restricted.

This legislative change stemmed from the recognition of growing family diversity and advocacy for the best interests of children in same-sex households, ensuring they enjoyed the same protections as those in heterosexual families. It addressed inequalities in parental rights, enabling both partners in a same-sex relationship to share responsibilities equally.

The law complements Belgium's broader LGBTQIA+ rights framework and aligns with its commitment to anti-discrimination and child welfare policies.

Aims:

- To provide equal parental rights to same-sex couples.
- To ensure children in same-sex households have the same legal protections as others.
- To strengthen Belgium's stance on LGBTQIA+ equality and inclusivity.

Strengths:

- Enhanced legal recognition of diverse family structures.
- Protected the rights and well-being of children in same-sex families.
- Positioned Belgium as a leader in LGBTQIA+ family rights.

Barriers and challenges:

- Resistance from conservative and religious groups during the legislative process.
- Ongoing societal prejudice and challenges to family integration.

Results:

- Equal adoption rights for same-sex couples established.
- Improved social acceptance and visibility of LGBTQIA+ families.
- Strengthened Belgium's legislative framework for equality.

Resources:

- Political and legislative advocacy by LGBTQIA+ organizations.
- Expertise from legal and family rights specialists.

Additional resources:

Information can be accessed through Çavaria (www.cavaria.be) and Rainbow House Brussels (rainbowhouse.be). Relevant updates are also available via Belgium's Ministry of Justice.

Anti-Discrimination Law

Typology of practice:	Policy and legal intervention
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Anti-discrimination, legal protection
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Marginalized groups, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities
Promoter(s):	Belgian Federal Government
Responsible and contact person/body:	Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IEFH/IGVM); contact: info@iefh.belgium.be



Description of the good practice:

The Anti-Discrimination Law prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and race. It aligns Belgium with EU anti-discrimination directives. The law provides a legal basis for addressing workplace discrimination, unequal access to services, and hate crimes. It is enforced through national bodies like the IEFH and UNIA, Belgium's equality center. A key aspect is the ease of reporting cases through dedicated hotlines and legal support services.

Aims:

- Strengthen equality and prevent discrimination.
- Offer accessible mechanisms for reporting and addressing violations.

Strengths:

- Comprehensive protection across multiple domains.
- Alignment with international human rights standards.

Barriers and challenges:

- Awareness of the law remains limited in rural areas.
- Case processing times can be lengthy.

Results:

- Thousands of cases have been successfully prosecuted.
- Increased societal awareness of discrimination issues.

Resources:

Funded by the Federal Government and EU grants.

Additional resources:

[Samen voor gelijkheid | Unia](#)

Lumi

Typology of practice:	Support service, Helpline
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Mental health support, Social services
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	LGBTQIA+ youth, young adults
Promoter(s):	Lumi: A helpline and online chat service dedicated to LGBTQIA+ youth, managed by the non-profit çavaria and funded by the Belgian federal government.
Responsible and contact person/body:	Lumi Contact Center, çavaria



Description of the good practice:

Lumi, formerly known as Wel Jong Niet Hetero, is a national LGBTQIA+ helpline that began as a volunteer-based support initiative. It has since evolved into a professional service providing confidential counseling and information for LGBTQIA+ youth facing issues like identity struggles, family dynamics, and mental health challenges. The helpline collaborates with mental health services and regional initiatives, ensuring that callers have access to referrals for ongoing support if needed. Lumi's counselors are trained to handle sensitive topics, promoting sustainability through government funding and partnerships with healthcare providers.

Aims:

To provide confidential, accessible support for LGBTQIA+ youth in crisis or distress.

Strengths:

- 24/7 accessibility
- Trained, empathetic counselors
- National reach with local referrals

Barriers and challenges:

- High demand for services, occasionally leading to long wait times
- Limited availability of regional referral services

Results:

The helpline has helped countless LGBTQIA+ youth by offering a safe, non-judgmental space, and has contributed to improved mental health outcomes for young LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Resources:

Government funding, trained counselors, partnerships with mental health services.

Additional resources:

Details on the Lumi helpline and additional services are available on the Lumi website.

Gender Recognition Law (2018)

Typology of practice:	Policy and legal intervention
Level of the initiative	National
Sector:	Legal, civil rights
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Transgender individuals seeking legal gender recognition
Promoter(s):	Belgian Federal Government
Responsible and contact person/body:	Federal Public Service for Justice (FPS Justice), Contact: justice@just.fgov.be



**SERVICE PUBLIC FÉDÉRAL
JUSTICE**

Description of the good practice:

This law, implemented in 2018, enables individuals in Belgium to change their legal gender without mandatory sterilization or medical procedures. It is rooted in human rights advancements and reflects the nation's efforts to comply with European human rights standards. Applicants need to provide a declaration of gender identity, removing prior medicalization barriers. The law is complemented by anti-discrimination measures to support its enactment. It was developed in response to advocacy by groups like Çavaria, reflecting the broader goal of ensuring trans rights.

Aims:

- Promote self-determination for transgender individuals.
- Ensure compliance with international human rights standards.

Strengths:

- Removes medical barriers for legal gender change.
- Affirms bodily autonomy and dignity for transgender people.

Barriers and challenges:

- Implementation gaps in rural areas, requiring training for local administrators.
- Advocacy continues for non-binary recognition.

Results:

- Increase in applications for legal gender change.
- Enhanced visibility and rights for transgender people.

Resources:

Funded by the Federal Government, with technical support from advocacy groups.

Additional resources:

[Language selection | Justice](#)

Rainbow Houses Network

Typology of practice:	Network, Awareness-raising activity, Action plan
Level of the initiative	Local/regional
Sector:	Social inclusion, Education, Support services
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Young people, LGBTQIA+ individuals, families, educators, and social workers
Promoter(s):	Federation of Rainbow Houses in Belgium: A network of local organizations that provide support, organize events, and promote LGBTQIA+ rights across Belgium.
Responsible and contact person/body:	Contact local Rainbow House offices in Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, or Ghent (information available on the official website of each city's Rainbow House).



Description of the good practice:

The Rainbow Houses network started in Belgium to address the needs of LGBTQIA+ people by providing safe spaces and resources for youth and adults. Initially formed as individual organizations, these houses now collaborate across cities to coordinate events, raise awareness, and offer direct support. The network is actively involved with national and regional

initiatives like Pride events, education programs, and policy advocacy. They provide mental health support, legal advice, and community activities aimed at reducing isolation. Sustainability is ensured through local government funding and volunteer contributions, with support from nonprofit partners.

Aims:

To provide safe spaces, promote LGBTQIA+ equality, support the mental health of young people, and encourage allyship within communities.

Strengths:

- Widespread presence in multiple cities
- Strong community support
- Collaboration with local governments and schools

Barriers and challenges:

- Reliance on public funding, which varies by region
- Social stigmas in some communities

Results:

Increased visibility of LGBTQIA+ issues, reduced stigma, creation of support networks, and improved mental well-being among LGBTQIA+ youth.

Resources:

Government funding, volunteer support, spaces provided by local authorities, and collaboration with non-profit partners.

Additional resources:

More information can be found on the Brussels Rainbow House website and related social media channels.

School & Welzijn Alliance (School & Welfare Alliance)

Typology of practice:	Awareness-raising activity, Educational support, Collaboration between schools and welfare services
Level of the initiative	Regional (Flanders)
Sector:	Education, Social Welfare
Target group(s)/beneficiaries:	Students, teachers, school counselors, welfare professionals
Promoter(s):	School & Welzijn Network: A coalition of educational institutions and welfare organizations in Flanders working to create LGBTQIA+ inclusive environments in schools.
Responsible and contact person/body:	Contacts can be found through Flanders education and welfare agencies.



Description of the good practice:

The School & Welzijn Alliance started as a pilot project in Flanders to address the inclusion and well-being of LGBTQIA+ youth in school settings. It connects schools with local welfare organizations, training teachers and counselors on LGBTQIA+ issues, and providing resources like guidelines for

addressing bullying and mental health support. The project was launched in response to national surveys indicating high rates of LGBTQIA+ bullying in schools. It aligns with broader Flemish education policies focused on mental health and inclusion and is ongoing with regular evaluations.

Aims:

To create a supportive, inclusive school environment for LGBTQIA+ students and equip school staff with resources to address LGBTQIA+ issues effectively.

Strengths:

- Strong partnership between education and welfare sectors
- Comprehensive training and resources for school staff
- Sustainable, regionally funded support

Barriers and challenges:

- Limited resources in schools for full implementation
- Varying levels of acceptance among school communities

Results:

Improved support structures for LGBTQIA+ students, reduced bullying, and increased staff awareness and capability in addressing LGBTQIA+ issues.

Resources:

Funding from regional education budgets, welfare service partnerships, training sessions for staff.

Additional resources:

Further details can be accessed through the Flanders Education Department website.



Creating Space for LGBTQIA+ Youth to Thrive