

Everything
you always
wanted to know
— ABOUT —
LGB's*

**but were afraid to ask*



Vlaanderen
is gelijke kansen

COLOPHON

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Dear reader,

Diversity is the keyword of our contemporary society. Diversity offers opportunities and is the strength of our society. But it also engenders quite a few challenges. There are mechanisms in day-to-day life that inhibit equal opportunities. LGBs are still too often confronted with discrimination and ignorance. Telling others at school that you are lesbian or two men walking hand-in-hand in the street? We see a positive evolution, but it is still not self-evident.

One of the causes is a lack of correct information and knowledge. And so we have prepared this brochure. For parents, family, teachers, LGBs, friends, acquaintances and so on. In fact, for everyone who wants to know more about LGB sexuality. For proper information leads to an open society where diversity is no longer viewed as a problem but as an added value. My final goal? A Flanders where everybody can be and are themselves. Where it does not matter whether it is two men, two women or a man and a woman who enjoy being together.

Enjoy your reading.

Flemish Minister of Equal Opportunities
Liesbeth Homans



A black and white photograph of two women, Romy Schneider and Lilli Palmer, in profile, kissing. They are wearing light-colored, high-collared blouses. The background is dark and out of focus.

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Romy Schneider and Lilli Palmer in 'Mädchen in Uniform' (1958)

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WHAT IS LGB?

LGB' is an acronym, derived from the words 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual'.

under the spotlight

ORIENTATION • If you feel attracted to someone of the same sex or attracted to several sexes or gender identities, you can call yourself LGB. You don't necessarily need to want to have sex together or to build up a relationship; it could also be a romantic desire.

WHAT DO YOU CALL YOURSELF? • You don't like calling yourself 'LGB'? That's fine. It's up to each individual person to decide what they call themselves. Some choose to call themselves 'a woman who loves other women', others do not label themselves at all. "I just love people," still others will say, "regardless of their sex or gender identity."

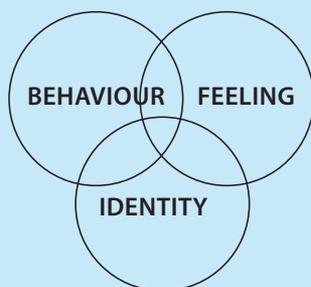
FLEMISH 'HOLEBI'S' • The word was invented in Flanders in 1996 because lesbian women and bisexual people were often forgotten in text and word. The word is therefore mainly used in Flanders because, in Dutch, 'homosexuals' can apply to both men and women. French people on the other hand talk about '**lesbigay**', and in English-speaking countries the acronym '**LGB**' is used (**lesbian, gay and bisexual**).

ALPHABET SOUP • The English acronym LGBT is gaining prominence and is also getting longer. Some people will use LGBTQIPAA, short for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersexual, Pansexual, Asexual and Agender, which in turn can be lengthened with A(lies), S(traight), H(eterosexual) and D(emisexual). As you can see, this becomes unpronounceable! That is why other acronyms have been introduced. In the Netherlands for example the acronym LGBT (Lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans*people) is gaining ground. The **United Nations** talk about '**SOGIESC**' (**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics**) and therapists in London prefer '**GSD**' (**Gender and sexual diversity**). Until somebody makes a final decision, we shall talk about LGBT+.

timeline

7th
Century
BC | **Sappho**, born on the Greek island of Lesbos, was one of the first women in history to express her personal feelings in poetry. Many myths exist about her personal life and relationships with other women. Her work was placed on the list of banned literature and apart from a few lines, did not survive the Middle Ages.

NUMBERS



3 TO 8%

of the population call themselves LGB. Those numbers, however, differ from one research project to another because there are several different aspects of sexual orientation. You can ascertain what someone feels or desires (physical and/or emotional attraction, fantasies), what

that person does (relationship and sex) and what they call themselves (identity), but those aspects will not always correspond. It is possible to call yourself heterosexual and still sometimes fantasise about homosexual sex or have sex with someone of the same sex or gender identity.

GAY TEST

Are you gay?

Yes

No

If you answered 'yes',
you are gay.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN LGB-TEST? Except for those mentioned later, there are no self-tests that are fool proof in deciding someone's sexual preferences. Sexual feelings cannot really be tested because feelings are not absolute: they can change throughout all your life.

ARE YOU BORN WITH IT OR IS IT A CHOICE? Is it in your genes? Hundreds of research projects have already been carried out to determine what makes you LGB or heterosexual, i.e. research on genes, hormones, brains, education etc. No subject is too crazy to become the subject of a theory. There is, for example, 'research' claiming that eating soya products makes you gay. Rubbish, of course. To be honest we simply don't know. But does it really matter? LGB people may come from cabbages or have different brains, but that doesn't change your feelings. Being in love or sexual arousal is something that takes you by surprise. And the same is true for LGB people. They don't have a say in the matter either.

IS IT CONTAGIOUS? 'If only' is what LGBs think who are secretly in love with a heterosexual person. You do not become LGB by reading LGB cartoons, by meeting lesbian teachers, by drinking soymilk or by listening to George Michael or Kylie Minogue. The vast majority of LGBs come from heterosexual families.

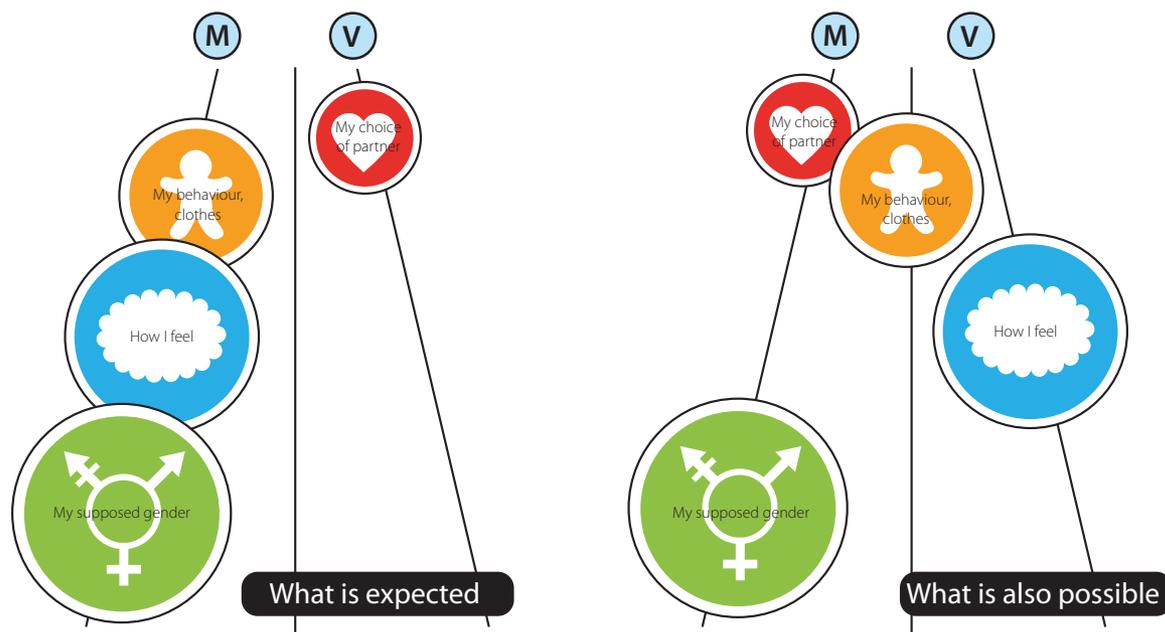


"If I were allowed to compare mortals to goddesses, please know that the sight of your beauty fends off all my worries"



FEMININE MAN, MASCULINE WOMAN

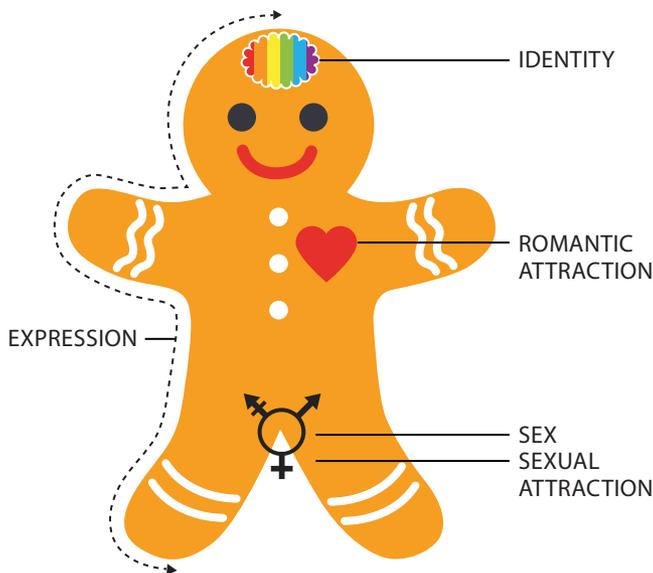
Quite a few people think that gays are feminine men and lesbians masculine women. Along those same lines, they also think that transvestites and transsexuals are really gay and feminists are secret lesbians. But that is not how it works.



TOE THE LINE Contrary to what is often thought, your sex does not predict how you feel (gender identity), how you express yourself (gender expression) or which partner you are going to choose (sexual orientation). Those elements usually do toe the line for the majority of people but it is definitely not a law of nature. You can have male genitals, feel like a woman, send out both male and female signals and fancy men. Or, with the same body, you can dress, feel and behave very manly and fancy both men and women.

timeline

356 BC – 323 BC – The sexual preference of **Alexander the Great**, one of the greatest conquerors of ancient times, is controversial. The reason for this is the **Oliver Stone** film 'Alexander', which depicts Alexander as bisexual or even gay. Historically correct or a distortion of history?



BOY OR GIRL? The fact that this gender ginger bread biscuit (sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual and romantic orientation) allows for so much variation, is not to everybody's liking. We like to know immediately whether someone is a man or a woman, whether a new-born baby is 'a boy or a girl'. If that's not immediately clear, we feel uneasy.

COMPELLING EXPECTATIONS There are a lot of expectations we link to this M or F. While dad takes his son to play football in the garden, mum will perhaps ask her daughter to do some chores. Over dramatic? Not as much as we would like to think. These expectations about masculinity and femininity are very strongly present

in our culture and according to some studies, go a long way to explaining our aversion to LGBTs. These people seem to stray from expectations. They do not behave as you would expect them to, do not choose the partner you would expect them to and do not dress as you would expect them to either.

A boy may feel like a girl from an early age and prefer to wear a dress, but this may not remain the case.

1/3

of the children who are registered with the gender team of the University Hospital of Ghent later appear reconciled with his or her or their sex. A large number of these children, however, turn out to be LGB.

FREE OF ALL INHIBITIONS "But don't you tend to see more gays behaving in a feminine way than heterosexual men?" Correct. Once you have crossed one line, like the one concerning your choice of partner, it sometimes becomes easier to question other expectations as well. It leaves you with a lot more room to experiment and to search.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSGENDER:

www.transgenderinfo.be

Brochure 'Everything you always wanted to know about transgender people'

NUMBER



Moreover, Ancient Greece did not recognise the modern-day heterosexual – homosexual difference. Gay friendships between older men and younger boys were part of the culture.



A WHOLE RANGE OF LGBS

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS 'THE' LGB No, not all gays love Abba. No, not all lesbians have short hair and wear hiking boots. LGBs are a very diverse group.

Some gay and lesbian people will copy for example the dress sense of other LGBs to whom they feel close. That, in itself, is not that exceptional – heterosexual people do that as well – but it can create the impression that LGBs 'are all the same'. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole group contains not only feminine and masculine men and women, but also trans* people, sportsmen and women culture lovers, young and old people, party animals, scientists, politicians, farmers and you name it. Some are involved in one relationship, others in several, and still others prefer their bachelor/bachelorette lifestyle. Some are sexually very active, others completely not.



BISEXUALITY The letter 'B' is often forgotten in LGB. Bisexual people encounter a lot of ignorance, both from heterosexuals as well as from gays and lesbians: "Bisexual people want the best of both worlds, cannot choose..." That is what we call biphobia. If a man enters into a relationship with a woman, we assume that both are heterosexual, which is clearly not always the case.

GROUPS WITHIN GROUPS Just like heterosexual people, LGBs form groups based on shared interests. These can be sport based, or bike or theatre based but these groups can also be based on sexual preference and behaviour. This explains why there are groups of gays who like or are "bears" (hairy men) and groups of lesbians who are or fall for "butch" women (women with a rather masculine expression).

MORE INFORMATION

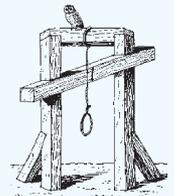
A summary of LGBT organisations can be found on www.cavaria.be/verenigingen

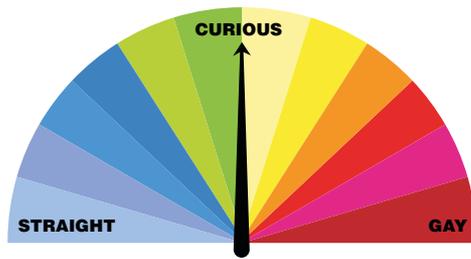


timeline

1292

8 September: **Jan van Wetteren** was executed at Ghent. It was, insofar as sources allow us to check its correctness, the first time in the history of West-European Christianity that somebody was convicted for the crime of committing sodomy.

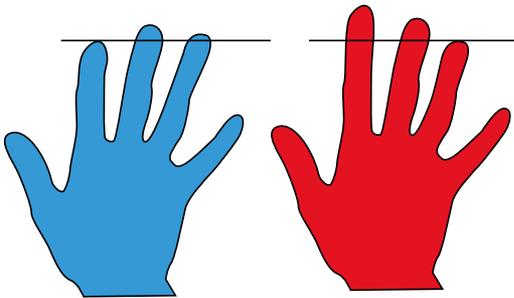




GAYDAR, THE LGB'S SIXTH SENSE Some LGBs say they immediately recognise other LGBs and they often do as well. Some people will therefore say that LGBs have a sixth sense, a 'gaydar' (a contraction of the words 'gay' and 'radar'), that is in-built with their orientation. Others will take the more rational approach and explain this gaydar as a sensitivity developed for small details or signals which give the game away. Those signals are a logical result of your interest for someone of the same sex – you look differently at boys or girls – and of your identification with other people to whom you feel close. Both sending and receiving those signals often happens unwittingly.

No matter how you explain it, such a radar is not 100% LGB proof, but that is not a disaster. LGBs are not offended should they accidentally be called heterosexual so why should heterosexual people be offended if you think they are LGB?

TEST YOURSELF Have you got a highly attuned gaydar? You'll find a whole range of tests on-line but it really is not that important. Best thing to do is to assume that anybody you meet can be either straight or LGB or call themselves something different.



LOOK FOR DIFFERENCES Some scientists look for physical differences between straight people and LGBs. They claim, for example, that they have identified differences in finger length: if your index finger is longer than your ring finger, you could be a feminine person and therefore as a man you would have a greater chance of being LGB. This test is more often incorrect than correct but is nice as a conversation starter at parties.

1475 - 1564



Michelangelo Buonarroti was an Italian painter, sculptor, architect and architect. He painted the Sistine Chapel and sculpted David's muscles in marble. That sculpture became one of the most famous works of art in history.



FAMOUS LGBTs

Fame is not just for straight people. Do you know these famous LGBTs?



Karolien Debecker (radio-dj)



Zachary Quinto (actor)



Cynthia Nixon (actress)



Paul De Leeuw (all-round broadcaster)



Wim De Vilder (journalist)



Ellen DeGeneres (actress)



Luc Appermont (TV-presenter)



Sarah Bettens (singer)



Elio Di Rupo (ex-PM)



Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir (ex-PM)



Pascal Smet (minister)



Els Robeyns (mayor)



Amélie Mauresmo (tennis-player)



Matthew Mitcham (swimmer)



Saskia De Coster (writer)



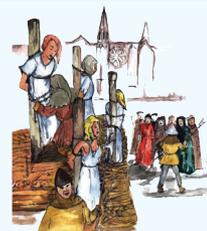
Tom Lanoye (writer)

timeline

1564 - 1616



Was **Shakespeare** gay? There is no clear answer but his early sonnets seem to be serenading a man, rather than a woman.





iStockphoto

MORE THAN ONE LABEL Of course, no-one is ever just LGB. If you ask people what parts of their identity they think are important, you will receive as many answers as there are people. One person will tell you it is being a dad, another will mention their job and yet another will mention the fact they are doing sports at the highest level. It is striking that those things you deem important, are exactly the things that set you apart from a majority. For a woman with Moroccan roots, those roots are probably more important than for a woman born and raised in Belgium.

YOUR OWN CROSSROADS What labels do you identify with? Your gender? Your sexual orientation? Your place of residence? Your hobby? You are on the intersections of all these areas. Unique. Just like every other human being.

EXTRA HURDLES Some people find they are in several of these areas subjected to discrimination or repression. Maybe you are an immigrant and LGB and disabled. It is quite possible you will face difficulties on several levels.

Careful though, this is not to say that lesbian women are exactly twice as much discriminated against as straight women, black lesbian women three times as much and so on. There is no scorecard. But research does show that bigger problems do occur if you belong to several minorities or disadvantaged groups.

YOU DON'T BELONG ANYWHERE? If you belong to a minority within a minority, there is a big chance that even within that minority, you are overlooked. For example, within groups of young people with a mental disability, LGBs are sometimes overlooked. At the same time, it is also true that LGBs sometimes forget that there are LGBs with mental disabilities. Luckily, there are more and more groups or organisations who do pay attention to these issues.

16th – 17th Century Hundreds of thousands of 'bad women' were burnt at the stake. A 'bad' woman was not married and practised dark arts, a bit like a witch or a whore. Midwives, poor and old women and women who loved other women were also 'bad'. A 'good' woman was married and took care of her husband and children or was a virgin.

LGBs FROM ETHNIC-CULTURAL MINORITIES In some cultures homosexuality is not considered a matter of orientation but one of behaviour. It is not something that you are but something you do. Sometimes it is even considered a disease or a sin. If, as an immigrant boy, you admit fancying other boys, or as a girl fancying other girls, you are faced with a true hurdle race. You are forced to juggle several values and standards and also expectations from your family, the LGB community and society as a whole. All these elements together are a likely recipe for stress.

Add to this the stress of being in a double minority position – you know that being an immigrant and LGB will be held against you – and you will begin to get an idea of the pressure heaped on an LGB person belonging to an ethnic-cultural minority.

LOCKED CLOSET Coming out is often very difficult. It is possible that, when doing so, you will be confronted with the beliefs and traditions of your family and community.

It is quite possible that in such a case you would want to meet like-minded people with whom you can share your feelings. Luckily enough, there are quite a few such groups in Flanders.



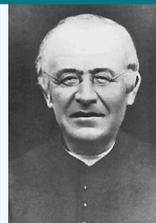
MORE INFORMATION

www.cavaria.be/community/etnisch-cultureel

timeline

1830 - 1899

Guido Gezelle the priest-teacher, had a very intense bond with one of his pupils. They wrote poems to each other, including the famous 'Dien avond en die rooze'.



*"... toch lang bewaart, dit zeg ik u,
't en ware ik 't al verloze,
mijn hert drie dierbare beelden: u
dien avond - en - die rooze!"*



Getty Images



BELIEVING UNDER THE RAINBOW Most monotheistic religions are thought to be negative towards LGB sexuality. Often people refer to a few sentences from either the Bible, Torah or Quran. Some religious LGBs manage to reconcile their sexual orientation and religion. There are specific ceremonies for gay blessings and the Belgian Pride festival too, usually kicks off with a religious celebration.



CARROT AND STICK The Vatican is both against LGB marriages as well as against discrimination of LGBs. Biblical texts do indeed indicate that 'a man who lies with a male' has 'committed a detestable act' (Leviticus 20:13), but at the same time they also say that as a human being you must not condemn any other person, in other words not condemn LGBs either. Fortunately, more and more local communities are beginning to genuinely appreciate the expression of love between LGBs and consider it to be equivalent to love between heterosexual people.

NO GAYS, NO MEATBALLS You can ask yourself if religious people who are against homosexuality, are really against it "because the Bible says so". If they truthfully live by the book of Leviticus, then they are not allowed to eat meatballs, because they contain pork, or mussels (Leviticus 11), nor are they allowed to wear clothes from H&M because clothing made out of more than one fabric – such as cotton and polyester – is not permitted either. (Leviticus 19).

MORE INFORMATION

- Christians and homosexuality: "Geloven onder de regenboog. Toolkit hulpverlening aan christelijke homo's, biseksuelen en lesbiennes." ("Believing under the rainbow. Toolkit for assistance to Christian gays, bisexuals and lesbians.") Movisie and LCC Plus organisations, 2013. Can be downloaded from www.movisie.nl
- Muslims and homosexuality: "Allah heeft ons zo gemaakt. Liefde tussen vrouwen." ("Allah created us this way. Love between women"). Khadija Arib, 2011.



1854 - 1900

Oscar Wilde, writer and poet of Irish descent, was incarcerated for two years because of his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas.

"The reason we so gladly discover other people's secrets, is that it diverts the attention from ours."



What if I am LGB?

HOW EXACTLY DO I KNOW?

YOUR GUT FEELING There are no tests and nobody can make the 'diagnosis' for you. You'll know when you fall in love with someone of the same sex or gender identity. Some know from a very young age, others only discover it after years of marriage to someone of the other sex. Still others remain in doubt or don't want to be labelled.



"We all experience our orientation in our own way and of course we all have an idea as to how we want to deal with the situation. Me, I am still in the process of finding my own way, but I am sure that will happen."

Singer Sarah Bettens, Zizo-magazine

EVER EARLIER Most youngsters start thinking about their sexuality during their puberty. It is said that more and more LGBs discover their sexual preferences at an ever earlier age. That is why the youth organisation 'Wel Jong Niet Hetero' (Young but not Heterosexual) also has an 'Under 19' branch.



**Wel Jong
Niet Hetero**
www.weljongniethetero.be

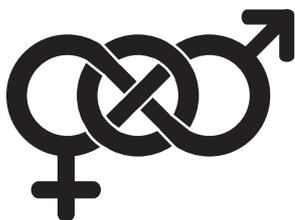
timeline

1879



Magnus Hirschfeld established the first organisation protesting against anti-gay laws: the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee.

"I definitely did not call it 'homosexual'. I did not think that from now on I was going to fall in love with other boys as well. Definitely not. No, I was in love with my best friend. Plain and simple."
 Presenter **Tom De Cock** in 'Coming out'
 (Nine Cornelissen & Miriam Van Damme, Linkeroever Publishers)



SET IN STONE? If you feel the spark, how can you be sure that you are gay or lesbian? That is a difficult question. Perhaps you are bisexual but you did not feel the need to explore further after your first homosexual or heterosexual experience. Studies show for example that women identify as bisexual more easily than men, or that their sexuality is more fluid and varies more the older they get.



"I am a happily married woman and I am married to a man. I do not believe that denies my bisexuality. Some find it strange that you identify with a certain non-heterosexual orientation but you still get married to someone of the other sex. (...) That is their problem."
 Actress **Anna Paquin** in Red Magazine 2012

MORE INFORMATION

The Holebifoon is a support and info phone line for all your questions about LGBTs. You can request information or tell your story. You can also send an e-mail to vragen@holebifoon.be or chat. www.holebifoon.be



0800 99 533
HOLEBIFOON.BE
vragen@holebifoon.be

1894 - 1956

the American biologist and sexologist **Alfred Kinsey** executed a large-scale research into human sexual identity and experiences. The 1994 film 'Kinsey' tells the story of all taboos he encountered. He was a pioneer but the scientific value of his work is controversial.



Salomé (1923)*Wings (1927)**Pandora's Box (1929)*

RECOGNIZE YOURSELF Of course you can discover your sexual orientation when you fall in love, but you can also explore yourself 'virtually'. Films and in particular books allow you to be carried away and invite you to identify with their characters. You could possibly recognise yourself in one of the LGB characters. Give it a try. ZiZo made a list of a number of films and books that can 'show you the way'.

You can download the ZiZo film trail on www.cavaria.be/filmspoor

*Henry and June (1990)**Philadelphia (1993)**Heavenly Creatures (1994)*

timeline

1940 - 1945
WO II

World War II: During the War, the **Nazis** arrested over 100,000 gays and forced them to wear a pink triangle on their outfit.



Wizard of Oz (1939)*Rebel without a cause (1955)**Rope (1948)**Brokeback Mountain (2005)**Milk (2009)**Mixed Kebab (2012)*

1953

Suzan Daniel established Belgium's first LGBT organisation.



COMING OUT, WHEN IT SUITS



COMING OUT? When we talk about ‘coming out of the closet’ or shorter ‘coming out’, we mean that you openly acknowledge your bisexual, homosexual or lesbian feelings. Whether you come out or not, is totally your choice. It is best though only to come out when you’re completely ready. When you do come out, you usually do it in stages. For example, you first tell your best friends, maybe later your parents and family and later still you tell others.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN Strangely enough, coming out just once is often not enough. You have to do it over and over again. If you move house, go to another school or start a new job, your (new) acquaintances will probably assume you’re heterosexual. That is not completely illogical because there are many more heterosexual people than LGBs. The chance is therefore quite big that their assumption is correct. That is exactly why heterosexual people do not have to come out of the closet and why LGBs often have to explain that they do not meet the typical man-woman expectations.

POSITIVE REACTIONS The run-up to coming out is experienced by most as being very stressful because you can never really predict how others will react. Of course you hope they’ll be happy for you and that they will support you. That is why you often hear parents or friends say: “that they have always known”, “that for them nothing changes” and “that they want you to be happy”.

OR NEGATIVE... But perhaps your environment doesn’t react as positively as you had hoped. Maybe your dad yells that you’re no longer his child, or that he no longer wishes to see you. If that’s the case, talk to people who do support you, friends who do accept your coming out or who are gay themselves and understand what you are going through.

timeline

1969

New York: The **Stonewall** riots took place at the end of June when police forcefully evacuated the gay bar The Stonewall Inn. After years of bullying and violence by police, LGBT people decided to fight back. These riots have become the leading example all over the world for all LGBT protest marches and Prides.



STAY IN THE CLOSET Some choose very consciously to stay locked in that closet. It is their well-considered choice. Others remain closeted their whole life for fear of negative reactions. It is also possible they find it hard to accept their homosexual feelings, let alone tell their environment about them. They can carry this secret with them for ages and this can cause a constantly stressful situation for them.

COST OF THE CLOSET A recent Canadian study indicated something that many already suspected: coming out is good for your health. LGBs who have come out have lower levels of stress hormones and fewer symptoms of stress such as tiredness, depression and burn-out. Researchers did add that LGBs need first and foremost to accept themselves as such, but, they continue, media and education share a responsibility in this process.

If you have not come out, every discussion about personal experiences can be tricky. It becomes difficult, for example, to share a nice weekend experience, as you can see in the graph underneath. (*freely copied from: The cost of thinking twice - Claudia Woody*). It is possible that after a while you will feel ever worse.



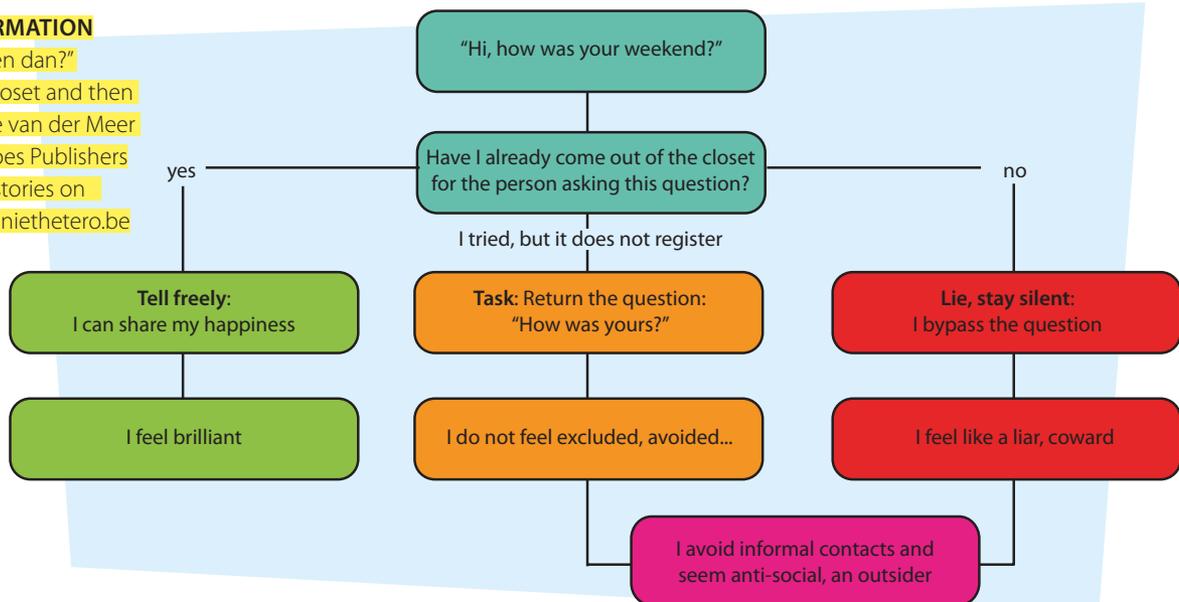
MORE INFORMATION

- "Uit de kast en dan?"

("Out of the closet and then what?") Yvette van der Meer

(ed), Appelmoes Publishers

- youngsters' stories on www.weljongniethetero.be



1970

Will Ferdy was the first Flemish singer to come out during the television programme 'Zo Zijn' on national TV.



THE BEST WAY TO TELL? You probably won't believe it but ... "There's an app for that". More than one even. These apps ask you to think about the way you want to tell it, how to assess all risks involved, when the best time would be and how to look beyond that one moment.

It is striking that none of these apps tell you exactly how to come out of the closet because there is no 'one way'. However, there are lots of tips and styles.

THE FORMAL STYLE You call a meeting, indicating a definite time and place. That can be on the same day, after dinner, or even later, giving everybody the chance to be there. You open this meeting by saying "there is something I need to tell you" after which you say you fancy boys/girls. Some people will advise against using words as 'gay' or 'lesbian' because these are rather loaded words. Do not expect immediate fireworks and champagne. Give others time to get used to the idea and to ask questions.

Advantage: you cannot back out; the other party is prepared for the worst but it all turns out to be alright in the end.

Disadvantage: sometimes it feels too forced and if everybody reacts nicely, you feel like a twit for feeling so scared. That feeling, by the way, is totally unnecessary. Your uncertainty is totally justified: you cannot know.

Another way of doing it like this is the letter or e-mail, whether or not with cake...

Advantage: here you're in the position where you can re-read your text several times, work on it, dictate its rhythm...whereby nobody interrupts your little speech. They, on the other hand, have time to think before reacting.

Disadvantage: it's a bit impersonal, you are biting your nails as they are reading it and they can't look you in the eyes, making it sometimes easier to react negatively.



THE CORRECTING STYLE You're in a constant state of suspense until the person you want to tell it to makes it clear they consider you to be heterosexual after which you can correct them. Your mother for example says: "if you meet a girl one day..."; to which you can reply: "and what if I meet a boy...?"

Advantage: it feels unforced.

Disadvantage: it is possible you have to wait a long time. On top of that it is also possible you catch the other person out, making them possibly feel ashamed, which in its turn can be an advantage, because they might want to compensate for that with openness.

timeline

1973

The **American Psychiatric Association** decided on 15 December to remove homosexuality as a psychiatric illness from the list of DSM III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

THE DROPPING HINTS-STYLE You can also 'drop hints', i.e. drop subtle hints about your partner, your nightlife, a film or book you rate highly, one which others know deals with gay subjects. Or you leave magazines around.

Advantage: it feels unforced if you do it correctly.

Disadvantage: if you have to drop too many hints in one evening, it can become cumbersome. Sometimes the other person gets it after the first hint but gets annoyed with the fact that you don't just come out with it.

It will always remain a touchy subject because homosexuality isn't as common and many prejudices remain.

THE DIPLOMAT Maybe you don't fancy the confrontation but you know someone you're close to who could act as the go-between. You know that this person accepts LGBs and they get along very well with your parents and/or friends. That person can then very diplomatically inform the others. You can choose to ask this diplomat to come along to a formal conversation or you can ask them to have that conversation without you.

Advantage: you don't have to face it on your own. There is already somebody to back you up, with whom you can share your feelings or doubts. It gives you more certainty.

Disadvantage: you remain dependent on the go-between's style. When parents or friends react positively, you may feel a bit clumsy or guilty for asking for help because it may seem like you didn't trust them. Your fear, however, is not without reason. It remains a crystal ball exercise and it is a virtue to be careful.

"I have already tried 10,000 times to tell my environment and people around me. I had even studied a text and planned a moment. But every time the moment was there, I didn't have the courage."

Nick about his coming out, which he did during the VTM-programme 'Uit de Kast' with Roos Van Acker as diplomat. He needed that push, he said in ZiZo-Magazine.



© vtm

1976



Establishment of **De Rooie Vlinder** (The red butterfly), a socialist-feminist action group fighting for the liberation of homosexuality. After its dissolution in 1981, the **Roze AktieFront** (Pink Action Front) took up its militant torch.



APART FROM COMING OUT, COMING IN

WELCOME ‘Coming in’ means you are going to try to find your way in the world of LGBs. You also want to meet other LGBs in order to see your orientation recognised, to make friends, to start a relationship. A whole new world opens up for you. For some people, such a coming in follows a coming out, for others it is the other way around while still others choose never to do either.

THE WORLD OF LGBS Heterosexual people may not believe it, but there really is such a world. It is a very diverse sub-culture with its own bars, organisations, events, parties, shops and so on. A lot of LGBs also have circles of friends consisting mainly of LGBs. Is it a necessity to be part of this world? Of course not. Some people will find it very comforting, will feel supported and safe and feel at home. Others, however, aren’t attracted to this sub-culture or don’t need it. Again, there are no rules set in stone.

LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE There are more than 120 LGBT organisations in Flanders and you can find them on the çavaria website: www.cavaria.be. You will find organisations concentrating on doing sports together, others with a focus on the theatre, and others on organising walking trips or board game nights. Some organisations are meant for youngsters, others are for older people while a lot of organisations are simply open for all LGBTs from the area.

Incidentally, you can expect to be personally met and welcomed in most groups. You don’t just write your name down on a list. You can expect a one-to-one with someone from the group making you immediately feel safe and accepted.

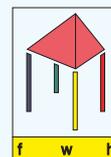
PINK HOME Do you fancy some exploring? Go and clear matters up for yourself at the pink house in your area: Casa Rosa in Ghent, The Pink House-çavaria Antwerp, the Rainbow House in Hasselt or Brussels, the Holebihuis in Leuven or Rebus in Ostend. You will find their addresses at www.cavaria.be/verenigingen

COMING IN SAFELY Coming in does come with a safety tip. In gay bars, the chances of sex are greater, and a certain ability to stand up for yourself sexually is appropriate. If you give in to seduction, please practise safe sex.

timeline

1977

16 january: Establishment of the **Federatie Werkgroepen Homofilie** (Federation of Working Groups on Homosexuality). This was an umbrella organisation for LGBT organisations in Flanders and Brussels, later renamed the **Holebifederatie** (The LGB federation).



LGBT MOVEMENT Compared to other countries, Flanders does seem to have a very tight-knit group of LGBTs. Each province has several organisations and its own pink house, usually also affiliated with the Flemish umbrella organisation **çavaria**. This organisation gets its name from the contraction of 'ça va' & 'varia' ('diversity is top'), supports all LGBT and T organisations and defends the rights of LGBT and trans* people at the governmental level. The organisation was instrumental for example in getting same sex couples the right to marry, the possibility for same sex couples to adopt children, in achieving protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and the battle against homophobia and transphobia.



çavaria also manages the **Holebifoon**, where you can get help or talk about your worries via e-mail, chat or telephone. It is also responsible for the news channel **ZiZo-Online.be** and the magazines **ZiZo-Magazine** and **Attitude** – powered by ZiZo.

PRIDES For a few days every year LGBT and trans* people take to the streets to celebrate and make a statement. The hetero norm is so pervasive that you might forget that there are relationship possibilities other than the stereotypical male-female one and that not every family has a daddy and a mummy. Events like the Belgian Pride or Antwerp Pride therefore like to get as many LGBTs as possible out and about, often with very specific demands but basically to celebrate diversity. The message is clear: there's nothing wrong with being different; on the contrary, it's something we should embrace as a community.

DANCING IN Do you fancy going out and meeting other LGBTs? There are quite a few LGBT pubs, parties and other places you can go. The çavaria online calendar surely contains something to your liking.



MORE INFORMATION

www.cavaria.be/agenda

1978

18 march: The very first international **Gay Day** took place in Ghent and notwithstanding a bomb scare, it was a successful day with more than 2,000 people taking part.



LGB FC As LGB it is possible you don't quite feel at home within conventional organisations, such as sports clubs. Many of them do still have a very macho culture.

In 2014 çavaria started Sports4Every1, a project against LGB discrimination and transphobia in sport. Well-known sportsmen and women such as Aagje Vanwalleghem, Tia Hellebaut and Tomas Van Den Spiegel participated in the campaign.

Of course not all sports carry that same negative label. Women's cycling for example is not too bad: lesbian **Judith Arndt** has won several Olympic medals and the World Championship. Until now, however, no player in the professional league in men's football has come out. Are they really all heterosexual?

Many athletes who are openly out prefer to practise sports in their own teams and that is also why they'd rather participate in their own national and international LGB sporting events, such as the EuroGames, Gay Games and World Outgames. These Games combine sports with culture and entertainment and everybody is welcome, including heterosexual sports people.



Judith Arndt

timeline

1979



Using the slogan '**Janetten tegen de raketten**' (Fags against missiles) LGBs took part in the anti-missile protest marches in Brussels.



COMING IN-TERNET The arrival of the internet has really opened up the globe. It provides a worldwide pink tour of discovery.

Here are a few starting points:

- **zizo-online.be:** LGBT news, both national and international, politics, sports or culture
See also: gayworld.be, gaylive.be, lacquemant.wordpress.be
- **cavaria.be:** a source of information about rights, issues and demands
- **facebook** (zizo-magazine, cavaria, pink houses etc.): stay up-to-date daily
- **twitter** (zizo-online, cavariatweet etc.)
- **fora:** weljongniethetero.be/forum; www.min19.be
- **chatrooms:** : first read important tips on www.weljongniethetero.be/chattips
bullchat.be - 18min.eu - gayromeo.com - gaylog.com - gay.be - gaydargirls.com
- **Grindr:** an app about meeting places for gay men on your smartphone
- **Expreszo** (NL): online magazine for LGB youth - expreszo.nl

PAPER FRIENDS If you prefer to read a magazine, there is plenty of choice

- **ZiZo-Magazine** quarterly magazine, distributed free for LGBTs - zizo-online.be



- **Attitude - powered by ZiZo** free magazine for gays - zizo-online.be
- **Et Alors?** Magazine about queer, fetish and the extravagant alternative scene
etalorsmagazine.be
- **Zij aanZij** (NL) magazine for lesbians and bisexual women - zijaanzij.nl
- **Winq** (NL) bimonthly magazine for gay men - winq.nl
- **The Gay Issue** (NL) bimonthly magazine for gay men – thegayissue.be
- **BRUCE** Brussels Gay Guide – brucemagazine on FB

1980

First **Pink Saturday** march in Brussels, in 1996 re-named into Belgian Lesbian and Gay Pride, which then changed into the Belgian Pride in 2010.



SEX: SENSUAL? SERIOUS? SAFE!

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX Yes, it's called 'homosexuality'. You didn't really think that sex wouldn't come up, did you? And yes, when you have sex with someone of the same sex, it is different to having sex with someone from the other sex. But don't expect one or two words will cover it all. (from: homoinfo.nl)

SAFE SEX Sex is a bit like an exciting discovery but isn't free from risks. By practicing safe sex you avoid contracting and passing on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).



FOR MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN A condom considerably reduces the risk of STDs, but does not do away with it completely. That is why it is a good idea to have yourself tested every 6 months, even if you are not showing any symptoms. Do you have a steady partner? You should realise that many gays contract HIV via their steady partner. Both of you should be tested before you stop using a condom. Reach good agreements and talk openly to each other.

PrEP stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. It is a preventive medication against infection with HIV. It is primarily intended for people who are at high risk of HIV. Be-PrEP-ared is a Belgian study that is researching whether PrEP is acceptable and achievable. Currently, the medication is not (yet) prescribed in Belgium.

timeline

1986

First **Lesbian Day** in Ghent.



PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) is a treatment with HIV inhibitors for people who run the risk of contracting HIV. A doctor first assesses the risk before prescribing PEP. The doctor takes into account the partner with whom you had sex: is that person gay or straight, or from a country where there is a high level of HIV? Do they have a history with drugs (or still use them)? Does your partner have HIV and does he or she take HIV inhibitors? The type of sex is also important: did you have oral, anal or vaginal sex? Are there other sexually transferable diseases (STDs) present?

FOR WOMEN WHO REGULARLY HAVE SEX WITH WOMEN make a regular visit to the gynaecologist. Research has shown that lesbian women in particular are reticent about visiting a gynaecologist. But you are more at risk from certain cancers. HPV is, moreover, sexually transmitted between women and can lead to cervical cancer.

SAFE SEX - FOR MEN

1. Talk about sex: agree on what you want and do not want
2. Always use condom and lubricant
3. Avoid sperm entering your mouth
4. Have injections against Hepatitis A and B
5. Do regular tests

SAFE SEX - FOR WOMEN

1. Talk about sex: agree on what you want and do not want
2. Avoid period blood entering your mouth
3. Use a dental dam if you do want to have oral sex during your/your partner's period
4. Wrap a condom round any dildo you share with others
5. For young girls: have yourself vaccinated against HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)
6. Do regular tests



MORE INFORMATION

www.mannenseks.be

www.allesoverseks.be

www.levenmethiv.be

book: "Lesbische Seks. Een praktisch handboek." (Lesbian sex. A manual) M. Hermans

IN LOVE, ENGAGED, MARRIED

ROMANCE Some people say that the word “homosexual” puts too much emphasis on the word “sex”. After all, it’s also about love and relationships. LGBs need romance, just like heterosexual people. Relationships can be just as complex and just as diverse. Some are monogamous, others have several relationships simultaneously; some prefer their bachelor/bachelorette status and others get married after knowing one another for a year.



MARRIAGE LGBs have the same co-habiting options as heterosexual couples:

- **Marriage.** Belgium was the second country in the world allowing same-sex marriages. Since June 1st 2003 couples of the same sex have the same marital rights as heterosexual couples.
- **Actual co-habiting.** This form of co-habitation holds no formalities: there are no specific obligations, nor are there any specific rights for either partner. But couples do have the option to stipulate contractually some arrangements between them by drawing up a co-habitation contract executed before a notary.
- **Legal co-habiting.** This is a form of co-habiting somewhere between marriage and actual co-habitation and can be created by filing a declaration of legal co-habitation with the registrar. Filing this declaration creates a whole raft of rights and obligations comparable to those for married people, but less exhaustive. People who are legally co-habiting, however, can lay down their respective rights and obligations in greater detail in a co-habitation contract, preferably executed by a notary.



MORE INFORMATION

Would you like to know more about marriage or co-habiting?
www.notaris.be

timeline

1989 Sunday 20 August: Eighty or so police officers barge into the disco **Le Délire** in Aalbeke. It was a place frequented by gays. The raid, officially to snare drug users and dealers, was executed very aggressively and the Human Rights' League declared it afterwards as a discriminatory action against gays.

WHO IS THE MAN? As a same sex couple you will often hear the question: who is the man, who is the woman? The more caring male or the one who does most of the cooking will often be called 'the woman' and the lesbian woman with a career or the one who puts out the rubbish will be called 'the man'. At least, that's how others see it. The actual partners in the couple will often assess it differently. Two co-habiting women or men will deal more creatively with the classic role pattern. You can never assume that one party does this, that or the other just because they are a man or a woman. You organise your life according to what you both enjoy and you make decent arrangements.

"Asking who's the 'man' and who's the 'woman' in a same-sex relationship is like asking which chopstick is the fork." – Ellen DeGeneres

"We were applauding standing on the benches of the House of Representatives' balcony, which wasn't really allowed. Louis Tobback came to tell us the next day we should have been thrown out of the room. But nobody had taken any offence. It's curious though that everything went so smoothly for us. The registered partnership that René and I symbolically signed as the first ever couple was much more intense, but it helped to speed up everything else."

Tom Lanoye on Studio Brussel, January 2013



© Belga



© Belga

Marion Huibrechts and **Christel Verswyvelen** were the first same-sex couple to get married in Belgium on 6 June, 2003.

"We are still as happy as we were then. [...] I think that in the meantime society has come to accept same-sex marriages nearly fully, and us for that matter. Ten years ago, we didn't know how everybody in Belgium would react. Our friends and family obviously reacted very positively."

Marion Huibrechts on Radio 2, January 2013

TWO DADDIES, TWO MUMMIES

CHILDREN People who are opposed to same-sex marriages usually feel just as reluctant towards LGBs raising children. To them it seems completely impossible. However, one study after another indicates that children don't feel burdened by the situation.

ADOPTION Since 2006 it is legally possible for LGBs to adopt children, making it possible for 2 men and 2 women to be a child's legal parents. In practice however, children had been raised by 2 mummies or 2 daddies even before the adoption of the law.

CO-MOTHERS Lesbian couples have the possibility to conceive a child using donor sperm. Most hospitals have no problem with their desire to have children. If married, the co-mother automatically has a legal relationship with the child. If not married, the co-mother can acknowledge the child via the civil registry.

MEN Gays who wish to have children are often left in the lurch. Inter-country adoption is possible, yet limited only via an adoption channel in South Africa and the USA. Most domestic adoptions are made by gay couples. But there are long waiting lists and the number of children in Belgium that are put up for adoption is (fortunately) small. Surrogate motherhood is in principle possible, but not (yet) regulated in Belgium and thus gives rise to considerable legal uncertainty; firstly for the child, but also for the surrogate parent(s) and for the commissioning parents.

NUMBER

The Zzip2-study in 2011 showed that

15,4%

of all LGB couples had children. 37.6% of heterosexual couples had children.

61%

of LGB couples have children from a previous heterosexual relationship and 17% was created within the LGB relationship. 18% had been adopted, 9% were stepchildren and 2% were foster children.

timeline

1995

2 May, at 6.22pm: First call to the **Holebifoon** (The LGBT hotline), a hotline for people with questions about homosexuality.





MORE INFORMATION

'Samen Mama. Zwangerschapsgids voor lesbische koppels' ('Being a mother together. Pregnancy tips for lesbian couples') Barbara Claeys, Lan-
noo, 2008

'Juridische gids over ouderschap voor holebi's en transgenders,' ('Legal guide to parenthood for LGBTs') Paul
Borghs, çavaria, for the organisation
Gelijke Kansen in Vlaanderen, 2013

www.cavaria.be/dossier/ouderschap

Questions about adoption:

www.kindengezin.be/adoptie

Book tip for children: 'Ik heb twee moeders.' (I have two mummies),
Marja Vos, Bookscout.nl, 2009

"I have two mothers, one biological, one non-biological. My mothers are married. My non-biological mother has three children: my older brother and my two older sisters. For me they are my real brother and sisters. I also have another brother. We share the same mother and the same sperm donor. We do not know that person."

"The bond between our family members is very strong and we always treat one another as if we are a 'normal' family because that is exactly what it feels like. My brother has always been my father figure. I did once experience missing a father. I was at a friend's home and he was monkeying around with his dad. That was the only time I realised that that was something I've never had."

"When I attended secondary school, it automatically popped up in conversation before my new friends came around to my place. I have never had any unpleasant reactions."

"When I was growing up I received an awful lot of love and attention, even though there were five of us. I am therefore very happy with my childhood. Sometimes I think I am too soft which could possibly be explained by the fact I have never had a father figure. I probably would have become a bit harder, someone who knew how to stand up for themselves. But it is not as if I miss it terribly. All in all, I never wanted for anything. I have had a normal and happy childhood, just like any other child, but with two mothers. I consider my life to be very normal and as a matter of fact, I am proud of it, because it is reasonably unique."

Abel in Puberteit, portretten over het leven van pubers, Judith Grobecker 2013 (Abel in Puberty, portraits of adolescents' life, Judith Grobecker, 2013)

1996



Anne Van Asbroeck became the first Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities. LGB people were from the start an important target group.

In-between open arms and closed fists

Although there is nothing wrong with falling in love or having sex with people of your own sex or gender identity, it is quite possible that your sexual orientation does cause a bit of a stir. Often this is to do with the fact that not everybody accepts homosexuality, but it is also possible that you yourself are struggling with it.

TO BE DIFFERENT IS CONFUSING



SUICIDE Such confusion can express itself in very serious ways. Research in 2016 suggests that 1 in 4 LGBs have attempted suicide. Social support in the social environment, positive reactions to a coming-out, living in a safe environment without homophobia or transphobia violence will bring down these figures.

Do you struggle with thoughts about suicide?
Do not hesitate to ask for help.



0800 99 533
HOLEBIFOON.BE
vragen@holebifoon.be

zelfmoord1813.be
voor info en hulp

1813
zelfmoord

timeline

1997 **Ellen DeGeneres**. American actress and stand-up comedian, came out. At the same time, the main character in the television series *Ellen* (Ellen Morgan, played by Ellen DeGeneres) also came out. Many praised Ellen for her courage but she also faced a lot of criticism and her series was stopped. After a difficult period, she made her comeback in the very popular 'The Ellen DeGeneres Show'.



NUMBERS

LESBIAN WORRIES

42,6%

of all lesbians and bisexual girls are coy about their orientation.

37,5%

is worried their behaviour can be seen as 'typically lesbian or bisexual' and

43,4 %

of them have already been confronted with either psychological or verbal violence at least once. (Welebi-research, 2009).

LACK OF ROLE MODELS When you consider yourself 'different', you tend to search for others who are 'different', preferably public figures who are living proof that 'being different' doesn't necessarily have to prove a problem or obstacle. The LGBT community also has these role models but not as many as you would expect. We reckon that about 10% of the population is LGBT so consequently there should also be about 10% of all actors, politicians and sports people who come out as LGBT, but that is not the case. The possibilities of identifying with such a role model are therefore relatively scarce.

Moreover, the invisibility of many LGBTs also has a discouraging effect. It seems as if those LGBTs 'expect problems' should they come out. We're not quite sure why some famous people choose to remain in the closet. Some might just think that their private lives are exactly that: private.

MINORITY IDENTITY LGBTs share something with people with an immigration background: they both belong to a minority group. But the latter will receive a 'minority identity' from within their group. They are often surrounded by identification opportunities. As a LGBT person, you often grow up in a heterosexual and gender prescriptive environment sometimes giving you the impression that you are on your own.

STIGMAS, MINORITY STRESS AND INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA As a member of a minority group you sometimes feel or experience that you are unduly treated in a different way. Your minority group is often linked with certain prejudices which you yourself would rather not be associated with. You then get the feeling that your 'being different' is becoming a stigma and that you're losing out on opportunities for exactly that reason.

These prejudices can make you feel insecure or even perhaps make it difficult for you to see yourself as part of that group. It is not unheard of that some LGBs copy these negative feelings existing in society towards other LGBs.

This mix of feelings is called minority stress, and is a feeding ground for feelings of suicide and self-loathing. This stress will only increase when LGBs try to keep their orientation, feelings and behaviour a secret.



MORE INFORMATION

'Ik wou dat ik dood was' (I wish I was dead),

Movisie, 2012

www.movisie.nl/publicaties/ik-wou-ik-dood-was

2000

The first **Pink Houses** opened their doors. Casa Rosa opened on 24 March in Ghent and on 23 September, the Pink House opened in Antwerp. Later, Pink Houses was also opened in Brussels, Ostend, Hasselt and Leuven.



TO EXCLUDE IS EXCLUDED

HOMO-NEGATIVITY Some people still have problems with LGBs. Some even call homosexuality a sin or a disease and they more than disapprove of LGBs. Thankfully, they are an ever-decreasing group of people.

Nowadays we are confronted with an ever more subtle and modern form of homo-negativity. We regularly hear people say that “LGBs don’t always have to flaunt their sexual orientation” or that they “don’t have a problem with LGBs, as long as they stay out of my face”. You can sometimes tell by their facial expression that there is a lot more they would like to say but they realise that’s no longer acceptable in 21st century Flanders.

LGBs themselves have been known to struggle with these feelings and some will develop a negative attitude against LGBs who have a more showy life style

HOMOPHOBIA Instead of ‘homo-negativity’ we sometimes use the word ‘homophobic’. That doesn’t mean that phobia of LGBs is a psychological condition such as ‘arachnophobia’ (fear of spiders) or ‘agoraphobia’ (fear of open spaces) but sometimes it seems that way. The aversion is at times so irrational and deeply rooted that it has all the elements of a condition. Quite a few reasons for this phobia have been suggested:

- Lack of understanding of anything that is different;
- Confusion between homosexuality and paedophilia;
- Religious or cultural standards disapproving of homosexuality since the beginning of time.
- The fear of or insecurity about personal homosexual feelings;
- Feeling that gay people undermine or question the macho-ideal and the man-woman relationship;



NUMBERS

72 %

of the people of Flanders think it is good that LGBs can marry.

7 %

of the people of Flanders have a problem if their child receives lessons from a LGB teacher.
(SCV survey 2014)

timeline

2003

A historic year for LGBT emancipation! Sexual orientation was included in the **anti-discrimination legislation** and the first LGB couples were married.



DISCRIMINATION LGB people can be confronted with discrimination. Even now, a gay or lesbian couple can be refused rental property because the landlord has issues with LGBs. Or they aren't given a double bed in a hotel, whereas heterosexual couples are. In some cases it's bullying, continuous (denigrating) remarks at the workplace, hostile language on the internet and so on.

Discrimination means you are denied a certain item based on some unrelated issue. Discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is forbidden by law in Belgium.

ARE YOU THE VICTIM OF BULLYING OR DISCRIMINATION?

Don't let it worry you or don't take it in silence. Repeated discrimination and bullying can end in depression. As a result, you might possibly censor yourself or not visit certain places anymore.

Contact the Holebifoon (holebifoon.be) or one of the discrimination focal points (www.diversiteit.be/links) in Flanders to talk about it. They're also the place where you can officially report discrimination.

GATHER PROOF When you report a case of discrimination, you will be asked for proof. It's therefore advisable to keep e-mails, letters, texts or (photos of) graffiti on your wall. Ask witnesses whether they would be prepared to testify. Don't rip up hateful letters and don't erase messages left by a stalker from your machine. If real estate agents leave you a voicemail saying you and your partner are not eligible for this rental property because you're not a 'traditional couple', keep that message. Should someone attack you and you need medical attention, have the medical people write a certificate and have pictures taken of your injuries.

MORE INFORMATION

'Stand out and Stand up, a guide for victims of LGB-phobic and transphobic violence' çavaria 2014

2004

'**The L Word**', a popular American soap about lesbians, appeared for the first time on Flemish TV.



GAY BASHING IN FLANDERS

A MULTI-FACED MONSTER When we hear the words ‘homophobic violence’ or ‘gay bashing’, we immediately picture bloody noses and black and blue eyes. ‘Violence’ however is much more than that:

- PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: hitting, pushing, pulling...
- VERBAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE: insults, swear words, being laughed at, being made fun of, discrediting, intimidating, bullying, denigrating, hurting, outing someone against their will, forbidding someone to come out or to experience their sexuality...
- MATERIAL VIOLENCE: damage to or destruction of property, spraying graffiti on walls or cars...
- SEXUAL VIOLENCE: inappropriate touching, stroking, rape.....

Report violence

To:

- Police station in the area where the incident took (call 101)
- Call meld-it 0800 12 800 – a discrimination hotline
- The Holebifoon 0800 99 533 – the Holebifoon also gives tips on how to go about filing a report with the police.
- Local discrimination focal points available in 13 cities
- (see www.gelijkekansen.be)

You don't want to go to the police but you do want to file a report? Call the Holebifoon. The volunteer at the other end of the line or chat knows the LGB world, knows what you are talking about and is also trained to assist you. They will listen to your story and have advice and the correct referral ready for you.

timeline



NUMBERS

18,4 %

of all LGBs have been threatened or bothered during the last 6 months.

35,3 %

of all LGBs have been the subject of verbal violence at least once during the last 6 months. Zzzip 2, 2011

2005

The Flemish TV station **JIM TV**, which is mainly aimed at the younger generation, cooperated with Wel Jong Niet Hetero to launch in April their first programme for LGBT youngsters: **ShOut!**





FREEDOM OF SPEECH? You could say that all abuse or swear words should be made punishable by law. That, of course, is not possible because there is also this small thing called 'freedom of speech'. If, for example, someone says that 'LGBs are not fit to raise children and therefore should not be allowed to adopt them', then we can reply that scientific research will contradict his opinion, but we cannot forbid them from having that opinion.

ATTENTION: it is, on the other hand, forbidden to incite discrimination, hatred or violence: you cannot knowingly encourage others to thwart LGBs or to attack them nor are you allowed to issue public insults and negative statements with the intention of creating an anti-LGB atmosphere.



BULLYING AT SCHOOL It is obvious that bullying is not allowed, not even at school. However, LGB youngsters still report more incidents of bullying than their heterosexual counterparts. One third of heterosexual youngsters will find it annoying when a boy behaves in a way they think is 'too feminine'. They will hurl insults at these 'feminine boys' or 'masculine girls' just because of their sexuality, although they might not even be gay. The difference between gender expression and sexual orientation is often blurred.

HOMO-FRIENDLINESS REQUIRED LGB youngsters do not always feel good about themselves. Some struggle to accept themselves for what they are, others are afraid to tell people close to them. They need support, confidence and positive expectations. They need to know their school is an LGB-friendly environment. This is not only true for pupils but also for teachers, who may, of course, also be LGB.

timeline

2007

The **EuroGames** took place in July at Antwerp, with more than 3,000 participants and 10,000 visitors from all over the world.



FIVE TIPS FOR A MORE LGBT-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

1. Make non-traditional forms of relationships visible.

Also mention LGBT couples as examples in history or reading lessons and assignments. Mention the sexuality of openly gay politicians, artists or scientists. LGBT teachers who have come out can also be role models for their pupils.

2. Support coming out, but do not impose anything

Whoever wants to come out must be able to do so of their own will and on their own initiative in a safe, welcoming and friendly environment. Make it abundantly clear that it is not a problem, but do not impose anything on pupils or teachers.

3. Make use of any available counsellors

Anybody who is bullied must have the option of contacting a counsellor, be that a teacher, a pupils' guidance counsellor or some management person. Publish the name of such a counsellor and make it abundantly clear they are there for everybody, including LGBTs.

4. Deal with bullying

Do not make light of bullying. Do not say "they need to toughen up" but show you take it seriously and act against bullying. Organise anti-bullying campaigns.

Pay attention to sexual identity

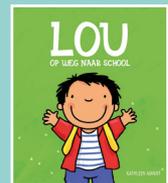
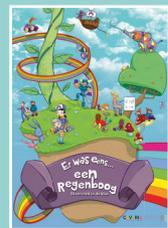
It is there in black and white listed in the interdisciplinary final attainment levels: you must pay attention to it. Do you not know how? Contact çavaria. Read the brochure 'Bank Vooruit! Op naar een holebivriendelijke school.' (Front of the class! On our way to an LGBT friendly school)

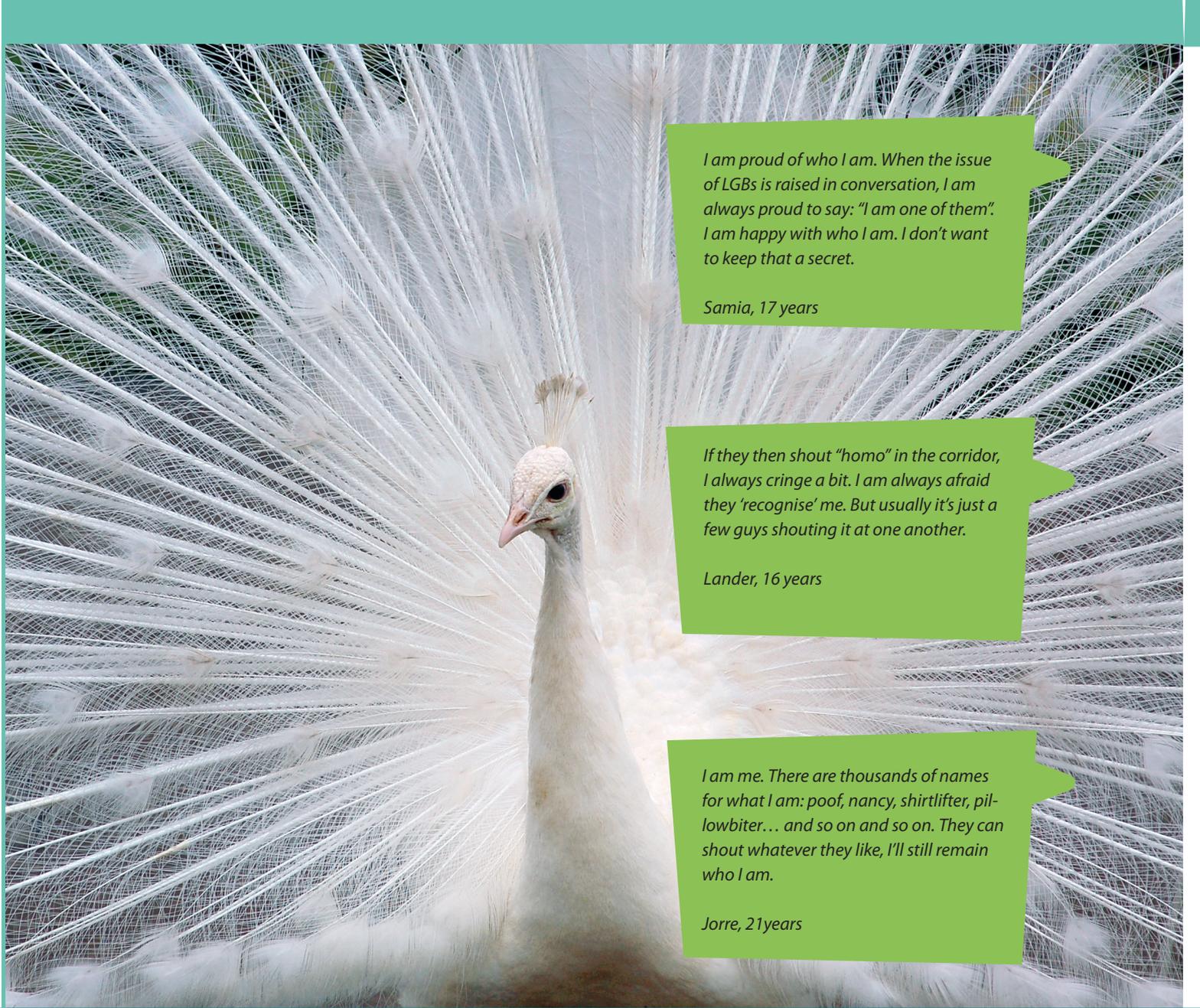
The educational tool "There once was... a rainbow" was developed for primary schools and contains a lot of information, tips and ready-made methodologies to acquaint children in primary education with the notions of gender diversity and sexual identity.

Diversity is a given. Everybody is different. That is the underlying theme in the book series Lou, which çavaria has developed in collaboration with author Kathleen Amant.

This material belongs to the first book in the series: Lou on his way to school. You can use it for discussions about diversity, but also about themes such as traffic, profession or family. You can download the whole packet in one go, or activity by activity.

MORE INFORMATION: schooluitdekast.be





I am proud of who I am. When the issue of LGBs is raised in conversation, I am always proud to say: "I am one of them". I am happy with who I am. I don't want to keep that a secret.

Samia, 17 years

If they then shout "homo" in the corridor, I always cringe a bit. I am always afraid they 'recognise' me. But usually it's just a few guys shouting it at one another.

Lander, 16 years

I am me. There are thousands of names for what I am: poof, nancy, shirtlifter, pillowbiter... and so on and so on. They can shout whatever they like, I'll still remain who I am.

Jorre, 21 years

2011



Elio Di Rupo was the first openly gay Prime Minister of Belgium and the first male gay Prime Minister in the world.

BULLYING AT THE WORK PLACE Even at the work place you can get bullied because of your sexuality or because people suspect you are gay. Sometimes you have to deal with stupid 'innocent' jokes or annoying gossip, but it can sometimes also be rather crass. Do not ignore it. Discrimination at the workplace is forbidden by law. Report it to the Halebifoon, or to your union, the work's counsellor or on a discrimination hotline.



MORE INFORMATION

www.meld-it.be

NUMBERS

1 IN 5

LGBs do not mention their partner at work.

1 IN 10

LGBs are convinced their sexuality is the reason for their dismissal or for their failure to grab opportunities at work.

YOUR WORK, YOUR LIVING ENVIRONMENT We spend an awful lot of time at our workplace, sometimes even more than at home. You talk to your colleagues about more than just work. As a LGB person you then have to choose whether or not to tell them. If you do, you risk being rejected. If you don't, you have the stress of having to hide who you are.

Apparently it is mainly in the educational and health care sectors LGBs have trouble coming out.

That is why it is best for companies to openly declare themselves as LGB-friendly. They can do that using posters, mentioning LGBs in their non-discrimination code or supporting their LGB network. Government, police, IBM and Accenture do this already.



MORE INFORMATION

www.workplacepride.org/

www.kliqvzw.be



2015

A new law was passed which gives co-mothers the same rights as straight fathers.



A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Belgium is one of the best countries to live as an LGB person. Legislation recognises you, you are allowed to get married, raise children and your equal rights are protected in anti-discrimination legislation. Moreover, people campaign pro-actively against homophobia and gay bashing, which unfortunately still exists. In many countries, however, LGBs face a lot more difficulties. In countries like Iran, Sudan or Saudi-Arabia and a few others you can still be sentenced to death for your sexuality.

The map shows the worldwide LGBT situation in the year 2016.



Download: www.cavaria.be/mediatheek/ilga-wereldkaart



SEXUAL ORIENTATION

ILGA, THE INT



CRIMINALISATION

IMPRISONMENT

73 countries and 5 entities

DEATH PENALTY

13 States [or parts of]



Death penalty not known to be implemented



Morality laws (religion-based) that limit LGB freedom of expression and association

Death penalty

Imprisonment 14 Y - Life

Imprisonment up to 14 years

Promotion ('propaganda') laws limiting freedom of expression

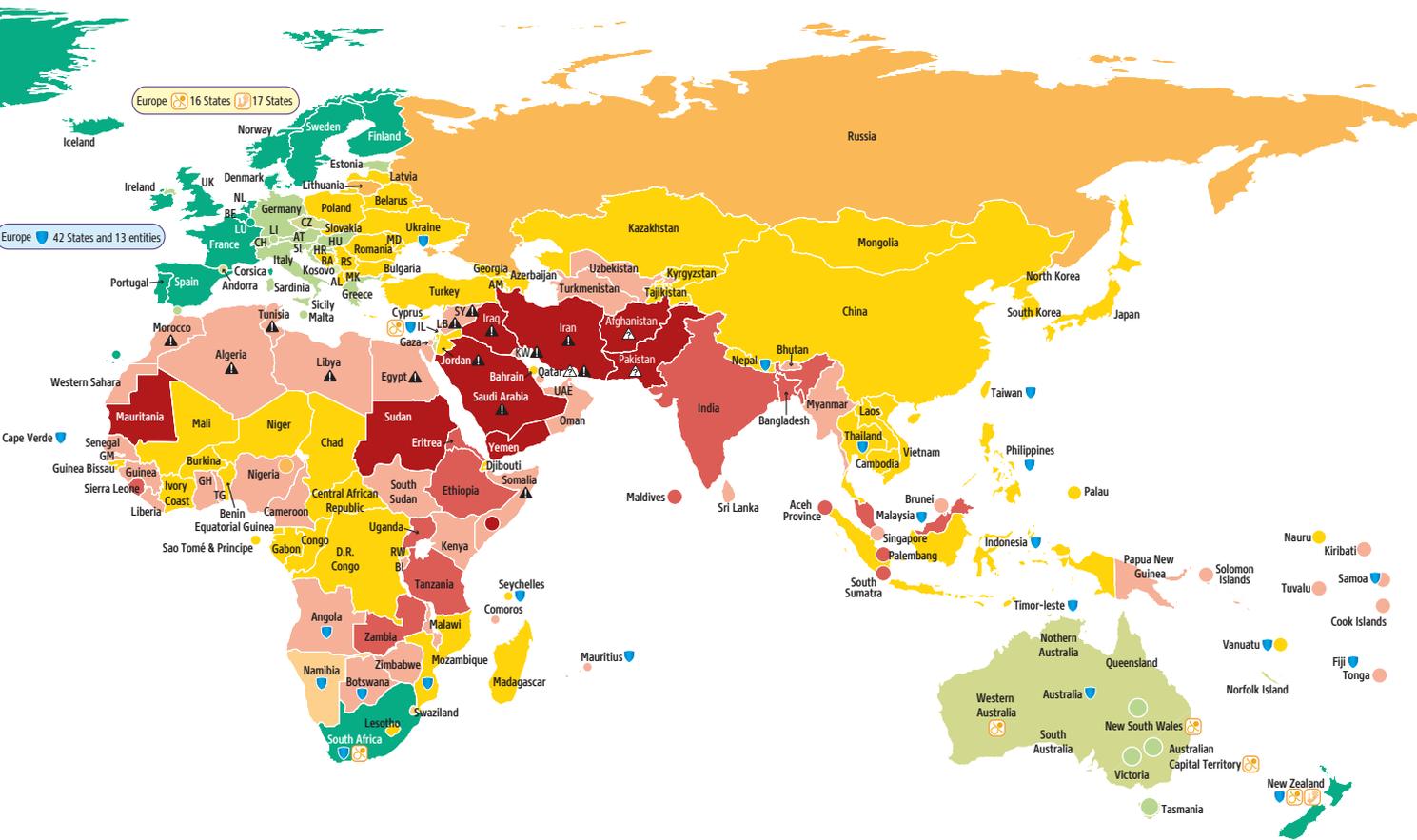
No penalty specified

TATION LAWS IN THE WORLD - OVERVIEW

INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX ASSOCIATION

JUNE 2016

WWW.ILGA.ORG



PROTECTION

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS

76 countries and 85 entities

Includes employment, Constitution, other non-discrimination protections, hate crime and hate speech.

NO SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

Laws penalising same-sex sexual acts decriminalised, or never existed

RECOGNITION

RECOGNITION OF SAME-SEX UNIONS

47 countries and 65 entities

JOINT ADOPTION
27 countries and 28 entities

SECOND PARENT ADOPTION
17 countries and parts of Italy



Marriage

Equal (almost equal)
substitute to marriage

Clearly inferior substitute to
marriage

The data represented in this map, and the three accompanying separate maps on Criminalisation, Protection and Recognition, are based on *State-Sponsored Homophobia: a World Survey of Sexual Orientation Laws: Criminalisation, Protection and Recognition*, an ILGA report by Aengus Carroll. The report and these maps are available in the six official UN languages: English, Chinese, Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish on www.ilga.org. This edition of the world map (June 2016) was coordinated by Aengus Carroll and Renato Sabbadini (ILGA), and designed by Eduardo Enoki (eduardo.enoki@gmail.com).

Explore further

ORGANISATIONS

ÇAVARIA

Çavaria inspires, stimulates and supports all organisations and individuals who stand up for a broad view on sexuality, gender expression and gender identity. It sticks up for the rights of all LGBTs in all aspects of daily life and strives to secure their well-being. Çavaria manages the Holebifoon, ZiZo-online.be and publishes ZiZo Magazine and countless other brochures and supports The Belgian Pride.

Kammerstraat 22, 9000 Gent
09-223 69 29
info@cavaria.be
www.cavaria.be

KLIQ NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

Non-profit organisation KliQ wishes to increase expertise by training, pathway counselling and coaching. KliQ offers advice and does this on the intersections with gender identify and sexual orientation.

Kammerstraat 22, 9000 Gent
09-223 69 29
info@kliqvzw.be
www.kliqvzw.be

WEL JONG NIET HETERO

is the national youngsters' movement for and by LGBTs in Flanders and Brussels.

Kammerstraat 22, 9000 Gent
09-335 41 87
info@weljongniethetero.be
www.weljongniethetero.be

THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TEAM (FLEMISH GOVERNMENT)

is responsible for the Flemish equal opportunities policy. It prepares, executes, evaluates and coordinates that policy. It gathers knowledge, finances research, organises campaigns, awards grants, creates a legal framework and develops indicators to measure the progress of the policies. It also coordinates the initiatives taken by other Flemish departments and agencies.

Boudewijnlaan 30, 1000 Brussel
02-553 51 38
gelijkekansen@vlaanderen.be
www.gelijkekansen.be



PINK HOUSES

The so-called Pink Houses are provincial or regional umbrella organisations that function as meeting places for LGBT associations and individuals. You can find the contact information on www.cavaria.be/verenigingen

TRANSGENDER INFOPOINT

The Transgender Infopoint (TIP) gives out information and advice on the transgender theme, by telephone (0800-96 316) and via www.transgenderinfo.be. Even for people who are not undergoing a medical trajectory or who aren't transgender.



WEBSITES

cavaria.be/verenigingen

An up-to-date list of organisations can be found on www.cavaria.be/verenigingen/per-doelgroep

zizo-online.be

Cavaria's news site, focusing on trans* and LGB people

cavaria.be/agenda

An overview of events for LGB and trans* people in Flanders and Brussels. Made possible by CultuurNet Vlaanderen.

ANY QUESTIONS?



holebifoon.be

0800 99 533

vragen@holebifoon.be

The holebifoon is an information hotline that deals with all your questions about LGBT issues.