



Country report 2024 on anti-discrimination: highlights



Belgium



Demographics and Religion:

Belgium has 11 million people, with Roman Catholicism being the main religion (50%). Other religious groups include Muslims (5%) and various Christian denominations (2.5%). Nearly 42% identify as non-believers, including atheists.



Linguistic and Ethnic Diversity:

The population is divided into Dutch (7 million), French (4 million), and German (76,000) speakers. Around 25% of the population is of foreign origin, with major minorities being Moroccans, Italians, French, Turks, and Dutch.



Federal System and Anti-Discrimination Law:

The federal system includes the Federal State, regions, and communities, complicating the implementation of anti-discrimination laws.



Main Legislation:

Belgium is part of key international anti-discrimination agreements but has not ratified Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Constitution prohibits discrimination and includes provisions for disability rights.



Key Federal Acts (2007):

Major anti-discrimination laws include the Racial Equality Federal Act, the General Anti-Discrimination Federal Act, and the Act combating discrimination between women and men. These laws were updated in 2023 to improve their effectiveness.



Regional Legislation:

Regions and communities have enacted their own anti-discrimination laws aligned with federal legislation, covering areas such as employment, education, and housing. Notable recent updates include Brussels-Capital Region's ordinances and the Walloon Region's decree on housing discrimination.



Enforcement Mechanisms:

Victims can seek legal remedies such as nullifying discriminatory provisions, seeking damages, and obtaining injunctions. The equality body Unia and other organisations can file suits on behalf of victims.



Equality Bodies:

Unia and the Vlaams Mensenrechteninstituut (Flemish Human Rights Institute) are key equality bodies. Unia assists victims, issues reports, and may file judicial actions. It operates independently despite being under parliamentary supervision.



Key Issues and Developments (2023):

The withdrawal of the Flemish authority from Unia has fragmented anti-discrimination laws, making them harder to understand and enforce. 2023 saw a rise in antisemitic incidents and ongoing anti-Muslim rhetoric linked to previous terrorist attacks. Efforts are being made to codify complex anti-discrimination legislation.