

# PROMOTING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE RESEARCH WORKFORCE

## COUNTRY NOTE: FRENCH COMMUNITY OF BELGIUM



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With the support of

## Preface

The Country Note for the French Community of Belgium is an output of the ongoing project on “Research systems and the future research workforce: promoting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion”, which is part of the programme of work of the OECD Global Science Forum (GSF), Science and Technology Policy Division, Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation.

Early in the process, the expert group members of the participating countries, including the author, reached an agreement on the conceptual framework for the project, identified the major policy issues for investigation, and finalised the country note template (see APPENDIX 1: OECD Country note template) to collect information for the development of the project. This note follows the structure of the provided template.

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## Executive summary

This country note provides a comprehensive overview of the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) landscape within the research workforce of universities in the French Community of Belgium. Structured according to an OECD template for the project on “Research Systems and the Future Research Workforce: Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion,” it is divided into seven main sections:

- The first section sets the national context, detailing the research system and workforce, including an overview of research and innovation governance in Belgium, budgetary pressures affecting the research system, the doctoral education framework, research careers, and research funding models in the French Community of Belgium.
- The second section delves into EDI concepts and metrics, lists Belgian institutions with EDI competencies, and highlights organizations and interuniversity working groups related to EDI in the research workforce. Additionally, it covers public recognition and awards for EDI initiatives. Reports on EDI in the research system published in the last 10 years are synthesized in a table format, organized by theme, challenge, recommendations, and progress.
- The third section provides a brief synthesis of study results covering different aspects of EDI in the research system, supplemented by additional data from various sources. This offers an overview of current progress in EDI.
- The fourth section addresses the challenges associated with gathering EDI data. It additionally covers various initiatives from key bodies, including MERI at BELSPO, the Observatory-FNRS, the Rector's Council, and the F.R.S.-FNRS, all of which compile some EDI metrics. Significant data gaps remain, particularly regarding detailed information on researchers' personal characteristics, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, and race, as well as socio-cultural factors like religious beliefs and language.
- The fifth section provides an overview of federal laws and actions aimed at advancing EDI across various sectors, including higher education and research. It also highlights key policy initiatives from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation implemented between 2014 and 2024 to enhance EDI within the research system. This section features a table detailing each policy document, complete with hyperlinks, a description of the policy's purpose and content, and the measurable targets established.
- The sixth section identifies three key issues: a lack of comprehensive data on EDI, insufficient research studies addressing EDI, and the absence of a coherent and systematic EDI policy or plan.
- The final section highlights several key institutional initiatives and practices within the French Community, including the cascade model at ULB, ongoing monitoring of potential biases from an intersectional perspective at F.R.S.-FNRS, and parenting support initiatives at UNamur and UMons. A comprehensive list of all initiatives can be found in the appendix.

While significant progress has been made in promoting EDI within the research workforce in the French Community of Belgium, there remain areas needing further attention and improvement. Addressing the gaps in comprehensive data collection, enhancing the focus on EDI dimensions beyond gender, and establishing a coherent and systematic EDI policy are critical next steps. The initiatives and practices highlighted in this note, along with the detailed policy overviews, provide a foundation for ongoing efforts.

**Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the research workforce**

**COUNTRY NOTE: FRENCH COMMUNITY OF BELGIUM**

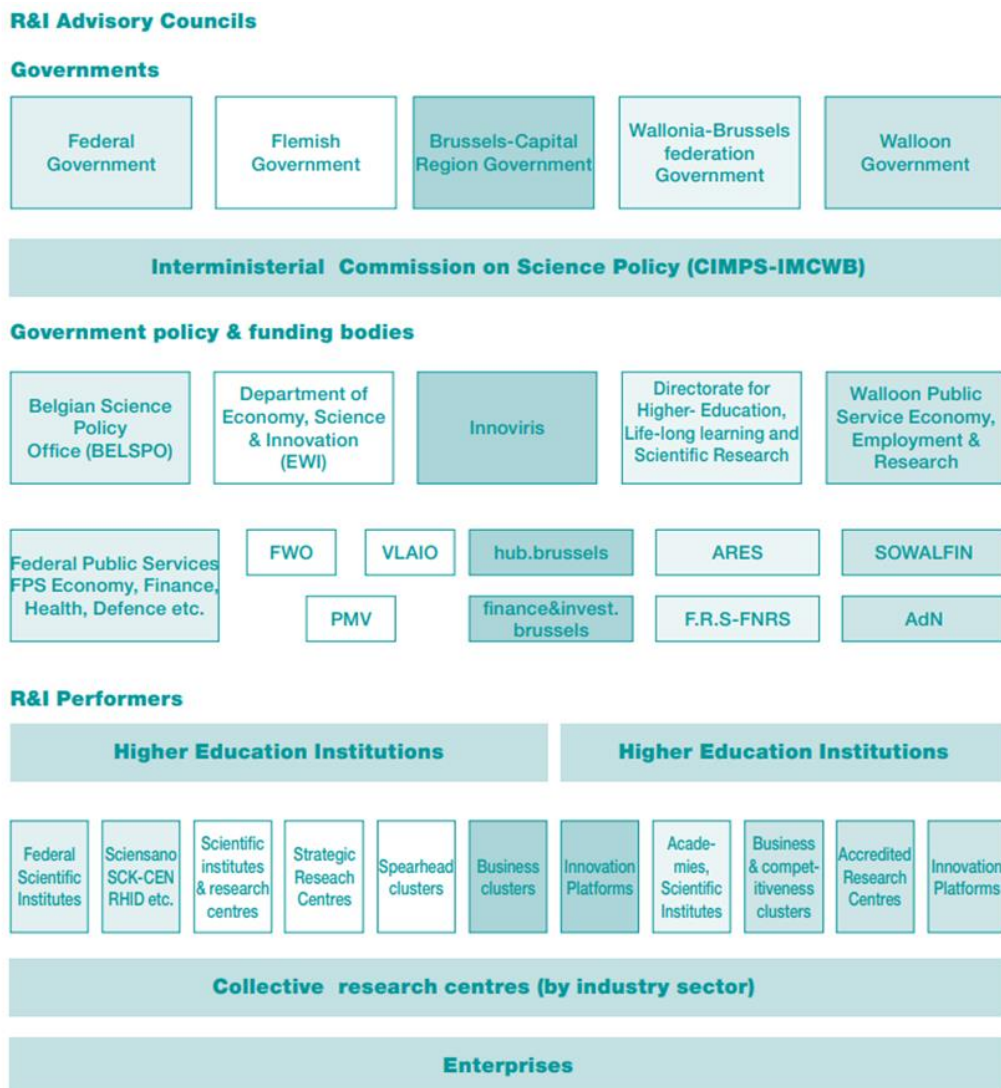
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## A. NATIONAL CONTEXT: INTRODUCTION

Belgium is a federal state (Article 1 of the Constitution), where scientific research is a competence shared by the federal government, the regions (the Flemish region; 6,774,807 inhabitants, the Brussels-Capital region; 1,241,175 inhabitants, and the Walloon region; 3,681,575 inhabitants)<sup>1</sup> and the Communities (the Flemish Community, the French Community<sup>2</sup>, and the German Community). The figure below describes the Research and Innovation (R & I) governance in Belgium<sup>3</sup> (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The R&I governance in Belgium<sup>4</sup>



Source : [https://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub\\_ostc/BRISTI/FWB\\_rapport\\_2021\\_en.pdf](https://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/BRISTI/FWB_rapport_2021_en.pdf)

<sup>1</sup>These numbers provided by Statbel are based on population statistics of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023:

<https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/structure-population#:~:text=On%201%20January%202023%2C%20Belgium%20had%201%2C697%2C557%20legal%20inhabitants.,Statbel%2C%20the%20Belgian%20statistical%20office.>

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article, when we mention the 'French community,' we are specifically referring to the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

<sup>3</sup> Spithoven, A. (Ed.). (2013). Annual report on science and technology indicators for Belgium Brussels, Belgium

<sup>4</sup> Please note that DGENORS is now named DGESVR and SOWALFIN Wallonie Entrepreneurs

The Federal Government oversees the federal scientific institutes, intellectual property (IP) law, standardization, fundamental metrology, nuclear energy research, polar research, defence research, public health research, corporate taxation, employment legislation, social security, and the R&D tax credit<sup>5</sup>. The communities are responsible for fundamental and applied research in higher education institutions (universities, university colleges, superior art schools). This also includes grants, particularly those supporting international activities of institutions. The regions are competent in economically oriented research, technological development, and innovation. They provide financial support in the form of loans and equity to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger companies, finance research conducted by public and collaborative research centers, and support intermediaries such as science parks and organizations that facilitate technology transfer, entrepreneurship, and innovation advisory services.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the Wallon region provides several funding opportunities for industrial research projects, such as “Win4Doc”<sup>7</sup>, which aims to support any industrial research project undertaken with the goal of completing a doctoral thesis within a company in Wallonia, or “Win2Wal”<sup>8</sup>, which targets projects within universities, colleges, or research centers that have the potential to lead to the emergence of a product, process, or service. Similarly, in the Brussels-Capital region, the «Applied PhD»<sup>9</sup> program funds doctoral thesis projects that will be conducted in collaboration with businesses or public/administrative authorities. The funding schemes are therefore sometimes complex, with different levels of power that fund different forms of research, even if the boundaries between them (basic, strategic, and applied research) are sometimes vague.<sup>10</sup>

## 1. Budgetary pressures in the French Community of Belgium

Given the focus of this country note on doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, as well as professors, instead of providing a comprehensive overview of research funding managed by the French community (including direct subsidies to university colleges<sup>11</sup> such as FSR, FRHE, research infrastructures, research councils, and European units), this section will exclusively address the budgetary pressures encountered by universities and the FNRS.

### ➤ Public funding to universities in the French Community of Belgium

While the budgetary constraints faced by universities may not be directly correlated with the broader pressures on research funding, they nonetheless provide valuable insight into the present situation within the French community. The number of undergraduate and graduate students in the French-speaking universities of Belgium has been steadily increasing. Between the academic years 2006-2007 and 2021-2022, the number of students in universities in the French Community increased from 68,758 to 112,479 (an increase of 63 %). During the same period, the operational funding allocation to universities (at constant prices) increased by only 18%<sup>12</sup>. In its Memorandum of 2023, the Rectors' Conference of the French Community of Belgium (CRef), drew attention to the continuous defunding of universities and asked an additional 150 million euros to refinance universities. The Minister of Higher Education of the

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<sup>5</sup> Kelchtermans, S, and Robledo-Bottcher N, RIO Country Report 2017: Belgium, EUR 29152 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, ISBN 978-92-79-81195-1, doi:10.2760/066103, JRC111253.

<sup>6</sup> Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) (2021). Belgian Report on Science, Technology and Innovation 2021, BELSPO, Brussels, Belgium

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub\\_ostc/BRISTI/FWB\\_rapport\\_2021\\_en.pdf](https://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/BRISTI/FWB_rapport_2021_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://recherche.wallonie.be/win4doc>

<sup>9</sup> <https://recherche.wallonie.be/win2wal>

<sup>10</sup> <https://innoviris.brussels/fr/program/applied-phd>

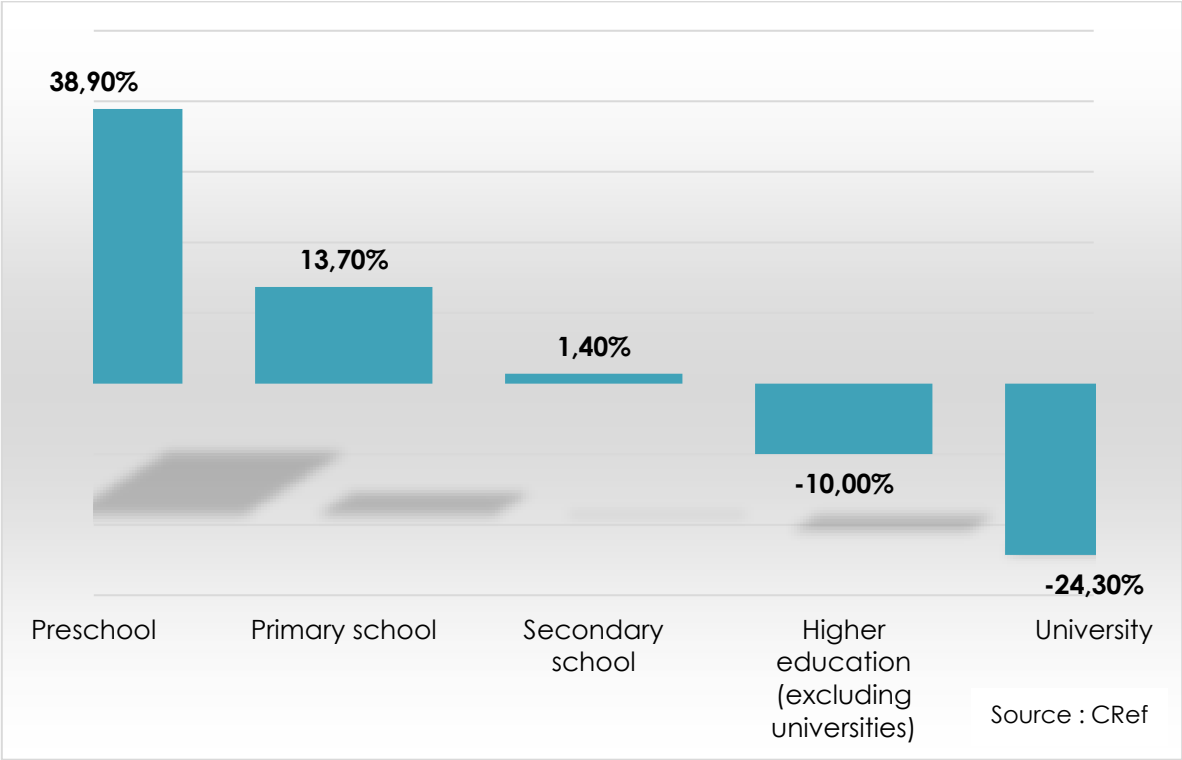
<sup>11</sup> F.R.S.-FNRS (2019). Plan stratégique. Phare 20.25. [https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS\\_PHARE\\_2025.pdf](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS_PHARE_2025.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> University colleges are institutions that offer vocational training. There are 19 university colleges in the French Community of Belgium. University colleges in the French community cannot offer doctoral training nor doctoral degrees.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.cref.be/communication/20230830\\_Memorandum.pdf](http://www.cref.be/communication/20230830_Memorandum.pdf)

Government of the French Community initiated a refinancing of higher education for the current legislative period – amounting to 80 million euros in 2024 for all institutions, including 33.3 million euros allocated to education and 17 million euros to research in universities<sup>13</sup>. However, as can be seen in Figure 2, the evolution of expenses in the French Community of Belgium reveals the deterioration in higher education, especially for universities. Therefore, according to CRef, the additional allocation of funding is still far from reversing the trend observed over many years.

**Figure 2. Evolution of expenses allocated per student between 2006 and 2021, depending on the level of education in the French Community of Belgium**



**➤ Public funding to Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique – FNRS**

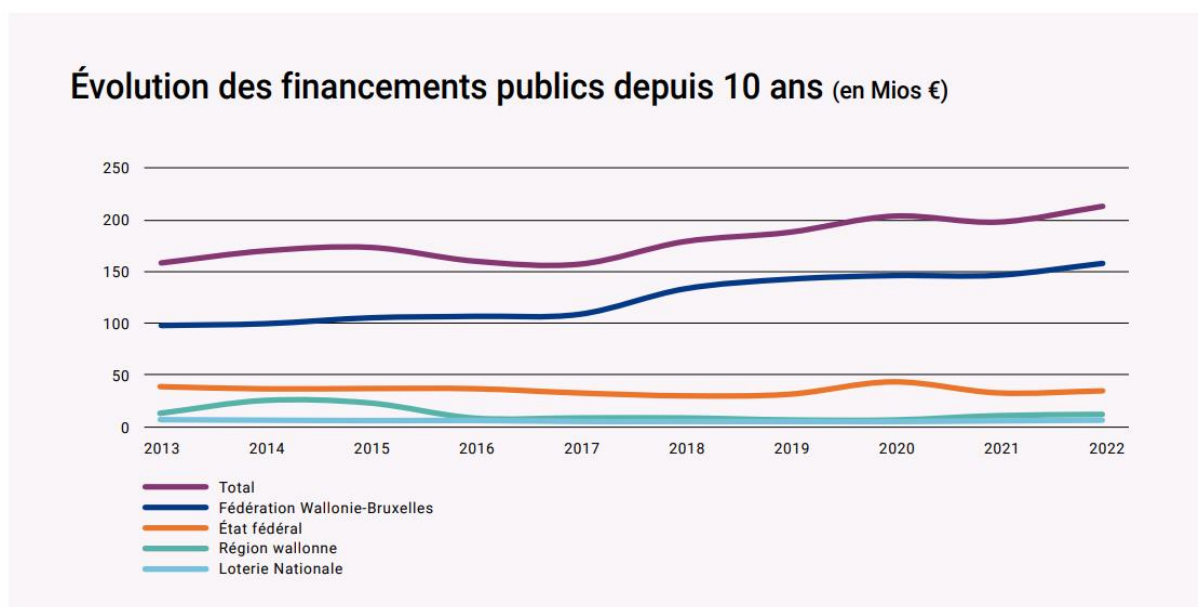
Public funding allocated to F.R.S.–FNRS includes funding from different sources: the French Community, the federal state (including Interuniversity Institute of Nuclear Sciences and tax measures), the Walloon Region, and the National Lottery. A quick look at the evaluation of the public funding allocated to F.R.S.–FNRS between 2017 and 2022 indicates that the public funding has been slowly increasing and for the first time has exceeded 200 million euros<sup>14</sup> in 2020 (Figure 3).

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.cref.be/communication/20230830\\_Memorandum.pdf](http://www.cref.be/communication/20230830_Memorandum.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> F.R.S.–FNRS (2021). Rapport d'activités FNRS 2020. <https://www.fnr2020.be/>



Figure 3. Evolution of public funding to F.R.S.-FNRS between 2013 and 2022<sup>15</sup>



However, a closer look indicates that this increase is closely related to the increase in the budget allocated by the French Community. There is a trend of stagnation from other sources<sup>16</sup>, including the subsidies from the federal state, from the National Lottery and the Walloon Region.

- At the federal level, particularly the abolition of the "Employment Plan" with an annual budget of 6M€ has impacted postdoctoral researchers since it ensured the salary of over 80 postdoctoral researchers. In addition, the federal subsidy to the Fund for Medical Scientific Research (FRSM) has been removed retroactively starting from 2017.
- The subsidies granted by the National Lottery have undergone a reduction of 13% between 2014 and 2019.
- Subsidies from the Walloon Region, despite an increase between 2011 and 2014, have rapidly declined after 2014 and have stagnated until 2021. It is important to note that in 2021, the Walloon Region has decided to double the WELBIO budget (strategic fundamental research in life sciences)<sup>17</sup> and bring it to 15M€ annually. Furthermore, in 2022, a new funding initiative by the Walloon Region of 9.75M€ annually, the "WEL-T Investigator Programme" was launched to support strategic research in engineering, chemistry, and physics, providing grants to both established and early-career researchers.
- At the French community of Belgium level, the budget increased by 8M€ in 2018 (in addition to the initial EOS grant of 14M€) and by 6M€ in 2019. However, since then, only the indexation of this budget has been contributing to the growth seen in Figure 3. In addition, the level of public funding is considered insufficient for F.R.S.-FNRS in relation to the large number of applications. Between 2015 and 2020, the number of applicants for postdoctoral fellowships has fluctuated between 400 and 500 annually, with success rates that are around 20%, which results in the rejection of excellent researchers and research projects.

<sup>15</sup> [FNRS-PHARE-100.pdf \(frs-fnrs.be\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> F.R.S.-FNRS(2019). Plan stratégique. Phare 20.25. [https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS\\_PHARE\\_2025.pdf](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS_PHARE_2025.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lecho.be/economie-politique/belgique/wallonie/la-wallonie-double-le-financement-de-welbio/10341497.html>



## 2. Doctoral education framework

The legislative framework in Belgium gives an autonomy to universities to organize research, within the framework imposed by the regional and European authorities. While several decrees outline the general framework (e.g. Decree of 1991 on the Career of Scientific Researchers<sup>18</sup>), the European Charter for Researchers (2005), the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005) and the principles of innovative Doctoral Training (2011)<sup>19</sup>, as well as the Salzburg recommendations of the EUA (2005, 2010 and 2016) are the guiding principles. Admission requirements: Holding a master's degree is a general admission requirement for being admitted to a doctoral programme.

- Supervision<sup>20</sup>: Each doctoral student has at least one supervisor, assisted by a guidance committee. The committee meets at least once a year to monitor the progress of the candidate and gives its approval for their continued advancement. Every university has created a document listing the general regulations related to the preparation of a doctoral thesis, in which the general expectations of the candidate are listed. In many universities, a key feature of these documents is that it also sets out expectations regarding the supervisor as well as common supervisor-supervisee relationship issues (e.g., co-authorship, career advice, etc.).
- Provision of a structured PhD program that offers courses on specialist topics: The obligations related to the courses to take may differ from one university to another.
- A degree of doctor is granted after a public presentation and defence of a doctoral thesis. The preparation of a doctoral thesis aims to contribute to the training of a researcher who can independently make a valuable contribution to the development and growth of scientific knowledge.
- Funding: Many doctoral candidates either have a fixed-term employment contract with the university (for instance as a research assistant) or receive a personal PhD scholarship. Most doctoral fundings have a duration of four years (sometimes renewable after the first two years). Although it is difficult to identify doctoral candidates without funding, in a study conducted on doctoral candidates in one of the French-speaking universities, this number was at 26%<sup>21</sup>.
- Transferable skills training: While all universities provide opportunities for developing transferable skills, the requirements to enrol in such courses can differ significantly between institutions and even among different faculties within the same university.
- Rate of doctoral degree completion: In the French Community of Belgium, a longitudinal study conducted in two universities indicated the success rates of doctoral candidates to be around 54.3% within 8 years<sup>22</sup>.
- Time to degree for the PhD: According to the "Future of PhD Holders: 2019" survey, the length of doctoral completion in the French Community of Belgium is on average 5.1 years (SD = 1.6). The average length varies between research fields: 4.9 years (SD = 0.4) for Exact and Natural Sciences (ENS), 5.2 years (SD = 0.8) for Life and Health Sciences (LHS) and 5.3 years (SD = 0.7) for Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> [https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/06319\\_002.pdf](https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/06319_002.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy\\_library/principles\\_for\\_innovative\\_doctoral\\_training.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/third-cycle-phd-programmes-3\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/third-cycle-phd-programmes-3_en)

<sup>21</sup> Van Der Haert, M., Arias Ortiz, E., Emplit, P., Halloin, V., & Dehon, C. (2014). Are dropout and degree completion in doctoral study significantly dependent on type of financial support and field of research?. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(10), 1885-1909.

<sup>22</sup> Wollast, R., Boudrenghien, G., Van der Linden, N., Galand, B., Roland, N., Devos, C., ... & Frenay, M. (2018). Who are the doctoral students who drop out? Factors associated with the rate of doctoral degree completion in universities. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 7(4), 143-156.

<sup>23</sup> Bebiroglu, N., Dethier, B., & Ameryckx, C. (May, 2019). Employment status of PhD holders in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels. ORCS Thematic Report Series #1, Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers, Brussels, Belgium.

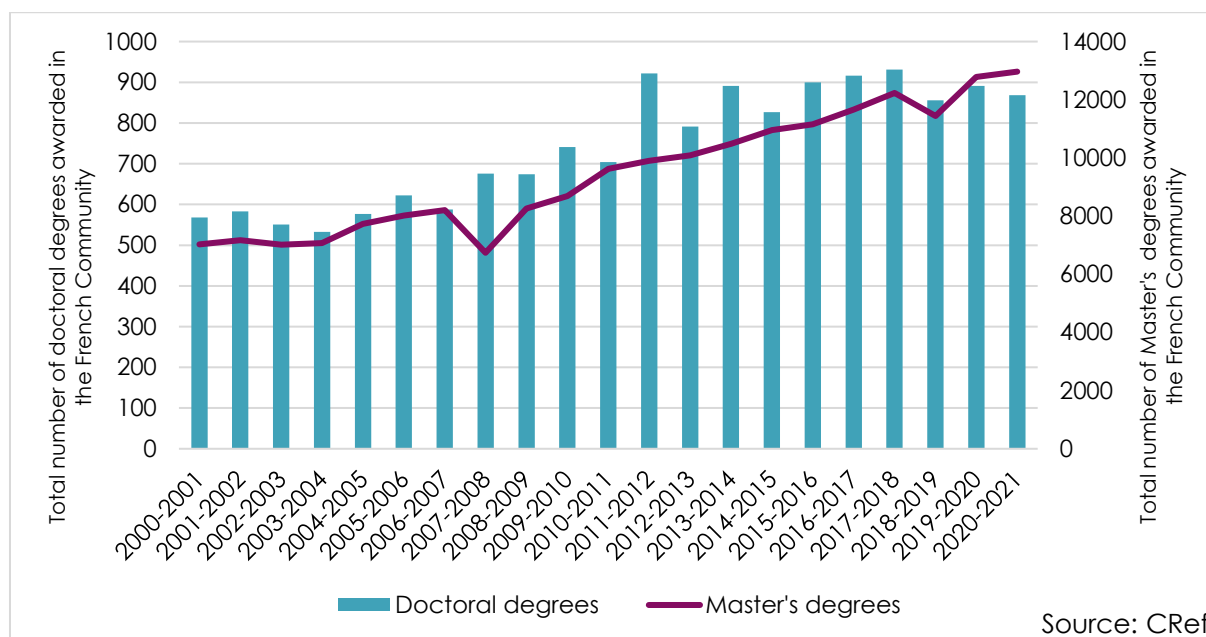
[http://www.observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/docs/REPORT%20EMPLOYMENT%20ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/docs/REPORT%20EMPLOYMENT%20ENG_FINAL.pdf)

### 3. Research workforce career models

#### ► Evolution of number of doctorates awarded in the French Community

When we look at the number of doctoral degrees awarded between 2000 and 2021 from the French-speaking universities of Belgium, we see a clear increase, from 568 doctoral degrees awarded in the academic year 2000-2001 to 868 doctoral degrees awarded in 2020-2021, an increase of 53% in 20 years (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Total number of doctoral and master's degrees awarded in the French-speaking universities of Belgium between 2000 and 2021**



However, as observed in many parts of the world, this increase in the number of doctorate holders in the French Community of Belgium is not matched by an increase in the number of available permanent academic positions. For instance, between 2014 and 2018, the number of full-time permanent academic and scientific positions that were opened in all the French-speaking universities in Belgium ranged from 68.5 to 90.6, with an average of 80.9 positions per year<sup>24</sup>. Since these vacant positions are open internationally and the doctorate recipients in a given year are also in competition with previous cohorts in the queue, to secure a permanent position is highly challenging.

#### ► Share of researchers by sector

In the French Community, the university sector remains the main employment sector for doctorate holders on average four years after obtaining their degrees, irrespective of their research field.

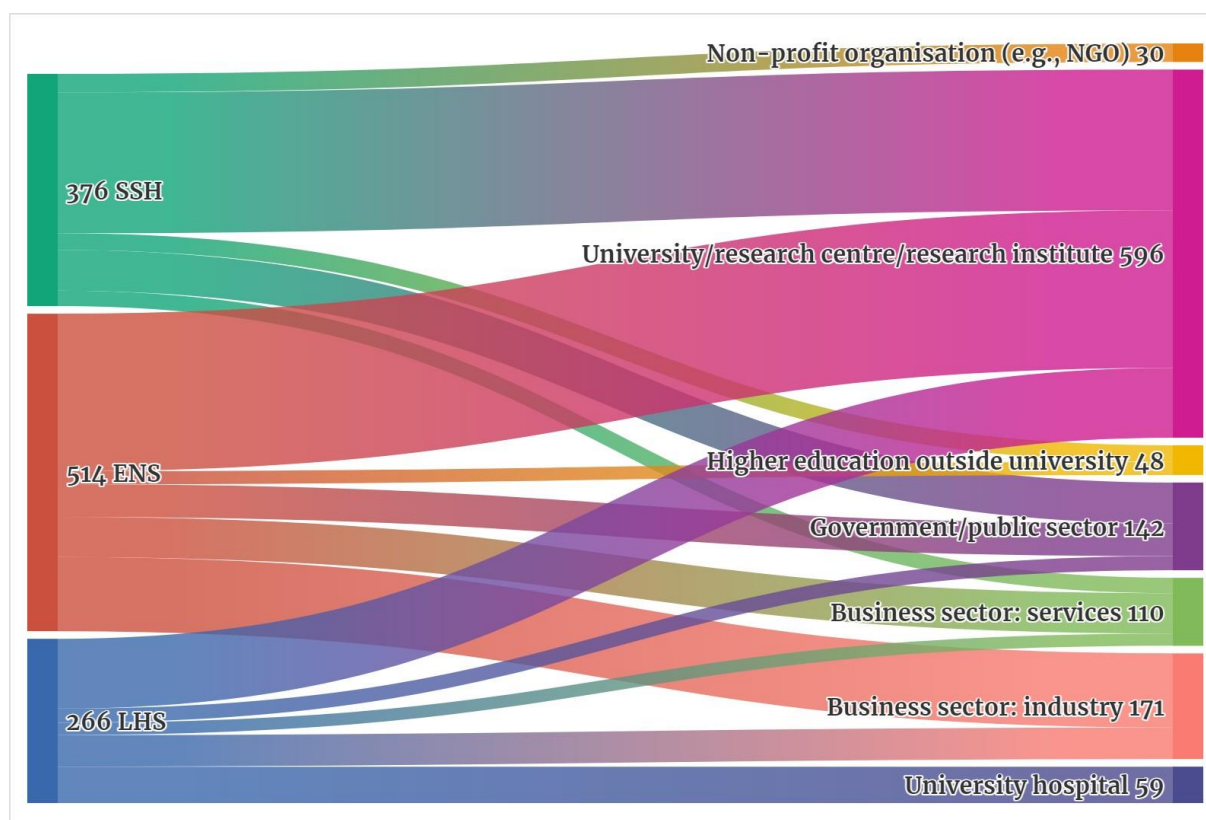
<sup>24</sup> Bebiroglu, N., Dethier, B., & Ameryckx, C. (May, 2019). Employment status of PhD holders in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels. ORCS Thematic Report Series #1, Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers, Brussels, Belgium.  
[http://www.observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/docs/REPORT%20EMPLOYMENT%20ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/docs/REPORT%20EMPLOYMENT%20ENG_FINAL.pdf)

**Table 1. Sector of employment (total proportion) of doctorate holders by research field in the French Community<sup>25</sup>**

(%)	Education outside of HE	HE outside university	Gov/ Public	Hospital	Industry	Service	Non-profit	University/ Research institutions	Other
SSH	4.1%	7.4%	13.5%	1.7%	7.0%	1.2%	5.7%	53.7%	5.7%
ENS	2.6%	2.9%	8.1%	1.7%	20.7%	11.2%	2.0%	47.1%	3.7%
LHS	1.5%	3.4%	5.8%	23.2%	14.5%	5.3%	2.4%	39.1%	4.8%

Even though the number of candidates is much higher than the number of permanent positions available in the university sector, doctorate holders choose to stay in large numbers in this sector regardless of their field of research. Other important sectors of employment include industry, government/public and service sectors.

**Figure 5. Sankey diagramme displaying the flow between the research field and the sectors of employment in the French Community<sup>26</sup>**



<sup>25</sup> HE = Higher education, SSH= Social Sciences and Humanities, ENS= Exact and Natural Sciences, LHS= Life and Health Sciences

<sup>26</sup> SSH= Social Sciences and Humanities, ENS= Exact and Natural Sciences, LHS= Life and Health Sciences

#### 4. Research funding models

In the French Community of Belgium, basic and applied research is mainly carried out within five universities<sup>27</sup>, namely, Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain), Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Université de Liège (ULiège), Université de Mons (UMons), Université de Namur (UNamur), and university hospitals linked to them, such as *CHU de Liège* (ULiège), *les Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc* (UCLouvain), *l'hôpital Erasme* (ULB), among others. University colleges can also apply for applied research fundings through different programs (i.e., the FRHE action "*Financement de la Recherche en Hautes Écoles*", or the European partnership "Transforming Health and Care Systems" programme<sup>28</sup>), but do not have the authority to confer doctoral degrees.

The policy is implemented by the agencies whereas their monitoring and evaluation is done within the administration of the respective governments: the SPW Economy, Employment and Research (SPW EER) for the Walloon Region and the DGESVR (*Direction générale de l'Enseignement supérieur, de l'Enseignement tout au long de la vie et de la Recherche scientifique*) for the French Community, respectively.

In this context, the General Administration of Education of the Ministry of the French Community supports research for multiple actors (university colleges, the schools of arts, etc.) and actions (funding researchers, financing the acquisition of infrastructure, financing STEM awareness projects, etc.). Given the focus of this country note, the focus will be on two major players: universities and the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique-FNRS (F.R.S.-FNRS). F.R.S.-FNRS is a strategic and fundamental research funding agency, with the status of a private foundation with public utility. This support is provided through five funding lines:

- operating allowance to universities, 25% of which is estimated to be devoted to research activities;
- subsidies granted to the F.R.S.-FNRS;
- Special Research Funds (FSR) allocated to universities;
- Concerted Research Actions (ARC) allocated to universities;
- various subsidies granted directly to researchers or teams for research activities and the dissemination of scientific knowledge, or to institutions other than universities or the F.R.S.-FNRS (e.g. The Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and of Fine Arts of Belgium).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> UCLouvain, ULB and ULiège are comprehensive universities with larger student bodies.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.recherchescientifique.be/index.php?id=2190>

<sup>29</sup> <https://statistiques.cfwb.be/recherche-scientifique>

## B. KEY EDI CONCEPTS, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND REPORTS ON EDI

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### ► Definitions of the terms

There are two glossaries that provide definitions for the terms used in the field of EDI in the French Community:

1. The glossary of the Equality of Opportunities Directorate of the Ministry of the French Community.<sup>30</sup>
2. The eDiv glossary developed by Unia<sup>31</sup>, the Interfederal Center for Equal Opportunities.

We can additionally find definitions in some publications from federal organisations.

**Equity.** "Equity" as a term is not defined nor often used in public policy. "**Equality of chances**" is defined as "a vision of equality that aims to ensure that individuals have "equal opportunities," the same chances for social development, regardless of their social or ethnic background, gender, their parents' financial means, place of birth, religious beliefs, or any potential disabilities". "**Equal treatment**" is defined as "the absence of any form of direct or indirect discrimination or harassment" in the law.

**Diversity.** Diversity has several different definitions<sup>32</sup>. In the Federal Diversity Charter<sup>33</sup>, **diversity** is defined as "the representation of 'the entirety of human demographic differences'." It is what will generate a broad spectrum of possibilities, talents, and activatable potential.

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is not defined in the glossaries. In the Federal Diversity Charter, it is defined as "the extent to which staff members feel valued, respected, accepted, and encouraged to fully participate in the activities of an organization whose work environment tends to adapt to the needs of everyone. It is what will allow this diversity to express itself concretely, in a useful way, and to develop its potential in the service of everyone." "**Inclusive education**<sup>34</sup>" is defined as an educational approach that implements measures aimed at eliminating or reducing material, pedagogical, cultural, social, and psychological barriers encountered by students benefiting from it during access to studies, throughout their studies, and in socio-professional integration".

**Protected criteria.** In the Belgian law, there are criteria designated as "**protected**" by antidiscrimination legislation (federal laws, decrees, and ordinances). These protected criteria are age, sexual orientation, marital status, birth, financial status, religious, philosophical or political beliefs, union affiliation, language, current or future health status, disability, physical or genetic characteristics, nationality, alleged race, skin color, ancestry, national, ethnic, or social origin, and gender.

The law of May 10, 2007, defines **discrimination** as "the situation that occurs when, based on one of the protected criteria (see below), a person (or a group) is treated less favorably than another person (or group) is, was, or would be in a comparable situation." Any discrimination based on one of these "protected" criteria is prohibited and punishable. It is important to note that the law of 2007 uniquely referred to discrimination "on the basis of one of the protected criteria<sup>35</sup>." It did not consider **intersectional discrimination**, which occurs when different forms of discrimination operate together such as the discrimination a woman from an ethnic minority may face (gender and ethnic discrimination). This law has been amended in 2023<sup>36</sup>, the term

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.egalite.cfwb.be/index.php?id=lexique>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.unia.be/fr>

<sup>32</sup> For instance, in the glossary of the Equality of Opportunities Directorate of the Ministry of the French Community diversity is defined as "Differences between the values, attitudes, cultural frameworks, beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, skills, knowledge, and experiences specific to each member of a group."

<sup>33</sup> <https://bosa.belgium.be/fr/publications/charte-de-la-diversite-et-de-linclusion>

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/39922\\_000.pdf](https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/39922_000.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ediv.be/theme/unia2019/library.php?id=32>

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/loi/change\\_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table\\_name=loi&cn=20230](https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table_name=loi&cn=20230)

“on the bases of one of the protected criteria” has been replaced by “one or more of the criteria”. In addition, in the amendment, we see the use of the term **intersectional discrimination**, which is defined as “a situation where an individual experiences discrimination as a result of a distinction based on multiple protected criteria that interact and become inseparable”.

### ► **Belgian institutions with EDI competencies**

[Unia](#) is the Interfederal Center for Equal Opportunities that has the mission of developing a comprehensive policy to combat discriminations and issuing opinions on inclusion matters. Unia is an independent public institution. In this context, Unia engages with relevant stakeholders, formulates recommendations, and organizes informational or awareness-raising seminars. All except for two protected criteria (i.e., gender and language) fall within Unia's competencies.

Belgium has a specific body that deals with issues of equality between women and men and gender-based discrimination: [Institute for the Equality of Women and Men](#). The Institute for the Equality of Women and Men is a federal institution created in 2002 which aims to guarantee and promote the equality of women and men as well as fight against any form of gender-based discrimination and inequality. The Institute consists of different units active in various fields of activity such as, for example, gender mainstreaming, employment, combating domestic violence, and research. A legal unit has been set up to deal with complaints from victims of gender discrimination.

Currently, no public body has a specific competence for the language criterion.

### ► **Organisations or interuniversity working groups related to EDI in the research workforce**

- Women and Science Committee<sup>37</sup>: This committee aims to promote and enhance balanced participation of women and men in scientific and academic careers. It has the following missions:
  - Formulate opinions and recommendations on all matters related to gender equality in the scientific and academic field.
  - Ensure the exchange of information and the dissemination of best practices among universities, the F.R.S.-FNRS, the administration and the relevant Ministers regarding gender equality in academic careers and scientific research.
  - Facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers in the field of Gender Equality.
  - Contribute to defining the positions of the delegation of the French Community of Belgium to the Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation.
- Gender contact person: At each university, higher education institution outside universities, and within the F.R.S.-FNRS, there is a designated gender contact person responsible for addressing gender-related inquiries within their respective institutions. These individuals undertake three primary missions: providing information, raising awareness, and facilitating networking. Universities and F.R.S.-FNRS have also elaborated gender equality plans.
- BeWise<sup>38</sup>: BeWiSe is a non-profit organisation advocating for gender equality in science and supporting women scientists at all levels of STEM careers. It is active at universities, research institutions and companies in Belgium.
- The Gender Commission in Higher Education (CoGES)<sup>39</sup> at ARES (*Académie de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur*), is responsible for addressing the gender theme in higher education and supporting higher education institutions in their fight against gender-based discriminations.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.femmes-sciences.be/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://bewise.be/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.ares-ac.be/fr/a-propos/instances/commissions-permanentes/genre-coges>



- The Commission for Inclusive Higher Education (CESI<sup>40</sup> at ARES) : created in 2014, CESI is forging a network of stakeholders in order to create a more inclusive higher education in the French Community of Belgium. CESI organizes training sessions for the administration of higher education institutions and initiates tools to inform higher education institutions as well as students.
- Sophia<sup>41</sup>: an NGO managed by researchers that provides a platform for those who do research in the field of gender studies in Belgium. It aims to advance gender studies research and education, emphasizing collaboration across disciplines and between universities, as well as bridging the linguistic and community gaps in the country. Additionally, it underscores the significance of gender studies in shaping effective equality policies.
- Interuniversity Working Group on "Belgian Colonial Past": in 2020, The Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) and CRef decided to set up a joint working group to reflect on the role of universities in the decolonization of academia. This work resulted in a report entitled "Belgian Universities and the Dealing with the Colonial Past".<sup>42</sup>

It is worth noting that, with the exception of Sophia and BeWise, all the organizations listed above are exclusive to the French Community of Belgium.

### ➤ Public recognition and awards

- Women and Science Committee of the French Community of Belgium annually presents two distinctive awards:
  - Gender Studies Master's Award: This award is exclusively granted to individuals enrolled in the interuniversity gender studies program who have completed a master's thesis addressing gender and gender equality. Master's theses are selected based on their originality, scientific quality, and societal perspectives.
  - Research Award: This award acknowledges and promotes noteworthy research conducted in the French-speaking universities, that integrates gender/sex-related topics.
- Innoviris the Women Award in Technology and Science (WATS)<sup>43</sup>: to encourage women in the field of science and enhance science awareness among young women, Innoviris, which is the public organisation that funds and supports research and innovation in the Brussels-Capital Region, presents an award and selects Brussels Science Ambassadors. These ambassadors play a role in promoting scientific and technological education in Brussels.
- L'Oréal UNESCO For Women in Science Belgium<sup>44</sup>: L'Oréal and UNESCO have collaborated globally for over two decades to promote female researchers. Within this framework, a collaborative agreement has been in effect in Belgium since 2007 involving L'Oréal, the National Commissions for UNESCO, F.R.S.-FNRS, and FWO. This award provides supplementary operating budget to cover additional operational expenses for women postdoctoral researchers in Exact and Natural Sciences in Belgium.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.ares-ac.be/fr/a-propos/instances/commissions-permanentes/enseignement-inclusif-cesi>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.sophia.be/en/sophia-home-en/about-sophia/>

<sup>42</sup> Goddeeris, I., Beyen, M., Gijss, A. S., Henriët, B., Kanobana, S. R., Tshibangu, K. P., ... & Zanoni, P. (2022). Belgian universities at the core of decolonization. *Belgisch tijdschrift voor nieuwste geschiedenis= Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 52(4), 108-114.

<sup>43</sup> [Women Award in Technology and Science - Innoviris](#)

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.forwomeninscience.com/>



► **Synthesis of reports that guide science policy on EDI in the research workforce**

As stated, all universities and F.R.S.-FNRS publish gender reports yearly and have established gender equality plans. This section focuses on the following reports published in the last 10 years that guide science policy on EDI. Most reports exclusively focus on gender:

- **Réseau des Personnes de Contact Genre de la FWB (2021)**. Rapport des universités de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles et du F.R.S.-FNRS sur l'état de l'égalité de genre en 2018-2019
- **Sophia - Belgian Gender Studies Network (2020)**. Gender at Belgian universities. An interuniversity meeting for policy officers working on gender equality. Report  
<https://www.sophia.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Report-Gender-at-Belgian-Universities-Sophia.pdf>
- **Comité Femmes et Sciences (2021)**. #MeTooAcademia. Rapport et conclusions  
[https://www.femmes-sciences.be/system/files/MTA\\_Rapport\\_conclusions.pdf](https://www.femmes-sciences.be/system/files/MTA_Rapport_conclusions.pdf)
- **Comité Femmes et Sciences (2021)**. Proposition de révision de la clé ARC du décret du 30 janvier 2014  
<https://www.femmes-sciences.be/system/files/CFS-JCL-20-001.pdf>
- **Comité Femmes et Sciences (2022)** Avis sur la présence des femmes dans la recherche. [https://www.femmes-sciences.be/system/files/Pre%CC%87sence%20des%20femmes%20dans%20la%20recherche\\_avis\\_0.pdf](https://www.femmes-sciences.be/system/files/Pre%CC%87sence%20des%20femmes%20dans%20la%20recherche_avis_0.pdf)
- **Comité d'expertes - Université catholique de Louvain (2023)**. Harcèlement et violences de genre. Rapport final.  
<https://cdn.uclouvain.be/groups/cms-editors-respect/Rapport-final-du-Comite-d-experts-vf.pdf?itok=D-YOHS7Y>
- **FWB-ARES (2018)**<sup>45</sup>. Guide d'accompagnement pour l'inclusion des personnes trans dans l'enseignement supérieur en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.  
[http://www.egalite.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&hash=e4d62ae77cfbabf0dbd4af9d2e4605fe9b398ad1&file=fileadmin/sites/sdec\\_III/upload/sdec\\_III\\_super\\_editor/sdec\\_III\\_editor/documents/Discriminations/Trans\\_GUIDE.pdf](http://www.egalite.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&hash=e4d62ae77cfbabf0dbd4af9d2e4605fe9b398ad1&file=fileadmin/sites/sdec_III/upload/sdec_III_super_editor/sdec_III_editor/documents/Discriminations/Trans_GUIDE.pdf)

**Table 2. Synthesis of reports on EDI in the research system: Organised by theme, challenge, policy recommendations and progress**

Theme	Challenge	Policy Recommendations	Progress
Gender	Work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support family-friendly policies. Child-care facilities, babysitters for occasional needs, flexibility grants to help cover the childcare costs or finance the salary of a support person.</li> <li>• Better inform researchers about policies concerning parental leave, encourage and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many universities and F.R.S.-FNRS are reflecting on better measures to help with the work-life balance of parents.</li> <li>• It is stated in the strategic plan of the FNRS for 2023-2028 that the Fund is considering implementing additional financial support to postdoctoral researchers in mobility in the form of a "family mobility allowance". This is intended to strengthen equality of opportunities between male and female</li> </ul>

<sup>45</sup> This guide will soon be updated.

		facilitate taking up leaves both for mothers and fathers.	candidates.
	Career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness about gender bias not only among selection committees and academic staff but also the HR personnel.</li> <li>• Increase the presence of women at various stages of their careers through a 'cascade'<sup>46</sup> measure implemented in all French-speaking universities.</li> <li>• Increase the number of women in leadership positions.</li> <li>• Inform postdoctoral researchers about career opportunities in and outside of academia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Order of the Government of the French Community on "affirmative actions"</a>, 22/11/2023. The Cascade model did not have a legal framework to be implemented. With this order, as long as a target group is evidently under-represented within the workforce of an employer within the scope of the French Community, it is allowed to set a recruitment or promotion quota for this target group, until the observed inequality is resolved.</li> <li>• The creation of the Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers, which pays particular attention to gender stereotypes among PhD holders and informs about career opportunities in and outside of academia.</li> <li>• Many universities have the aim of improving gender balance in decision-making bodies. In the French Community, four out of five universities are led by female rectors.</li> <li>• Constant monitoring of data through annual gender equality reports of universities and F.R.S.-FNRS.</li> <li>• Universities created tools such as video modules to raise the awareness of selection committees about gender bias.</li> <li>• Many universities have started mentoring programs for junior researchers and academics.</li> <li>• Universities offer leadership training.</li> </ul>
	Research assessment, recruitment, and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement gender-fair and transparent procedures, stronger regulations, and clear rules.</li> <li>• Strive for gender parity in recruitment and promotion commissions and thesis committees.</li> <li>• Reconsider the importance of "international mobility" for research assessment and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities and F.R.S.-FNRS have elaborated gender equality plans and have the objective of improving the gender balance in recruitment and promotion commissions.</li> <li>• At F.R.S.-FNRS a special attention is given to the gender balance of experts and scientific commissions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ First step (Remote evaluations). As of 2023, this step is predominantly carried out by male experts, with only 28.3% being female. While the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.ulb.be/medias/fichier/genre-questions-reponses\\_1540372643696-pdf](https://www.ulb.be/medias/fichier/genre-questions-reponses_1540372643696-pdf)

		<p>promotion</p>	<p>Fund does not endorse a quota-based approach, recognizing the limited representation of female researchers in academic staff, ongoing proactive measures aim to enhance the proportion of female evaluators. There has been a gradual increase in evaluations conducted by female experts over the years, rising from 21.8% in 2012 to 28.3% in 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Second step (Evaluations by scientific commissions). Similar proactive efforts were undertaken for members of the scientific commissions and these initiatives have yielded positive results. In 2023, over 50% of members in international scientific commissions and over 60% of commission presidents were female. At the beginning of every scientific commission meeting, a dedicated slide is presented to members, focusing on gender-related considerations. This slide underscores the significance of gender equality and addresses the potential presence of unconscious gender bias within the panels.</li> <li>● The Board of Trustees of F.R.S.-FNRS on June 20, 2023, approved modifications to the guides and forms of F.R.S.-FNRS. Mobility, which was previously defined as "long-term stay abroad", is now replaced with "long-term stay outside the original institution, whether it be outside or within institutions of the French Community of Belgium".</li> <li>● The FNRS signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), committing to make a responsible use of metrics (impact factor, h-index, number of citations, ...) as well as a more qualitative evaluation of applications.</li> </ul>
	<p>Harassment, bullying and gender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiate a research project aimed at gathering comprehensive data on harassment, bullying, and gender violence within academia in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Minister of Higher Education in the French Community launched the BEHAVES survey (Well-being, Harassment, and Violence in Higher Education)</li> </ul>

	violence in academia	<p>French Community of Belgium to understand the full extent of the problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate regulations and implement clear tools and procedures to report cases of harassment and sexism and develop a protocol to protect the anonymity of the victim.</li> <li>• Raise awareness about harassment among the entire university community, especially managers and thesis supervisors and increase the information particularly for junior female researchers.</li> <li>• Consider harassment as a structural issue and a systemic phenomenon.</li> <li>• Impose harsher sanctions for committed acts.</li> <li>• Provide free administrative, legal, and psychological support for victims.</li> </ul>	<p>conducted among students and staff members of all higher education institutions in the French Community of Belgium. This study is currently in progress<sup>47</sup>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many universities started initiatives to combat all forms of harassment among students as well as staff members. Universities provide information for victims and perpetrators regarding existing legislation, provide psychological support for victims, and train staff members. Below are some examples of university-lead initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 100% Respect: Any student or staff member experiencing harassment can initiate the "100% respect" procedure at UMon. This multi-step process may result in disciplinary action for the person committing the act of bullying or harassment if the act is repeated.</li> <li>○ Cash-e: Created in 2020 at ULB, the Centre for assistance and support with student harassment issues (Cash-e) at ULB is a centre that supports students dealing with emotional or sexual abuse during their studies.</li> <li>○ Phare: PHARE is a service for students and doctoral candidates to combat moral, physical, or sexual harassment and to provide support to victims and witnesses at UNamur.</li> <li>○ Respect Programme: Initiated in 2022 by UCLouvain, this program seeks to improve current mechanisms and institute structural reforms to address harassment and gender-based violence. As part of this programme, university authorities asked an independent committee of experts to analyze existing mechanisms combating harassment and gender-based violence at the university and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<sup>47</sup> At the time of finalizing this country note, the BEHAVES study was still underway. The study has now been published and can be accessed at the following link: <http://enseignement.be/index.php?page=28575&navi=4877#%C3%A9tude>

			<p>make recommendations. This comprehensive <a href="#">report</a> was published in 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Respect Campaign<sup>48</sup>: Launched in 2019 by ULiège, this campaign aimed to fight against all forms of discrimination and harassment.</li> </ul>
<b>Transgender</b>	Inclusion of transgender students in higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly identify a contact person.</li> <li>• Raise awareness among staff and students.</li> <li>• Have a clear equality and diversity policy.</li> <li>• Create a trans friendly environment by letting trans students use their chosen names officially in university documents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities have established a procedure allowing any individual whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex to use their preferred name. They reissue a student card with the chosen name, an email address and their chosen name appears in the directories and registration lists.</li> <li>• Many universities have also identified a contact person for transgender questions.</li> <li>• The Gender.S Reflection Group at UMons organizes, among other activities, an annual scientific day dedicated to a theme related to issues of discrimination and implicit bias, particularly in support of the LGBTQIA+ community and conducts awareness-raising activities.</li> </ul>

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.uliege.be/cms/c\\_15124733/fr/campagne-respect-contre-le-harcelement](https://www.uliege.be/cms/c_15124733/fr/campagne-respect-contre-le-harcelement)

## C. AVAILABLE NATIONAL EVIDENCE ON EDI

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### ► Studies on EDI in the research system

It is almost impossible to find scholarly papers and policy analysis on EDI in the research system in the French Community of Belgium that considers factors such as race, ethnicity, neurodiversity, etc.<sup>49</sup> One exception to this is the the GARCIA (Gendering the Academy and Research: combating Career Instability and Asymmetries) project<sup>50,51,52</sup>. This project studied the lack of representation of women in academia, concentrating specifically on the postdoctoral phase, which is marked by uncertainty and competition. It aimed to understand the causes behind the imbalance and propose solutions.

According to studies published within this framework, the career model in Belgium may affect women academics more adversely. For instance, although most researchers feel that work-life balance is hard to achieve, this feeling is more present among mothers. In addition, researchers who are mothers seem to be more pessimistic about their job prospects than researchers without children and fathers. In another study<sup>53</sup> examining recruitment criteria used by selection committees, two distinct reference systems were identified. The 'competition reference system' highlights factors such as excellence and international mobility, while the 'integration reference system' emphasizes qualities like collaboration skills and trustworthiness. The coexistence of these frameworks, assessing candidates both internationally and internally, is argued by the authors to contribute to differences among men and women, as well as parents and non-parents in terms of the evaluation of candidate quality.

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<sup>49</sup> We can find a few studies on the student body, that can shed some light on these issues:

- Race. One recent and unpublished master's theses entitled "Living and study conditions of Afro-descendant students at the Université libre de Bruxelles" by Blanca Pérez Merle D'Aubigné, revealed that approximately half of the Afro-descendant students in the sample encountered discrimination and microaggressions. Many reported a persistent sense of their intellectual abilities being underestimated. Despite professors often being unaware of the root cause, these students faced significant challenges in securing internships, a mandatory component of their degree.
- Disabilities. Dangoisse et al. (2020) conducted a comparison between students with and without disabilities transitioning to a French-speaking university. The findings indicated that students with disabilities who had experience managing challenges throughout their lives were more equipped to navigate difficulties associated with the transition to higher education. Dangoisse, F., Clercq, M. D., Meenen, F. V., Chartier, L., & Nils, F. (2020). When disability becomes ability to navigate the transition to higher education: a comparison of students with and without disabilities. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 35(4), 513-528.
- Colonial past. Within the framework of the interuniversity working group "Belgian colonial past", there have been recent debates about how academia could be decolonized.

<sup>50</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/611737/reporting>

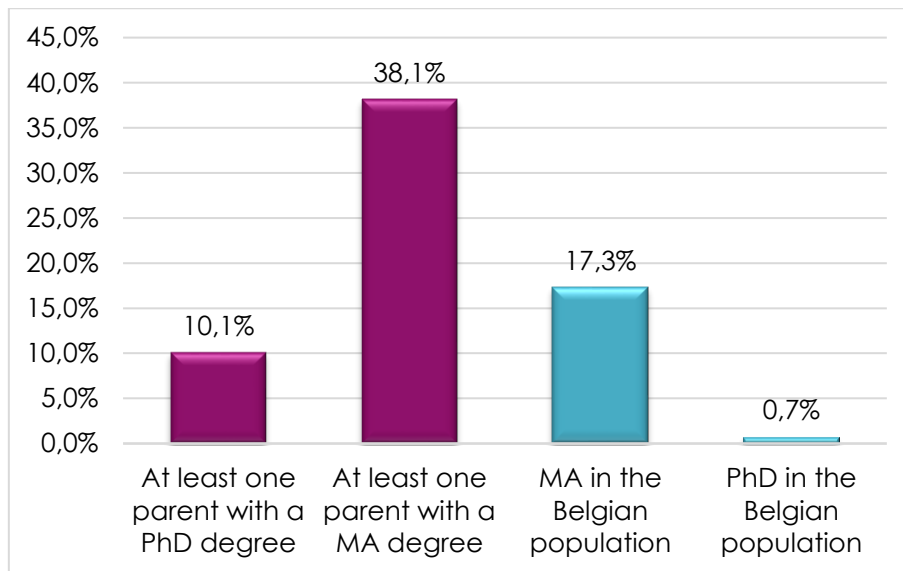
<sup>51</sup> Dubois-Shaik, F, Fusulier, B (2016) Toward a gendered pipeline typology: A comparative analysis across six European countries, GARCIA working paper no. 12, University of Trento (ISBN 978-88-8443-694-8). Available at: [http://garciaproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/GARCIA\\_working\\_papers\\_12.pdf](http://garciaproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/GARCIA_working_papers_12.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Dubois-Shaik, F, Fusulier, B (eds.) (2016) *Experiences of Early Career Researchers/Academics: a Qualitative Research on the Leaky Pipeline and Interrelated Phenomena in six European Countries*, GARCIA working paper n. 11, University of Trento (ISBN 978-88-8443-689-4)

<sup>53</sup> Dubois-Shaik, F., Fusulier, B., & Lits, G. (2019). L'excellence académique entre «compétition» et «intégration». Analyse des critères de recrutement académique et des biais de genre qu'ils induisent. *Sociologies*.

**Socioeconomic status:** Regarding socioeconomic status, data from the “Future of PhD Holders” study may offer valuable insights. In the survey, parental education level served as a proxy, and doctorate holders were asked to indicate the highest level of education attained by their fathers and mothers. The data reveals that 10.1% of PhD holders have at least one parent with a PhD degree, and 38.1% have at least one parent with a Master’s degree.

**Figure 6. Parental level of education of doctorate holders (n = 1495) (in purple), compared to the level of education in the Belgian population (in blue)**



Source: The Future of PhD Holders Study, 2022 Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers-FNRS; [Educational attainment, at least Master's or equivalent, population 25+, male \(%\)\(cumulative\) | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/SH.SV.TV.EV.L1?locations=BE)

### ➤ Evidence of EDI progress

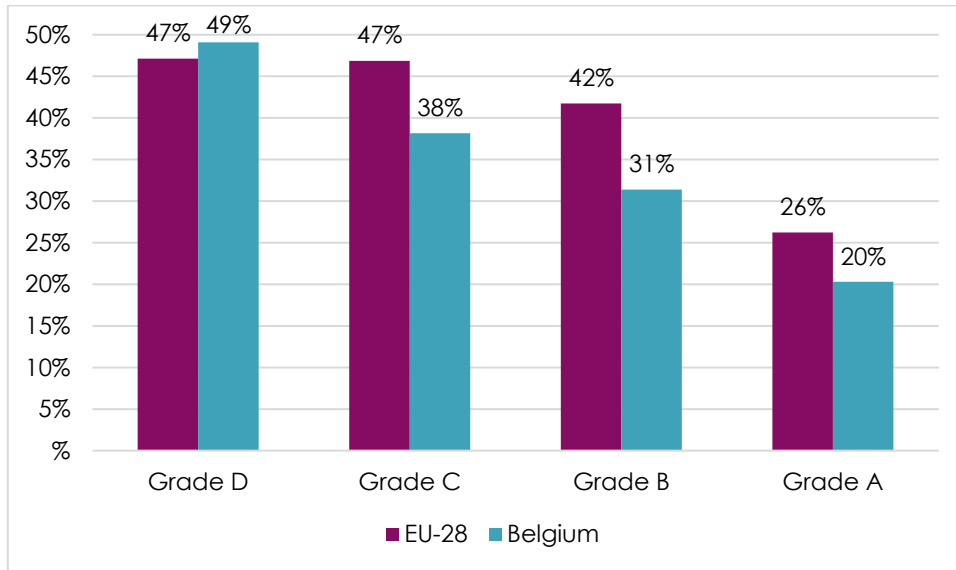
The gendered patterns are reflected when we consider the share of women in academic staff in Belgium, which declines as women advance to higher grades.<sup>54,55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Grade A: The single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted. Grade B: Researchers working in positions not as senior as top position (A) but more senior than newly qualified PhD holders. Grade C: The first grade/post into which a newly qualified PhD graduate would normally be recruited. Grade D: Either postgraduate students not yet holding a PhD degree who are engaged as researchers, or researchers working in posts that do not normally require a PhD.

<sup>55</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1>

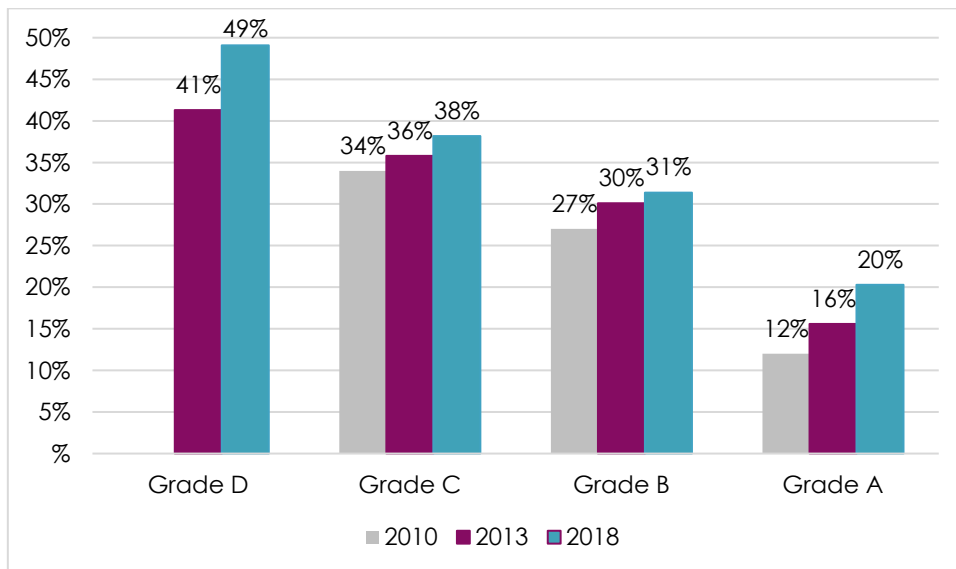


**Figure 7. Proportion (%) of women among academic staff, by grade in EU-28 and Belgium, 2018<sup>56</sup>**



Considering the data coming from [She Figures](#) over time (2012<sup>57</sup>, 2015<sup>58</sup>, and 2021<sup>59</sup>), we realize that compared to 2010, the proportion of women among academic staff is slightly increasing over time for all grades<sup>60</sup>.

**Figure 8. Proportion (%) of women among academic staff, by grade in Belgium in 2010, 2013, and 2018<sup>61</sup>**



<sup>56</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>57</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ba8dc59b-61b8-4c03-9176-373fd9ddac82/language-en/format-PDF/source-302867860>

<sup>58</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f546dfed-41a9-11e6-af30-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>59</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>60</sup> The data is missing for the proportion of Grade D in 2010.

<sup>61</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1>

### ➤ Research assessment and allocation of research funding

To a lesser degree, we see a similar pattern when we specifically consider the share of women among the F.R.S.- FNRS researchers. The most recent analyses<sup>62</sup> indicate that although at the doctoral level, there is almost a parity (49.3% women), the proportion of women slightly decreases at post-doctoral level (41.9% women) and goes down to 39.2% for research associates ("*chercheuses et chercheurs qualifiés*"), 32.0% for senior research associates ("*maitres de recherches*") and 25.0% for research directors ("*directeurs et directrices de recherches*"). It is important to note that candidacy and success rates, aggregated by age, sex, the language of the proposal, the country in which the degree was obtained, nationality, and academic age are analysed for each call and published online for transparency reasons.<sup>63</sup>

### ➤ Private investment

While private foundations in Belgium, such as the King Baudouin Foundation<sup>64</sup>, offer funding for social inclusion projects, and companies provide funding for doctoral and postdoctoral candidates, there is currently a gap in the French Community where these two spheres intersect, and private investment is being offered for social inclusion projects related to researchers.

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<sup>62</sup> F.R.S.-FNRS (2021). Rapport sur l'état de l'égalité de genre. Accessed at [https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS\\_Rapport\\_etat\\_egalite\\_genre\\_2021.pdf](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS_Rapport_etat_egalite_genre_2021.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/le-fnrs/analyses-etudes>

<sup>64</sup> <https://kbs-frb.be/en>

## D. STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION ON EDI

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### ► General context on statistical data collection on EDI and challenges in data collection

Due to historical considerations, the collection of individual data broken down by protected attributes, such as racial or ethnic background, or religious group is very sensitive in Belgium, as it is in other European countries.<sup>65</sup> In addition, enacted in May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation<sup>66</sup> (GDPR) stands out as a crucial tool for data protection at the EU member states, including Belgium.<sup>67</sup> The GDPR outlines fundamental principles for the general processing of personal data and establishes the conditions for lawful processing. It includes provisions prohibiting the processing of sensitive personal data. Even though existing standards do not preclude the collection of sensitive personal data, there is a general fear regarding data collection and an uncertainty about the legislative framework and its interpretation.<sup>68</sup>

In 2021, identifying the need for additional “equality data<sup>69</sup>”, Unia and the Equal Opportunities Team of the Federal Public Service for Justice partnered for a project entitled “Improving equality data collection in Belgium”.<sup>70</sup> This project mapped existing equality data in Belgium in a centralized platform online to improve accessibility and transparency. This platform allows filtering of existing data and research based on various criteria (such as race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, etc.) and domain (i.e., work, health, justice and police, etc.).<sup>71</sup> The platform does not yield any research findings for the academic sector, nor does it provide any data related to equality issues for the field of science, technology and innovation (STI).

### ► Existing data on EDI in research in the French Community

**Federal-level data.** Monitoring and Evaluation of Research and Innovation<sup>72</sup> (MERI), attached to the department of the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO), produces official statistics on research and development. It holds longitudinal information on research personnel and research spending in Belgium for four distinct sectors: the business enterprise sector (BES), the government sector (GOV), the higher education sector (HES), and the private non-profit sector (PNP). Research personnel is divided into two categories: researchers and personnel supporting R&D and employment status (external or internal R&D). Data can be aggregated by region/community, function, sex, sector, level of education (PhD, MA, etc.).

**Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers.** Since 2019, the Observatory has been engaged in a longitudinal study entitled the “Future of PhD Holders.” This comprehensive study focuses on the career transitions of PhD holders across all French-speaking universities in Belgium. The survey delves into a wide array of topics, including doctoral training experience, employment transition, current career trajectory, job satisfaction, and mobility experiences, among others. This research provides valuable insights derived from a large and representative sample of doctorate holders (2,055 participants in 2019 and 1,495 in 2022). Data related to doctorate holders cover demographics (age, sex, marital status (both at the time of the survey and during dissertation defense), parental status, period of having children (before, during,

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<sup>65</sup> [ec-july-2018-guidelines-equality-data-collection.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/equality/equality-data-collection-guidelines-2018-july-ec-guidelines-equality-data-collection.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> <https://gdpr.eu/>

<sup>67</sup> The Belgian Law of July 30, 2018, concerning the processing of personal data incorporates GDPR principles into Belgian legislation.

<sup>68</sup> [https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties\\_docs/Report\\_-\\_Improving\\_equality\\_data\\_collection\\_in\\_BE\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/Report_-_Improving_equality_data_collection_in_BE_EN.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Defined as “any piece of information that allows us to describe and analyze the state of equality or inequality in society”.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.unia.be/fr/publications-et-statistiques/publications/donnees-sur-linegalite-la-discrimination-en-belgique>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.equalitydata.unia.be/fr>

<sup>72</sup> [https://meri.belspo.be/site/index\\_en.stm](https://meri.belspo.be/site/index_en.stm)

and after the doctorate), nationality, parents' level of education (including mother and father - added as a proxy for socio-economic status in 2022). Additionally, the study explores many work-related information such as the sector of employment, type of contract, income, and factors related to the doctorate (types of funding received during their doctorate, field of research, the institutions). These rich data aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences and backgrounds of researchers.

**Rectors' Conference (CRef).** Since 1996, CRef has been publishing yearly statistics on the academic and scientific staff as well as the student population of the French-speaking universities of Belgium. These statistics are available online<sup>73</sup>. The data are aggregated based on factors such as nationality, gender, research field, subfield, first-generation university student status, and academic degree. It is important to highlight that while CRef currently lacks information on postdoctoral researchers, these data will be incorporated in future updates.

**F.R.S.-FNRS.** F.R.S.-FNRS conducts systematic monitoring of data, examining submission and success rates across research domains and funding instruments after each call for proposals. Age, sex, the language of the proposal, the country in which the degree was obtained, nationality, and academic age are analyzed for each call and published online for transparency purposes.<sup>74</sup> This ongoing monitoring ensures a thorough check for bias in the selection process. Detailed analyses, encompassing both descriptive and inferential statistics, are conducted for each funding cycle.

**Missing data.** The present composition of faculty in Belgian universities does not reflect the diversity of the Belgian population.<sup>75</sup> However, we lack statistics to objectify this information. Using the diversity wheel as a reference, in the French Community we currently lack data on personal characteristics of researchers, especially data on ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, and race, and on socio-cultural factors, such as religious beliefs and language. We also lack data on their experiences of discrimination or micro-aggression within the academic setting. This need has also been identified in the "diversity plan" of ULB. In the plan it is written "During the drafting of this Diversity Plan, a lack of data was noted that would allow for the analysis of diversity among members of the university community, the presence of discrimination, inequalities between women and men, sexism, racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, etc. In order to improve our institution's understanding of these issues, the objective of this project will be to conduct several studies<sup>76</sup>."

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.cref.be/annuaires/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/le-fnrs/analyses-etudes>

<sup>75</sup> Goddeeris, I., Beyen, M., Gijssels, A. S., Henriët, B., Kanobana, S. R., Tshibangu, K. P., ... & Zanoni, P. (2022). Belgian universities at the core of decolonization. *Belgisch tijdschrift voor nieuwste geschiedenis= Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 52(4), 108-114.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.ulb.be/fr/egalite-des-genres/plan-diversite-ulb>

## E. INFORMATION ON POLICY INITIATIVES ON EDI

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In Belgium very few policy initiatives specifically target EDI in the research force. However, federal laws promoting EDI, encompasses all sectors, including the higher education sector, and all individuals, including researchers. These laws and action plans are listed below:

- Antidiscrimination law.
  - the Act of July 30, 1981, aimed at suppressing certain acts inspired by racism or xenophobia,
  - the Act of May 10, 2007, aimed at combating certain forms of discrimination,
  - the Act of May 10, 2007, aimed at combating discrimination between women and men
  - Amendment, 17 august 2013, the Center for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism became an inter-federal institution to combat discrimination. The tasks of migration analysis, the fundamental rights of foreigners, and human trafficking were assigned to a separate federal institution: the Federal Migration Center, renamed Myria on September 3, 2015. The fight against discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities remained with the Inter-federal Center for Equal Opportunities, renamed Unia on February 22, 2016.
  - Amendment, June 28, 2023, published on July 20, 2023, which explicitly acknowledges the concept of “multiple discrimination” and differentiates two types: “cumulative discrimination”, where multiple protected criteria lead to separate but compounded discrimination, and “intersectional discrimination”, where multiple protected criteria interact and become inseparable.
- Gender mainstreaming. On January 12, 2007, Belgium adopted a law aimed at enhancing gender equality by integrating the gender dimension into the content of public policies defined at the Belgian federal level. Gender mainstreaming constitutes a legal obligation. The Royal Decree of January 26, 2010, stipulates that a federal plan aimed at integrating the gender dimension into all policies to prevent or correct potential inequalities between women and men should be established at the beginning of each legislative term. In 2021, the Federal Gender Mainstreaming Plan 2020-2024<sup>77</sup> was adopted. This plan consists of two parts:
  - A collective commitment by government members to implement gender mainstreaming and its key instruments.
  - A commitment by government members to prioritize the integration of the gender dimension in several policies falling within their areas of competence.
- Adoption of the Federal Action Plan for an LGBTQI+ Friendly Belgium 2021-2024<sup>78</sup>. The overall objectives of the plan are to enhance security and optimize inclusivity. The plan consists of four strategic axes: knowledge and information, inclusion policy, well-being and health, security and anti-discrimination.
- Adoption of the National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence (2021-2025).<sup>79</sup> This action plan will revolves around seven pillars: establish a conceptual framework of reference for gender-based violence, implement an integrated policy involving all sectors and civil society to collectively address gender-based violence and collect quantitative and qualitative data to enhance understanding of gender-based violence, prevent gender-based violence through awareness campaigns, education, training, and holding perpetrators accountable while addressing the root causes of such violence, protect, support, and accompany victims of gender-based violence and their surroundings (including children exposed to such violence) by placing them at the center of concerns, adapt and modernize criminal policy regarding gender-based violence, paying particular attention to victim protection and recognition, ensure consideration of gender-based violence in asylum and migration policies, act and combat gender-based violence on the international level.

Policy initiatives that were implemented between 2014-2024 to promote EDI in the research system and the future research workforce are synthesized in *Table 3*.

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<sup>77</sup> <https://news.belgium.be/fr/adoption-du-plan-federal-gender-mainstreaming-2020-2024>

<sup>78</sup> <https://sarahschlitz.be/wp-content/uploads/sites/300/2022/05/Pour-une-Belgique-LGBTQI-friendly.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> <https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/20211125-pan-2021-2025-clean-fr.pdf>

**Table 3. Recent policy initiatives targeting EDI in the research workforce in the French Community of Belgium**

<b>Document title, hyperlink</b>	<b>Purpose and content of the policies</b>	<b>Measurable targets of the policy</b>
<p>Order of the Government of the French Community of Belgium setting out the assumptions and conditions for affirmative action" 22/11/2023                      "Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française fixant les hypothèses et les conditions de l'action positive" 22/11/2023</p> <p><a href="https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/51883_000.pdf">https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/51883_000.pdf</a></p>	<p>The 'Anti-Discrimination' order provides that positive actions can be implemented to ensure full equality in practice. However, this provision had remained dormant for 15 years, lacking a government decree specifying in which cases and under what conditions these affirmative actions could be established.</p> <p>Affirmative actions are defined as "preferential measures adopted in favor of a group of people targeted by - at least - one protected criterion, with the aim of addressing the factual inequalities encountered by this group in order to promote full equality in practice."</p> <p>With this order, as long as a target group is evidently under-represented within the workforce of an employer within the scope of the French Community, it is allowed to take preferential measures in favor of this target group, until the observed inequality is resolved.</p>	
<p>Circular 9037 of 18/09/2023                      Prevention and combat against harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence within higher education and adult education institutions of the French Community.</p> <p>« Circulaire 9037 du 18/09/2023                      Prévention et lutte contre le harcèlement, les discriminations et les violences sexuelles au sein des établissements de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'enseignement de promotion sociale en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles »</p> <p><a href="http://www.enseignement.be/upload/circulaires/000000000004/FWB%20-%20Circulaire%209037%20(9292_20230918_141411).pdf">http://www.enseignement.be/upload/circulaires/000000000004/FWB%20-%20Circulaire%209037%20(9292_20230918_141411).pdf</a></p>	<p>This circular aims to update circular 8256 issued in September 2021 (see below), especially in light of the modifications made to the Penal Code. The goal is to equip institutions, particularly the 'contact points' identified in the fight against harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence.</p> <p>It also specifies the roles of each party and reminds of external specialized support and assistance services that can support institutions and ensure proper care. It outlines three responsibilities to higher education institutions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information: Informing victims (and perpetrators) about existing legislation and support services</li> <li>2. Prevention and awareness</li> <li>3. Provide training to students and staff</li> </ol>	

<p>Decree containing various provisions relating to Higher Education, Continuing Education, and University Hospitals, 25/05/2023</p> <p>“Décret portant diverses dispositions en matière d’Enseignement supérieur, d’Enseignement de Promotion sociale et d’Hôpitaux universitaires”</p> <p><a href="https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/51604_000.pdf">https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/51604_000.pdf</a></p>	<p>This decree ensures funding for a gender contact person from each university, university colleges, higher arts school, and the F.R.S.-FNRS. The gender contact person is responsible for gender-related questions and has three missions: informing, raising awareness, and networking.</p>	<p>Publication of an annual “gender report” by each French speaking university and “F.R.S.-FNRS report” giving statistics on gender balance</p>
<p>Circulaire 8256 of 01/09/2021 Prevention and Combatting Harassment and Sexual Violence Within Higher Education and Adult Education Institutions</p> <p>Circulaire 8256 du 13/09/2021 « Prévention et lutte contre le harcèlement et les Violences sexuelles au sein des établissements D’enseignement supérieur et de promotion sociale »</p> <p><a href="http://enseignement.be/upload/circulaires/00000000003/FWB%20-%20Circulaire%208256%20(8511_20210913_104_107).pdf">http://enseignement.be/upload/circulaires/00000000003/FWB%20-%20Circulaire%208256%20(8511_20210913_104_107).pdf</a></p>	<p>This circular outlines the missions of institutions and organizing authorities, as well as the legal framework regarding the fight against harassment, violence, and discrimination. It also introduces the support services available to victims and perpetrators in the French Community of Belgium.</p>	
<p>Decree on the reinforcement of the feminization of job titles, functions, grades, or titles and on good non-discriminatory practices regarding gender in the context of official or formal communications 2021</p> <p>“Décret relatif au renforcement de la féminisation des noms de métier, fonction, grade ou titre et aux bonnes pratiques</p>	<p>This decree ensures that acts and communications (both oral and written) of job titles, functions, grades, or titles are formulated in the feminine when referring to a woman or a group composed of women.</p>	



<p>non discriminatoires quant au genre dans le cadre des communications officielles ou formelles" 2021</p> <p><a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/49998_000.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/49998_000.pdf</a></p>		
<p>Decree of 3 May 2019 on various measures related to higher education and research</p> <p>« Décret du 3 mai 2019 portant diverses mesures relatives à l'Enseignement supérieur et à la Recherche »</p> <p><a href="http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=fr&amp;caller=summary&amp;pub_date=19-08-02&amp;numac=2019030780">http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=fr&amp;caller=summary&amp;pub_date=19-08-02&amp;numac=2019030780</a></p>	<p>This decree grants an annual subsidy of 200,000 euros to ARES to cover all or part of inclusive education projects within higher education institutions. The projects are validated by the Commission for Inclusive Higher Education.</p>	
<p>Decree of 3 May 2019 on various measures related to higher education and research.</p> <p>« Décret du 3 mai 2019 portant diverses mesures relatives à l'Enseignement supérieur et à la Recherche »</p> <p><a href="http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=fr&amp;caller=summary&amp;pub_date=19-08-02&amp;numac=2019030780">http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=fr&amp;caller=summary&amp;pub_date=19-08-02&amp;numac=2019030780</a></p>	<p>This decree ensures continued annual funding to F.R.S.-FNRS to cover all or part of the expenses related to the activities of the "Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers". The Observatory is responsible for developing knowledge related to the doctoral and postdoctoral journey. It formulates recommendations, including those aimed at facilitating the professional integration of Ph.D. holders and optimizing the doctoral process to align with the expectations of researchers and society. Particular attention is given to various obstacles related to scientific careers: issues of <b>gender stereotypes and discrimination</b>, constraints associated with international mobility requirements, the impact of early-career publishing pressure, etc.</p> <p><b>Measurable targets:</b> The results of surveys and analyses are systematically published on the dedicated website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys conducted on the job transition of doctorate holders (2019 and 2022)</li> <li>• Publications of reports<sup>80</sup></li> <li>• Publications of online articles</li> <li>• Presentations and webinars</li> <li>• Participation to scientific conferences</li> <li>• Creation of annual activity reports</li> </ul>

<sup>80</sup> All publications of the Observatory can be found on this page: <http://www.observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/publications.html>

<p>Decree of 3 May 2019 on combating violence against women</p> <p>“Décret relatif à la lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes”</p> <p><a href="https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/47201_003.pdf">https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/47201_003.pdf</a></p>	<p>This decree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges at least five groups of associations related to the fight against violence against women referred to as "Collectives.</li> <li>• Ensures that preventive actions in the fight against sexism, domestic violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and honor-related violence are all addressed.</li> <li>• Ensures funding for the financing of collectives projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An external evaluation of the implementation of this decree</li> <li>• An evaluation report</li> </ul>
<p>Order of the Government of the French Community granting a subsidy to F.R.S.-FNRS for the creation of the Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers imputed on the 2018 budget</p> <p>« Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française octroyant une subvention au F.R.S.-FNRS pour la création d'un Observatoire de la Recherche et des Carrières Scientifiques imputée sur le budget de l'année 2018 »</p>	<p>This order ensured the creation of an Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers. This structure aims to track and analyse the careers of researchers through surveys and data cross-referencing, develop knowledge on the doctoral and postdoctoral process and make recommendations to facilitate the professional transition of doctorate holders and optimise the doctoral process in order to meet the expectations of researchers and society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys conducted on the job transition of doctorate holders (2019 and 2022)</li> <li>• Publications of reports</li> <li>• Publications of online articles</li> <li>• Presentations and webinars</li> <li>• Participation to scientific conferences</li> <li>• Creation of annual activity reports</li> </ul>
<p>Decree of 10 March 2016 establishing the Committee on Women in Science</p> <p>« Décret du 10 mars 2016 instituant le Comité Femmes et Sciences »</p> <p><a href="https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42601_002.pdf">https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42601_002.pdf</a></p>	<p>This decree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishes the “Committee on Women in Science<sup>81</sup>” to promote and improve the participation of women in scientific and academic careers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of Committee on Women in Science</li> <li>• Research awards for researchers working on gender issues<sup>82</sup></li> <li>• Recommendations to improve the participation of women in science<sup>83</sup></li> <li>•</li> </ul>

<sup>81</sup> [Accueil | Blog du Comité Femmes & Sciences \(femmes-sciences.be\)](#)

<sup>82</sup> [Prix CF&S 2022 - Master de spécialisation en études de genre | Blog du Comité Femmes & Sciences \(femmes-sciences.be\)](#)

<sup>83</sup> [Avis | Blog du Comité Femmes & Sciences \(femmes-sciences.be\)](#)

<p>Decree on the integration of gender dimension into all policies of the French Community" 2016</p> <p>« Décret relatif à l'intégration de la dimension de genre dans l'ensemble des politiques de la Communauté française » 2016</p> <p><a href="https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42131_003.pdf">https://gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42131_003.pdf</a></p>	<p>This decree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes the adoption a "Women's Rights" plan aimed at respecting, protecting, and realizing the rights of women to achieve full equality between men and women in the policies of the French Community.</li> <li>• ensures the integration of the gender dimension into administrative contracts as well as into any other strategic and operational planning instrument of government services, public interest organizations, and autonomous public enterprises.</li> <li>• Ensures the Integration of the gender dimension into the budgetary process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a "monitoring committee" to ensure the implementation of the strategic objectives and measures of this decree, and evaluate their implementation.</li> <li>• Preparation of an interim evaluation report and a final evaluation report.</li> </ul>
<p>Decree aimed at promoting balanced representation of men and women in advisory bodies 2014</p> <p>« Décret visant à promouvoir une représentation équilibrée des hommes et des femmes dans les organes consultatifs » 2014</p> <p><a href="https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/40248_000.pdf">https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/40248_000.pdf</a></p>	<p>This decree aims to have a balanced gender representation in advisory bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-thirds maximum of the members of an advisory body may be of the same sex.</li> <li>• Each body responsible for presenting candidacies shall present, for each mandate, the candidacy of at least one man and one woman.</li> </ul>	
<p>Circular n°4840 on the recognition of the seniority of researchers</p> <p>« Circulaire n°4840 du 20/05/2014 sur la reconnaissance de l'ancienneté des chercheurs »</p> <p><a href="http://www.recherchescientifique.be/index.php?elD=ix_nawsecuredl&amp;u=0&amp;g=0&amp;hash=fd05af36b6e2509e407a8b73323d543fa91962ae&amp;f">http://www.recherchescientifique.be/index.php?elD=ix_nawsecuredl&amp;u=0&amp;g=0&amp;hash=fd05af36b6e2509e407a8b73323d543fa91962ae&amp;f</a></p>	<p>Following the European Charter for Researchers, the European Code of Conduct, this circular encourages employers of researchers to recognize all types of mobility and research experience in the private sector as seniority.</p>	

<a href="#">ile=fileadmin/sites/sirs/upload/sirs_super_editor/sirs_editor/documents/Circulaire/Circulaire_sur_la_reconnaissance_de_l_anciennete.pdf</a>		
<p>Decree relative to inclusive higher education 2014</p> <p>« Décret relatif à l'enseignement supérieur inclusif » 2014</p> <p><a href="https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/39922_000.pdf">https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/39922_000.pdf</a></p>	<p>This decree aims to promote the development of inclusive education in higher education institutions. It seeks to facilitate the implementation of measures and resources to meet the needs of benefiting students by providing material, social, cultural, methodological, and pedagogical adjustments to address the difficulties they may encounter in their student life and in their socio-professional integration efforts during and after their course of study:</p>	



## F. POLICY CONCERNS, GAPS, AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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### ► Lack of data

The current overview of available data highlights significant gaps concerning EDI within the research system and its workforce in the French Community of Belgium. Data disaggregation beyond gender, age (biological and academic), and nationality is limited, with scant information on key factors such as ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, religious beliefs, and linguistic diversity among researchers. There is a pressing need for valid, reliable, and comparable data on EDI.

### ► Lack of studies

Notably absent are systematic survey data across universities capturing the experiences of researchers from diverse backgrounds, including instances of discrimination, racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of bias. The Minister of Higher Education in the French Community launched the BEHAVES survey (Well-being, Harassment, and Violence in Higher Education) conducted among students and staff members of all higher education institutions in the French Community of Belgium. This study is currently in progress<sup>84</sup>. The results of this study can provide crucial evidence, rendering discrimination more visible, informing policy actions aimed at promoting EDI within research systems, and bolstering advocacy and awareness-raising efforts.

### ► Lack of coherent and systematic EDI policy or a diversity plan

In recent years, significant improvements have been made in advancing gender equality within the French community. All universities and the FNRS have implemented coherent and systematic approaches to foster gender equality, including strategic plans, comprehensive gender reports, dedicated working groups, and designated gender contact personnel.

While many institutions acknowledge the importance of diversity in their strategic plans, only two universities have developed a diversity plan that extends beyond addressing gender disparities. The diversity plan of ULB covers 25 actions in four domains: selection and recruitment (e.g., combatting discrimination in selection and promotion committees), staff management (e.g., improving the inclusion of people with disabilities), internal communication (e.g., drafting and disseminating articles on various diversity topics such as parental leave), and external affairs (e.g., management of the university's colonial heritage). The diversity and gender equality plan of UMONS<sup>85</sup> covers 21 actions with four main objectives: pursuit and development of awareness-raising actions, removal of obstacles to recruitment, retention, and career progression, reduction of gender imbalance and improvement of the attractiveness of scientific careers, consideration of the gender dimension in education and research where justified.

It is important for all institutions to clearly outline their EDI objectives and develop interventions that address EDI challenges beyond those related to gender. These objectives should encompass strategies aimed at reaching a more diverse pool of research talents for potential vacancies, actively removing barriers hindering recruitment, ensuring equitable access to funding for all, fostering fair promotion and career advancement opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, and proactively addressing challenges in retaining and advancing diverse researchers. This commitment is vital for fostering inclusive participation within the research ecosystem.



## G. INFORMATION ON INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL INITIATIVES AND PRACTICES

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This section highlights a selection of key institutional initiatives and practices in Wallonia-Brussels Federation. While a comprehensive list can be found in the appendix I, here we will focus on three notable initiatives in four different institutions.

### ► The “Cascade” measure at ULB<sup>84,87</sup>

Implemented initially in the academic year 2016-2017, this initiative addresses gender inequality in career progression to combat the phenomenon known as the “leaky pipeline<sup>88</sup>”. Its primary goal is to counter the erosion of gender balance at the highest levels of academic careers by encouraging women to pursue promotions. For instance, if women constitute 33% of the workforce at the N-1 level (e.g., professor) throughout the university, there must be a minimum representation of 33% women among those promoted to level N (e.g., full professor). This initiative specifically applies to promotions for the titles of professor (Grade B) and full professor (Grade A). After scrutinizing the eligibility conditions for promotion requests, the “*Service du Personnel Enseignant et Scientifique*” (Teaching and Scientific Personnel Service within the Human Resources Department) submits reports and rankings, prepared by scientific commissions at the departmental level, to the Rector. The Rector, in collaboration with the Vice-Rector responsible for academic careers, gender, and diversity, along with any other advisors they consider appropriate, selects candidates proposed for promotion. The Rector aims to ensure that the distribution of women and men among those promoted is at least equal to the same proportion at the preceding level of the career.

### ► Ongoing monitoring of eventual bias at F.R.S.-FNRS from an intersectional lens

Detailed analyses, encompassing both descriptive and inferential statistics, are conducted for each funding cycle and the submission, evaluation, and selection process is monitored for bias. If any bias is identified, F.R.S.-FNRS enacts amendments to address this bias and make the process more inclusive.

In a comprehensive report published by FNRS entitled “Study from a gender perspective on the international mobility of doctorate holders<sup>89</sup>” it has been observed that having children, especially for women at the beginning of their careers, is an obstacle for international mobility. The Board of Directors of F.R.S.-FNRS has decided to act based on these observations:

1. **Change of eligibility criteria for parents.** The Board of Trustees of F.R.S.-FNRS enacted a regulatory amendment to change the eligibility criteria for parents.<sup>90</sup> Previously, individuals wishing to apply to F.R.S.-FNRS were required to adhere to a maximum time frame between obtaining their PhD or MA degree and the submission of their application. This time frame could be extended by one year per childbirth and/or adoption, provided that these events occurred **after** the date of obtaining their degree. In 2020, the Board of Directors of F.R.S.-FNRS has decided to remove this condition: female researchers who are parents (and male researchers, uniquely in the context of adoption) can now benefit from this extension, regardless of when the childbirth or adoption occurred in their

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<sup>84</sup> At the time of finalizing this country note, the BEHAVES study was still underway. The study has now been published and can be accessed at the following link: <http://enseignement.be/index.php?page=28575&navi=4877#%C3%A9tude>

<sup>85</sup> <https://web.umons.ac.be/app/uploads/2022/03/CA120-plan-genre-et-diversite-signed.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.ulb.be/en/diversity/gender-equality>

<sup>87</sup> [https://www.ulb.be/medias/fichier/genre-questions-reponses\\_1540372643696-pdf](https://www.ulb.be/medias/fichier/genre-questions-reponses_1540372643696-pdf)

<sup>88</sup> Refers to the erosion of gender balance as individuals progress in their academic careers.

<sup>89</sup> [Égalité des chances entre femmes et hommes au regard des expériences de mobilité et de leur valorisation \(frs-fnrs.be\)](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/l-actualite-fnrs/1376-modification-reglementaire-concernant-la-prise-en-compte-d-egalite-des-chances-entre-femmes-et-hommes-au-regard-des-experiences-de-mobilite-et-de-leur-valorisation)

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/l-actualite-fnrs/1376-modification-reglementaire-concernant-la-prise-en-compte-d-accouchement-s-et-ou-adoption-s-dans-le-cadre-de-l-eligibilite>



careers. This measure aims to make the selection process more inclusive for mothers wishing to pursue their careers in research.

2. **Change of definition of mobility.** Given the significance of international mobility as a key criterion in evaluations, it was proposed to change the definition of mobility in the evaluation guides. The aim was to explicitly emphasize that mobility, outside the home institution, even if it occurs within the same country, is considered valuable. This adjustment was intended to provide encouragement to female candidates and young researchers. Based on this study, the Board of Directors of F.R.S.-FNRS on June 20, 2023, approved modifications to the guides and forms of F.R.S.-FNRS. Mobility which was previously defined as "long-term stay abroad" is now replaced with "long-term stay outside the original institution, whether it be outside institutions of the French Community or within another institution of the French Community." This measure is also important for researchers who have a refugee status who cannot leave the country for international mobility for legal reasons.
3. **A mobility allowance specific for parents.** As it is stated in the strategic plan of the FNRS for 2023-2028<sup>91</sup>, the Fund is considering implementing an additional financial support to postdoctoral researchers in mobility in the form of a "family mobility allowance". This is intended to strengthen equality of opportunities for researchers who are parents.

## ➤ Parenting support

All universities have a daycare center where all staff members, including doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, have access to a subsidized childcare catering to children aged 3 months to 3 years.

- **UNamur**

Specifically, UNamur has implemented various initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall well-being of its staff who are parents in the workplace.

- After-school center: For children aged between 30 months and 10 years, an after-school center is available during non-school hours and holidays.
- Home-based care for sick children. This service was established to ensure the well-being of sick children who cannot attend a childcare facility or school due to their health, and whose parents are occupied with professional commitments. A pediatric nurse is dispatched to the child's home to oversee their condition, provide meals, offer necessary care, and administer prescribed medications.
- Guide to parenthood at UNamur<sup>92</sup>. In 2017, the Vice-Rectorate for Gender Policies at UNamur published a comprehensive guide specifically designed for staff members transitioning into parenthood. This guide is a valuable resource that outlines essential information about legal rights in Belgium, including details about maternity leave, parental leave, child allocations, birth allocations, and breastfeeding rights. In addition to addressing legal aspects, the guide offers practical insights into childcare services. Furthermore, it provides essential references for services that can provide essential information such as housing, social or administrative issues to welcome researchers and their families.
- **"Future Mom" and "Young Parents" student status at UMons<sup>93</sup>**

Some university students are parents or become parents during their studies. These students may need greater flexibility to effectively manage their obligations. The "Future Mom" student status is specifically for students who become parents during their studies. And

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<sup>91</sup> <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/Phare100/FNRS-PHARE-100.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.unamur.be/genre/ressources/parentalite/view>

<sup>93</sup> <https://web.umons.ac.be/app/uploads/2022/06/Reglement-etudiants-future-maman-ou-jeune-parent.pdf>





“Young Parents” student status is for parents responsible for children under six years old. Students granted these statuses at UMons can benefit from workload reductions and may be partially exempted from attending learning activities. During evaluation periods, they can request changes to evaluation dates, and ask personal assignment deadlines to be postponed.

### ➤ Other noteworthy initiatives currently underway

- Collaboration between UMons and Unia. UMons has already collaborated with Unia, on a comprehensive package aimed at raising awareness about discrimination. This initiative includes a 1.5 to 3-hour course module designed for both students and faculty. Additionally, UMons is currently developing with Unia an awareness tool to address implicit biases during recruitment, specifically targeting staff members responsible for recruitment such as deans, jury members, presidents of the recruitment committees etc.
- UCLouvain. UCLouvain is currently developing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion plan that addresses several key priorities, including strategies to address bias in selection committees and enhance the inclusion of researchers with disabilities. Furthermore, an EDI council will be established to take charge of the development of the EDI plan and oversee its implementation. To improve these efforts, a full-time position will be created. Significant progress is expected in the coming months as these initiatives unfold.
- ULiège. The Gender and Equality Council (CGE) at ULiège established in 2022, operates with a unique participatory approach and is open to all university members. The CGE created an action plan<sup>94</sup>, which includes actions in five areas: work-life balance, diversity in leadership roles, equality in recruitment and careers, integration of gender and intersectional perspectives in teaching and research, and actions against gender-based or sexual preference violence. This plan aims to build an ambitious institutional gender policy.

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<sup>94</sup> <https://www.uliege.be/books/position-du-conseil-genre-et-egalite-2023/>



## H. APPENDIX 1: OECD Country note template

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### OECD GSF project on “Research systems and the future research workforce: promoting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)”

#### National context

- Brief description of the national context with a bearing on the research system and the research workforce in general and from an EDI perspective [NB for most countries this can be informed by the country notes from recent previous work on precarity and career-paths and there is no need to repeat information]
  - Definition of EDI and their use in public policy and public debate, EDI concepts and metrics in national STI strategies, policy audits, research priority setting, expert panels and advisory committees, public recognition and awards. Include any relevant information on intersectional approaches.
  - Budgetary priorities and pressures in the research system
  - Doctoral education framework and research workforce career model/s (academia, public research organisations, private sector)
  - Research funding model, research priority setting, and research assessment
- Synthesis of reports that inform/guide science policy on EDI in the research system and future research workforce, in terms of:
  - Challenges, progress, and areas for improvement
  - Data collection efforts and new evidence
  - Policy recommendations

#### National policy priorities and policy concerns

- List of national policy priorities for promoting EDI in the research system and research workforce.
- Summary of policy concerns or gaps and areas for improvement.

#### Available national and international evidence

- Brief synthesis of scholarly papers and policy analysis studies that review EDI in the research system and/or future research workforce in your country or are transnational in nature [Please provide references.]
- Evidence of EDI progress and existing gaps in the research workforce, e.g. at the level of disciplines, sub-disciplines, the higher education sector and its sub-sectors, public research organisations, private sector R&D.
- Evidence of EDI progress and existing gaps in research assessment, availability and allocation of research funding.
- Evidence of private investment, e.g. from philanthropies or Foundations, to promote EDI in research.

#### Statistical data collection

Brief description of current and planned data collection efforts on EDI in the research system and research workforce. For example, demographic/intersectional data on researchers in academia, public research organisations, private sector; research funding for individuals, research topics, and institutions. What are challenges in data collection, and what data is missing?

Description of any additional data resources, eg administrative data, that can be used to explore EDI issues in the research workforce.



### **Information on public policy initiatives**

Brief description of past, current and planned public policies to promote EDI in the research system and the future research workforce. [N.B. If these policies are already included in STIP Compass then simply cross-reference and provide any complementary information as appropriate]

- Purpose and objective/s
- Measurable targets
- Implementation: policy levers used (e.g. regulatory, funding, informational, and organisational policy levers to involve relevant stakeholders)
- Outcomes and impact
- Factors that have been found to enable (incentives) or hinder (barriers) the effectiveness of the described public policy

### **Information on institutional-level initiatives and practices**

Briefly describe three institutional-level practices currently implemented in a higher education institution or public research organisation that are recognised for promoting EDI in the research system and/or research workforce in your country.

These might have a focus on: research/institutional culture (covering doctoral education); EDI in research topics; EDI in research careers from an intersectional lens.

Please provide for each a brief description of the main aspects that would be worth analysing. Where appropriate, the OECD Secretariat may follow up with online interviews with people responsible for the practice.

### **Suggestions for interviews with science leaders from an underrepresented background**

Please propose to names of science leaders from an underrepresented background and briefly explain the main topics / perspectives that could be worth covering in an interview. Where appropriate, the OECD Secretariat may follow up with online interviews.

Note: Please re-use the information provided for previous GSF projects and for the STIP Compass, where relevant. Provide references, and URLs for online publications, if available.



## I. APPENDIX 2. Initiatives implemented by the F.R.S.-FNRS and universities for EDI in the research system and/or future research workforce.

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In line with the European Research Area policy agenda<sup>95</sup> In recent years, multiple initiatives have been implemented in Belgium to take into consideration EDI in the research workforce. Below I list some of these initiatives implemented first by FNRS and then by universities of the French Community.

### ➤ Initiatives by F.R.S.-FNRS

#### ➤ Gender equality

- F.R.S.-FNRS conducts systematic **monitoring of gender data**, examining submission and success rates for both women and men across research domains and funding instruments after each call for proposals. This ongoing monitoring ensures a thorough check for gender bias in the selection process. Detailed analyses, encompassing both descriptive and inferential statistics, are conducted for each funding cycle.
- Additionally, the Fund publishes an annual **Gender Equality Report**<sup>96</sup> online, providing a comprehensive overview of the success rates of male and female applicants, along with the proportion of female applicants. Notably, consistent efforts have been made to identify and address any variations in success rates between genders, with the overall goal of promoting fairness and equality in the funding process.
- A **Gender Equality Plan**<sup>97</sup> with actions to be implemented targeting gender balance in leadership and decision-making, gender equality in recruitment and career progression and work-life balance and organizational culture has been approved by the F.R.S.-FNRS's Board of Trustees in April 2022. Among other measures, it is planned to elaborate a guide on preventing unconscious biases (including gender biases) targeting scientific panels.
- A "gender contact person" has been appointed at F.R.S.-FNRS for all actions pertaining to gender issues.
- F.R.S.-FNRS actively participates to the Belgian national group Women and Sciences and publishes a yearly report on the topic. It also takes part in other projects at the European level, such as Gender-Net-Plus, Academia-Net, and GENDERACTIONplus.
- F.R.S.-FNRS additionally signed the charter of inclusive panels<sup>98</sup> to strive to have more diverse panels in terms of gender, origin, language, age etc.
- The F.R.S.-FNRS has added gender studies to its research descriptors.

#### ➤ Non-discrimination policy

The selection procedure at F.R.S.-FNRS is based on the sole criterion of scientific excellence irrespective of the nationality, gender, sexual or political orientation of the researchers.

- Application forms for F.R.S.-FNRS research positions contain a section dedicated to career breaks allowing the applicants to document any career break longer than 2 months (occurring over the last 5 years).

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<sup>95</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec\\_rtd\\_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec_rtd_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> [https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS\\_Rapport\\_etat\\_egalite\\_genre\\_2021.pdf](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/FRS-FNRS_Rapport_etat_egalite_genre_2021.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> [Premier Plan d'égalité de genre du FNRS \(2022-2025\) \(frs-fnrs.be\)](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/premier-plan-d-egalite-de-genre-du-fnrs-2022-2025)

<sup>98</sup> [Why are diverse panels so important? | Why are diverse panels so important? \(inclusivepanels.be\)](https://www.inclusivepanels.be/why-are-diverse-panels-so-important/)



- To avoid any discrimination based on age, for the three main fellowships (research fellow, postdoctoral researcher, and research associate), the eligibility criteria are based on the number of years following the graduation and giving access to the funding instrument (and not on the age of the applicant).
- During maternity, paternity or adoption leave, the research fellow receives a replacement income paid by the mutual insurance company as from the time set by the law regarding sickness and invalidity insurance. In that case, the payment of the remuneration is immediately suspended. The Fund gives the research fellow in the situation mentioned above an extra payment to the indemnity provided by the mutual insurance company to compensate for the loss of income.
- The eligibility period to F.R.S.-FNRS instruments is extended by one year per child (giving birth or adoption) for all applicants.
- The fellowships interrupted due to maternity, paternity or adoption leave can be extended for a duration equivalent to the duration of the interruption.
- At all career stages, equal pay is ensured between men and women (at the same function and seniority) through fixed pay scales.

### ➤ **Diversity and inclusion**

One of the rare reports in the French Community that explicitly mentions "equity, diversity and inclusion" is the strategic plan of FNRS for 2023-2028<sup>99</sup>. In this report "enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion to enrich research" is explicitly stated as an objective and it is acknowledged that the issues of equal opportunity go beyond gender equality.

### ➤ **Recruitment procedure**

F.R.S.-FNRS recruitment procedures are designed to meet the Charter and the Code requirements. Positions are open to researchers of any nationality, gender, age, etc. The evaluation is transparent:

- All documents pertaining to F.R.S.-FNRS calls are available online (regulation, application forms, application guidelines, evaluators guidelines, composition of the scientific commissions, ...) in French and English.
- F.R.S.-FNRS call regulations present all the necessary requirements for the available positions as well as the eligibility criteria for applying and the evaluation criteria for the assessment.
- F.R.S.-FNRS provides the researchers with information regarding the type of contract attached to the available positions. It also presents the benefits attached to the positions as well as the rights and duties of the researchers towards the F.R.S.- FNRS.

### ➤ **Evaluation procedure:**

- The FNRS signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), committing to make a responsible use of metrics (impact factor, h-index, number of citations, ...) as well as a more qualitative evaluation of applications.
- Most calls for proposals are based on a bottom-up approach: researchers are invited to submit their research proposal with no imposed thematic orientation.
- The evaluation of applications submitted to F.R.S.-FNRS considers various set of parameters concerning the researcher, the research project, and the research environment. The weighting of these parameters depends on the level of the position applied to. For the higher positions, another set of parameters is taken into account concerning the international recognition of the researcher.

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<sup>99</sup> <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/Phare100/FNRS-PHARE-100.pdf>



- The bibliometric outputs are not only assessed quantitatively but also qualitatively as a section is available in the application forms where the applicants can describe their publication strategy. In addition, this information is not obligatory if considered not pertinent by the applicant. Scientific Commission members prior to their meetings are reminded that they should critically assess the applicant's outputs proportionally to their seniority.
- At the end of the procedure, full written feedback (anonymous remote experts reports and scientific commissions report) is given to all applicants.
- A special attention is given to the gender balance of experts and scientific commissions:

**First step (Remote evaluations).** As of 2023, this step is predominantly carried out by male experts, with only 28.3% being female. While the Fund does not endorse a quota-based approach, recognizing the limited representation of female researchers in academic staff, ongoing proactive measures aim to enhance the proportion of female evaluators. There has been a gradual increase in evaluations conducted by female experts over the years, rising from 21.8% in 2012 to 28.3% in 2023.

**Second step (Evaluations by scientific commissions).** Similar proactive efforts were undertaken by members of the scientific commissions and these initiatives have yielded positive results. In 2023, over 50% of members in international scientific commissions and over 60% of commission presidents were female. At the beginning of every scientific commission meeting, a dedicated slide is presented to members, focusing on gender-related considerations. This slide underscores the significance of gender equality and addresses the potential presence of unconscious gender bias within the panels.

In addition to gender diversity, geographical and institutional diversity as well as a diversity in professional experience (senior and junior permanent researchers) is considered in the selection of evaluators and commissions.

### ➤ **Research careers**

To provide researchers with the best possible professional experiences F.R.S.-FNRS has implemented various measures. Doctoral researchers who have F.R.S.-FNRS fellowships have the right to do administrative work or tasks related to didactic supervision up to eight hours per week annually<sup>100</sup>. In addition, postdoctoral researchers have the possibility to interrupt their F.R.S.-FNRS fellowship and use their 3-year fellowship over a period of 6 years, if an external postdoctoral funding is obtained to do research outside the French Community of Belgium<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> [https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/Reglement-et-documents/FRS-FNRS\\_REGL ASP\\_EN.pdf](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/Reglement-et-documents/FRS-FNRS_REGL ASP_EN.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> [https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/Reglement-et-documents/FRS-FNRS\\_REGL CR\\_EN.pdf](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/Reglement-et-documents/FRS-FNRS_REGL CR_EN.pdf)



## ► Initiatives by French-speaking universities

All French-speaking universities in Belgium have taken a series of initiatives to tackle EDI in institutions.

- **Action plans**<sup>102</sup>. Although the scope changes from one university to another, all universities developed in recent years systematic plans that establish priorities and objectives and lists measures to be implemented to improve gender equality and/or diversity within institutions (e.g., Diversity plan<sup>103</sup> for Université libre de Bruxelles, gender equality plan for Université catholique de Louvain<sup>104</sup>, or diversity and gender equality plan for Université de Mons<sup>105</sup>)
- **Data**: Universities routinely release a gender report detailing the status of gender equality within their organization. This report aims to evaluate the distribution of gender among students and staff, pinpoint specific areas needing improvement, and document the various initiatives implemented to foster gender equality within the institution.
- **Designated personnel**. Universities have designated specific staff members as points of contact for matters related to EDI. All universities have a **gender contact person** who is responsible for gender-related questions and has three main missions: information, raising awareness, and networking. These individuals contribute to the implementation and development of gender policy within the institutions. Universities have also created various positions such as "rector's advisors for Gender, Equality and Inclusion policy<sup>106</sup>" or "equal opportunities advisor<sup>107</sup>" to advise and formulate recommendations on all questions related to the equality and inclusion policies of the universities. UMon has an "equal opportunities group" who work on various concrete actions to move things forward.
- **Studies**. The interuniversity master's degree on "gender studies" that started in 2017 was a common action of all French-speaking universities to increase knowledge and expertise within the French Community of Belgium.
- **Combating harassment**. All universities started initiatives to combat all forms of harassment among students as well as staff members. Universities provide information for victims and perpetrators regarding existing legislation, provide psychological support for victims, and train staff members. Below are some examples of university-lead initiatives:
  - 100% Respect: Any student or staff member experiencing harassment can initiate the "100% respect" procedure at UMon. This multi-step process may

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<sup>102</sup> UCLouvain : « Plan de l'égalité de genre »

[https://cdn.uclouvain.be/groups/cms-editors-arh/drupal9/genre/20231220\\_PlanEgaliteGenreUCLouvain.pdf](https://cdn.uclouvain.be/groups/cms-editors-arh/drupal9/genre/20231220_PlanEgaliteGenreUCLouvain.pdf)

ULB : « Gender Equality Plan »

<https://www.ulb.be/fr/egalite-des-genres/gender-equality-plan>

ULiège : « Propositions pour un plan d'action pour l'égalité de genre à l'Université de Liège »

<https://www.uliege.be/upload/docs/application/pdf/2022-03/propositions-plan-action-egalite-genre.pdf>

UMons : « 21 mesures pour une université plus ouverte à la diversité et à l'égalité de genre »

<https://web.umons.ac.be/app/uploads/2022/03/CA120-plan-genre-et-diversite-signed.pdf>

UNamur : « Plan d'action en matière de politique de genre à l'UNamur »

<https://www.unamur.be/genre/gender-equality-plan/21-22/view>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.ulb.be/fr/egalite-des-genres/plan-diversite-ulb>

<sup>104</sup> <https://uclouvain.be/fr/decouvrir/egalite/gep.html>

<sup>105</sup> <https://web.umons.ac.be/app/uploads/2022/03/CA120-plan-genre-et-diversite-valide-EN-signed.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> <https://uclouvain.be/en/discover/equality/contact-us.html>

<sup>107</sup> <https://web.umons.ac.be/en/university/university-governance/university-management-team/>





- result in disciplinary action for the person committing the act of bullying or harassment if the act is repeated.
- Cash-e<sup>108</sup>. Created in 2020 at ULB, the Centre for assistance and support with student harassment issues (Cash-e) at ULB is a centre that supports students dealing with emotional or sexual abuse during their studies.
  - Phare<sup>109</sup>: PHARE is a service for students and doctoral candidates to combat moral, physical, or sexual harassment and to provide support to victims and witnesses at UNamur.
  - Respect Programme<sup>110</sup>: Initiated in 2022 by UCLouvain, this program seeks to improve current mechanisms and institute structural reforms to address harassment and gender-based violence. As part of this programme, university authorities asked an independent committee of experts to analyze existing mechanisms combating harassment and gender-based violence at the university and make recommendations. This comprehensive report was published in 2023<sup>111</sup>.
  - Respect Campaign<sup>112</sup>: Launched in 2019 by ULiège, this campaign aimed to fight against all forms of discrimination and harassment.
- **Refugees.** All French-speaking universities in Belgium have support structures to help students with refugee status. This support revolves around administrative assistance (equivalences and admission tests), support in acquiring proficiency in French, and, for some, English. They are also concerned about aid with registration processes, understanding the workings of the Belgian academic system, managing registration fees, and securing accommodation.
  - **Scholars at risk.** The SAR (Scholars at Risk) section in the French community was established in 2023, and currently comprises five members: ARES, CRef, ULB, UCLouvain, and ULiège<sup>113</sup>. As the coordinator of the section, ARES serves as the main point of contact with the SAR network, disseminates information from SAR to higher education institutions in its region, and organizes an annual event. In addition, ARES provides on its website a map of initiatives taken by higher education institutions in the French Community of Belgium<sup>114</sup>.
  - **Students with disabilities.** In line with the 2014 decree on inclusive higher education<sup>115</sup>, all universities aid students facing difficulties related to a sensory or motor disability, a health issue (including mental health), a learning disability (confirmed dyslexia, etc.), or an accident or surgery. Universities provide material, social, cultural, methodological, and educational adjustments to address the difficulties associated with their situation. These adjustments aim to support them in their student life and in their socio-professional integration efforts during and after their course of study. UMONS has developed a practical guide for faculty members to assist them in addressing practical issues related to students with disabilities<sup>116</sup>.
  - **Staff with disabilities.** ULB has established partnerships with external organizations to extend the reach of their job opportunities through platforms like Actiris and

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<sup>108</sup><https://www.ulb.be/fr/accompagnement-et-soutien-dans-les-risques-de-harcelement-cash-e/cash-e-centre-daccompagnement-et-de-soutien-dans-les-risques-de-harcelement-envers-les-etudiant%C2%B7es>

<sup>109</sup> <https://phare.unamur.be/>

<sup>110</sup> <https://uclouvain.be/fr/decouvrir/respect/programme-respect.html>

<sup>111</sup><https://cdn.uclouvain.be/groups/cms-editors-respect/Rapport-final-du-Comite-d-experts-vf.pdf?itok=D-YOHS7Y>

<sup>112</sup> [https://www.uliege.be/cms/c\\_15124733/fr/campagne-respect-contre-le-harcelement](https://www.uliege.be/cms/c_15124733/fr/campagne-respect-contre-le-harcelement)

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.ares-ac.be/en/relations-internationales/refugie-es-et-chercheur-es-en-danger/scholars-at-risk-en-fw#02-section-scholars-at-risk-en-f%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration-wallonie-bruxelles>

<sup>114</sup><https://www.ares-ac.be/en/relations-internationales/refugie-es-et-chercheur-es-en-danger/scholars-at-risk-en-fw>

<sup>115</sup> [https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/39922\\_000.pdf](https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/39922_000.pdf)

<sup>116</sup><https://web.umons.ac.be/app/uploads/2021/08/A4-Etudiants-en-situation-de-handicap-Petit-guide-pratique-a-lusage-des-enseignants.pdf>



Diversicom (a recruitment platform for individuals with disabilities), aiming to enhance the diversity of their applicant pool. Their job postings explicitly encourage applications from individuals with disabilities. Additionally, ULB has decided to adopt a systematic approach to share best practices among various departments responsible for creating accommodations, fostering a collaborative environment for inclusivity.

- **Sign language.** All universities provide sign languages classes that staff members can also attend.
- **University Chair for "les Amis des Aveugles"** at UMONS. In 2021, a chair that is exclusively dedicated to visual impairment has been established at UMONS. This program includes training intended for any professionals who can be in contact with visually impaired individuals in the course of their work as well as those working in the field of visual impairment. Within this program, three doctoral candidates are currently funded.
- **Transgender students.** Universities have established a procedure allowing any individual whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex to use their preferred name. They reissue a student card with the chosen name, an email address and their chosen name appears in the directories and registration lists. Many universities have also identified a contact person for transgender questions<sup>117</sup>. The Gender.S Reflection Group at UMONS organizes, among other activities, an annual scientific day dedicated to a theme related to issues of discrimination and implicit bias, particularly in support of the LGBTQIA+ community and conducts awareness-raising activities.

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<sup>117</sup> <https://web.umons.ac.be/fr/universite/universite-responsable/genre-et-diversite>