



PAARS PAPER

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2022 edition



“You close a chapter of your life

Bas (20) switched over to the girlscouts

#youthmovement #Scouts #coming-out #change

In the search for his identity Bas (20) switched to a girls' Scouts group. However, he'd been in the boys' group since he was seven: "With my girlfriends I can really be myself."

By Lisa Debeuckelaer

"I never had to come out myself," grins Bas. "I had both the advantage and the disadvantage that everyone around me knew it before I did. It was noticeable already pretty early on in my voice because it's not a typical low voice." Bas also liked stereotypical girls' things, which meant that he was pretty quickly put in the LGBT+ category by his environment. "I don't mind it much, because I wasn't bullied. It was a bit frustrating, though, because I was still unsure about it all myself, but the people around me weren't."

"I was relieved because I had the feeling that people had a better sense of who I am."

So, Bas didn't have to come out of the closet. When he expressed it himself, a weight fell from his shoulders. "It was nice to be open and to be able to talk about that part of your identity. I was relieved because I had the feeling that people had a better sense of who I am."

"I've always remained myself," Bas continues. "That's why it was not a big surprise to my family and friends. It was more like a kind of growth. I grew up together with the people around me, largely in the Scouts. The more I got to know them, the more I discovered myself. So, people around me knew it before I did, so if I did something that was different, my close friends were instantly aware of it. I was always open and explicit enough, which meant that there was little difference between the Bas before and after the coming out."

Bas found it more complicated to talk about his orientation in the Boy Scouts. The other boys had different interests than he did, not just in terms of women. "In my opinion, they had very stereotypical interests, such as football and rough games. I did get to know a bit about the hype around football, but I often couldn't contribute to the conversation about those subjects. As a result, it became an experiment for me to get in touch with interests that I normally would never come into contact with," Bas says. "I've always remained myself but in my own way. My fellow Scouts and I differed too greatly to enter into any real interaction about my personality."

"Eventually I switched to a girls' Scouts group. Many girls who were friends of mine were in the Scouts and they had the same interests as me," Bas smiles. "The boys' Scouts was

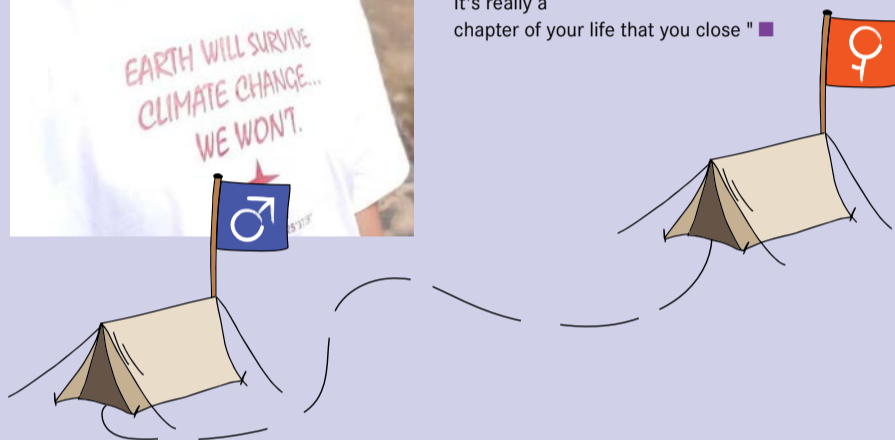


not bad at all, but I found more connection with the girls because I could more easily communicate with them. I felt that I could be more myself and that there were more common interests there. With the boys, there was too big a difference in terms of mentality. They were not really interested in listening to my gossip drama," he laughs.

"They were not interested in my gossip drama."

The choice was very difficult for Bas. After all, he'd spent a large part of his youth at the Boy Scouts. "I made a part of my history there. It's really a

chapter of your life that you close" ■



Need inspiration?

Coming out doesn't always have to be a serious affair. These five examples are proof. They might just inspire you.

#comingout #OutTheCloset #creative

Say it with a song

"It wasn't the first time that I came out to someone, so I wanted to try another approach. At the time, I was a big fan of the YouTuber Ally Hills. She had a video with a song about 'coming out'. I sent that to a friend of mine. It is much easier to let YouTube do the talking than to say it yourself." — Anonim (21)

Rainbowcloset

"I worried for so long about how I would come out of the closet that in the end, I started thinking very creatively about it. So one day, I just crawled into the kitchen closet, with a cooking pot in my hand (in Dutch 'pot' is a slang word for a lesbian). When Mama opened the closet, I exclaimed: 'Look Mama, now there are two pots in the closet!' In the closet!" — Vera (20)

It is what it is

"I find the entire concept of 'coming out of the closet' rather stupid. I just came home with my boyfriend and my parents simply had to accept that. If heteros don't have to come out, why should I?" — Seb (15)

Bi-party

"I was walking one night with my best friend Raiden in Bruges when he said, 'You know what? I'm bi'. I started laughing and said 'LOL, you're kidding me'. He asked if I had a problem with it or something and I answered: 'No, I'm also bi'. We just totally cracked up and started shouting out to all of Bruges: 'We're Biiiiii!' — Lowie (21)

Queer phone

"When I broke the screen of my cell phone, it started constantly flashing rainbow colours. 'Look, I've infected my phone with my queerness,' I said to my parents. That really made them laugh, but the bill for repairing my mobile phone wasn't quite so funny."

— Eimé (18)

"I'VE GOT THE EIGHT OF DIAMONDS, THREE OF CLUBS AND THE SILVER OF HEARTS. AND YOU?"

#GoldSilverBronze#Genderneutralcards



Indy Mellink: "Waarom laten we gender niet gewoon vallen?"

Indy Mellink created gender neutral playing cards to replace the King, Queen and Jack. During a game of cards she was about to explain to her nieces and nephews that the King is worth more than the Queen. That's when it hit her, in the ranking, why is the King above the Queen?

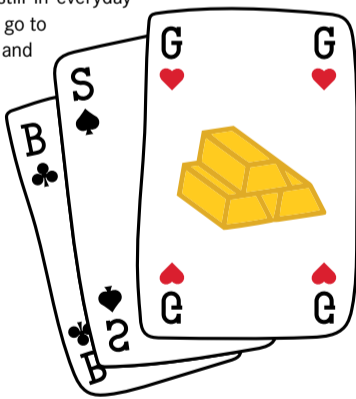
By Janne Genar

Bronze, silver, and gold were the alternatives that Indy found to make a gender-neutral deck of cards. It's a ranking that everyone already knows, so it's easy to adjust.

"I often think about gender neutrality, but sometimes I even have to correct myself, as well."

"Making the GSB playing cards is not my full-time job. I teach Legal Psychology at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. But I do hope that I will be able to introduce the playing cards in a lot of other countries!"

"I see a lot of inequality still in everyday things. For example, if you go to the airport or the bank and you have to register, there are always boxes with female, male, x or "I'd rather not say". Why don't they just make that an open question or simply leave out the gender?" ■



gender-neutrality

Since 2017, the Swedish church has regarded God as genderless. In other words, the forms of address "He" or "Lord" are no longer used.

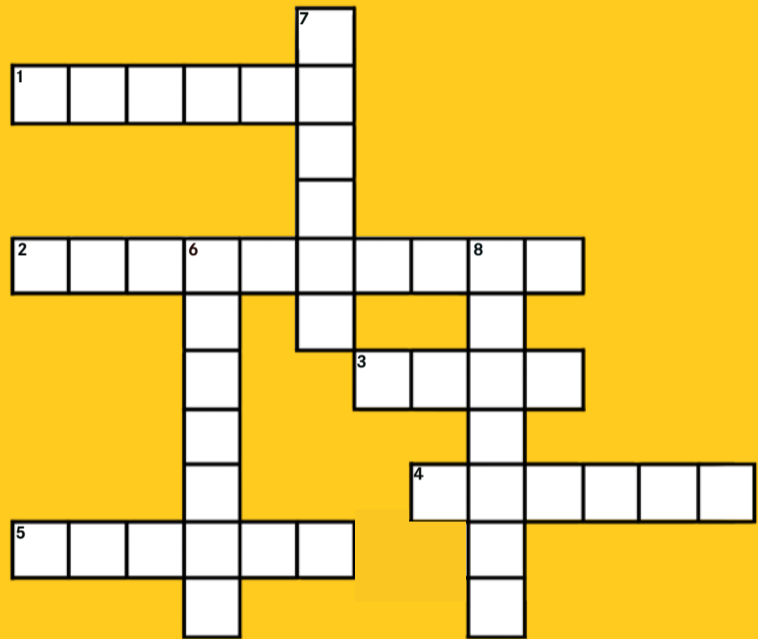
Gender-neutral language use

#BisexuWhat #PlayingWithWords #SelfLove

'Gender neutral language' means that a person, job or function is referred to without specifying a gender. That's important because our language does not take all genders into account and that can be experienced as discriminatory. By using gender-neutral language, you can solve this problem.

For example: instead of 'postman' or 'postwoman', it's better to say 'postal worker'. Can you find the gender-neutral alternatives for these words?

By Martha Van den Eede & Deniz Nalbantov



Horizontal

- 1. Husband/wife
- 2. Miss/Mr (teacher)
- 3. she/he
- 4. Latino/Latina
- 5. mother/father

Verticaal

- 6. policeman/policewoman: police_
- 7. waiter/waitress
- 8. to 'man' a machine



-B

THE



-D

+

-H



-F

THE



+



= All the colours of the rainbow

Sweet as a Rainbow

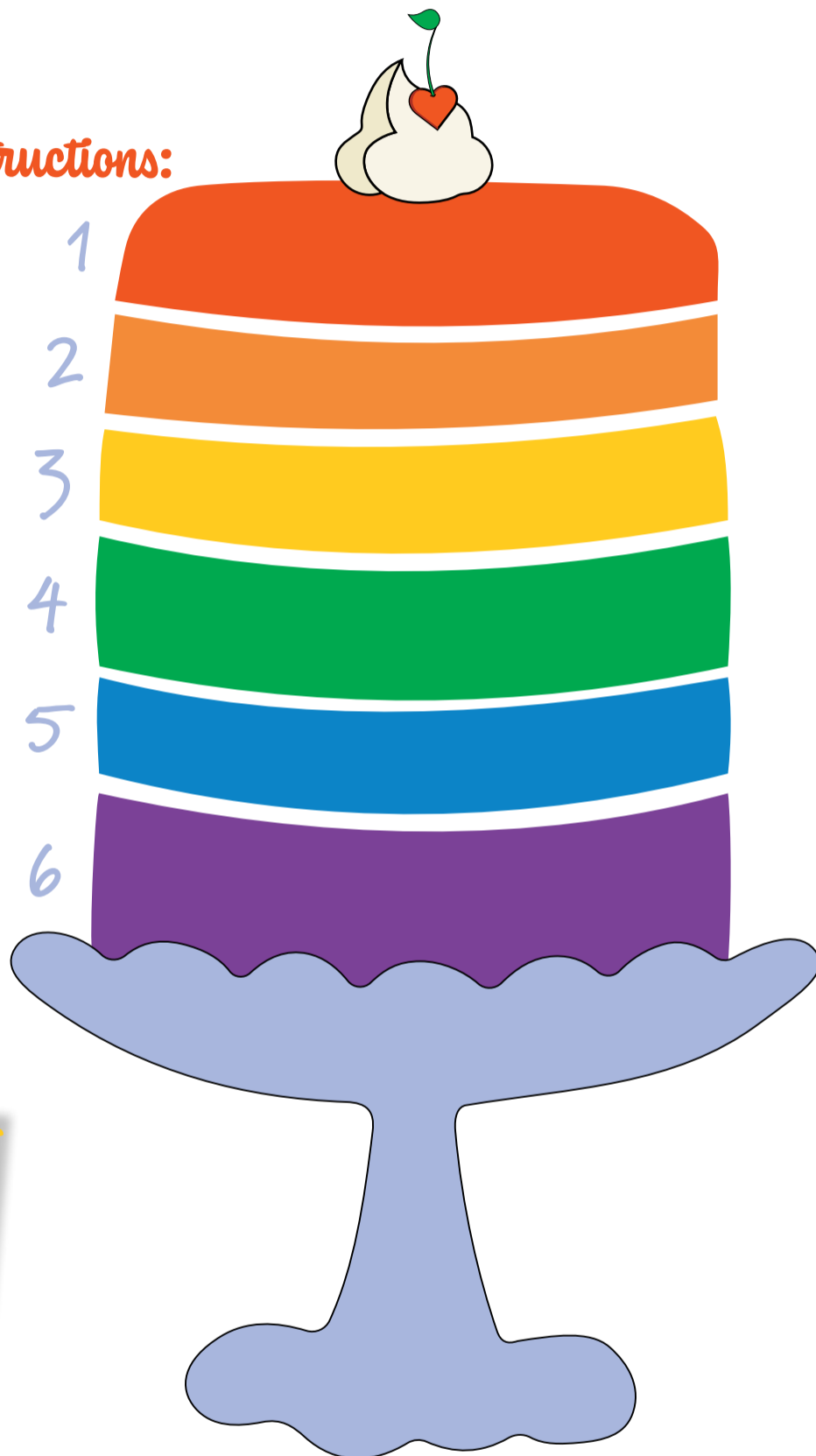
Nothing beats getting to work creatively for yourself! Try the recipe for this rainbow cake and share the result with #paarstoday!
By Antje De Visscher, Silke Haentjens, & Janne Genar

#EatingGood #FeelingGood #ComfortFood

Ingredients

- Rainbow Cake
- 500 grams self-rising flour
- 500 grams of granulated sugar
- 500 grams of butter (room temperature)
- 8 eggs
- At least 3 types of food dyes
(Blue, red, yellow)
-
- Butter cream frosting
- 250 grams of butter (room temperature)
- 250 grams of confectioner's sugar
(to taste)
-
- A little butter to grease the pan
- Baking paper
- 2 big bowls
- 6 small bowls
- Spring forms of the desired diameter
-
-

Instructions:



**OMG, I
HOPE I'M
NOT ACTING
TOO GAY?**

Having fun without having to worry that you're acting 'too gay' or might come across as 'a little weird' can be such a relief. That's what you'll find at min19, both online and in real life.

At min19.be, you'll find other young people in your area. You can chat and share your stories and experiences on the forum... You create an account by e-ID, which means you're completely safe.

These might include a city game, going to an amusement park, to Pride or a movie afternoon. In the spring and autumn, they organise a weekend and, in the summer, you can participate in the min19 summer camp. kan je mee op het Min19-zomerkamp.

Are you between 13 and 19 years old and you are gay, lesbian, bi, pansexual, transgender... or are you still unsure about your orientation or your feelings?

Then definitely take a look at the website!

www.min19.be, also on Facebook
min19@weljongniethetero.be

POLITIE ≠ MACHO CULTURE

Some professions are inextricably linked to a certain gender. That's what we call stereotypes. We went looking for a few people who break through that gender role pattern. You can find more testimonials on www.paars.today!

“The stereotypical image of a police officer

#policezoneAntwerpen #diversityunit

Chief Inspector Kristof De Busser hopes to bring about a big change in that with the diversity unit of the police force. People often equate the police with a macho world, but according to De Busser, that's not at all the case.

By Pauline De Mulder

“The stereotypical image of a police officer is a Caucasian man of around 35 years old. That's totally incorrect! We want to be a very diverse corps where we take into account a migration background, LGBT+, age, gender, or disability. Of our employees, 35% are women, 10% have a migration background and there are also a whole lot of colleagues from the LGBT+ community. With regard to that last group, I think we already have a good reflection of society.”



Kristof De Busser: "Look at the police with an open mind."

“20 years ago, the police had another culture. Now we walk along in the Antwerp Pride.”

“Much has changed lately within the police force. About 20 years ago, it's true, it was a different culture and you wouldn't see any police officers walking in the Antwerp Pride. Meanwhile, we've been doing that for several years, now.”

How does the Belgian federal police compare to other countries in term of LGBT+?

“Belgium is in second place in Europe when it comes to legislation on anti-discrimination, antiracism, and hate crimes. Still, I think there's room for improvement. Unfortunately, collaborations between police zones don't happen enough. A foundation has already been laid, because the federal police has developed a vision around diversity. That vision is fairly general,

meaning that every zone chooses its own priorities.”

“In Antwerp, we consider diversity a must, that's why we've assigned seven employees and 45 mediators to diversity. We think the police need to be credible, and therefore we need to have a diverse police force that responds correctly in situations related to racism and discrimination. We also give training every year to one third of the corps about different diversity themes. In addition to assessing

together with colleagues from internal supervision and customer management what complaints about racism and discrimination are received against police officers, we are also available to give colleagues tips if they don't know how to respond to a diversity issue.

How do you ensure that people find their way to the police?

“In the field of LGBT+, we're connected to Het Roze Huis and for several years we have been taking part in the Antwerp Pride. When police officers are present at those kind of actions, they show their support and as a result, we notice that people are quicker to dare to report incidents related to LGBT+ or otherwise. We also try to be accessible for young people with the site www.magda-police.be, where we answer questions such as “when do you have to show your ID?” or “may someone in plain clothes check my ID?” but also, “how can you file a complaint about the police?”

What would you say to young people who are interested in working for the police?

“Sign up for an information session or come and talk to someone from the promo team. That way, you know what is expected of you. There are different roles at the police: neighbourhood inspectors, traffic officers, inspectors on patrol, administrative staff, social assistants, IT people... something for everyone. Let go of your prejudices against us and look at the police with an open mind.” ■

Maggy (73): “Seniors crawl back into the closet”

#senior #LGBT+-seniors #taboo #outofthecloset



In the 1980s, homosexuality was seen as a disease. That's why people often only came out of the closet later in life. Maggy Doumen is one of them and is now an advocate for the rights of LGBT+ seniors as a rainbow ambassador.

By Fenne Verbeek & Pauline De Mulder

“There's a big taboo around being LGBT+ in many rest homes. Seniors want a good conclusion to their life and as few difficulties as possible. They conceal their orientation and crawl back into the closet.”

How was it for you to come out of the closet?

“I suppressed my feelings for a long time because I wanted to just be “normal”, but I only realised that after my coming out. Before I got married to a man, I had some short relationships with women and then I thought: “If I had children now, then it would be ideal for me”. There was a man who wanted to fulfil my wish for children and I accepted his offer.” “At the age of 43, a girlfriend called and she asked: ‘Do you think I'm a lesbian?’ I answered spontaneously: ‘No, you aren't, but I am.’ I had suddenly expressed something that could no longer be denied. About a year later I met my current partner. People close to me saw that I was happy and that was

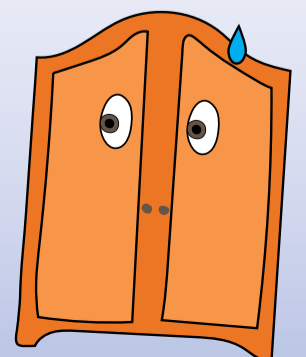
enough.”

How do you think it is for the younger generation to come out of the closet?

“Belgium has pretty progressive LGBT legislation, because you can marry and have children with whomever you want, but that doesn't mean that everyone automatically agrees with that. Many young people have difficulty coming out to the people around them. I would want to give them this tip: make friends who support you in the steps that you take. It will do you good!” ■

Everybody bi?

Sigmund Freud, an important founder of modern psychology, was devoted to the investigation of sexuality. He had a theory that claimed that everyone is a little bit bisexual.



"I feel much happier this way!"



"There are a lot of people like you."

QMusic DJ Jana De Wilde (23) is trans and a proud lesbian

#transition #LGBT+ #awareness

Jana de Wilde wanted to postpone her transition for a dream job at QMusic, but she soon felt that something was a bit off. "I felt that one is connected to the other. With a job in the media, it's important to have the freedom to be who you are, and that wasn't the case for me yet."

By Lisa Debeuckelaer & Gitte Vandeneede

"My original plan was to postpone the transition so that I could fully focus on a dream job at QMusic. But I soon felt that something was off. Everyone felt that it wasn't right. I felt it myself, and I was certain that listeners would feel it too. I couldn't postpone my transition so that I could first find a job. That wouldn't match. It just had to happen.

"My transition just had to happen."

At that moment I didn't know anyone in the media who was trans. You heard very little about it in Belgium. I also felt that people didn't have a clear sense of what would happen, which made me afraid to take that step here. I heard a few stories from America that I could relate to. Five years later, fortunately, things have evolved tremendously.

Being a trans person is a label that you get imposed on you. That can be nice because you feel a kind of connectedness with a community. On the other hand, it remains a label. I felt that, if I would embrace that label, it would overshadow everything else that I do.

I hope people say about me: "That's that Jana and she works for the radio," instead of: "That's Jana and she's trans." That's why I consciously chose to first do my job and to get recognition there from my listeners. Only then would I announce that I'm trans, so that that basis would already be laid. I knew I would one day come out to the outside world, I just didn't know when.

I do understand that awareness still needs to be raised on the subject. Not every one has an affinity with it. Yet it's nothing new, because trans people have always been around. There have always been people who didn't feel okay in their bodies or struggled with their identity. But you didn't see it. Now that is gradually getting more and more visible, also in the media and in society.

I do understand that awareness still needs to be raised on the subject. Not every one has an affinity with it. Yet it's nothing new, because trans people have always been around. There have always been people who didn't feel okay in their bodies or struggled with their identity. But you didn't see it. Now that is gradually getting more and more visible, also in the media and in society.

I understand that it takes some time to make people aware. If I personally say something about the fact that I'm trans, I try to do it in a very accessible way, with clear, intelligible language and I try not to bombard people with

overly difficult information. At QMusic we also work in this way, everyone should be welcome with us. I notice that you can count on a lot of sympathy if you approach it in this easy-going way.

"It takes time to raise people's awareness."

I feel so much happier! It feels finally right. That doesn't mean that I have no insecurities anymore. Of course, I'm uncertain about my body. Everyone has that sometimes, but those uncertainties often have nothing to do with my transition. My message to everyone who is facing this:

"Know that there are many people like you and that there's always someone you can turn to. Even if you don't know what to do, there are always organisations, places, people where you can find support."

ODD MAN OUT IN THE PRIDE

2018. Hesitant and not entirely at ease, I travel with some other parents I know, who also have an LGBT+ child, to Brussels, to participate in my very first Pride. On TV I had seen images of very eccentrically dressed figures at Pride marches and now I see them in real life. They seem very happy, the atmosphere is euphoric. I wonder if I really belong here.

A few months before that with the same group of parents, we had started an association: "Proud Parents". We wanted to show all parents of LGBT+ children that we're proud of our kids and that they have to accept their children as they are. After all, don't children do the same with their parents?

The procession gets moving and we walk along in the churning sea of people who certainly aren't ALL eccentrically dressed. More than half of the participants are hetero. They just want

to support the fight for a society where everyone can be themselves. Enthusiastic youth organisations in uniform march in the Pride next to their 'Youthwork@Pride'-truck.

We carry a large banner: 'LGBT acceptance begins in the family'. On our t-shirts are messages such as 'My son is gay, so what?!' The rows of spectators grow more crowded, many bystanders applaud. When a few LGBT young people break free of the masses and embrace us, with tears in their eyes, I know for sure: I do belong here. ■

— Petra, President 'Proud Parents'
www.trotseouders.be

RAINBOW HOUSES: INFO POINT AND SAFE REFUGE

You can find a rainbow house in every province.
You can go there for info about LGBT + topics, and
they offer a safe meeting place for everyone.

By Martha Van den Eede

“Visibility is needed for there to be equality”

Dimitri Cools is the chairman of the Rainbow House "Unique" in Flemish Brabant. For the past four years, he has been coordinating all the working groups and loves their unique collaboration with volunteers.

By Martha Van den Eede

“Anyone can come to us. The age group ranges from 7 to 77, so to speak. When we have our info stand set up at an event in Flemish Brabant, we often get parents and grandparents coming to us who have questions about the orientation of their (grand) child. That’s because young people are coming out much sooner than, for example, 15 year ago, which causes family members to go looking for information themselves,” says Dimitri.

“I love working at the Rainbow House, it gives me energy. There’s a strong bond within the team thanks to the great results that you achieve. Everyone is working towards a common goal and creates a team spirit. As a result, I get so much satisfaction out of my commitment as a volunteer.”

The LGBT+ community has already achieved

a lot: they can get married, they can adopt children and, in the meantime, there is also a legislation on discrimination. But according to Dimitri Cools, people’s mentality does not always follow this progress. “Changing a mindset is not always easy, it takes a lot of time,” he notes.

He emphasises all the initiatives around

“Een mindset veranderen is
niet altijd makkelijk.”

LGBT+, such as the Rainbow Houses, are an important aspect in the fight against queer and transphobia: “Visibility is necessary to reach equality, because it brings recognition. Only in this way can we strive for acceptance and normalisation of being LGBT+.”

“The underlying criticism of the hetero community leads to shame for many members of our community, but if we are able to create visibility, we can demonstrate that it’s okay to be who you are.” ■

Info Regenbooghuis Vlaams-Brabant 'UniQue':
Address: Diestsesteenweg, 24,
B-3010 Kessel-Lo - Leuven
Tel.: 016 60 12 63
E-mail: hallo@unique-rbh.be



©Erik de Weerd

You can find a Rainbow House in every province

West-Vlaanderen:
Regenbooghuis 'Rebus'
Address: Torhoutsesteenweg 123,
8400 Oostende en
Speelmansrei 22/Thomas Morus,
8000 Brugge
E-mail: info@rebuswvl.be

Oost-Vlaanderen:
Regenbooghuis 'Casa Rosa'
Address: Kammerstraat 22, 9000 Gent
Tel.: 09 269 28 12 of 0483 32 97 26
E-mail: info@casarosa.be

Antwerpen:
Regenbooghuis 'Het Roze Huis'
Address: Draakplaats 1 en 2,
2018 Antwerpen
Tel.: +32 (0)3 288 00 84
E-mail: secretariaat@hetrozehuis.be

Brussel:
Regenbooghuis Rainbowhouse'
Address: Kolenmarkt 42, 1000 Brussel
Tel.: 02 503 59 90
E-mail: info@rainbowhouse.be

“A lot of people would fall into a deep, dark place without Rainbow Houses”

In the Limburg Rainbow House, Leopold Lindelauff has been working as chairman since 2019. He had been married to his wife for some time when he discovered that he is bi-sexual. At that time, he did not know that this orientation existed and he had nowhere to go with his questions.

By Martha Van den Eede

“At the time, I lived in the Netherlands. Most people see it as a fairly tolerant country, but I still couldn't find a place where I felt at home as a bisexual person. When I finally came to Belgium, I immediately went to the Rainbow House in Hasselt because I was looking for other people within the Bi community.”

“I notice that many people go through the same struggle as I did, years ago. They need to gather their courage to walk into the Rainbow House. Even though we have no physical threshold, the symbolic one is very high. But once they enter and get to know people in a similar situation, they find a warm home they can go to. A lot of people would fall into a deep, dark place without Rainbow Houses.”

“I am happy to open up my own ideas
for discussion.”

Since 2019 living together with his colleague Manon Van Engelen, Leopold has been giving presentations in schools. They enter into debate with the students and want to make them aware of where their reactions come from: “We don't want to impose on them how to think about the world and people around them, but just that they try to have empathy for what someone else may be experiencing. They need to consciously consider what they think and why they think that way,” says Leopold.

“I want to share my knowledge about the subject with young people, but often I learn a lot from them too. I also experience that in the Rainbow House: discovering how young people think, is for me an added value. I am happy to open up my own ideas for discussion. Sometimes we have hours of conversation and it's these conversations that make the Rainbow House a safe retreat.” ■

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E-mail: info@regenbooghuislimburg.be



©Michel De Pourcq

"We want to educate"

Emma and Maximilian lead an LGBT+ group at school

#PrideClub #inclusive #LGBT+AtSchool

Many LGBT+ young people feel uncomfortable at school because they don't dare to be completely themselves. The Pride Club at the multilingual European school II in Brussels is trying to do something about that. Emma and Maximilian work with passion on this student initiative.

By Antje De Visscher & Janne Genar

What was first a smaller project has grown into an essential part of the approach to LGBT+ topics. Maximilian: "We founded the club because our school is still not inclusive enough. There were already general rules regarding tolerance, but gender was still unknown terrain. There had to be a change."

Emma: "In the lower grades, we still regularly saw homophobia because they do not know the community. So it's important to educate them."

Workshops

The club members are not sitting still. Emma: "We are drawing up new rules in connection

with LGBT+. For example, pronouns and first names must be respected at all times. We also organise workshops and presentations to educate everyone. It's fantastic when the students come back to thank us for our hard work.

Some people come to the Pride Club to learn more, but Maximilian has a more personal reason. "For a long time, I was afraid to come out of the closet and I suppressed my sexual orientation. I want to help prevent other students from feeling that way." ■

Follow the Pride Club via Instagram: @woluwe_pride.



"Your personality before your profile photo"

#LGBT+ #dating #ItsWhatsInside

It's what's inside. That's the starting point from the Himoon app. You choose your chat partner not based on looks, but based on your common interests. And the photo? You get to see that little by little.

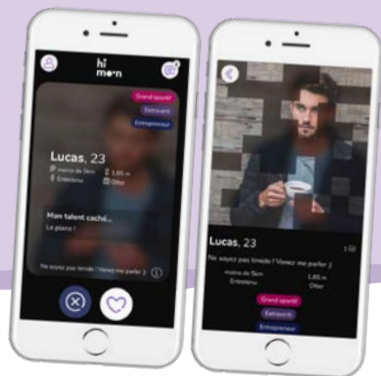
By Janne Genar

Himoon is very different from Grindr. There you see a photo and the name, you think for about 2 seconds and make up your mind entirely based on looks. Himoon also works with photos but they are not visible when you swipe. You just see a list, a text with some characteristic joints, and a few facts. When you swipe right, you can chat with the person. Every time you chat with the person, you can see a bit more of the profile photo.

'Unfortunately, Himoon is only available in French for now. We are working on

translating it into Dutch so that Flanders and the Netherlands also have the chance to use it," explains Michael Couvreur, communication manager for Himoon.

"I consider the app a success, and then I'm not just talking about numbers of course. In the two months we've been online, I've already received two messages from people who have become a couple thanks to our app. That's what it's all about." ■



Pushed out of the closet

Coming out of the closet is a big step. Even at your own initiative, it can sometimes be a challenge. What if someone else pushes you out of the closet?

By Antje De Visscher & Thomas Hendriks

"I was 'that lesbian'"

— Merel (19)

"I'd just started a relationship with a girl, and the only person I had dared to tell was my best friend. Not much later the whole school knew about it. I didn't realise that, but I felt that something was wrong. Some of my friends avoided me, I got weird looks. One year later I found out that I was known at school at the time as 'that lesbian'. It became an insulting word used against me. My reputation was down the drain, even though I hadn't done anything wrong."

"Outed by my mom"

— Kaat (21)

"When I finally dared come out of the closet to my mom, it was a big weight off my chest. But I wasn't ready yet to tell my grandparents. I needed a little more time to take that step. My mom didn't give me that time. Without my knowledge, she told my grandparents. I had a really hard time with that. A while later I tried to talk about it with my mom, but she didn't understand what she had done wrong."

"Even worse than bisexual"

— Lucas (20)

"I was once part of a small group of friends. I had gathered the courage to come out to them as bisexual. A year later I had a fight with one of those 'friends'. Behind my back she had told my class that I was gay, because that was 'even worse than bisexual'. In my class there was a troublemaker. He confronted me with my sexuality in front of everyone. Meanwhile, someone else was filming and shared it on Snapchat. I was lucky that I got a lot of support afterwards and people took my side."

"Not your story"

— Jonathan (18)

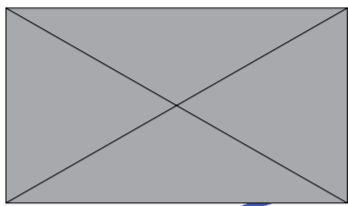
"A few years ago, I had a crush on a boy with whom I was in a group. I had told a girlfriend about it. A week later, there was a party. A good friend of mine came out there as trans. At that moment my girlfriend decided to blurt out to the whole group that I liked boys. I can laugh about it with that girlfriend now, but at the time it was really awful. Depriving someone of the chance to come out for themselves, you just don't do that. Just keep that information that you have to yourself, it's not your story."

EVERYONE IS PART OF THE WORLD! OR ARE THEY?

#hashtag #hashtag #hashtag

Acceptance of the LGBT + community is growing around the world, but this is not yet the case in all countries. Many people still don't find it acceptable if you walk hand in hand with your sweetheart of the same sex.

By Gitte Vandeneede & Lisa Debeuckelaer



Baby boom

Since 2017 it has been legal in all 50 states in America for same-sex couples to adopt a child.



Go, Orange!

In 2001, **The Netherlands** was the first country in the world to allow couples of the same sex to marry. Sexual activities between queers had already been legal since 1811.



Forbidden love

In **Morocco**, it is forbidden to be LGBT+. If you're caught, you'll get a prison sentence of three years and pay a fine of 230 euros.

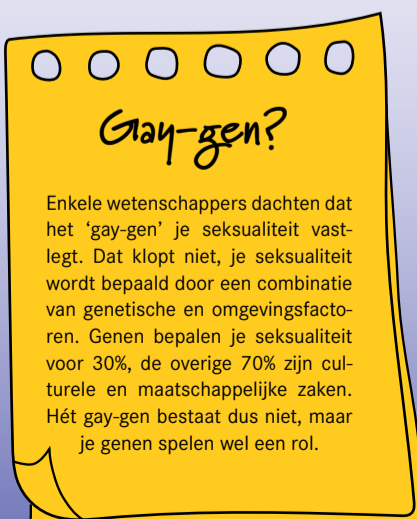


For life

In **Tanzania** homosexual acts are punishable by life in prison.

East West, home is best

Belgium scores as one of the best on the list of most LGBT+-friendly countries in the world. It was also one of the first countries with an openly gay Prime Minister, Elio Di Rupo





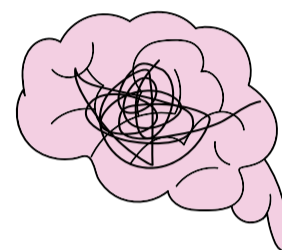
With heart and soul

In the **United Kingdom**, trans people have been able to change their legal sex since 2004.



Conservative

In June 2020, **Poland** declared a LGBT-free zone or Strefny wolne od LGBT. This zone consists of 100 Polish municipalities, representing almost a third of the country.



Mental illness

In **Russia**, falling in love with someone of the same sex has been considered a mental illness since 1999.



First trans news anchor

Tashnuva Anan is the first trans news anchor in **Bangladesh**. In 2021 she made her TV debut on International Women's Day. Not so obvious, because trans people face a lot of discrimination and violence here.



Mamma mia?!

In **Italy**, **Greece** and **Switzerland**, it is still impossible to marry someone of the same sex. Living together is permitted.



Latecomers

In **Australia**, it has only been possible to marry someone of the same sex since 2017.

“HALF TURKISH, HALF FRENCH, BUT COMPLETELY BISEXUAL

Ezra loves both men and women

Bisexual #France #Turkey #ComingOut



shaved her head, to which her parents reacted laconically: "It's okay if you're into girls. It doesn't matter to us."

"In France, I never really had problems with my orientation," Ezra continues. "A few years ago, half of Paris came

"They are a secret middle finger to the president."

"You would think I'd have difficulties at home because of my orientation but that was anything but the case," Ezra (21) starts off. "I'm aware that both Turkey and France have done gay-unfriendly stuff in the past, but from my parents, I never experienced that."

By Deniz Nalbantov

"Both the Turks and the French are very intense and proud people. I recognise myself in that too. For example, I love a

particular man, my boyfriend, and all the women in the world! I'm half Turkish, half French, but completely bisexual." (laughs)

"I was very interested in internet culture from a young age. I'd had a hard time dealing with my gender and sexuality since I was thirteen. In the end, I discovered myself by delving into these subjects on sites such as Tumblr. Yet I had a huge breakdown because of that." At one point, Ezra had

out on the streets to protest gay marriage. Yet I've never experienced homophobia there. Gays are allowed to get married there too. Turkey is a different story. The president himself has made many anti-LGBT statements himself. It's ironic that I know a whole lot of LGBT+ people in Turkey. They are a secret middle finger to the president ■



Make-up tips: from a Queen, for a queen

With 150 shows per year, Selina Pearl (35) has 15 years of experience as a drag queen. Interested in makeup? Read Selina's best tips.

By Antje De Visscher & Martha Van den Eede

1. Good makeup doesn't have to be super expensive.
2. Contouring should not be too dark. You want it to look like a natural shadow, not like a dark stripe.
3. When filling in your eyebrows, start at the inside, go from light to dark. The outside should be darker than the inside.
4. Use a little highlighter under your eyebrows. You can choose which tint best suits you.
5. The larger the eyeliner, the more dramatic the look.
6. Accentuate the eyelashes! They make the difference.
7. If you don't have a certain colour lipstick, use a light nude colour and fill it in with an eye shadow according to your choice.
8. If you want to create the illusion of fuller lips, use a dark colour on the outside and gradually shift to a light colour towards the inside.
9. Thoroughly clean your face and use a good night cream.
10. Don't base yourself on what others do. Look at your own face and what works for you.

Selina's SECRET TIP: if you want to attach a wig with hair glue, you may end up with dirty dried up residue. Instead, spray hair spray on the inside of the wig and on your forehead. That ensures a kind of magnetic effect which lets you keep on your wig without any problem and without dried residue. ■



"Love is Love, but not with me"

Visiting young newcomers

#okandebat #Lovetolearn #Hottopic #Education

Learning about the LGBT + community starts the first years of school. That also applies for the students of the 'OKAN' classes, reception classes for foreign-language newcomers who learn Dutch in a year. We dropped into the Dutch lesson and spoke with fifteen students between the ages of 12 and 18.

By Matilda Jack

"I found 'homosexual!'" calls out one of the students. "Me too!" calls out another student. All students start shouting out the other concepts from the LGBT+-crossword. The students try to guess the meaning of the different terms and in the process, learn about them.

When asked who is against LGBT + there are different reactions. "I have no problem with it", or "that's not normal ". It quickly becomes a

heated conversation and two groups emerge. Where they were first good friends, they are now opponents.

"I would accept a trans person"

The students discuss further and 'trans people' becomes a hot topic. "I have no problem with LGBs but with trans people," a student says. Many students still have trouble with this concept. "I don't understand that you can do that, why would you change something so major about yourself like that?"

They come up with scenarios on which they can build their opinions. For example, how would they feel if someone they have always known as a boy one day came out as trans. "He was born as a boy, so he remains a boy." Many students agree. The minority was a bit less rigid. "I would have a hard time

with it for a moment but would accept it."

After a long discussion, students have had their say and the general conclusion is: "Love is Love, but not with me." ■

Potato Head

Do you remember the Potato Heads from the movie Toy Story? The toy manufacturer 'Hasbro' has decided to do away with "Mr." and "Mrs." And make the characters gender neutral.



“Intersex is something you have, not something you are

Emmanuelle tells about her intersex variation

#InterseX #Trans #Trauma #PAARS

Emmanuelle Verhagen (53) was born in a (mostly) male body, but felt more female. Moreover, she was born with an intersex variation, just like 1 in 60 other babies in Belgium. But what is intersex exactly?

By Fenne Verbeeck

"Intersex means that your body has characteristics that do not fit for 100% within the man or female category. There are at least 40 variations of intersex, but it's not something that you can be. I have an intersex variation and I am a trans person. My trans story is my experience of myself and my body. Between the age of 10 and 15, I was operated on three times on my intersex variation. My testicles had not descended, they were internal instead of external, and they also made my micropenis bigger."

"A trauma doesn't get away, you just give it a place."

10 years old, is that the usual age for such an operation?

"Nowadays, they prefer to operate in the first 3 months of life, in the assumption that the child won't remember it. However, we have learned more about trauma and neurology in the meantime



Emmanuelle: "My story is about me and from my body."

and it's been discovered that the body does remember. Intervention in a body always causes a trauma and you never know how that will express itself."

Was this also a traumatic experience for you?

"As a child I never knew that I had a trauma, that awareness only came much later. The impact of 3 involuntary operations during your puberty is really huge. I have given it a place, meanwhile, but a trauma never goes away. The memory is there and my body knows that all too well. For me, my transition was a bit like reclaiming my own body."

"You have to realize that every body is different."

Intersex Awareness Day takes place on October 26.

What do you think young people can do to show their support to the intersex community?

Above all, you need to get rid of the taboos about talking about the subject. It's very important to make people aware that other variations exist and that every body is different. Language use is also an important aspect, so pay attention to the terms you use and try to create a safe environment in which everyone feels welcome." ■

“I didn't have that much saved up

#Trans #Transition #PAARS2021

The lack of a clear overview of what his transition would cost caused a lot of stress for Jonas (20). He talks about his experience with transitioning and gives more explanation about the associated costs.

By Fenne Verbeeck & Pauline De Mulder



"I haven't always had it easy, financially, and that's also why I waited a long time to contact the UZ Gent. When they said that the first ten sessions with the psychologist were free, that was a relief. In the meantime, I now pay 47 euros for the psychologist, of which the health insurance fund pays 14 euros.

I also need to inject hormones every two

"Als er meer operaties terugbetaald worden, zou er veel stress wegvallen. Dat is nu niet het geval"

weeks. In the beginning that cost me 10 euros per dose, but after a year I found out that I can also get them for 2 euros. Of course I would have preferred to have known that sooner.

Such a transition is expensive. When the surgeon told me that the breast removal surgery would cost 1,800 euros, I thought: 'Yikes!'. I didn't have that kind of money. Shortly after that conversation, I was told that my operation would take place in a month. I had only been able to save up 500 euros, so I panicked. If more operations were covered by the health insurance, it would take away a lot of stress, but that is unfortunately not the case.

De prijs houdt me een beetje tegen om andere operaties te doen. Ik heb bijvoorbeeld vrienden die meer dan 3.000 euro kwijt zijn aan de geslachtsoperatie en ik weet niet of ik daar ooit zoveel geld aan kan uitgeven. De kans op complicaties na de operaties houdt me ook tegen. Na mijn borstverwijdering had ik complicaties en dat was een lang en zwaar herstel.

Ik denk dat je in totaal tussen de 7.000 en 8.000 euro betaalt voor een transitie. Dat is redelijk breed gerekend, maar in die prijs zitten ook zaken zoals medicatiekosten, apotheekkosten, complicatiekosten. Die hoge kosten ken je graag vooraf, zodat je op tijd geld opzij kan zetten, maar ik moest vaak zelf naar de

“Art is separate from gender identity



"Drag is more than men with wigs and fake breasts: it's about the art of the transformation. The power of drag is that you can be whatever you want, from fantasy creature to genderf*ck, it's all possible. You create the character that you want to show to the outside world, to escape reality," tells drag queen 'Lady Trash', who is known in daily life as Matthias van der Wee.

Door Antje De Visscher & Martha Van den Eede

"As Lady Trash I do things I'd never dare as Matthias"

She comes from a very conservative family and wanted to break free from that: "When I came out of the closet, I started experimenting with make-up to see how far I could go before I would feel uncomfortable. If I look back at those photos now, I think: 'Oh no, I looked terrible.' In the meantime, I've learned a lot, luckily."

"When I put on a wig, I completely change my persona. Everyone immediately notices 'wow, she's there'. I'm super seductive, with short skirts in leather or latex. It can also be a little off-beat, a little trashy. Hence the name 'Lady Trash'," she emphasises. "My self-confidence is massive at such times. I've worked for hours on my makeup, my wig, and my outfit, so I know I'm looking good. As Lady Trash I do things that I would never dare as Matthias."

Many people wonder what pronouns they should use for drag queens: "That depends from person to person. As Matthias, I don't care how you address me or refer to me. When I'm Trash, I'm no one but Trash, and then I don't respond to anything else. Matthias is no longer there. If you can still glimpse him under the makeup, that means I don't have enough makeup on."

Lady Trash also notices that many people confuse drag queens with trans people: "Trans people were born in the wrong body. They want to change it in order to feel like themselves. For drag queens, it's about the performance, it's an art form. In drag I wear fake breasts, but I'm also very happy when I can take them off in the evening. My transformation is not permanent, it's an outlet. It's also perfectly possible for a trans person to be a drag queen. Art is separate from gender identity." ■

“JESUS NEVER REJECTED SAME-SEX MARRIAGE”

According to Bishop Johan Bonny, there is a place for everyone in the church

#Religion #Christian #JesusLovesYou

In March 2021, the Vatican stated: "The Church cannot bless commitments between people of the same sex." Bishop Johan Bonny immediately countered that. He was ashamed of the statements of his Church and made it clear that in his diocese there was a place for LGBT+ people.

By Silke Haentjens & Antje De Visscher

"Suppose a gay couple really wants to care for each other and has the intention to provide a warm haven for others. If that couple wants to stay connected with the church in an active way, then it's unacceptable not to offer them a place within the community."

When I speak about LGBT+ issues, it's usually with parents or grandparents. After a mass, there are always people who come to me with questions. They often don't know what to think and might have wanted things to turn out differently, but want to be there for their children. As long as they're happy and are able to feel at home."

"I don't have to understand everything"

"As a bishop, I'm in the same position. A bishop also has to be a father or grandfather. I don't have to understand everything. I don't have to give my approval or disapproval. And



Bishop Johan Bonny: "We have to treat people today the way Jesus did"

that's not what they're asking for, either. But I want people to feel, in our house there's room for everyone, also for you."

"After my criticism of the Vatican I received a lot of reactions online. Thanks to the positive responses, I feel very supported. I don't need those reactions to continue to stand up for the LGBT + community, but it's still nice. That's how I know I've done what people expect of a priest and a bishop. If I didn't get that feeling, I

wouldn't do it."

"Of course, I also get negative responses. They make me a little sad because some people are really hard-line. And I'm talking about the man in the street, but also about people with high positions in the Church. That puts the entire Church in a negative light."

"I've also had my own evolution on the subject. I grew up in the 1960s - 1970s in rural Flanders, so I didn't come into contact with LGBT+ people

in my childhood.

During my studies, I encountered the literature about homosexuality for the first time. Later on, it was only once I was already a priest, that I got to know the personal stories."

"All Christians should embrace that evolution. I think our faith should be checked against the vision of Jesus. Same-sex marriage

"Sometimes you have to dare to skate on thin ice."

didn't exist yet, so Jesus neither approved nor rejected it." That question wasn't on the table. But we have to treat people today the way He did. When it comes to new issues like this, sometimes you have to dare to skate on thin ice. ■

“WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO BE OURSELVES”

Lotte had a secret relationship with a Muslim woman

#religion
#islam
#secretLove

From eight to six

The original LGBT+ flag had eight colours instead of six. Pink and turquoise were also part of it, but were later omitted because the factories could not produce those colours.

Pink stood for sexuality and and turquoise for art and magic.



Intercultural relationships can involve certain difficulties. For three and a half years, Lotte (22) was in a relationship with a Muslim woman, a relationship they had to hide.

By Nicki Francequin

Lotte's environment knew about it, but her friend's parents didn't know. They both had a hard time with it. "We thought that we would work it out together. You love someone, and you try to hold on to that. But we couldn't be ourselves. We had to hide a part of ourselves and that's never fun, of course. When we were at her place, we could never show that we were in a relationship. We had to pretend to be best friends. It worked in the beginning, but at a certain point that was no longer feasible. That

made us stop seeing ourselves as a couple and we simply became best friends. That's also why we broke up."

Fortunately, Lotte was able to talk to her friend and that was really important at the time. They understood each other. Those conversations made it more bearable. In the interview, Lotte emphasises how important it is to talk about your situation and not to lose yourself in it.

"The reason that my girlfriend's parents did not know had mainly to do with religion. Her parents were quite religious. At a certain point her mother found out that we had a relationship. She didn't approve, but she didn't want to lose her daughter. My girlfriend decided to leave the house. It was a difficult time for her. It's never nice when your family doesn't accept you, of course. She lived with me for a few months. Her mom finally came around. They sort of came to an understanding. Her father wasn't allowed to know, because he was very strict."

Lotte's parents were sorry that her friend's parents reacted like that. But they always supported the couple. As long as Lotte was happy, so were they. "We were very lucky with that. If my parents had been against the relationship, too, then it would have been even harder for us."

Naturally, Lotte and her friend dreamed of living together. There was a lot of ambiguity about that. "I didn't know if it was possible to live together. How would the family react? Who knows, maybe my girlfriend would have to make a choice: her family or a life of her own. I fear that many women in our society still have a hard time dealing with such reactions." ■

“A SIGNAL TO SOCIETY”

First-division KV Kortrijk supports LGBT+ community

#Football



Timothy Derijck with the rainbow armband, photographed by Dieter Bruneel

Timothy Derijck, Captain of KV Kortrijk, wore a rainbow armband for the entire 2020-2021 season. Simon Clinkemaele is fanbase and community manager for the club: “We do not tolerate LGBT+ hate.”
By Noa Van Hoeydonck

What does KV Kortrijk want to achieve with the action?

“We want to make a statement towards society and to the people who watch football. We want to make it clear that for a club like KV Kortrijk, everyone is the same. We want to send that message as a football club, because for many people, we set an example. By the way, Zulte Waregem has taken the same initiative.”

Do you think the action is sufficient to improve LGBT+ acceptance in football?

“Of course, it's not enough. Discrimination against LGBT+ people is a social problem that extends beyond the national borders. But if other clubs or other organisations also make such a statement, that will even more strongly show that they do not tolerate LGBT+ hate. The statement is therefore also a strong signal towards our supporters.”

Read the full interview on [paars.today](#)

“Hetero players touch each other in the shower more often than queers

Chairman Frédéric explains how the Straffe Ketten make their own contribution to the LGBT+ world

#rugby #Brussels #homosexual



Fr Frédéric, pictured in orange, is coach of the Straffe Ketten. The team has been supporting the LGBT+ community for decades.

Rugby is a sport that may not immediately bring LGBT+ openness to mind. Frédéric (48) is a former player, now coach and chairman of Straffe Ketten, a rugby team in Brussels. “Everyone is welcome here, because a player is a player.”

By Noa Van Hoeydonck

A straffe ket (Brussels slang for a ‘bass’), that's what you are when you play for the Straffe Ketten, a rugby team with straight, gay, and trans members. Frédéric has been with the Straffe Ketten for ten years now. The team not only takes part in rugby competitions, it also takes part in various actions to support the LGBT+ community. “For example, we take part in the Pride. And we have an agreement with the rugby union to give the LGBT+ community a place in the sport and to increase acceptance.”

The home base of the Straffe Ketten is in Brussels, but not everyone on the team is of Belgian origin. “In the team we have nationalities from every continent. Of course, there are players from countries that do not have an open LGBT+

community and where the subject is taboo.”

For some players, the team is a refuge, for others it's a team like any other. “Each of us has had different experiences. I know gays who play in squads and who have never had a bad experience. But others come to our team because they had a hard time elsewhere.”

“You need to be strong enough to come out of the closet”

It seems that men have a harder time in group sports. They conceal their orientation, or just don't do group sports. “If you feel that you are in a good environment or team, then come out. You are who you are. You're not different, we're all players.”

The team includes both straight men and gay men and trans people. And of course they shower together. “People who

hear that always think it must not be easy. But

it is. When you've played in the rain for two hours you want to be in the warmth of the canteen as quickly as possible. When I played on a straight team, I noticed that they touch each other more than in a LGBT+ team.”

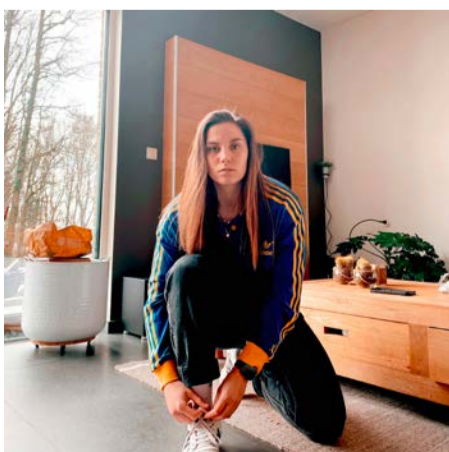
Frédéric believes that you'll always be supported. Everything will work out, even if you don't think so. “People first need to strengthen their self-confidence, in order to be strong enough to come out of the closet. People are often afraid that no one will accept them, but that's not true. There is always someone who will support you. In a team full of homophobes, there will always be someone who is not.”

To make the LGBT+ community in sport socially acceptable, a famous athlete needs to come out of the closet, Frédéric points out. “If a popular player for the Belgian national team, the Red Devils, came out, for example, it would have a big impact. People have to open their minds, it's as simple as that, but that's

“Now I think: why was I so scared back then?”

Badminton champion Flore Vandenhoecke on LGBT+ in sport

#badminton #lesbian #topsport



Top athletes are followed and criticized a lot, which sometimes makes it harder to come out in the spotlights. Flore Vandenhoecke (26) is the Belgian badminton champion and was afraid to be yet another LGBT+ personality

By Noa Van Hoeydonck

“I was afraid to come out of the closet in the sports world. In sports, there are already many LGBT+ people. That made it difficult for me. I didn't want to be the next-in-line.”

“It bothered me that I was just the next

LGBT+ person in sports. Others found that weird, because that actually made it easier for them. With me it was the other way round. Now I think, ‘Why was I so afraid of that?’”

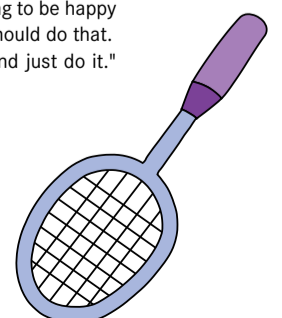
“As an individual you only have to look at yourself”

“In group sports it can be more difficult to come out of the closet than in individual sports. As a badminton player, I look at myself, I don't have to look at others.”

What would you say to young LGBT+ athletes who are hesitant to break into the sports world because of their orientation?

“First and foremost, you've got to always think of yourself. You're always going to have haters. If you are going to be happy by coming out, then you should do that. Let go of all the worries and just do it.”

Read the full interview on [paars.today](#)



"I'm not different, I've just travelled a different path"

Trans man Emile Jacobs played Lewis in 4ever #Trans #4ever #PAARS



Emile Jacobs: "Everyone is first and foremost just a human being."

Emile Jacobs (21) acted in the youth series 4ever on Ketnet during one season. He played the role of Lewis, a trans boy. The fact that he really is a trans boy made it a lot easier to empathise with the role. Moreover, he was the first trans person to play a trans character on TV.

By Fenne Verbeeck

"When I started my role, I didn't know that I was the first. At Ketnet, they told me that. That's not why I took the role, because I didn't know, but it was the icing on the cake of this adventure."

With your role, you mainly wanted to help young people in the LGBT+ world

to be themselves. Did you succeed?

"As soon as I appeared on TV for the first time and people knew what my role entailed, I received a lot of messages. On the one hand, they thought it was cool that I was doing this and on the other hand, I also got messages from people I had apparently helped with telling those around them that they were gay or lesbian. Those messages motivated me to play my role even better."

On the other hand, there are negative reactions, often articles on social media. People react by saying that we, trans people, are sick and a cult. I think it's easier to give your opinion on social media than face to face. Fortunately,

I never received such messages or reactions personally."

Do you think that as a trans person, you were able to portray the character better than someone who has no trans experience?

"I'm more in touch with the subject than you are, for example, and so it is a little easier for me to empathise. I felt that at a certain moment I wasn't acting, but just telling about my life in the role of my character. If someone really feels a connection to the subject and takes an interest in it, then I think it doesn't matter whether the actor or actress is a trans person or not. In the film Girl, for example the role of Lara was played by Viktor Polster, a non-trans person, but he did an incredibly good job."

Did you want to be a role model for other trans people?

"I took on the role with that in mind. On the one hand, it was a dream to act in a series. On the other hand, I wanted to play a role in other people's lives. When Bo Van Spilbeeck came out of the closet, I finally had someone I could look up to and who understood me. When Ketnet offered me the role of Lewis, it was my chance to help people to be themselves, even if it was only one person. It turned out to be a bit bigger than I had thought. So much the better."

Do you think that we are on the right track in Flanders in terms of LGBT+ inclusiveness in series and films?

"Compared to ten years ago, things have changed. You had the role of Kaat in Thuis, the film Girl, my role as Lewis... So more attention is being paid to the subject but it could be much better. You can have a trans person in a film, but don't put the focus on the fact that they're trans. Or debate about it in the news or on talk shows."

It should be a subject like any other, like talking about school or the weather. Many people still talk about it as a taboo subject, while we are simply who we are. I'm not different, I am just a person who has travelled a different path. Everyone is first and foremost just a human being, and that is the most important thing." ■

Wild

#bisexualbonobos

#anythinggoesintheanimalkingdom

#WildLGBT+ #Transfish

LGBT+

Being LGBT+ is only found in humans? Hardly. From transgender fish to bisexual bonobos, it also exists in the Animal Kingdom, and it's totally normal.

By Nicki Francequin

Asexual sponge

The question about Spongebob's sexuality, has been circulating for a long time. But in 2005, the creator confirmed that the beloved sponge is asexual.

Transfish

Over 50 species of fish can change their sex in the course of their lives. The fish are born in a female body with functioning female reproductive organs, such as the ovaries. After a natural process by which they change sex, they go through life as male fish, with functioning male reproductive organs. The clown fish is the best known trans animal.

Heterosexuality a disadvantage

All bonobos, a species of small apes, are bisexual. Sexuality plays a crucial role in their society. Having sex has a social aspect: heterosexuality would be a social disadvantage in the group.

Two sexes

Snails have two sexes. They are both male and female. When mating, they can use both sexes at the same time.. ■

"My boyfriend doesn't miss it"

Morgane prefers not to have sex

#ACE #Asexual #RelationshipWithoutS-

Sex, everyone wants it from time to time. Or not... Morgane (20) is asexual or ACE and therefore prefers not to have sex. Her boyfriend has no problem with that.

By Antje De Visscher & Silke Haentjens

"Because I am ACE, I know that my boyfriend and I really have an emotional connection. I know that he's not using me for sex. In our relationship, trust and comfort are the most important things, rather than the physical aspect. We both feel good about that. He doesn't feel like he's missing anything."

I think a successful relationship relies on that emotional bond. As long as it's there, it can work. Our society is very focused on sexuality and expressing it, but there are people like me who have no interest in it at all. It's a pity then that it is viewed from all sides as strange or abnormal." ■



“What you normally see in films was the reality for me”

Mister Gay Belgium 2020, Joren Houtevels, hopes to break the taboo around abuse



When Joren Houtevels was 18 years old, he met with a Grindr date, who drove with him to a remote forest to abuse him there. It was only years later that he opened up about it to a friend and sought psychological help.

By Gitte Vandeneede

"At the age of 18, I was sexually abused by a man who was about ten years older. He had been blackmailing me with nude photos since I was 15 years old and stalked me in order to have sex with me. I know that the man was from Leuven, just like me. When I'd arrive home, I would get messages like "just got home" or "I can see that you're in your bed". For a 15-year-old boy, such things carry a lot of weight, because it's so frighteningly close. That is something that you normally see in series and in films, but but for me it was just reality.

I denied the facts to myself for a year. The day

after, I went to school and did my exams. It was only after I'd had a few glasses of wine with a girlfriend, that I finally opened up. I took my story to the police and told the people close to me, but I knew that would not be enough to get over the abuse. You need to get psychological help before you do something drastic, I said to myself.

It was only after I went public with my story that I let all my emotions out and allowed myself to cry. I'm not the same person I was five years ago and I know that this has made me very strong." ■



Fighting harassment with love

Actress Ayla Satijn pleads for a combative LGBT+ future

Ayla Satijn is a cheerful Amsterdam based actress, whom you can watch at work in the LGBT+ Netflix series ANNE+. Satijn stresses the importance of such series, because in terms of awareness, there is still some work to be done.

By Gitte Vandeneede

"I try to care as little as possible about what other people think, but still, negative comments get stuck in the back of your mind. Sometimes I just think 'fuck it!' Street harassment shouldn't scare us. People are mainly focused on themselves. If someone looks at us, I sometimes shout, 'Yeah? Can you see it?'"

So I see the future for LGBT people as being combative. The Gay Pride is not just getting drunk and getting out of your clothes on a boat with glitter. It will always be a call to create awareness and to show faces: people of colour, people with other gender designations and other sexualities, transgenders, you name it. To give them a place in society, we can only fight this together with love." ■



"I owe my life to Christianity"

'Buurtpolitie' actor Johan Kalifa Bals supports the community

As a (musical) actor on the police series Buurtpolitie, in the role of inspector Obi Basu, and as a singer, Johan Kalifa Bals (37) tries to encourage the LGBT+ community. In collaboration with Lieven De Brouwer, he worked on a play about the origins of the Gay Pride in 1969. He found his motivation in his two Christian mothers.

By Lisa Debeuckelaer & Gitte Vandeneede

"When I was seven months old, I was adopted by two Christian women. They lived together, but they never really came out of the closet to the outside world".

Because of that background, Bals wants to dedicate himself to the community. In the play about the history of the Gay Pride, he plays a gay black man. "When I play a role like that, I think it is important that I just remain myself and that I do not become a caricature of it."

"The community is not yet sufficiently represented on TV. Just like the fact that there is not enough colour on television. When there are two or three queer characters in a programme, I often hear: 'Isn't that enough?' My answer is a resounding no. I'm glad that there is more diversity on the screen, but it could be done more and in a more natural way." ■



"I never felt the need to go into the gay scene"

You won't see TV presenter Gilles (33) on a Pride float

Gilles Van Bouwel, presenter and programme maker at Woestijnvis, doesn't let his orientation define his identity. 'Being gay is just as normal to me as having blue eyes.'

By Lisa Debeuckelaer

"I came out of the closet quite late, so I don't have many gay friends. I had my regular group of friends and didn't have the need to seek out the gay scene. I never used my sexuality to define my identity. I understand that young people who are still searching often let this play a role, but I kind of think that's a shame. Being gay is just one aspect, but it doesn't define your identity. I would hate it if my friends mentioned 'gay' in a description of me. To me that says as little about who I am as the fact that I have blue eyes." ■



All jokes aside

LGBT+ representation in series, it's an area where there's still work to be done. Although various series have focused a lot on queer representation, others lag behind. Here we give a few examples of series that are doing a good job and others that... still have work, especially when it comes to jokes. **Warning: Spoilers!**
By Thomas Hendriks & Silke Haentjens

Good Jokes

Derry Girls



"We don't need a Chinese person; we've got a lesbian"
Claire comes out in the British comedy as a lesbian. A new We student, Mae, has Asian roots. The Derry Girls want to be more diverse in order to look "cool" and they use Mae for that. Mae then uses Claire as Gay Best Friend. A perfect parody of tokenism, a superficial effort to be inclusive.



Community



"Bitches is gay talk for friends"
Community is a sitcom full of stereotypes. Pierce is the old man. He makes a gay joke in every episode. Later he accidentally becomes a gay icon. The series especially pokes fun at the old-fashioned thoughts of Pierce.

The Good Place



"Is it just me or is Janet a straight-up hottie right now?"
The bisexual Eleanor never stops trying to suppress her attraction to women. Even in life-threatening situations, she thinks of 'straight-up hotties'.



Bad Jokes

Sex and the City



"I think it's just a layover on the way to Gaytown"
Protagonist Sarah Jessica Parker already admitted that Sex and the City failed in the area of LGBT+ representation and she was quite right. They depict queer people in a highly stereotypical way and there was biphobia. In one of the episodes, it becomes clear that Carrie thinks bisexuality doesn't exist.



Friends



"Are you gay!?"
There is very little representation in Friends. And if there's any allusion to an LGBT+ character at all, it's mockingly. In season 9 Episode 6 (The One With the Male Nanny) Ross even suggests that a male nanny is gay.

How I Met Your Mother



"Who's hot and who's Scott?"
There is no representation in How I with Your Mother. Often, jokes are made at the expense of LGBT+. For example, the group plays a game, "Who's Hot and Who's Scott?", where they guess who the transwoman is in a group of women.



Superheroes with a rainbow cape

Comic books are no longer cliché stories of Superman rescuing a woman from a burning building. They have evolved and grown. Representation is also part of that. Five comic book characters who belong to the LGBT+ community.
By Deniz Nalbantov

#superheroes
#Marvel
#DC
#comics

Super same-sex marriage

Marvel Comics published the first comic in which a same-sex marriage occurs. They did that in "Astonishing X-Men". The superhero Northstar married his partner, Kyle in the 51st edition.

Batwoman

Kate Kane made her debut in #7 of the comic series '52' by DC Comics. She later took up the cape of Batwoman. From Kate's first appearance it was decided that she would be a lesbian character. In the meantime, she now has her own series.
Recommended comic: Batwoman (2011)

Northstar

Northstar is one of the first LGBT characters in comic books. He made his debut in Uncanny X-Men #120 in 1979. In 2012 Northstar married his boyfriend in Astonishing X-Men #51. They formed the first married gay couple in the Marvel comic books.
Recommended comic: Astonishing X-Men (2004), Alpha Flight (1983)

Harley Quinn

Harleen Quinzel, also known as Harley Quinn, has been known for a long time as the love of Batman's biggest enemy, Joker. Harley makes her first appearance in the TV series Batman: The Animated Series in 1992. Seven years later she is found in a comic for the first time. Harley Quinn is known as a bisexual character that in recent stories had a relationship with fellow-supervillain Poison Ivy.
Recommended comic: Harley Quinn (2013),

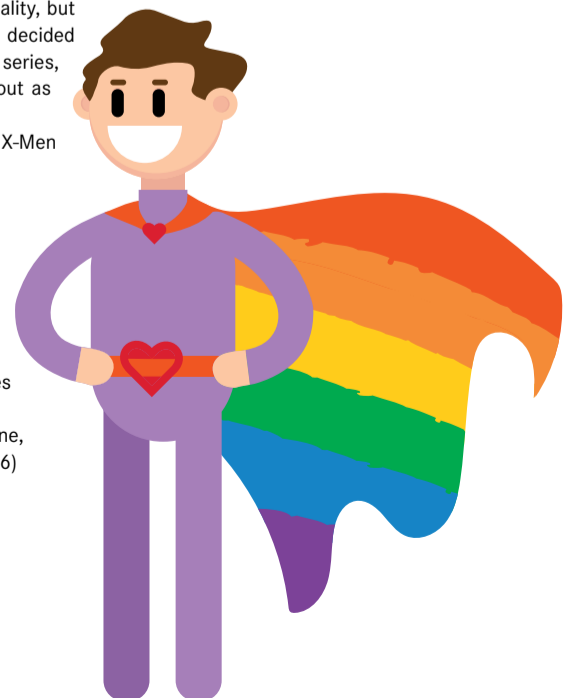
Harley Quinn & Poison Ivy (2019)

Iceman

Iceman made his debut in 1963 with the first version of X-Men, created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. At the time, there was no mention of the character's homosexuality, but in 2013, writer Brian Michael Bendis decided that Iceman needed a rebrand. In his series, All-New X-Men, the character came out as gay.
Recommended comic: All-New X-Men (2012), Iceman (2017)

John Constanti

John is a bisexual detective. He made his debut in 1985 in The Saga of SwampThing #37. Since then, he has had several series of his own in which his love for men, women and cigarettes 18 is very much in evidence
Recommended comic: John Constantine, Hellblazer (2019), The Hellblazer (2016)



READ FOR LIFE: LGBT+ BOOK TIPS

Tips

Katrien Temmerman:
boekenboekenboeken.blogspot.com

Caroline Elskens: Volunteer at the
Holebibib at het Roze Huis.

www.holebibib.be

Johanna Pas:

Gloei - Edward van de Vendel

Flo (illustrations)
LGBTQ+ 15+



A book of no less than 496 pages in which Edward van de Vendel interviews twenty-one young people. The only thing they have in common is that none of them are straight. Supplemented with illustrations by Flo, and preceded by a poem. A true delight to read!

Koning Valentijn - Tim Gladdines

H 13+



Fantastic, atmospheric book, in which the underlying tension between two brothers is always palpable.

Als vuur - Sara Lövestam

Femke Muller (vert.)
L14+



Summery, atmospheric story that takes place on the Swedish coast. Two girls who would never have met in the city, are thrown together on their way to the same island. Told from the shifting points of view of Lou and Anna.

Je moet dansen op mijn graf - Aidan Chambers

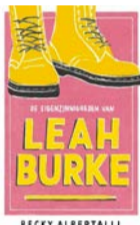
Eté '85 François Ozon
H16+



Hall promises his friend Barry that he will dance on his grave. When the time comes, everyone declares Hal crazy, and he seems to be a criminal. A classic by Aidan Chambers who still always deserves a place at any "must read" list. Beautifully filmed by François Ozon.

De eigenzinnigheden van Leah Burke - Becky Albertalli

Margot Reesink (vert.)
B15+



Leah is more than a best friend to Simon Spier ("Love, Simon"). This tough bisexual girl is not the prettiest or the slimmest but she will go to school and find the perfect sweetheart. Attractively and clearly written.

Wat als dit het is - Becky Albertalli en Adam Silvera

Margot Reesink (vert.)
H15+



Unique collaboration between two young adult writers. Ben and Arthur meet each other in a way that's out of the ordinary. They instantly fall in love. But could everything be so easy? Both writers take a character for their account and that makes it even better and more real.

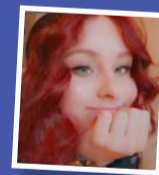
"Everyone has a personal reason to work with PAARS"

Thirteen determined students from the AP University of Applied Sciences decided to take up the challenge of creating a PAARS newspaper for 2022. They were all left with some nice memories and learned a lot.

Door Deniz Nalbantov

What is your favourite memory of PAARS?

"I had an interview with someone who is in the same part of the spectrum as me, and that became a very enjoyable and long conversation." - Silke



What was the best thing about working



"Everyone has a personal reason to work on PAARS, but everyone is equally passionate, and that makes it great." - Marthia

What did you learn by working on PAARS?



"A lot! This was the most interesting project of the entire semester. There are many terms that I understand better now." - Janne

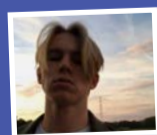
"The collaboration with the other students!" - Matilda



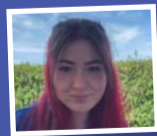
"I learned to do interviews about in-depth topics and of course I've learned much more about the LGBT+ community." - Lisa



"When I went to the OKAN class with Matilda and Thomas. The children spontaneously started discussing the topic. That was nice to see." - Nicki



"Giving people a platform to tell their story." - Thomas



"Getting to know people lets me put things into context better. For example, I knew about the world of Drag Queens but I'd never talked with someone from that community." - Antje

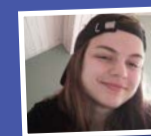
"The collaboration with the great editorial team. We are all people with the same mentality and with the same goal. We want to help people learn more about LGBT+." - Fenne



"It was great to work together with a team that's mostly queer. It felt like coming home." - Gitte



"I have researched the costs of a transition. I didn't know what treatments were possible. There were more than I thought. I was happy to hear that a part is already reimbursed, but it can always be even more!" - Pauline



"Every interview. Athletes and LGBT+ people are very open and super friendly. Every person interviewed treats you with a lot of respect, because they know that with PAARS, our aim is to support the community." - Noa

LGBT+ in all genres



Breaking into the music industry as an LGBT+ artist is difficult. That's why we're putting these artists from different genres in the spotlight.

By Thomas Hendriks & Matilda Jack

[#MusicConnects](#) [#Diversity](#) [#GayPlaylist](#)



Click here 



COLOPHONE

This newspaper was realised by journalism students from Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool, led by Wouter Frateur, graphic and digital media students from AP Hogeschool under the direction of Bavo Van Hecke.

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Respectful and open. This is how AP looks at the world.