



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

REFERENCE: BN/follow-up/Belgium/90

10 March 2025

Excellency,

In my capacity as Rapporteur on follow-up on concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), I have the honor to refer to the examination of the eighth periodic report of Belgium, at the Committee's eighty third session, held in October 2022. At the end of that session, the Committee's concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/BEL/CO/8](#)) were transmitted to your Permanent Mission. You may recall that in paragraph 66 on follow-up to the concluding observations, the Committee requested Belgium to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 14 (b), 24 (b), 26 (a) and 44 (e) of the concluding observations.

The Committee welcomes the follow-up report ([CEDAW/C/BEL/FCO/8](#)) received with a delay of two months on 10 December 2024 under the CEDAW follow-up procedure. At its ninetieth session, held in February 2025, the Committee examined this follow-up report and adopted the following assessment.

Regarding the recommendation made in **paragraph 14 (b)** of the concluding observations which recommended that the State party **“Take all measures necessary to eliminate the serious obstacles to access to justice faced by all women, including undocumented women and women with disabilities, by ensuring the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodation, as well as interpretation services, and by granting a residence permit during the entire judicial proceedings for undocumented victims.”**:

The Committee notes information provided by the State party about the provision of interpretation services in the language of the proceedings, in both criminal and civil cases, at public expense, for persons wishing to express themselves in a language other than the language of the proceedings, including those with hearing and speech impairments. It takes note of the State party's indication that eligibility to receive legal aid depends on a person's real income rather than on residential status. It further notes that undocumented women who are victims of trafficking in persons are granted a residence permit for the duration of the legal proceedings (subject to certain conditions). It regrets, however, the lack of information on whether undocumented women victims of other types of gender-based violence are granted a residence permit for the duration of their judicial proceedings. The Committee further regrets the lack of information as to the provision of age-appropriate accommodation for women victims of gender-based violence. Nor is there any information on procedural accommodations for women with disabilities.

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The Committee considers that the State party has not taken any specific action to implement the recommendation. It therefore considers that the recommendation has **not been implemented**.

The Committee notes that the information provided by the State party is thorough and extensive, but it fails to respond fully to the recommendation. It thus considers that the quality of the information provided is **partially satisfactory**.

The Committee recommends that, in relation to **paragraph 14 (b)** of the concluding observations, the State party provide, **in its next periodic report**, information on further actions taken to:

Eliminate the serious obstacles to access to justice faced by all women, including undocumented women and women with disabilities, by ensuring the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodation, as well as interpretation services, and by granting a residence permit during the entire judicial proceedings for undocumented victims.

In relation to the recommendation made in **paragraph 24 (b)** that the State party “**Ensure that, in practice, women with disabilities, particularly with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, are not subjected to sterilization without their free, prior and informed consent, and offer them training programmes on health and sexual and reproductive rights, including the prevention of sexual abuse, in accessible formats and adapted to their particular needs;**”:

The Committee notes the State party’s indication that the 2024 amendment to the Patients’ Rights Act is intended to strengthen self-determination and informed consent in a manner that corresponds to the patient’s capacity for understanding. It notes that, due to a lack of information on the subject, expert bodies have been commissioned to conduct a study entitled “Gynaecological and obstetric violence experienced by women with intellectual disabilities living in residential institutions”. The Committee further notes the State party’s indication that prevention and training programmes on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women with disabilities have been developed at the national level. The Committee nevertheless regrets the absence of details on how the amended Act enhances informed consent in relation to patients’ comprehension levels as well as on how, in practice, the State party ensures that women with disabilities are not subjected to sterilization without their free, prior and informed consent, and on the training programmes specifically provided to women with disabilities on health, and sexual and reproductive rights.

The Committee considers that the State party took some steps to implement the recommendation. It therefore considers that the recommendation has been **partially implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is extensive but does not relate directly to the recommendation. It thus considers that the quality of the information provided is only **partially satisfactory**.

The Committee recommends that, in relation to **paragraph 24 (b)** of the concluding observations, the State party provide, **in its next periodic report**, further information on actions taken to:

Ensure that, in practice, women with disabilities, particularly with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, are not subjected to sterilization without their free, prior and informed consent, and offer them training programmes on health and sexual and reproductive rights, including the prevention of sexual abuse, in accessible formats and adapted to their particular needs.

In relation to the recommendation made in **paragraph 26 (a)** of the concluding observations that the State party “**Ensure the availability and adequate funding of accessible**

shelters for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, providing legal, medical and psychological assistance, as well as skills training and education;”:

The Committee takes note of information provided on shelter support in the different regions of the State party and particularly information provided on increased shelter capacity or requests for funding to increase shelter capacity. It regrets, however, the limited information provided regarding the provision of legal, medical and psychological assistance or on skills training and education, as well as on the accessibility of shelters.

The Committee considers that the State party has taken substantial action towards the implementation of the recommendation. It therefore considers that the recommendation has been **substantially implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information received from the State party is thorough and extensive, but that it fails to respond fully to the recommendation. It thus considers that the quality of the information provided is **partially satisfactory**.

In relation to the recommendation made in **paragraph 44 (e)** of the concluding observations that the State party **“Strengthen labour inspections to monitor the working conditions of women domestic workers and investigate and punish exploitative and abusive practices of employers; and ensure in legislation and in practice that women domestic workers have explicit, written terms of employment outlining their specific duties, hours, remuneration, days of rest and other conditions of work, in contracts that are free, fair and fully consented to, together with information on access to complaint mechanisms;”:**

The Committee takes note of the State party’s indication that efforts have been made in recent years to increase oversight and targeted inspections in this area, and of the adoption of the Act of 7 October 2022, transposing EU Directive 2019/1152 and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on transparent and predictable working conditions in the European Union. It takes note that, under the above-mentioned Act, all employers are required to provide their employees with information on the key aspects of their employment relationship. It further notes that, according to the State party, domestic workers can file a complaint with the labour inspection service, contact the Labour Inspectorate or bring a case before the Labour Court in the event of a labour law violation. The Committee regrets the absence of information on measures taken to ensure that contracts are free, fair and fully consented to and that information on access to complaint mechanism is made available to women domestic workers in an accessible manner.

The Committee considers that the State party has taken steps to implement the recommendation. It therefore considers that the recommendation has been **substantially implemented**.

The Committee considers that the information provided by the State party is thorough and extensive, and that it relates directly to the recommendation. It thus considers that the quality of the information provided is **satisfactory**.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Natasha Stott Despoja
Rapporteur on follow-up
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women