



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States
parties under article 18 of the Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Seventh periodic reports of States parties due in 2012

Belgium*

[2 October 2012]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

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I. Introduction

1. This report is submitted in accordance with article 18, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by Belgium on 10 July 1985.
2. It will be recalled that the fifth and sixth periodic reports of Belgium (CEDAW/C/BEL/6), submitted as a single document, were considered by the Committee at its meetings on 21 October 2008. The concluding observations of the Committee (CEDAW/C/BEL/CO/6) on those reports were officially issued on 7 November 2008.
3. In September 2011, and as requested in paragraph 53 of the concluding observations, Belgium provided additional information (CEDAW/C/BEL/CO/6/Add.1) on its follow-up to the concerns expressed in paragraphs 28 and 30.
4. The report covers legislative amendments, changes in legal and administrative practices and new policies in relation to the articles of the Convention, adopted since Belgium submitted its fifth and sixth reports. Reference should also be made to the general information provided about Belgium in its core document (HRI/CORE/BEL/ 2011), submitted on 29 July 2011 and updated in July 2012.
5. This report seeks to respond to the Committee's wish to have information about the systematic application of measures adopted to implement the Convention and the results achieved at all levels of authority.
6. For the purpose of officially consulting civil society, the report was sent to 19 associations or representative advisory bodies in the field of women's rights or gender equality. Six of them took part in the meeting held with representatives of the Belgian authorities on 10 September 2012 in order for them to comment on the report orally or in writing.

II. Overview of measures taken to implement the various articles of the Convention and respond to the Committee's recommendations

Article 1 Discrimination

7. The Constitution of Belgium together with its laws, regulations and decrees provide it with an arsenal of measures to combat gender-based discrimination and guarantee respect for the principle of equality between men and women in the various spheres of economic, social, cultural and political life. Generally speaking, the existing provisions prohibit both direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment and harassment based on gender, as well as incitement to practise gender-based discrimination. The various laws in force provide for judicial recourse for victims and penalties against those responsible for discrimination.

Article 2

Policy measures

1. Legislative measures to combat gender-based discrimination

8. Belgium has remained true to its international and European commitments to combat discrimination and has shown its political will to strengthen substantially legislative measures aimed at combating gender-based discrimination and promoting gender equality.

9. At the federal level, three new anti-discrimination laws were adopted on 10 May 2007 with a view to eliminating a number of grounds for discrimination, in particular in employment, social security, the provision of goods and services, and access to economic, social and cultural activities. One of these was a specific law designed to combat discrimination between men and women in these areas. It incorporates several European directives. The Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, hereinafter referred to as the Institute, has authority to intervene in cases of violation of this law.

10. The federated entities have also adopted legislative measures to combat all forms of discrimination, in particular against women, incorporating European directives. The Flemish Community adopted a decree of 10 July 2008 on a Flemish policy framework for equality of opportunity and treatment, the French Community, a decree of 12 December 2008 combating certain forms of discrimination, and the German-speaking Community, a decree of 19 March 2012 aimed at combating certain forms of discrimination. The Walloon Region adopted a decree of 6 November 2008 combating certain forms of discrimination, amended by another decree of 19 March 2009. The Brussels-Capital Region, for its part, has tailored its anti-discrimination laws to specific areas by adopting an ordinance of 4 September 2008 to promote diversity and combat discrimination in public employment in the Brussels Region, an ordinance of 4 September 2008 to combat discrimination and promote equality of treatment in employment and an ordinance of 19 March 2009 amending the Brussels Housing Code.

2. Mechanisms to combat gender-based discrimination

11. The Institute for the Equality of Women and Men is tasked with guaranteeing and promoting equality between women and men and combating all forms of discrimination and inequality based on gender. The Institute thus follows up complaints lodged by victims of such discrimination, provides information, gives assistance, guides victims towards existing services and arranges for mediation. Where necessary, the Institute may initiate judicial proceedings in consultation with the victim.

12. In 2010, the Institute put in place a front-line service to handle complaints confidentially and without charge via a helpline, 0800 12 800, or by post or email. This allows complaints to be handled more swiftly and more effectively. Complaints are also entered into a database and can thus be tracked over time.

13. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of complaints received by the Institute rose by just over 50 per cent (from 125 to 191). Overall, twice as many women as men contact the Institute (by way of a complaint or a request for information), which reflects how they are actually affected by discrimination. In 2011, workplace discrimination accounted for the largest number of notifications (42.4%), of which the largest proportion involved cases of pregnancy and/or maternity. The Institute gave special attention to this phenomenon and conducted a survey on the obstacles encountered by women during pregnancy. This study brought to light a number of facts about the conditions experienced by women and served as a basis for recommendations relating in particular to improvements to be introduced both for working women and for employers and human resource officers.

14. Since 2008, the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Coordination has been responsible for monitoring, in respect of labour relations, the federal anti-discrimination laws of 10 May 2007 and their implementing decrees. This service receives complaints and checks whether they are based on one of the grounds for discrimination. It may then facilitate a judicial settlement of the case or an extrajudicial solution.

15. A review of Belgian case law reveals that litigants invoke the various provisions of Belgian law or European law in cases of discrimination between men and women.

16. The Institute has legal standing. For example, it successfully brought criminal indemnification proceedings in July 2011 following an employer's refusal to renew a labour contract because of the pregnancy of the female employee concerned, thus exercising direct discrimination based on sex. The mechanism of the reversal of the burden of proof was referred to in the court's ruling. It also decided to file civil suit in the "Sadia" case, so named after the young woman who was killed by her brother because she refused an arranged marriage. The Institute felt particularly concerned about this case because honour crimes are a very specific form of gender-related violence. The trial resulted in the first conviction based on article 405quater of the Criminal Code (aggravating circumstance relating to the motive of the crime, namely, hatred of a person by reason, in particular, of her sex).

17. In the Flemish Community, the decree of 10 July 2008 is the umbrella decree in matters of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. It is applicable in all areas of competence of the Flemish authorities, in both the public sector and the private sector, and in respect of work, vocational training, work-related mediation, health care, culture, sport, non-work-related mediation, housing, the provision of goods and services and participation in activities outside the private sphere. It lays down penalties and procedures to ensure observance. In addition, the anti-discrimination component of the equal opportunity decree provides for the establishment of 13 Flemish local contact points to register complaints of discrimination and act as mediators between the parties, and for the setting up of a body empowered to take legal action and assist persons who are victims of discrimination. Complaints are registered through a central database, known as METIS, to which the Centre for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle against Racism is also attached. Approximately 4 per cent of notifications concern gender-based discrimination.

18. In the French Community and in the Walloon Region, cooperation agreements have been concluded with the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, authorizing it to handle individual cases of gender-based discrimination, inform and raise the awareness of the public, ensure the training of personnel, give opinions and make recommendations to the community authorities and carry out studies on issues related to the fight against discrimination. Implementation of the cooperation agreements is coordinated by the Directorate for Equality of Opportunity of the Ministry of the French Community and the Directorate for Social Action of the Walloon Region within their respective fields of competence. What they actually do is bring the various parties into contact so as to maximize each one's resources and potential for combating discrimination. Between 2009 and 2011, 45 cases were handled under these agreements in the French Community and 17 in the Walloon Region. Furthermore, complaints of gender-based discrimination can be lodged through local contact points in "Walloon Spaces" (*Espaces Wallonie*) located in 11 big cities.

3. Awareness-raising to combat gender-based discrimination

19. In June 2010, the Institute launched an awareness-raising campaign (posters, particularly in public transport services, leaflets and a website) to make itself better known,

focusing on four themes: partner violence, the wage gap, workplace discrimination against pregnant women and gender stereotypes in advertising.

20. In 2010, the Institute put on line a database covering all the legislation on gender equality applicable in Belgium (including international texts like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).

21. Again in 2010, it put in place an external communication strategy for 2011–2013 focusing in particular on awareness-raising and information. The visibility of the Institute, as reflected in the number of times it is mentioned in the press, has increased by about 32 per cent since 2010 and 36 per cent since 2009, showing a constant progression.

22. In 2010, the Institute, the Centre for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle against Racism, the French Community and the Walloon Region launched a joint awareness-raising campaign in support of efforts to combat discrimination. This campaign under the banner of “Stop discrimination” grew out of the cooperation agreements concluded between them. The aim was to develop awareness of discrimination-related issues among employees in the public and public interest sector in the Walloon Region and the French Community and in voluntary organizations. A further aim was to inform public service employees and users of the appropriate bodies to be referred to in the event of their encountering discrimination. The campaign website provides information about the various types of discrimination and the laws in force.

23. In October 2010, the French Community developed and launched the campaign “*Discrimination toi-même*” (“Look who’s talking about discrimination”) targeting in particular girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 18. This campaign takes a practical, playful approach to questions of discrimination, freedom of expression, incitement of hatred, pressure to discriminate, racism, sexism, harassment, homophobia, disability, etc. Also indirectly targeting teachers, educators, local associations and stakeholders, it seeks to enable everyone, young and not so young, to understand the challenges of legislation to combat certain forms of discrimination and to familiarize them with the legal provisions to that end. In April 2012, the French Community disseminated an audiovisual version of this campaign via the French-speaking public television channel and DVDs.

24. In addition, under the European “programme to raise awareness of discrimination and legislation to combat discrimination”, the Institute, in collaboration with the Centre and the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Coordination, organized a series of seminars throughout the country to promote exchanges of knowledge and experience in combating discrimination and to further public awareness. The main target group included inspection services, prevention counsellors, trade unions, social and legal stakeholders, police officers and members of the judiciary. Each time, the Institute highlighted and explained the specific features of gender-related discrimination and discussed the role in that regard of international instruments, such as the Convention.

4. Discrimination against transgender persons

25. Belgium explicitly provides for protection against discrimination based on sex change in all legislation on gender equality. Various studies and awareness-raising activities have been carried out since 2009 in order to identify more clearly the problems faced by transgender persons. Various decision-making bodies are considering amendments to legislation (in particular, through study of the concept of gender identity) with a view to widening the protection currently available, which only covers transexual persons.

Article 3

Guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms

1. National monitoring mechanisms

(a) Bodies tasked with the promotion of gender equality

26. Established under a law dated 16 December 2002, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men is an independent, public interest body specifically tasked with combating gender-based discrimination, promoting gender equality and developing tools and strategies for gender mainstreaming in federal policies. It is also responsible for monitoring national and international policies in matters of gender equality. In addition, the Institute is competent to deal with complaints from any victim of gender-based discrimination, undertake research and give advice, on an independent basis.

27. In 2011, the Institute employed 38 staff and one office holder and received €4,722,000, 33 per cent of which served to provide support for civil society organizations active in the field of gender equality.

28. The Council for Equality of Opportunity between Men and Women is a federal advisory body established by royal order of 15 February 1993, replaced by royal order of 4 April 2003. In the past few years, it has issued opinions on matters relating to maternity and paid work (opinion No. 117 of 2008, opinions Nos. 118 and 126 of 2009), balanced representation of women and men in advisory bodies (opinion No. 116 of 2008 and opinion No. 121 of 2009) and gender discrimination in life insurance (opinion No. 124 of 2009 and opinion No. 131 of 2011). It has also given special attention to two important and complex topics, namely, the encouragement of women to participate in the labour market and the pensions system.

29. The Commission on Women and Development is a federal consultative body of the Ministry for Development Cooperation established by royal order of 14 December 1993, as amended by royal order of 3 June 2007. It seeks to support and promote the inclusion of the principle of gender equality in the formulation and implementation of Belgian development cooperation policy.

30. The Commission has three main functions: a consultative and advisory function, an awareness-raising and political advocacy function and a function of information exchange and coordination. By virtue of its composition, the Commission serves as a forum for mutual consultation between policymaking levels, development cooperation services and civil society. It makes every effort to secure the participation in its work of experts from countries of the South. It receives a budget and administrative support from the Ministry for Development Cooperation.

31. The Directorate for Equality of Opportunity comes under the direct authority of the Secretariat General of the Ministry of the French Community and the Minister for Equality of Opportunity in the French Community. It prepares, implements and evaluates the French Community equal opportunity policy on behalf of the Minister. It consists of a five-person team and receives an annual budget of some €800,000, not counting salaries and running costs. Within this framework, projects carried out by the voluntary sector are awarded subsidies, scientific research is conducted and awareness-raising and information campaigns are organized, in collaboration with civil society, provincial and local authorities, experts and scientific research institutions. The Minister for Equality of Opportunity also performs a coordinating role in the implementation of an equal opportunity approach at the level of the Francophone authorities (crosscutting policy).

32. In the Flemish Community, “Equality of Opportunity in Flanders” is the official unit that prepares, implements and evaluates the Flemish equal opportunity policy on behalf of the Flemish Minister for Equality of Opportunity. The latter, in addition to subsidizing a number of projects and conducting an awareness-raising campaigns, plays a coordinating role in the implementation of an equal opportunity approach at the level of the Flemish authorities (crosscutting policy) via the “open method of coordination” (OMC) (see below).

33. “Equality of Opportunity in Flanders” is a 12-person outfit with a budget of approximately €5 million (average for 2007–2012). In 2011, the sum of €345,000 was earmarked for projects, including €131,000 on gender issues and €53,900 for ethnic, gender and cultural minorities. In addition, a €3,038,000 subsidy was granted to civil society, including €1,172,000 for female civil society.

34. The Flemish authorities are also in close contact with the academic world. Besides organizing ad hoc research, they provide financial support for an equal opportunity policy hub, which can engage in long-term studies on the themes and target groups of Flemish equal opportunity policy.

35. In the Walloon Region, the Directorate for the Integration of Aliens and Equality of Opportunity (Directorate General for Local Authorities, Social Action and Health) coordinates and monitors Walloon equal opportunity policy on behalf of the Minister for Equality of Opportunity. Through a specific working group, it is responsible for monitoring the Walloon equal opportunity plan adopted in February 2011. This is a cross-cutting plan under which each government minister is required to take steps to reduce discrimination, in particular gender-based discrimination.

36. The Walloon Council on Equality between Men and Women, established in 2003, is an advisory body tasked, in particular, with giving advice and making recommendations on any gender equality issue in the Walloon Region, and in particular on regulatory measures. It has thus issued opinions on various draft decrees (notably, the anti-discrimination decree), regional and community policies and the “Beijing reports”.

37. The Brussels-Capital Region has an equal opportunity unit with a staff of eight. Seven of them are entrusted with a number of specific files, including gender equality. The eighth is exclusively concerned with domestic violence, including partner violence. Lastly, within the Ministry, five officials across the various departments are responsible, in addition to their main function, for monitoring gender mainstreaming.

38. The budget earmarked exclusively for gender equality stands at €59,000. In addition, there is a 1,282,000 budget for action to promote equality of opportunity (including gender equality).

39. On the basis of this financing, the Brussels-Capital Region pursues a multifaceted policy in this area through a series of recurrent operations: every year, through the Local Authorities Office, it calls for local community project proposals. The Region also organizes an equal opportunity and diversity fortnight every year. It actively combats stereotyping through continuing training of regional and local personnel. Lastly, subsidies are granted to a large number of projects carried out by grassroots associations.

40. Local policy for gender equality has two major strands: (i) combating violence against women, and (ii) promoting equality between men and women at the socio-economic level, in social life and in access to decision-making. To implement this local policy, Belgium collaborates with the provinces, and more specifically with provincial coordinators responsible for questions relating to equality of opportunity and/or violence against women. The objective of this mechanism financed by the federal State, the Communities and the Regions is to support local projects focusing on a number of annual priority topics (combating partner violence, socio-economic equality).

(b) **Establishment of a national human rights institution**

41. Belgium does not yet have a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles, but several specific institutions already act in part as such. The question of establishing such an institution has been on the agenda in Belgium for several years. Discussions were held following the Government's agreement of 2003, and in 2006 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was asked to give an opinion on two options: (1) extension of the mandate of the Centre for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle against Racism, or (2) establishment of a Belgian Commission on Fundamental Rights, proposed by a group of non-governmental organizations. The opinion delivered assessed the two options without particularly advocating either one. The question of the establishment of a national human rights institution was taken up in the most recent agreement of the Government, of 1 December 2011, in the following terms: "In compliance with our international commitments, a national human rights commission shall be set up, in consultation with the Communities and the Regions. Existing institutions will be taken into account". This undertaking follows on from a recommendation of the Human Rights Committee to Belgium in 2010 and from recommendations made on the subject on the occasion of its initial universal periodic review, in May 2011.

42. In accordance with the Government agreement, it was decided that an inter-federal human rights body would be set up in consultation with the Communities and the Regions. In September 2012, on the initiative of the Minister for Equality of Opportunity and the Minister of Justice, a working group will be established with representatives of the Prime Minister, Vice-Prime Ministers, the Regions and the Communities. Consultations may be held with a civil society stakeholders and academics with recognized expertise in matters of human rights. This working group will be required to prepare, under the aegis of the Minister of Equality of Opportunity and the Minister of Justice, a draft cooperation agreement on the establishment of a federal human rights institute serving as an umbrella structure. This proposal will be submitted no later than 30 June 2013. This structure will include the inter-federal Centre for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle against Racism and Discrimination, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men and the federal centre for the analysis of migration flows, the protection of the fundamental rights of foreigners and the fight against trafficking in human beings, and it will assign sufficient prominence to target groups such as children, persons with disabilities, etc. Account will be taken of other existing bodies, at the federal level and at the level of the federated entities.

2. **Gender mainstreaming**

43. At the federal level, the gender mainstreaming law of 12 January 2007 seeks to ensure the structural mainstreaming of a gender perspective in government policy. The Institute monitors and supports such mainstreaming.

44. A royal decree establishing the composition, mandate and rules of procedure of an interdepartmental coordination group (GIC) was adopted on 26 January 2010. GIC is composed of representatives of federal ministers, civil servants and members of the Institute. It is mainly responsible for promoting interdepartmental collaboration, disseminating instruments and methods that can be used to implement the law, approving a federal plan at the start of the legislative session and approving reports provided for by the law. The members of this group are trained in gender mainstreaming.

45. Gender budgeting consists in analysing public expenditure and income from a gender perspective. In 2010, a circular specifically devoted to gender budgeting was adopted by the Council of Ministers. As from 2008, the circular on the preparation of the federal budget also contains a section on gender budgeting. The Institute has published a

gender budgeting handbook, which sets out the underlying principles and the relevant legislation and directives.

46. A forthcoming royal decree is expected to establish the “gender test” referred to in the law. This test should serve as a means of evaluating the impact on the respective situations of women and men of proposals made to the Council of Ministers. A handbook on the application of the test will be issued with it.

47. A booklet containing a large amount of statistical data on the differences between men and women in Belgian society was published by the Institute in 2012. It will serve as a central tool in implementing gender mainstreaming at the Belgian federal level.

48. In 2008, the Institute held a series of five awareness-raising, information and training seminars for political and administrative decision-makers concerned by the application of the law of 12 January 2007, financed by the European Commission.

49. The Institute also edited a handbook on gender mainstreaming at the federal level and a booklet on gender mainstreaming in public procurement.

50. Lastly, in 2008, the Institute published and disseminated a document designed to serve as a guide to basic gender training for persons concerned with training. The purpose of this document is to facilitate the preparation of a gender training programme. It also established a database (VEGA) on male and female gender experts in various fields.

51. Since 2005, Flemish equal opportunity policy has been based on the open method of coordination (OMC) with a view to mainstreaming an equal opportunity perspective in all Flemish policy areas. Members of the Flemish government are expected to apply this method for the purposes of the 2008 equality of opportunity decree. Within the OMC framework, members of the government agree together on goals, after which they are individually responsible for pursuing those goals in their respective fields of competence. The Flemish Minister for Equality of Opportunity plays a coordinating role in this process.

52. The administrative Commission on Equality of Opportunity plays a central role in this process. It meets five times a year and is composed of representatives of all Flemish policy areas. It establishes plans of action, monitors progress and evaluates OMC goals.

53. The first OMC cycle began in 2006 with a set of goals being defined for 2006–2009, reflected in two action plans. A second cycle began for 2010–2014 and entailed the development of a number of indicators to measure progress.

54. Crosscutting gender policy focuses on the following strategic goal: the gender dimension as an organizing principle in our society. Three operational goals were approved:

- (1) Equal participation of women and men in various areas of social life;
- (2) Promotion of nuanced, non-stereotyped views;
- (3) Increased understanding of the situation of men and women and of the operation of gender mechanisms.

Action plans were developed for each of these goals, for example:

- (1) Administration: minimum of 33 per cent women in top management posts in 2015:
 - Education: elimination of sexual segregation in choice of studies;
 - Welfare: simplification of the combining of professional life and family life through increased availability of pre-school day care centres, with special attention to vulnerable groups (e.g. single-parent families);

- Employment: greater participation in the labour market of single parents, persons coming back into the job market and foreign-born women.
- (2) Media: promotion of nuanced, non-stereotyped views by way of information, awareness-raising and encouragement to media professionals:
- Welfare: Kind & Gezin applies a communication policy in which mothers and fathers occupy an equivalent position as educators.
- (3) Overall government policy: through survey on socio-cultural changes, gathering of data on the perception of men's and women's roles in society:
- Economy: gender-related data in enterprises (career, chances of success, etc.) are systematically updated;
 - Welfare: better understanding of the growing prevalence of women among the poor and development of an appropriate line of approach.

These sub-goals are developed in action plans evaluated by the Commission on Equality of Opportunity.

55. A project to mainstream gender in public policymaking has been implemented throughout the Ministry of the Brussels-Capital Region. In 2008, the Secretary of State for Equality of Opportunity commissioned a study on the best approach to gender mainstreaming in the policies of the Region. Following the study, administrative units were designated to play a pilot role in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their activities. The project is under way.

56. At the legislative level, the ordinance on gender mainstreaming in the policy lines of the Region was adopted unanimously, minus one vote, by the Parliament of the Region on 16 March 2012. This ordinance reflects the discussions that took place around the gender mainstreaming project. In addition, the Brussels-Capital Region calls every year for proposals for local community projects that include a significant gender dimension.

57. The community policy declaration 2009–2014 of the French Community stipulates that the government will integrate the gender dimension into all its policies.

58. In the Walloon Region, the Green Marshall Plan to stimulate the Walloon economy, approved on 3 December 2009, contains measures to promote gender equality such as support for female entrepreneurship or the combating of stereotypes in training and employment.

59. In June 2012, the Walloon government adopted a comprehensive equal opportunity plan. Under this crosscutting plan, each government minister undertakes to take steps to improve gender equality in his or her field of competence. The plan sets out 101 measures bearing on legislation, subsidies, pilot projects, research and structural reform. The comprehensive equal opportunity plan also has a "statistics" component which calls on the Walloon government not only to compile systematically statistics disaggregated by sex but also to undertake evaluations of progress achieved in respect of gender inequality.

60. Furthermore, the Walloon Institute for Evaluation, Future Studies and Statistics, in collaboration with the Walloon Council on Equality between Men and Women, has been working on the development of statistics disaggregated by sex through several publications, including, in 2010, a compendium of statistics "*Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes: photographie statistique*" (Equality between women and men: a statistical snapshot).

61. It may be noted that, through the implementation of concrete action plans, the various policy-making authorities have been steadily taking steps to measure the inequalities existing between women and men, by publishing brochures containing a number of indicators that show related trends.

3. Combating violence against women

(a) Mechanisms to combat violence against women

(i) *National action plan to combat partner violence and other forms of domestic violence 2010–2014*

62. In November 2010, Belgium adopted a new national action plan to combat partner violence and other forms of domestic violence (PAN) 2010–2014. This plan builds on the previous national action plan 2008–2009, which concerned only partner violence. Its field of action now also includes forced marriages, honour-related violence and female genital mutilation (FGM). Through this new plan linking together the federal State, the Communities and the Regions, Belgium has undertaken to implement more than 120 new measures to combat these various forms of violence.

63. In 2009, the Francophone governments also adopted a joint action plan to combat partner violence, broadening its scope to include other types of gender violence. This plan, which consists of 110 actions and measures, extends throughout the 2009–2014 legislature of the Regions and the Communities and constitutes their contribution to PAN 2010–2014. This Francophone plan is coordinated by the Directorate for Equality of Opportunity of the French Community.

64. A mechanism has been put in place to monitor and evaluate PAN, coordinated by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men. The mechanism consists of an interdepartmental group that meets every three months and consists of the departments and ministerial representatives concerned with the implementation of PAN and an expert group composed of field experts and representatives of the voluntary sector and academia. The expert group is required to report on the progress of measures under PAN with reference to what has been actually achieved and any further action that might be needed. A wide-ranging consultation was held in March 2012 to identify areas still presenting difficulties.

65. The basic objectives of PAN 2010–2014 are awareness-raising, training, prevention, protection, care of victims, treatment of offenders and implementation of an effective criminal policy. Both at federal level and at the level of the Communities, Regions, provinces and communes, huge efforts are being made to raise the awareness of the public at large and certain target groups in particular (toll-free helpline, awareness-raising campaigns, development of tools...), inform, reach out to and support victims (dedicated crisis line, brochures, Internet site, resource persons...) and develop the sense of responsibility of offenders. Some of these measures are spelled out in this part of the report. Reference should be made to article 5 with regard to measures relating specifically to female genital mutilation and honour crimes.

66. It is also to be noted that, in the light of General Recommendation No. 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and following the universal periodic review of Belgium, adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council on 21 September 2011, Belgium has undertaken to extend its national action plan to all forms of violence against women and girls. Work has already begun to that end.

(ii) *National security plan 2008–2011 and 2012–2015*

67. The national security plan 2008–2011 already called for an intensive and considered approach on the part of the public prosecutor's office and the police in matters of serious, non-organized violence. In the new national security plan 2012–2015, priority attention is given to domestic violence and violence against women. It is acknowledged therein that the police services have already taken the necessary steps for a considered, reactive response. Criminal policy directives on partner violence (COL 3/2006 and COL 4/2006, cf. above)

will continue to be applied and will be strengthened, while efforts, particularly proactive efforts, on the ground will be increased. The priority attached to domestic violence and violence against women requires a highly serious approach on the part of the police, which means that these forms of violence must be specifically addressed in security plans.

(iii) *National action plan “Women, peace and security” 2009–2012*

68. On the subject of action to combat violence against women in conflict situations, it may be recalled that in 2000 the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325. Member States were invited to develop a national action plan in order to give tangible effect to that resolution. At the Belgian federal level, the Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation coordinated a working group for the purposes of such an action plan. In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the Ministry of Defence, the Interior, Justice and Equality of Opportunity and the Commission on Women and Development also participated in the deliberations. This process culminated in the adoption of a national action plan entitled “Women, peace and security”, which sets out policy and action lines for the period 2009–2012.

(b) Policy to combat violence against women

(i) *Statistics on complaints and convictions for violence against women*

69. Belgium does not have any specific record of acts of violence against women, as the gender of victims is not systematically encoded. Nevertheless, some figures are available with regard to specific criminal acts, such as partner violence or sexual offences.

(ii) *Prevalence of physical, sexual and mental violence in Belgium*

70. A large-scale national study on the experience of women and men in the matter of gender-related physical, sexual and mental violence was conducted in 2010. According to the findings, 12.5 per cent of respondents had been subjected to at least one act of violence by their partner or ex-partner in the previous 12 months (14.9% of women and 10.5% of men).

(iii) *Measures to raise the awareness of victims*

71. A leaflet was prepared and translated into 17 languages in order to inform victims, and particularly foreign-born victims, about the phenomenon of partner violence and the possibilities of support and assistance. Distributed in more than 70,000 copies, it guides victims towards services that can assist and advise them in their own language. A play was written on the subject, as well as a handbook which provides professionals with a toolkit for detection. Numerous awareness-raising campaigns are conducted every year. In addition, a national Internet site on partner violence should be in operation in 2012.

(iv) *The training of professionals concerning violence against women*

72. Belgian magistrates receive training through the Institute of Judicial Training in respect of violence against women, particularly in couples. This focuses on legislation, guidelines and the application of alternative criminal mediation procedures. Police officers also receive basic training with a specific focus on the care of victims, including the victims of partner violence. Training in matters concerning partner violence also forms part of their rank training. Furthermore, awareness-raising and advanced training activities in respect of domestic violence have been carried out both in the hospitals and among general practitioners. Similarly, in the Walloon Region, special resource centres on conjugal and domestic violence are funded to provide training for professionals who are likely to come into contact with perpetrators and/or victims of conjugal violence.

(v) *Treatment of perpetrators*

73. Belgian has a detailed framework for providing suitable training and therapy to the perpetrators of partner violence, in the form of conditions imposed or proposed to the person concerned. This training or counselling may be directed towards, for example, aggression control or the learning of social behaviour or skills. The federal justice system subsidizes these projects, including the project "Time-out", which offers continuing training on aggression control in relations between (ex-) partners, with attention to the impact on children, and the not-for-profit association "Praxis", which organizes socio-educational training groups to track perpetrators of conjugal and domestic violence.

(vi) *Changes in the criminal policy mechanism concerning partner violence*

74. The mechanism established by circulars COL 3/2006 and COL 4/2006 was evaluated by the Criminal Policy Service. On that basis, proposed amendments to COL 4/2006 have since June 2012 been the subject of study within the working group of the College of Public Prosecutors responsible for following up the evaluation.

(vii) *Legislative amendments*

75. The law of 23 February 2012 extended the list of offences under article 458bis of the Criminal Code, which provides that persons bound by professional secrecy have a circumscribed and conditional right to report acts of domestic violence to the Crown Prosecutor. In addition, the law of 15 May 2012 introduced a new family home exclusion procedure to cover situations in which acts of violence have not yet been committed, providing for the possibility of very rapidly imposing a limited cooling-off period, irrespective of any criminal action that may or may not be taken following such acts.

(viii) *Criminalization of sexual violence*

76. The fact that sexual violence appears in Title VII of the Criminal Code (crimes and offences against family order and public morality) does not affect the priority given to the prosecution of such offences or how they are perceived. Moreover, it is technically difficult to introduce the proposed legislative amendment as that would require the amendment and renumbering of the many laws that refer to those provisions. If the Criminal Code, or the relevant part of the Code, is revised, such an amendment could be envisaged and, where appropriate, incorporated. Such a change would, however, be a complex undertaking for what would no doubt be a rather symbolic result.

(c) **Other advances in combating violence against women**

(i) *The client-centred service project ("Projet CO3")*

77. This pilot project, which is geared to the problem of domestic violence in the judicial district of Antwerp, covers three areas (assistance and welfare, police and justice) to create a physical environment in which these combine to provide appropriate all-round assistance. The fact is that the need for safety and the need for assistance often go hand in hand and that families subject to violence often require several kinds of help.

(ii) *Handbook on domestic violence: screening and the integrated approach*

78. This handbook was put together by several experts in collaboration with the Politeia Network for Citizenship and Democracy in Europe. It sets out screening procedures aimed at detecting partner violence, parental abuse and other forms of domestic violence and provides roadmaps/scenarios for dealing with the various forms of domestic violence. The focus then is on comprehensive, relevant and directly applicable practical information. It is

intended for all those who, in the exercise of their profession, may come into contact with domestic violence.

(iii) *Flemish policy for combating violence against women*

79. In March 2012, the Flemish authorities established the focal point “Abuse, Violence and Child Victimization”, which incorporates existing focal points and the care services provided by child abuse support facilities and general social aid centres, which deal with all forms of violence. A television spot was broadcast and street posters were put up showing child victims of violence.

80. Since 2009, the social orientation course that forms part of the integration programme provides information about gender-related rights, such as the prohibition of partner violence, the work-family balance, the right to dispose of one’s body (abortion and contraception), the prohibition of female genital mutilation, etc. Each year 12,500 persons follow the integration programme.

81. National Women’s Day organized on 11 November 2011 by the VrouwenOverleg - Komitee (VOK) was devoted to violence against women. The demands put forward on that occasion contained practical proposals for a better approach to sexual and partner violence.

82. In November 2011, domestic violence was the subject of all the “Klasse” periodicals (*Klasse* for teachers, *Kkasse* for parents, *Maks!*, *Yeti*) tailored to all the target groups (teachers, parents, young people). A frontline issue supplement was distributed with the monthly *Klasse* for teachers (circulation 200,000), which offers first-person accounts, contextual information, and practical suggestions on school management, educational materials, organizations and experts (www.klasse.be/leraren/eerstelijn.php).

(iv) *Francophone policy for combating partner violence*

83. The three Francophone governments (government of the French Community, the Walloon Region and the College of the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region) joined together to adopt a guidance note and a joint action plan against violence. The guidance note, adopted on 17 December 2009, constitutes the French Community’s contribution to the national plan of action to combat partner violence, extended to include other forms of gender-based violence (2010–2014). By coordinating their efforts within a unified framework, the three governments can best combine their capacities for prevention and for taking care of all those concerned – perpetrators, victims and witnesses. Setting out under five action lines the measures taken by all the Francophone entities to combat violence, the guidance note is in direct line with previous public policies in that it gives priority attention to partner violence, genital mutilation and forced marriage. The Directorate for Equal Opportunity is responsible for steering overall plan implementation. Two follow-up evaluations have been conducted within this framework.

84. Furthermore, in the French Community, a number of partnerships have been pursued, in particular with the Belgian Francophone network for the elimination of partner violence; Wallonia-Brussels/Quebec bilateral cooperation in education (pilot project in 2009–2010 and projected implementation in three schools in 2010–2011); development of a national Internet site devoted to partner violence; collaboration with the Delegate General for Children’s Rights on the subject of children exposed to partner violence, leading to a symposium on the topic on 14 December 2010. In addition, a toll-free number 0800 30 030 to report conjugal violence was created in 2009 and is listed in the parents’ book issued by the Birth and Childhood Office. An Internet site www.violencesconjugales.be, linked to the hotline, was established.

(v) *New concerted mechanism to combat conjugal violence in the Walloon Region*

85. Since 2008, this mechanism has enabled all those working on the ground with victims and perpetrators to join together in determining their methods of action, taking into account all the needs of those concerned, including children, and ensuring their safety. This overall mechanism, structured in accordance with the judicial districts, also serves to coordinate the action of social services with that of the police and the justice system. This mechanism is supplemented by a toll-free telephone number available to victims and to their friends and families, as well as to social service personnel. Moreover, a continuing training programme, organized by persons with expertise in the care of victims and perpetrators, is systematically provided for all those working in this area on the ground.

86. Since 2009, 15 shelters for adults in difficulty have been maintained in order to receive and look after victims of conjugal violence and their children. In addition, 13 services providing social assistance to litigants receive supplementary funding for the employment of a social worker working with victims and perpetrators. Six ambulatory care services for victims of conjugal violence are maintained and funded by the Walloon Region, while financing is also provided for a service specializing in the monitoring of perpetrators. The total annual budget for this mechanism is €2,583,000.

(vi) *Brussels regional coordination of efforts to combat violence*

87. In 2010, the regional coordination of efforts to combat partner violence was broadened to include domestic violence (female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, so-called honour crimes).

88. Since 2007, training has been provided for actors on the ground. Tools have also been developed to enable the various partners to be more fully informed. Thus, in 2010, a regional directory was compiled of the individuals and bodies concerned, while in 2011 a teaching tool was developed for future professionals graduating from higher institutes in Brussels and a booklet was re-issued on professional secrecy in respect of sexual mutilations.

89. Every year, awareness-raising days and symposia are organized. Moreover, awareness-raising campaigns on intimate partner violence among the young were conducted in 2011 and 2012.

90. Under urban district contracts for the renovation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, specific subsidies are also earmarked for issues relating to violence against women. In addition, exploratory studies have been undertaken to identify within the urban fabric possible sources of danger to women.

(d) The gender dimension in asylum policy

91. The Belgian authorities take into account the specific needs and vulnerability of certain specific migrants groups such as women or persons who have fled their countries because of gender-related persecution (forced marriage, FGM, honour-related violence, etc.).

92. Women asylum-seekers may ask to be interviewed by a female official both at the Office for Aliens and at the General Commissariat for Refugees and Stateless Persons (GGRA). Furthermore, the General Commissariat gives special treatment to applications for asylum filed by women or founded on gender-related concerns.

93. During the interview, the official (protection officer) is expected to create and maintain a climate of trust, in particular by stressing confidentiality. The official also asks the person to state not only the reasons for leaving the country of origin but also any grounds for fear in the event of a return. The interviews are held individually so that any

gender-related violence may be reported, even if the application for asylum is linked to that made by another member of the same family. In cases where detrimental facts are disclosed, CGRA gives assurances that no mention will be made of them in any decision and that they will remain strictly confidential. In order to facilitate interviews, a day-care facility for children aged between 1 and 11 years is also available.

94. Since 2005, the gender unit set up within the General Commissariat has been fulfilling its functions, in particular by establishing guidelines for the processing of applications for asylum filed by women, taking into account the specificity and vulnerability of certain women asylum-seekers and ensuring more standardized application of those guidelines. Specific prevention and monitoring measures may also be taken by CGRA to continue to protect the physical integrity of girls at risk of FGM where that has been recognized to have been the reason for seeking asylum (monitoring of girls by way of a medical document certifying that there has been no mutilation). In 2011, 14.4 per cent of CGRA decisions concerned applications founded on one or more gender-related concerns.

95. Since 2009, new CGRA protection officers have received a general briefing on gender issues in the asylum procedure. Since 2010, they have also benefited from a day-long course of practical, specific training on the various kinds of gender-related applications for asylum. This training familiarizes protection officers with existing tools for the processing of files and offers them practical guidance for the preparation and conduct of interviews and for decision-making. Some protection officers receive specific training in interview techniques for persons who say that they have been raped or in matters relating to female genital mutilation.

96. Since September 2011, a new brochure “Women, girls and asylum in Belgium. Information for women and girls seeking asylum” has been made available to women asylum-seekers at CGRA and the Office for Aliens. Issued in nine languages, it contains information on aspects of the asylum procedure of relevance to women, gender issues, possibilities of assistance and support, etc.

97. Belgium has also been pursuing various lines of research into gender and migration issues. In 2010, a research project entitled “Asylum and migration: the reception of women in centres. Towards a gender-sensitive reception policy” was carried out by the Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad (Flemish Council of Women) in collaboration with the Council of Francophone Women of Belgium. In addition, a brochure “Asylum and migration: the reception of women in centres. Tricks and devices for a gender approach” was drafted on the basis of research. In 2011, a stocktaking of gender-related research in Belgian asylum and migration policy was also carried out by the Centrum voor Migratie en Interculturele Studies of Antwerp University. This stocktaking was supplemented by a brief survey of the related policies and good practices of other member States of the European Union, the European Commission and the Council of Europe and was followed by a series of recommendations. In 2012, these were transmitted to the competent authorities.

Article 4

Special measures

1. Implementation of affirmative action

98. Affirmative action through specific measures to compensate for any inequalities affecting a person or a group is explicitly provided for in all the laws enacted by Belgium to combat discrimination.

99. At the federal level, an implementation order for the law of 10 May 2007 is yet to be adopted.

100. The Flemish Community, in view of the fact that affirmative action is one of the most controversial aspects of anti-discrimination legislation, made a study of its acceptability in 2010. There is disagreement in regard to terminology, the type of measures, the legal conditions for authorized forms of affirmative action and their desirability. The study focused in particular on the prevailing case law of the highest judicial bodies.

2. Law on quotas in the boards of management of public companies and publicly-traded corporations

101. In 2010, women accounted for less than 7 per cent of the membership of boards of management of publicly-traded corporations in Belgium. Considering that self-regulation, declarations of intent or company governance codes were inadequate, the Belgian Federal Parliament adopted a law designed to ensure the presence of women in the boards of management of certain companies. This law provides for the establishment of a quota of one third of members of the least represented sex in the boards of management of publicly-traded private companies, within a time limit of six years for very large corporations and eight years for small and medium-sized companies and without time limit for public companies. It also stipulates that publicly-traded companies shall describe in their annual reports the efforts made to achieve the purposes of the law. Supporting measures have been taken, such as a subsidy for the establishment of the association “Women On Board”, which seeks to help women to gain access to high-level posts in Belgian companies.

Article 5
Sexually stereotyped roles and prejudices

1. Elimination of prejudices and gender stereotypes (art. 5(a))

(a) Studies relating to the issue of sexism

102. In 2008–2009, the Institute commissioned a study on sexism. This examined the link between sexism, stereotypes, prejudices and gender-based discrimination and led to consideration of whether a distinction could be made between acceptable and unacceptable acts, how the latter could be limited and how acts and areas of activity could be defined as sexist. One outcome of this research was a sociological definition of sexism. The Institute also commissioned a study on the image of women and men in advertising. The purpose of the study was, by way of a questionnaire submitted to women’s and men’s organizations and to advertising agents, to examine themes that created problems in the representation of women and men. It studied the nature of related complaints filed in Belgium and how they were handled by the Jury on Advertising Ethics (JEP).

103. Lastly, in 2010, in order to overcome the difficulties posed by complaints of sexism, which are not always covered by existing legislation (on gender-based discrimination), the Institute undertook a number of as yet unpublished studies on legal aspects of sexism (comparative law study and study on the framing of legislation to combat sexism). These studies will lay the foundations for a possible law on sexism.

(b) Partnership with the Belgian Jury on Advertising Ethics (JEP) and the Council on Advertising

104. Collaboration was established between the Institute and the Jury on Advertising Ethics. This Jury, which is composed of an equal number of representatives of the advertising sector and civil society, deals with advertising-related complaints. Its decisions produce effects. The Institute has been represented in the Jury since 1 July 2009. Concretely, one member of the Institute attends the Jury’s meetings every fortnight. The

aim is to take greater account of the gender dimension in the handling of complaints (and requests for prior opinion by JEP). The Institute was also involved in the work leading, in September 2010, to the adoption of a Charter on the representation of persons in advertising, which constitutes a voluntary moral commitment to the respectful, balanced and diverse representation of women, men and children in advertising.

105. In 2011, some 15.3 per cent of complaints handled by JEP concerned sexism in advertising, gender stereotypes, affronts to male or female dignity or advertising with sexual connotations (as against 18% in 2010). A qualified opinion was adopted in respect of 15 per cent of cases; in 30 per cent of cases – almost twice as much as in 2010 – it was decided to halt or modify the offending advertisement on grounds of social responsibility, human dignity or decency and good taste. As for complaints of sexist advertising addressed directly to the Institute, they represent only 6.7 per cent of the total number of complaints received.

(c) The Supreme Council for Audiovisual Communication and the Plan of Action for Equality and Diversity in Audiovisual Media in the French Community

106. In 2009, the French Community adopted a plan of action for equality and diversity in audiovisual media. This plan, which extends over three years and is designed along two lines (development of a barometer and publication of a panorama of good practices) is coordinated by the Supreme Council for Audiovisual Communication (CSA), which is the regulatory authority for audiovisual communications in the French Community. Within this framework, the Institute (having concluded a cooperation agreement with CSA) and the Directorate for Equality of Opportunity of the French Community have since 2010 been represented on the steering committee for the implementation of the plan of action for equality and diversity in audiovisual media.

107. The “barometer” produces a yearly quantitative record, based on a sample week, of how men and women, along with other components of diversity (ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, young people, elderly persons), are represented in television programmes broadcast in the French Community. The purpose of this barometer is to provide an overview of media representation of diversity and equality in the audiovisual production of the French Community, which can serve to raise the awareness of audiovisual channel directors and operators. At the request of the steering committee, the Institute also carried out in 2011 an analysis under the title “Spotlight on women politicians” on the representation of women politicians in audiovisual media.

108. The “Panorama of good practices” introduces, highlights and encourages any initiative, approach or practice developed in the audiovisual sector that can enable all the players concerned to advance collectively. This publication, resulting from a large number of meetings with media professionals, identifies obstructions, explores existing solutions and proposes ways forward.

(d) Study on young people and sexist stereotypes

109. A French Community study carried out in 2006 on the absorption by young people of the sexist stereotypes carried by the media revealed a high level of absorption. They are big consumers of television programmes and the ones that they prefer (TV series, clips, animated cartoons) often convey sexist stereotypes. It was therefore necessary to make them realize the importance of a critical attitude towards the media, to which end a strip cartoon made with Fred Jannin and Catheline was disseminated under the title “*Stéréotype toi-même*” (“Mind your own stereotype”).

110. Since January 2009, “Mind your own stereotype” campaign material has been distributed to primary and secondary schools and institutes of education in the French Community and to any institution, association or individual on request.

(e) Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)

111. This study, published every five years, focuses on women’s presence in world media news coverage on a single day. The quantitative study was conducted in late 2009 and early 2010 and the qualitative study in the second quarter of 2010. The final results were presented in late October 2010.

(f) The Genderklik Campaign

112. The Genderklik awareness-raising campaign carried out in the Flemish Community in collaboration with several female civil society partners seeks through a variety of projects and activities to develop gender awareness in society and to reveal the impact of gender as an organizing mechanism. The actual situations of men and women can only be truly changed if citizens are aware that those situations are a consequence of gender mechanisms.

113. The first stage in the campaign consisted in the development of a dynamic, interactive Internet site, www.genderklik.be, which explains the concept of gender and how gender is acquired throughout life, in both the private and the public spheres (education, workplace, sports, relationships, language, religion, crime). It also provides a thumbnail description of activities organized for the campaign.

114. A competition was also held for art students. The winning project will be used during the second stage of the campaign.

115. On the occasion of International Women’s Day on 8 March 2012, a major awareness-raising campaign was mounted, targeting schools, the media and the cultural sector.

116. The Genderklik campaign gives special attention to education, in particular sexually neutral study options, the promotion of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, gender stereotypes in nursery and primary school, etc.

(g) Development of an expert database

117. The Flemish authorities have developed a database covering experts from groups that traditionally receive scant attention from the media, namely, women, foreigners or persons with disabilities. Through this project, the Flemish authorities want to make these groups more visible in the media without recourse to stereotypes. The expert database, which was officially launched in March 2008, contains a thousand or so names that can be used by journalists and programmers looking for experts in a wide range of subjects. The database also contains contact details of organizations concerned with gender issues, homosexuals and bisexual persons,¹ women’s groups at risk, transgender persons, foreign-born persons and persons with disabilities. The Flemish Journalists’ Association (VVJ) has been closely involved in the development of the databank. Journalists and programmers can log in free of charge and consult the databank on the following site: www.expertendatabank.be. At the end of 2011, a brochure “*Voorbij het cliché*” (“Beyond cliché”) was published to encourage journalists to introduce greater nuance into their depictions.

¹ Designated by the acronym “Holebi” (“Homsexuel(le), lesbienne ou bisexual(le).”

(h) Awareness-raising measures for new Flemish immigrants

118. Among new Flemish and Brussels immigrants, although women have a fairly well-established place in the world of work, their domestic roles, like those of men, usually follow a more traditional pattern. Subsidies have been granted for a number of projects aimed at raising the awareness of these groups:

- The not-for-profit organization Ella (Gender and ethnicity expert centre) organized a tour for young people, entitled “Love etc. on tour” and has collaborated with various schools subsidized by the Flemish Community in Flanders and Brussels. Workshops have provided young people with an opportunity to talk about relationships, their future partners, role distribution in the family, sexual orientation, pre-marital relations, mixed couples, etc.
- The project “Steunpunt Relaties” (Relationship support) was launched within the Federation of Moroccan Associations. Within this framework, foreign-born boys and girls have been able to engage in fruitful encounters around the subjects of relationships, sexuality and gender on the basis of an interpretation of gender in the Koran. This project has also served as a source of support for foreign-born women with relationship problems. This support, to which considerable recourse has been had, offers a bridge towards more conventional assistance.
- Under the title “Identity and relationships”, a debate has been triggered within the Muslim community on various interpretations of the Koran, with special attention to gender interpretations. A week’s training was organized, with talks by eminent speakers on subjects drawn from the lives of foreign-born young people and interactive workshops on the question of method in Koranic management and interpretation. In addition, a Muslim network was formed to reach out to young people with the necessary information and method.
- The publication “*De eerste stappen*” (“First steps”) was prepared as part of the effort to emancipate the difficult-of-access group of disadvantaged foreign-born women. This practical handbook intended for those working with vulnerable children and parents aims to encourage educational support personnel to adapt their working methods to the needs of poor foreign-born families and to give due attention to the emancipation-related needs of mothers.

(i) Crosscutting policy to promote a balanced, non-stereotyped representation of men and women in the Flemish Community

119. The goal of promoting balanced, non-stereotyped representation has also been adopted as one of the goals of the open method of coordination. The various Flemish departments have taken concrete measures to achieve it.

120. The Internet site of the Culture, Youth and Media department lists a number of sites for persons interested in gender and media issues.

121. The project “*Wereld aan je voeten*” (“The world at your feet”) seeks to encourage young people to pursue technical training in higher education without regard for gender stereotypes, by way of examples and models.

122. The Wellness, Public Health and Family Department runs a major campaign on health-care training and professions (academic year 2011/12) through TV spots, an Internet site (www.ikgaervoor.be) and a promotion tour. It is aimed at young secondary school leavers and persons considering a career change and gives special attention to men. By reproducing first-hand accounts from men involved in care work and providing an FAQ section on the Internet site, the department hopes through this campaign to attract men to the health-care professions.

123. While the Flemish authorities have not established quotas, they wish to serve as an example with regard to women and the world of work by setting quantitative goals to be achieved: 33 per cent of middle-level and managerial posts occupied by women in 2015. The responsible official in the Emancipatiezaken (Emancipation service for Flemish public sector personnel) gives particular attention to stereotypes and the representation of women in the workplace and endeavours to bring about a change in behaviour by introducing the female dimension into managerial posts.

2. Elimination of customary practices (art. 5.a)

124. It may be recalled that the national action plan (PAN) 2010–2014 was expanded to take in such phenomena as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-related violence, thereby demonstrating Belgium's determination to step up its efforts to combat these phenomena.

(a) Policy for the prevention of female genital mutilation

125. Belgium considers that legislation and punishment are not the most suitable means of putting an end to female genital mutilation. This is borne out by the fact that very few cases have been reported to the judicial authorities, notwithstanding the legislation and the establishment of a specific FGM registration code in the databank of the College of Public Prosecutors. Three cases were opened within the jurisdiction of the the Liège Court of Appeal in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and one in Brussels, and so far none has reached the courts. This shows the need for better coordination among the various services concerned and for training and awareness-raising in the medical world.

126. Belgium has therefore opted for a holistic approach to FGM, with particular attention to prevention and comprehensive care for victims. In this context, risk identification and awareness-raising among professional groups and the public at large are very important. Several subsidized civil society organizations, such as the not-for-profit organizations GAMS and INTACT, are engaged in action on the ground to eliminate FGM through prevention measures, awareness-raising, training and outreach to target communities.

127. Several publications have also been devoted to various aspects of FGM: a brochure on professional secrecy and a guide for the professions concerned. The problem of FGM is also included in the university medicine curriculum.

128. In 2010, a study on the numbers of women having undergone excision and girls at risk of excision in Belgium was carried out in response to the recommendations of the European Parliament that efforts should be made to improve statistics in that area. From this it emerges that the number of women and girls originating from a country where FGM is practised was estimated to be 22,840, of whom 6,260 were believed to have "already very probably undergone excision" and 1,975 to be "at risk".

129. In the French Community, the Birth and Childhood Office contributed to a research report under the leadership of the AIDS Observatory in Belgium on behalf of the Belgian Group for the Abolition of Female Sexual Mutilation (GAMS) with a document entitled "Excision and migration in Francophone Belgium". GAMS has also tried to make parents think about what they are passing on to their children through a project entitled "What am I transmitting to my daughter?". This project had two main strands: a study on the reasons for the persistence of excision in the immigrant population of African origin and on possible levers of change and a national awareness-raising campaign "No excision for my daughter! No excision for my sister!" to avert the risk of excision during vacations in the home country. In addition, the Directorate for Equal Opportunity has for many years supported GAMS in its efforts for prevention and attitude-changing. Since 2010, it has also

been supporting the association INTACT, which seeks to take and support any action, particularly in the legal and judicial fields, to abolish FGM and any harmful “traditional” practice more generally affecting the health of women and children, including early or forced marriage.

130. Under the national action plan, the Walloon Region has given priority to the development of assistance for women victims of genital mutilation who are often also victims of forced marriage. For two years, the Walloon Region has been supporting a family planning centre which provides such persons with psychological, legal and social assistance. More recently, employment aid has been granted to three not-for-profit organizations to develop more extensive assistance for victims of genital mutilation.

(b) Policy against honour-related violence

131. To support and coordinate two pilot projects – launched respectively in Malines and Verviers – and propose guidelines in respect of honour-related violence, a working group established within the College of Public Prosecutors asked the criminal policy service of the Federal Public Justice Service to undertake an exploratory study to arrive at a fuller understanding of the subject. This comparative policy study led in 2011 to a number of recommendations which are now to be discussed and analysed.

132. In December 2011, the first Belgian empirical study of the phenomenon of honour-related violence (commissioned by the Federal Public Service of the Interior and the Institute) was concluded. While being complex, this type of violence is considered by most of those having to deal with it on the ground as a specific phenomenon, requiring a specific approach. The study sets out recommendations concerning the definition and conceptualization of the term “honour-related violence” and the framing of an effective, comprehensive and integrated policy approach. It makes practical recommendations for swifter detection of these forms of violence and provision of appropriate assistance. On the basis of this work, the goal is now to define a policy for combating and preventing honour-related violence through a strategic, multidisciplinary plan engaging all stakeholders. Emphasis will be placed on cooperation and exchange of information between the personnel concerned, their training, detection and prevention of the phenomenon, support for victims and, lastly, the monitoring of perpetrators.

3. Measures in family education (art. 5b)

(a) Measures taken through the Birth and Childhood Office (ONE)

133. In the French-speaking Community, the Birth and Childhood Office has a general mission of providing support for children in and in relation to their family and social environment. It is also tasked with parent support measures and health promotion. In 2010, 14,466 mothers-to-be were registered for prenatal consultations and nearly 60,000 babies were registered in child care clinics, as were 159,116 children up to the age of six.

134. In the field of parent support, the Office has distributed a logbook “On becoming a parent” to all parents, broadcast television spots and conducted annual campaigns on specific topics.

(b) Study on paternity leave

135. In 2011, the Institute published a study on paternity leave aimed at better understanding any obstacles that may be encountered by workers. The study shows that the number of fathers taking such leave increased by 10 per cent between 2006 and 2008 and that 81.3 per cent of fathers used their paternity leave. However, 10.8 per cent of fathers said that it had been difficult for them to take paternity leave.

136. One of the recommendations of the study concerns the importance of awareness-raising and information for fathers with regard to leave. This is an ongoing task of the Institute, which it carries out, in particular, by speaking in symposia and seminars and informing citizens. Moreover, the Institute and the Federal Public Employment Service organized a symposium for workers and employers in November 2011.

(c) **Balancing working life with family life: a question of gender equality**

137. In 2007, on the occasion of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, a major multimedia campaign was launched on the combination of working life and family life, entitled “MV United”. Its purpose was to encourage discussion on equality of opportunity between men and women with reference to the balancing of paid work and family life. This campaign, conducted through two television programmes, two magazines, various projects and a website, was the first such campaign by the Flemish authorities aimed at stimulating discussion on equality of opportunity.

138. Within the framework of the national action plan (in coordination with the Federal Government and the other governments), the Flemish equality of opportunity unit took up the challenge of “*Tien Dagen Gelijke Kansen*” (“10 days for equality of opportunity”). It supports 11 projects for a total amount of €98,100.

139. The campaign “*Gezinnen onder druk*” (“Families under pressure”) carried out in 2008 focused on the role of women and men in traditional and modern families. The aim was to learn how families managed to reconcile work and family life at home, how they would like it to be balanced and to show the population the need for a change in the perception of the roles of men and women in families and in society. The questionnaire was widely circulated through various channels (Internet site and on paper) and the results were published in a brief report as part of a communication campaign.

140. Every year, the *Genderjaarboek* spotlights the “wage gap – career gap” issue and the various related topics and policy areas. One edition of the *Vlaams Genderjaarboek* always includes an essay, a section containing statistical data and a policy section in the form of a monitor. In 2008, the main focus was on the work-family balance (and the role of fathers).

Article 6

Trafficking

1. Measures to combat all forms of trafficking in women and children

(a) **Policy framework**

141. Article 433quinquies of the Criminal Code defines trafficking in human beings as the fact of hiring, conveying, transferring, sheltering or receiving a person and assigning or transferring control over that person for the purposes of any of the following forms of exploitation: sexual exploitation of adults and minors; economic exploitation under working conditions contrary to human dignity; exploitation of begging; removing or allowing the unlawful removal of organs or tissues; causing a person to commit a crime or an offence against his or her will.

142. A national action plan to combat trafficking in human beings (TEH) was adopted in 2008 for a four-year period. It includes proposals for changes in laws and regulations and measures relating to awareness-raising, prevention, punishment of traffickers and suitable protection for victims, with specific measures for minors. The plan also covers issues of coordination, information-gathering and policy evaluation.

143. A new action plan was prepared, based in particular on a monitoring chart showing the implementation status of the previous plan, current concerns and the opinions of the various services involved. On 22 June 2012, the Minister of Justice and the Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration submitted to the Council of Ministers a new action plan, which offers a practical approach to the issue for the coming two years. This new plan is more pragmatic and more concrete than the previous one. It is framed by concerns about victim protection, detection, and the prosecution and conviction of traffickers. It contains 19 new proposals for realistic, short-term measures. A stricter policy for the prosecution of traffickers and their accomplices, awareness-raising campaigns and improved protection of victims are some of the initiatives set out in the new action plan.

144. Directive COL 01/2007 of the Minister of Justice against all forms of trafficking in human beings stresses the obligation to respect the rights of victims, even if they have violated Belgian law. It establishes in each judicial district special magistrates for trafficking in human beings, provides for coordination meetings for all those involved on the ground and contains a list of 70 indicators of trafficking offences for more effective identification of the phenomenon. A circular has been issued by the Minister of Justice, the Minister of the Interior, the Secretary of State for Migration and Asylum Policy and the College of Public Prosecutors on trafficking in human beings (COL 4/2011) and another by the College of Public Prosecutors on action to facilitate illegal immigration (COL 10/2010).

145. Like the Security Plan 2008–2011, the new National Security Plan 2012–2015 lists trafficking in human beings among the 10 criminal phenomena to be combated on a priority basis.

(b) Statistics on trafficking in human beings

146. The latest data available on police and judicial action and on victims were included in the 2010 annual report of the Centre for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle against Racism. The Aliens Office also has specific statistical data on victims of trafficking.

(c) Measures to raise the awareness of victims and train professionals

147. Awareness-raising and information campaigns are carried out in the countries of origin of victims both by the Belgian development cooperation service and by the Office for Aliens. Their purpose is to inform people, particularly women and children, of the risks they run and of the practices of traffickers. A flyer was produced in 2009 to inform employment visa applicants of the existence of networks of exploiters and to provide them with the contact details of services that can assist victims. It is available in the six diplomatic missions of the countries most concerned by trafficking. In collaboration with special reception centres, a brochure has been issued to make doctors and hospital social workers aware of the symptoms that may be presented by the victims of trafficking so that they can respond appropriately.

148. In 2011, the Judicial Training Institute provided magistrates with training in respect of trafficking in human beings. The federal police force organizes information sessions and publishes tools for law enforcement services in order to facilitate investigation and victim identification.

(d) Measures to protect and assist victims

149. Police and inspection services lead the way in detecting the signs of a person who has been subjected to trafficking. They are required to inform victims that they can benefit from protection status and guide them towards special reception centres for the accommodation and assistance of victims of trafficking. These centres are subsidized by the public authorities and their personnel often receive the requisite training. They have at their

disposal a safe house in a discreet location and work with multidisciplinary teams which, in consultation with the victim, draw up a plan of medical, psychological, social, administrative and legal assistance. These centres have sole authority for requesting residence papers or permits or their extension from immigration services and they may institute legal proceedings on behalf of victims. A draft royal order on the recognition of these centres specializing in the care of victims is being prepared.

150. The entire protection system is regulated by ministerial circular of 26 September 2008, which sets out procedures for identifying, referring cases to courts and sheltering and assisting potential victims, and lists conditions for being granted victim status. The circular also specifies the role of all those involved in the various stages of the procedure: police and inspection services, Office for Aliens, special reception centres for victims of trafficking in human beings, public prosecutors and judge advocates. It also incorporates specific directives concerning unaccompanied foreign minors who are potential victims of trafficking (appointment of a guardian, assistance to the minor and cooperation of the appropriate services). This circular was evaluated in 2011 by the officers of the interdepartmental coordination unit for the fight against trafficking in human beings. Following review, each recommendation was entrusted for implementation to the appropriate services. The results of the evaluation were taken into account in the preparation of the new action plan. An evaluation focusing specifically on minors is still ongoing, it being considered necessary to follow a particular methodology in their case.

151. On the ground, there have been difficulties with interpreters. The matter has been placed in the hands of an ad hoc working group of the interdepartmental coordination unit. It has made specific recommendations in regard to trafficking, which have been implemented (federal police testing of the United Nations Victim Translation Assistance Tool, or VITA) and other more general recommendations concerning interpreters in judicial proceedings, which have been forwarded to the competent services.

(e) Strengthening of international cooperation

152. Belgium has concluded agreements on police cooperation in combating trafficking in persons with States of origin of victims and/or traffickers (in particular, Moldavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Morocco). Liaison officers – Belgians abroad (in particular, in Italy, Thailand and Albania) and foreigners in Belgium – in consultation with magistrates investigating cases of trafficking, collaborate in the simultaneous arrest of groups of offenders. The federal police are often involved in projects implemented by other Belgian services in cooperation with countries of origin of victims of trafficking.

153. Trafficking in human beings may constitute crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes (articles 136bis et seq. of the Criminal Code). The Belgian authorities cooperate fully with their foreign counterparts in the prosecution of offenders and, where appropriate, with international tribunals.

2. Other steps taken to combat the sexual exploitation of children

154. The law of 13 November 2011 amends the legislation to improve the approach to sexual abuse and pedophile acts in a relationship of authority. It follows on from the work of a special commission on the treatment of sexual abuse and pedophile acts in a relationship of authority, particularly in the Church. It contains a series of criminal and procedural amendments to combat sexual abuse more effectively, in particular extension of the statute of limitation to 15 years in cases of serious sexual offences against minors, mandatory audiovisual recording of hearings if the minor has been a victim or witness of sexual offences and extended speaking rights for persons bound by professional secrecy.

155. Furthermore, a Flemish forum on child abuse was inaugurated on 29 March 2011. Its role is to monitor implementation of the protocol of 30 March 2010 on child abuse – justice/well-being – and make recommendations on approaches to child abuse.

156. With regard to child sex tourism, the federal authorities, non-governmental organizations and private and public companies collaborate in the prevention of child prostitution abroad through a cooperation agreement. Awareness-raising campaigns have also been conducted in this connection.

157. In 2009, Child Focus carried out a study for the Flemish Community, entitled “On the Internet tightrope: an exploratory study on young people, the Internet and paid sex”. Hitherto, studies revealed juvenile prostitutes in traditional prostitution settings. Child Focus found that a new “hidden” form of child prostitution had emerged with the new information and communication technologies and drew attention to this development and the attendant risk of troubled sexual behaviour.

158. A new awareness-raising campaign against the sexual exploitation of children was launched in 2007 and 2010, following on from those in 2004 and 2005. A leaflet was produced and an Internet site (www.stopprostitutionenfantine.be, www.stopkinderprostitutie.be) was developed for the purpose. In 2007, a European conference was held on “Travelling abusers in Europe”, bringing together the travel sector, non-governmental organizations and police services. In 2010, the theme of the campaign was “When you’re travelling, get the full picture. Don’t close your eyes to child prostitution”. Within this framework, posters and brochures were disseminated in stations, airports and catering establishments and in 130 Belgian embassies, consulates and missions abroad.

159. Mention may also be made of the support given by the French Community to various women’s organizations for the organization of an international symposium on “Prostitution and deception”, held in Brussels in December 2011.

Article 7

Political and public life

1. The presence of women in legislative assemblies and government

160. Since 2002, the Belgian Constitution has provided for measures to promote the equal access of men and women to elective and public office (art. 11bis). Several laws have accordingly been adopted to increase the presence of women in legislative assemblies. These laws prohibit political parties from presenting electoral lists in which the difference between the number of candidates (designated candidates and alternates) of each sex is greater than one. They stipulate that the first two candidates on each list must be of a different sex. If political parties do not comply with these provisions, the lists are invalidated. The legislator has also adopted measures to ensure the presence of persons of either sex in all the governments of the country.

161. Similar regulations have been adopted by the Flemish Community, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region for local (provincial and communal) elections. On 15 March 2012, the Brussels Region amended its legislation to ensure the equal and rotating presence of men and women in all the lists of candidates for communal elections as from 2018.

162. The Institute systematically analyses the results of federal, regional and European elections from a gender perspective. There has been a clear increase in the presence of women in political life, although it is not yet equal to that of men.

163. In 2009, on the occasion of the Flemish and European elections, a campaign was launched on the theme “*Denk niet cliché, stem niet cliché*” (“Don’t think in clichés, don’t vote in clichés”) in order to make voters aware of the importance of diversity in politics.

2. Presence of women in government departments and in advisory or managerial bodies

164. The Belgian federal administration is organized on the basis of four levels, corresponding to different degrees of qualification (A, B, C and D, from the highest to the lowest qualification). In 2012, there were 42.3 per cent women in level A posts (as against 37.2% in 2006), 50.6 per cent in level B posts (as against 45.8% in 2006), 53.8 per cent in level C posts (as against 59.5% in 2006) and 65.4 per cent in level D posts (as against 51.4% in 2006). Overall, male-female distribution in the federal administration is 47.3 per cent men (as against 50.1% in 2006) and 52.7 per cent women (as against 49.9% in 2006). These figures show a distinct rise in the proportion of women in the federal administration between 2006 and 2012. This increase concerns levels A and B, while at levels C and D the proportion of women declined. Women remain in a clear majority at levels C and D, while they are just beginning to be in the majority at level B and remain in a minority at level A. In managerial and supervisory posts, there were only 27 women for 157 posts, or 17.2 per cent in 2011 (as against 23 for 184 posts, or 12.5% in 2006). At the highest level, only one woman chairs a management committee (one post in 17, or 5.8%).

165. On 11 May 2012, the Council of Ministers approved a proposal by the Minister for Equal Opportunity and the Secretary of State for the Civil Service, setting quotas for high-level women civil servants. As from 2012, at least one public sector manager in six must be a woman. Following this proposal, at least one sixth of the personnel of each department should be women in 2012. In 2013, the proportion should rise to at least one third. Departments that fall short of the required standards should give preference to women candidates in cases of equivalent rating. Once the goal has been achieved, the measure will be suspended.

166. Various initiatives have been undertaken in the federal civil service to increase the presence of women. “Top skills” is a project designed to encourage women to apply for management posts by inviting them to participate in a management selection simulation exercise, after which they receive feedback. Three such exercises have been staged since 2009. Evaluation of the project has confirmed its effectiveness.

167. “Felink” is a network established by the federal authorities in 2006 to provide support for women in the federal civil service in the development of their professional connections, in their personal fulfilment and in their careers. Felink also plays a role in making management aware of gender equality issues. “Selection and Diversity” training is mandatory for all experts forming part of the federal civil service selection board (“Selor”) and for all external selection experts who follow the Selor certificate course. One of the goals of this training is to ensure that men and women have equal access to all selection procedures.

168. Furthermore, part-time experience now counts as full-time experience in all selection processes and special attention is given to gender in recruitment notices. To ensure that the content of post descriptions is gender-neutral, the Federal Personnel and Organization Department commissioned an analytical study of post descriptions from this angle. The analysis resulted in recommendations which will be incorporated into post description mapping for office-holder posts.

169. In 2008, the Institute published a study entitled “Women at the top”. This study analyses the representation of women and men in high office, in companies, in workers’ and employers’ organizations, in the media, in academic bodies, in professional associations, NGOs, politics, the judiciary, the army, the civil service and the national bank.

170. Two royal orders were adopted in 2010 for the implementation of the law of 3 May 2003 aimed at promoting the balanced presence of men and women in bodies performing advisory functions. This legislation is currently being put into effect.

171. A Flemish Authority decree of 13 July 2007 concerning the presence of women and men in advisory and administrative bodies stipulates that no more than two thirds of the membership of advisory, managerial or administrative bodies of the Flemish authorities may be of the same sex. If this proportion is not respected, the deliberations or advisory opinions of the body are not valid. Exceptions may be granted on request. The VLIOM (Vlaamse Instellingen, Organen en Mandaten) database was set up to monitor the composition of the advisory and managerial bodies of the Flemish authorities. At the end of 2011, the database covered 1,905 bodies, of which 497 were required to comply with the rules laid down in the decree. Of these bodies, 27.8 per cent were of balanced membership and 18.9 per cent were not of balanced membership; no information was available concerning 53.5 per cent of the bodies.

172. The French Community adopted a similar decree in 2002; its implementation was evaluated in 2006.

173. Within the Flemish administration, 29 per cent of middle-level management posts are held by women (20% in 2001; 26% in 2009). The goal is that, by 2015, 33 per cent of senior and middle-level management posts should be held by women. The proportion of women in senior management posts appears to be unmoving at 24 per cent. In order to promote promotion prospects for women, the “Emancipation” service organizes network meetings under the Vlechtwerk project, which offers civil servants with management ambitions opportunities to enlarge their networks and improve their skills.

174. A decree of 15 December 2010 is designed to promote the balanced participation of women and men in the bodies of legal entities designated by the French Community. This decree stipulates that persons appointed or proposed by the Parliament, the government or a minister should be:

- Of a different gender when two persons are appointed or proposed;
- Of a different gender in one third of cases when three or more persons are appointed or proposed.

175. These rules also apply when a third party proposes appointments to the bodies of legal entities. They may be waived, however, when the third party is unable to comply with them. This decree also requires such bodies to submit an annual report to the government on the implementation of measures to promote the balanced participation of women and men in management bodies and on the gender distribution of occupied posts.

176. On 1 March 2012, the French Community adopted an action plan for diversity 2012–2015 aimed at promoting diversity within the government services of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The plan is designed for four target groups: women, persons of immigrant background, persons with disabilities and LGBT persons (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender).

177. For the Brussels-Capital Region, two ordinances have been added to the legislation in force on the civil service:

- An ordinance to ensure a policy of diversity in the Brussels civil service, for which the implementation order came into force on 15 March 2011;
- An ordinance to guarantee the balanced presence of women and men in the boards of management of para-regional public sector or public interest bodies.

Specific measures have been taken for the purposes of career management:

- Training was proposed to men and women at grade A 2 (First Attaché). This training led to an action plan to promote women to senior posts;
- In late 2010, a new project was launched entitled “Women as architects of their careers”. Training/discussion modules for women at grade A in the ministry were introduced.

178. Communication campaigns were carried out to establish the position of the ministry as an employer who respects the principle of diversity and equality of opportunity and selection jury members were given training in gender issues. Lastly, a specific review was made of certain posts in which men are overrepresented (e.g. park wardens).

179. On the 24 February 2011, the Walloon government adopted a comprehensive plan for equality which includes equality between men and women as one of its priorities. This crosscutting plan sets out specific measures for the promotion of women in public and political life. The Walloon Region continues to support the provincial coordination authorities in their local action to encourage and support initiatives to promote the active participation of women.

180. On 8 March 2012, the Walloon government adopted on first reading a preliminary draft decree making it mandatory for at least one third of the members of the management boards of all private bodies approved by the Walloon Region to be of the same sex.

181. On the same day, it adopted on first reading the diversity charter and the diversity action plan. A three-year series of measures is thus proposed within Walloon public services, in coordination with those of the French Community.

Article Representation

1. Women in Belgian diplomacy

182. In 2007, 12 out of 112 Belgian ambassadors were women, or 10.7 per cent; in 2012, the corresponding figures were 11 out of 114, or 9.65 per cent. These are the lowest percentages in the European Union. In 2007, there were 11.5 per cent women “international cooperation officers”, 30.2 per cent women consuls and 14.3 per cent women in the entire diplomatic corps. In 2012, the proportions were respectively 15.6 per cent, 35.9 per cent and 19.1 per cent, showing a significant increase in the presence of women in Belgian diplomacy.

183. Changes were made to the diplomatic service examination in 2007 so that more women could take it and more women have a chance of passing it. Information meetings, campaigns and open days were held, in which women diplomats were held up as models. The importance of growing numbers of women diplomats has been highlighted on the site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a result of these measures, more women have taken the diplomatic service examination and they had a higher pass rate.

184. Since 2012, trainee diplomats participate in a series of training modules which deal directly with the rights of women. These modules will be supplemented by a specific module on sexual and reproductive rights. The Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs organizes “Basic Generic Training” twice a year for persons participating in missions of the European Union and the United Nations; some of the modules used are devoted to gender issues (sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender mainstreaming, etc.).

2. Belgian women in international bodies

185. In 2007, 219 Belgians were working in the United Nations Secretariat, of whom 127 were men and 92 women, or 42 per cent women. In March 2012, 192 Belgians were working for the United Nations Secretariat, 124 men and 68 women, or only 35 per cent women. It thus follows that there was a 7 per cent decrease in the number of Belgian women in the United Nations between 2007 and 2012. The decrease was particularly marked in higher posts.

186. In the Council of Europe, Belgium has 16 women (6 grade A, 9 grade B, 1 L) out of 32 staff members, or 50 per cent. The proportion of Belgian women has not changed since 2011. In 2010, there were 15 Belgian women officials. To ensure that women are represented in the European Court of Human Rights, the Belgian State publicly advertises for candidates and draws attention to the fact that the Government gives particular importance to being able to nominate both women and men, as expected by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Belgian State sees to it that women are represented in the composition of the jury and in the interview and that the qualifications and experience of all candidates, men and women, are evaluated so as to ensure that they are all placed on an equal footing. The same procedure exists for the shortlisting of the Belgian member for the Committee against Torture of the Council of Europe.

187. In the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in 2012, there were 176 Belgian women serving in the international military and civilian staff and in the Belgian military and permanent missions to that organization.

188. Lastly, in 2012, there were 3,313 Belgian women in the European Commission, as against 2,520 men, or 56.8 per cent women. It should be emphasized that men remain over-represented in management posts.

3. Belgian women in international civilian crisis management missions

189. Since 2005, the Federal Public Justice Service has fielded nine men and three women to international civilian crisis management missions (European Union, United Nations); these have included nine magistrates and three penal experts.

190. In order to attract more women to international missions, the international unit of the federal police held a round-table meeting with the Belgian women police network on 3 February 2012. Presentations on that occasion included feedback from a woman officer who had previously formed part of a mission.

191. The federal police force intends to advertise explicitly for women candidates for the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) mission, and more particularly for the Gender/Family Protection Unit. This initiative was taken following the reception of a Palestinian delegation a few months ago (with the new Gender Adviser and EUPOL COPPS).

192. The federal police force has also put out a further general call for participation in international missions: nine of the 44 candidates who have been approved by their supervisors for this purpose are women. Some 10 per cent of police officers currently listed in the long-term international missions databank are women police officers.

193. The proportion of men and women of the federal police force who have participated in European Union civilian crisis management missions is also shown in an annex.

4. Women in the international representation of the Flemish Community

194. In 2009, 10 women and 45 men served as Flemish international representatives; in 2011, the figures were 9 women and 37 men. Where technology officers are concerned, the figures have remained unchanged since 2009, with one woman to five men. The Flemish government also has 11 representatives abroad, who include one woman (since 2011). Among deputy representatives, there are six women to three men. The proportion of men and women in subsidized internships in international organizations fluctuates. In 2007, there were 13 women and 9 men, and in 2011, 33 women and 22 men.

5. Women assigned to the Directorate for Foreign Affairs of the Brussels-Capital Region

195. Among the 15 A-grade officials assigned to the Directorate for Foreign Affairs of the Brussels-Capital Region (administrative unit in charge of the Region's international affairs) there are seven women, who include the Acting Director² and the Acting Delegate³ of the Region to the European Union. Of the economic and commercial attachés, 22 are men and 10 are women.

Article 9 Nationality

196. The Belgian State has no new information to share with the Committee concerning article 9 of the Convention. Women and men in Belgium have long enjoyed equal rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality.

Article 10 Education

1. The educational level of women and men in Belgium

197. On average, the youngest generations are increasingly well qualified. Educational levels decline with age: 44 per cent of young people between 25 and 34 are highly qualified, as against a quarter of the 55-64 age group and 14 per cent of those aged 65 and over. This trend affects women just as much as men, but the shift is even more marked among women. In the 65-and-over age group, only 11.3 per cent of women and 18.6 per cent of men are highly qualified. In the 25 to 44 age group women are often highly qualified (49% of the 25-34 age group and 43% of the 35 to 44 age group), while the educational level of men is generally average (42% and 40.5% respectively). Among those aged 45 to 54, the proportions of low-, medium- and highly-skilled persons are relatively balanced (from 30 to 35%) among both women and men. In scarcely more than two generations, the difference in educational level between men and women has then largely changed, to the advantage of the latter.

2. Promotion of equality between women and men in education

198. The governmental action programme for the promotion of gender equality, interculturalism and social inclusion adopted by the French Community in 2005 seeks to achieve directly several goals in respect of gender equality: recruitment of teachers of both genders, promotion of women in science and research, presence of both genders in

² Directrice f.f (faisant fonction).

³ Déléguée a.i. (*ad interim*).

vocational courses, gender training of teachers and support staff, review of proposed programmes of vocational training, elimination of sexist stereotypes in school textbooks. In addition, the community policy declaration 2009–2014 of the French Community makes special mention of gender and diversity awareness-raising in pre-and in-service teacher training, the underrepresentation of women in academic careers, encouraging higher institutes and universities to implement equality plans including goals as to the number of women teachers, the organization of gender training for nursery nurses so that children learn in their infancy about balanced relations between the sexes, continued gender mainstreaming in the training of teachers and teacher educators and the combating of gender bias in respect of jobs currently held by a majority of men or women.

199. In 2011, the French Community funded action-oriented research on the subject of inequalities between women and men in universities of the French Community of Belgium. Carried out by the Department of Applied Economics of the Université libre de Bruxelles, this research seeks to document the causes of gender inequalities in higher education courses and in academic careers, to highlight changes in student populations during the past 10 years in the various Francophone universities and to analyse the representation of women in the various stages of university careers in order to test the hypothesis of a spontaneous progression towards greater equality. The research is in three parts, namely: identification and analysis of trends; factors explaining the inequalities noted; and policies to be implemented in order to remedy them.

200. A working group composed of various political and administrative actors was also established to propose a series of measures to be taken and to make recommendations concerning the composition of juries and scientific commissions (parity), the inclusion of life experience in the evaluation of scientific documentation, the integration of gender issues into course content (higher education), provision for leave in special circumstances in all research organizations of the French Community and support for associations for the advancement of women in science careers.

201. The “boy-girl” dimension was integrated into the various collections of “educational indicators” from 2007 to 2011 (and continued in 2012).

202. Although young women are often more highly qualified than young men, horizontal sexual segregation in education has not decreased in the Flemish Community.

203. The reform of secondary education in the Flemish Community should allow young people to move easily towards a suitable area of general or specialized study on the basis of their interests and abilities. The new structure is so designed as to reduce gender impact to zero and combat sexual segregation in the choice of studies. Efforts also need to be made to eliminate prejudice in respect of particular occupations.

3. Integration of the gender dimension into education programmes

204. In the French Community, the programme commissions on general and technical subjects in ordinary and specialized education make efforts to ensure the inclusion of feminine as well as masculine forms in programmes (the equivalent in French of such personal gender designations as postman/postwoman). The “two-gender form” is also used in profiles.

4. The development of teaching tools

205. The French Community’s website includes a section on “Citizen education: gender equality”, which offers a number of useful links on the subject.

206. The various evaluation commissions in the French Community seek to promote a non-stereotyped image of women through the production of evaluation tools, in particular by banishing sexist stereotypes.

207. In the Flemish Community, the project “GenBasec” is designed to help schools cope better with gender issues. A handbook and a scenario have been developed for gender coaches and teams with a view to a strategy for change. A database outlines all the various kinds of existing gender-related projects, activities and literature. In addition, a number of balanced tools have been assembled and brought to the attention of the various educational players who work with or develop educational materials.

208. Gender issues have been a main focus of all publications in the “Klasse” collection. An anthology on the subject, “*Eerste Lijn*”, came out in January 2011 and was distributed free with “*Klasse voor Leerkrachten*” (200,000 circulation). It contains information and practical advice for teachers, educational guidance centres (*centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding*) and parents. All other magazines published by the Education Communication Agency also gave their attention to gender issues in January 2011.

209. “*Gender in de blender*” is a teaching tool for secondary education which includes theory, exercises and advice on gender and diversity issues (for parents, teachers and pupils).

5. The development of gender expertise in education

210. The French Community supported gender research on inequalities between girls and boys in education by selecting and financing seven projects in 2008 and 2009. The results concerning gender inequalities between pupils, their representations, future projects, etc., were presented at two symposia in December 2009 and May 2011 and were followed up through a number of publications.

211. The Education Department of the Flemish authorities concluded an agreement for each of the five Flemish universities. It thereby provided support to the universities for two academic years (2007/08, 2008/09) for their courses on gender and diversity issues and for the framing of a sustainable policy to anchor this cross-disciplinary field of scientific study. The current Minister of Education and Equality of Opportunity recently stressed the importance of gender studies in order to encourage universities to establish a common course on the subject.

6. Training and measures for teachers

212. In 2009, the French Community created an online awareness and training module for teachers, teacher educators and future teachers. Further funding has been released for this project which, since 2011, has been pursued in partnership with university institutes providing pre-service training for future teachers in order to develop gender mainstreaming in the teachers’ disciplines, advance gender mainstreaming in teacher training and test this module with target groups and ensure its dissemination after positive evaluation.

213. In addition, the Institute of In-service Training (IFC) has staged several training modules for teachers (“Towards a non-sexist education open to diversity”; “How to take the gender dimension into account in my teaching practice?”) and has integrated the gender dimension into most of its training courses.

214. The *Equality Guide*, developed in 2008 by a consortium of Flemish universities, is a handbook designed to combat inequality through gender-neutral human resource management tools in order to promote equal opportunity in personnel and career policy in universities.

215. Since 2008, the decree on university financing has contained a mobility and diversity parameter, on the basis of which special research funds are allocated. This parameter takes account in particular of the percentage of women in each university among initial appointments to an independent academic personnel grade. In 2012, this parameter will be adjusted and the new decree will include other measures in support of women. The indicators developed enable it to be ascertained whether the measures have a real impact and whether more women faculty members have actually been recruited.

7. Efforts to eliminate sexist stereotypes through school textbooks

216. Pursuant to a decree of 19 May 2006, a steering committee decides whether or not to grant its approval to school textbooks on the basis of the opinion issued by an advisory college composed of education inspectors of the French Community. The college delivers its opinion after checking that the textbook submitted to it meets a series of criteria, including respect for the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

217. In this connection, the Directorate for Equal Opportunity, in collaboration with the Education Inspection Services, brought out a publication entitled “Gender and textbooks. Promoting equality in school textbooks”. Intended for all educational stakeholders and all those involved in the school textbook production process, this publication seeks to develop a critical outlook in response to unbalanced stereotyped representations of men and women, girls and boys, to which some school textbooks may lend themselves. On the basis of recent research findings on the subject and the analysis of nearly 800 textbooks, this publication provides readers with keys to detect stereotyped or even sexist representations in order to promote the balanced representation of women and men in school textbooks.

218. In the Flemish Community, in 2010–2011, the LGBT umbrella organization Çavaria carried out a project entitled “*Open Boek*”, which provides tools for banishing gender stereotypes and heterosexual norms in the representation of children and young people. It has made educational publishers (of books and other materials) more aware of the influence of illustrations on the gender norms of children.

219. “Gender in the classroom” (“*Gender in de klas*” of the Rosa documentation centre) is a practical site for teachers and related personnel. This website offers advice and material for tackling gender issues at school and tools for gender screening by educational level and by subject.

8. Promotion of gender equality in school counselling services

220. The *Onderwijskaravan* (teaching caravan) project pays special attention to gender mechanisms and negative choices in education, which lead to many dropouts, particularly among young immigrants. To encourage young people to make thoughtful choices of courses of study geared to the future, contribute to greater equality of educational opportunity and more equal participation by immigrant boys and girls in all forms of education and areas of study, the mobile caravan offers families expert advice and information about study options.

221. Nearly one foreign-born girl in three leaves secondary school without diploma or certificate, as against 10 per cent among indigenous girls. The WINst FOR LIFE project, developed in collaboration with the not-for-profit association Ella, is designed mainly for teachers and pupils in technical and vocational education and seeks to help young immigrants in their choice of studies.

222. Flanders achieved the Lisbon goal of increasing by 15 per cent, in 2010, the number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology. However, the associated goal of a more balanced gender distribution was not achieved. The proportion of men enrolled in

mathematics, science and technology in higher education is one in three, as against slightly more than one woman in ten.

223. The goal of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) action plan 2012–2020 is that institutions, companies, science sectors and teachers should increase the number of STEM professionals by offering more attractive educational and career prospects. One of the eight policy lines of the action plan is designed to attract larger numbers of girls to STEM courses and professions.

224. In 2010, the Instituut voor Samenleving en Technologie (Institute for Society and Technology) launched the gender and technology initiative, which led to the publication of a collection of essays and the holding of a conference to draw attention to this subject in Flanders. The collection of essays was presented at an educational conference organized in the Flemish Parliament. In February 2012, the Institute organized a round table “Open for building. Gender, science and technology”, the aim of which was to make policy recommendations on the subject.

225. The Agoria Vlaanderen technology federation is seeking to persuade more girls to choose studies leading to employment in the technical and technological sector. “*Technogirls*” offers gender training to future teachers and gives them an opportunity to take part in workshops in technology companies on the occasion of Girls’ Day. Technology companies themselves participated enthusiastically in this project.

226. On 25 May 2011, Agoria Vlaanderen turned a spotlight on women already working in the technology sector. An event entitled “*Technoladies*” was staged in order to draw attention to the lack of women in the sector and to show that many role models already exist and that it is therefore necessary and sensible to put an end to the stereotyped representation of women and technology.

227. Since 2010 in the Province of Luxembourg, 2011 in Walloon Brabant and 2012 in the other provinces, the Walloon Region and the French Community have been financing the pilot activity “Girls Day Boys Day”, which seeks to arouse the interest of students in occupations traditionally exercised by the other sex.

9. Promotion of gender equality at university

228. Girls are in the majority (54.8%) among students in Belgian colleges and universities. They are, however, in the minority in certain fields such as science, mathematics, computer science and engineering. Moreover, men remain strongly in the majority among academic personnel, particularly in high posts.

229. Furthermore, each year a Women’s University Prize is awarded for a French Community university dissertation.

10. Exhibitions in schools

230. The French Community has supported and circulated three educational photo exhibitions for secondary schools and associations on the subject of “Women in the resistance”, namely: “Great women resistance fighters of our time”, “Respect” (trajectory of the French association “*Ni putes ni soumises*” (“Not tarts or slaves”)) and “Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo: 30 crazy years”.

231. The Women’s History Archives Centre has developed a web module based on the exhibition “Boy or girl: a life’s fate?.” This exhibition shows how ideas concerning masculinity and femininity have changed in Belgium over the past two centuries. The exhibition is available to secondary schools in the Flemish Community in order to show how far gender norms are linked to a particular time and place.

11. Development of gender expertise in education

232. The Directorate for Equality of Opportunity of the French Community shares its gender expertise in various ways, in particular by serving on the Education and Training Council, participating in meetings of the Education Steering Committee and the Education Commission of the Council of Francophone Women of Belgium, contributing to the Internet site “My job, my future” set up by the General Education and Scientific Research Administration, collaborating with the Institute of Continuing Training in in-service teacher training and taking part in the feasibility study on the establishment of an inter-university master’s degree in gender studies in Belgium.

12. School education in sexual and reproductive rights

233. The Community Policy Declaration 2009–2014 of the French Community includes among its goals for schools the gradual universalization, through family planning centres and in partnership with the Regions, of animation modules centred on emotional and sexual life.

234. A call was launched for projects in education for emotional and sexual life in order to inform and develop the awareness of adolescents regarding matters of sex, emotional attachment, relationships and love within the framework of the school, in cooperation with the Walloon government and the College of the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region.

235. A partnership was formed with the National Women’s Service in Chile (SERNAM) under the bilateral cooperation programme between Wallonia-Brussels and Chile. The partnership led to action-oriented research conducted by the Women’s University. The results were circulated and an Internet educational tool on sexual and reproductive rights (www.bougetapomme.be) grew out of the research.

13. Promotion of gender equality in nursery school

236. GenderatWork has brought out a brochure for nursery schools and nursery school teachers on gender in early childhood education in Flanders. Children develop their gender identity in nursery school. It is therefore also the responsibility of teachers to tackle gender appropriately in the classroom and to ensure that children do not think in stereotyped terms.

14. The wearing of religious symbols in schools

237. In the French Community, the wearing of religious symbols by pupils may be restricted by each school’s internal regulations. The wearing of religious symbols by the teaching staff may be governed by labour regulations in compliance both with decrees on “neutrality” and with the anti-discrimination decree. In Flanders, the school authorities are also the ones who decide whether or not to include in the school regulations permission for the wearing of veils or any other religious symbol.

15. Gender equality in sport

238. Within the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region, increased efforts have been made to ensure equal access to recreational and sports facilities in park areas in accordance with the specific needs of the various users (including girls). In addition, neighbourhood agreements include specific measures to promote access by women and girls to sports and recreational training and infrastructure. Associations receive subsidies for that purpose. Areas covered range from interaction with other women in the neighbourhood to the learning of languages or literacy training.

239. The sporting behaviour of the Flemish people has been studied on the basis of two studies carried out in 2003 and 2009. The results were analysed according to age and sex in particular. Comparison of the two studies showed that, in all age groups, more men than women practise a sport. The biggest differences are seen in the youngest and oldest age groups. In terms of the number of hours of sport per week practised by young people, it emerges that approximately one third of girls and two thirds of boys practise more than three hours of sport per week. Approximately one third of men do more than three hours of sport per week. Among women, there is more variation between age groups. In the 55 to 64 age group, more than a quarter of women practise more than three hours of sport per week, while in the next age group, only one woman in seven engages in sport to the same extent. As for the sports preferences of women and men, there are very many similarities: cycling, walking, running and swimming are popular among men and among women.

240. In the Flemish Community, the “*proeftuinen*” (laboratories) are initiatives in response to new developments and needs in the culture, youth or sports sector. “The sports laboratory in the big city” is a project focusing on wrestling and dancing. The dance activities are aimed at girls (Roma, African and indigenous girls in vocational secondary education) who are less readily targeted by traditional sports. In 2011, associations continued to be given support to enable them to continue experimenting with approaches to shared ownership, the development of a sense of responsibility, neighbourhood involvement and parent participation.

241. The French Community is working to make sports activities accessible to everyone. Besides the practice of sport by women, they also need to be present among the managers of clubs and sports federations, referees and umpires, journalists, members of the various advisory boards, etc. Such has been the principle guiding the activities outlined below.

242. The participation of girls and young women in nearly all residential and non-residential sports training activities is widely encouraged, most of such activities being open to both sexes or just to girls. This easy access helps to defeat certain stereotypes and customary practices.

243. In order to develop women’s sports and encourage women of all ages to take an interest in them, the French Community maintains and develops sports and/or leisure activities such as Sport for All, Family Sport, School Sport, sports development programmes, youth summer events, etc.

244. Women’s sports are of moderate interest to the media and to sponsors, except when top-ranking athletes are involved (e.g. in tennis and athletics). In its promotional advertising, the Directorate General for Sport is careful to include and broadcast images of women, or men and women together, engaged in sports activities.

245. In the Directorate General for Sport of the French Community, a very large proportion of the data on participation in sports training activities is disaggregated by sex.

Article 11

Employment

246. In 2010, 73.4 per cent of all men between the ages of 15 and 64 were professionally active, as against 61.8 per cent of all women of the same age. This group of “active” persons can then be subdivided between those actually working and those seeking employment. Among men of working age, 67.4 per cent have employment, as against 56.5 per cent of women. In 2010, the labour force participation rate of women was 61.8 per cent (as against 73.4% for men), the employment rate was 56.5 per cent for women (as against 67.4% for men) and the unemployment rate was 8.6 per cent for women

(8.2% for men). Annex 7 provides more detailed information concerning the active population.

1. Maternity (and paternity) protection

247. In Belgium, an amendment to the Labour Act of 16 March 1971 stipulates that the prescribed postnatal leave of a pregnant woman worker who had started working on the day of her confinement does not begin until the following day. A further amendment to the 1971 Act was introduced to allow women workers to convert the last two weeks of their postnatal leave into individual days of postnatal leave so as to return to work gradually. The days in question can be spread out over a period of eight weeks from the date of resumption of work.

248. The law of 3 July 1978 on labour contracts was also amended in order to protect from dismissal workers who take paternity leave. In addition, the fixed allowance in the case of the dismissal of a worker because of conversion of maternity leave into paternity leave (in the case of the death of the mother) was increased to six months.

249. Within the Flemish administration, it has been possible since 2009 to take 10 days of “co-maternity” leave (paternity leave for the male or female partner of the biological mother). A special dispensation is granted to allow adoptive parents to follow the adoption preparation programme.

250. Within the French Community administration, paternity leave or leave for childbirth (in the case of homosexual couples) went up from 10 to 15 working days as at 1 January 2012. It is fully covered by the Ministry of the French Community, both for statutory and for contractual staff.

2. Special leave

251. In May 2012, amendments were made to the regulations concerning parental leave.

252. Four months’ leave, as opposed to three months’ previously, is now granted for the purposes of child care. The period may be taken in monthly fractions. It is still not possible for this leave to be transferred between parents but it may be taken either by the father or by the mother. In 2009, the maximum age of the child for whom a parent may be granted parental leave was raised to 12 years, where before it had been either six or eight years.

253. In addition, for six months following the end of parental leave, a worker may request adjustments to his or her work schedule or timetable.

254. The period in which mothers are entitled to breaks for breast-feeding has been increased to nine months without any further condition.

255. In Flanders, a brochure “*Vaders en ouderschapverlof*” was published in 2010 and distributed to all young fathers in order to encourage them to take parental leave. A pregnancy guide for lesbian couples was also produced in 2008.

3. Childcare facilities

256. The children’s homes of the Walloon public employment and training service FOREM take care of the children of job-seekers in cases of emergency or temporary need. FOREM has established partnerships with external service providers so as to increase care facilities for the children of job-seekers who are having difficulties in achieving socio-occupational integration.

257. Flanders has adopted a decree which provides that, by 2016, at least half of children under the age of three years will have a place in a childcare facility and that, from 2020,

every family will be offered a satisfactory, financially affordable place at a reasonable distance in good time. A special childcare desk will be established in every commune.

258. The French Community continues to support increased care facilities for children under the age of three years. More than 2,000 places are accordingly being created in care facilities subsidized by the National Childhood Office. In 2010, the Office also gave specific support to non-subsidized care facilities, in particular through the design of a pilot project for the establishment of children's homes. As at 1 October 2010, the French Community estimated that it had a 44.5 per cent coverage rate (counting subsidized and non-subsidized care facilities and school attendance by children between the ages of 2 ½ and 3).

259. The Childhood Office grants subventions to communes involved in efforts to coordinate the provision of care during out-of-school hours, which includes out-of-school care, homework rooms and holiday centres.

260. The Brussels Region also supports the care of children of job-seekers. It thus, in 2007, established 170 additional posts in order to increase the number of childcare places.

261. Again in 2007, the Brussels government decided to grant an allowance to companies for the creation of new care facilities for the children of their employees under the age of 3 years.

4. Efforts to reduce the wage gap and the career gap

262. Belgium has one of the smallest wage gaps in Europe. Moreover, in the past five years, this gap has been steadily decreasing. According to several European and international studies, collective wage-setting in Belgium is largely instrumental in reducing the wage gap.

263. However, between 2007 and 2009, the Institute participated in a study showing that wage inequalities may stem from an inequality in social benefits. Because of these differences in income, women often have to contend with precarious living conditions: 36 per cent of women as against only 11 per cent of men are only able to avoid poverty by relying on the income of other members of the family (usually their partner). In the course of the study, the Institute examined how far men and women can do what they want with their time. Since women look after most of the household tasks, they have less time for paid work, which in turn has an impact on the wage gap.

264. In the past few years, Belgium has been seeking very actively to reduce the wage gap and to that end has taken several initiatives in various areas.

265. In 2008, a collective labour agreement was concluded which provides for equal pay based on equal elements and conditions of pay, including job evaluation systems. Following the conclusion of the agreement, each joint commission was asked to prepare a report on the wage gap and job classifications. Most of the 62 respondents considered that sectoral classifications were gender-neutral and 13 stated that, following the conclusion of the agreement, they had reviewed or were about to review them.

266. Every year since 2007, the Belgian authorities have published a report on the wage gap. In 2010, the year of the Belgian presidency of the European Union, a European report was also prepared and Belgium proposed the topic for the adoption of Union-wide agreed conclusions.

267. Lastly, on 8 March 2012, the Federal Parliament passed a law aimed at reducing the wage gap between women and men. This law calls for the negotiation at three levels of measures to reduce the wage gap: between professions, within sectors and at the level of

individual companies. This multiple approach was dictated by the complexity of the wage gap, which itself has multiple dimensions.

268. Flanders has decided to concentrate on the gender career gap, which is a broader concept than gender employment gap. A university was asked to draw up several questions on the career gap and then to put them to employers' and workers' advisory bodies and to teachers' organizations. The aim was to obtain detailed replies concerning the priorities to be set, the types of indicator to be used and the goals to be pursued. Efforts will also be made to encourage the development of tools to eliminate the career gap and to put in place a legal framework. Round tables will then be organized which will lead in late 2014 to a robust action plan and to political commitments.

269. Every year since 2005, one of the trade union organizations (FGTB) associated with Flemish socialist women (Zij kant) undertakes a major awareness-raising campaign on the occasion of Equal Pay Day.

270. In this context, in 2012 Flanders brought out a brochure entitled "*Je studie nu bepaalt je loon later*" in order to draw attention to the consequences of choice of study and employment for wages. A second brochure, scheduled for autumn 2012, will inform workers about the consequences of career choices for taxation and pension.

5. Alleviating the psychosocial burdens of work

271. The law against sexual harassment was amended in 2007 so as to be directed henceforth against "the psychosocial burdens of work", in other words, any psychosocial burden originating in the performance of work or arising on the occasion of the performance of work which has a harmful effect on an individual's physical and mental health.

272. The amendments introduced in 2007 also served to clarify the role of the various actors and to spell out the internal procedure to be followed by companies when employees complain of sexual or psychological violence or harassment at work.

273. The Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Coordination undertook an evaluation of the 2007 amendments which was completed in April 2011 and which shows that those involved on the ground consider the changes to the legislation to be an improvement. Following that evaluation, the Federal Parliament, in July 2011, adopted a number of recommendations concerning in particular the measures required at the legislative level (revision) but also in terms of awareness-raising (a campaign) and monitoring compliance with the legislation.

274. The fifth European survey on working conditions conducted in 2010 reveals that, in the previous 12 months, 8 per cent of men and 9 per cent of women in Belgium had been subjected to psychological harassment, 4 per cent of men and 2 per cent of women had suffered physical violence and approximately 0.5 per cent of men and 1 per cent of women had been victims of sexual harassment.

6. The socio-occupational integration of women

275. An agreement has been concluded between the Walloon Region, the Walloon Public Employment and Training Service and the public social action centres in order to promote the training and integration of women job-seekers in lasting, quality employment. The agreement gives priority to low-skilled women job-seekers and heads of single-parent families and takes into account such dimensions as the balancing of private and professional life, the mobility of women job seekers and child care.

276. The Walloon Region also subsidizes seven regional integration centres and plans to grant subventions to local social development initiatives. Within this framework, it supports

a great deal of social emancipation work for immigrant women, mainly from working-class backgrounds. The aim is to enable the women concerned to have the minimum requirements to undertake a process of socio-occupational integration by learning French as a foreign language and by acquiring sufficient socio-cultural knowledge of their host society.

277. The Walloon Region also supports the project “Women in the building industry” aimed at the occupational integration of women in technical building trades and thus ties in with efforts to combat horizontal segregation.

7. Support for women entrepreneurs

278. In 2010, the Agency for Economic Stimulation of the Walloon Region granted financial support to the Belgian Network of Women Business Ambassadors and established a woman entrepreneur award on the occasion of the Walloon Grand Prix for Entrepreneurship.

279. The Flemish agency “Entreprendre”, supported by the Minister of the Economy, has been mandated to introduce new measures to support business creation in Flanders. Special attention has been given in this context to certain target groups, including women, by offering them continuing extensive support. The women’s network of the Flemish Entrepreneurs’ Association (Mabizz) was also carried out targeted action in collaboration with the women’s business network, Markant.

280. In 2007, the Brussels Region supported the project “Women’s Business, Businesswomen”, which gives free assistance to women who want to start a business and helps to train them.

8. Diversity in human resource management in companies

281. The Walloon Region is engaged in a project for the development of a tool for the internal and external evaluation of human resource diversity management in companies and organizations. This tool should help to identify non-discriminatory but also proactive practices implemented by private and public employers to manage and valorize cultural diversity.

282. The Brussels Region has adopted regulations that encourage the implementation of company diversity plans in respect of six target groups. One of these groups consists of persons of underrepresented gender. Company action is encouraged by the award of a subsidy and, at the end of two years, if the goals have been met, by a label. Since 2007, 19,845 workers in Brussels have been covered by these plans. Four labels were awarded in 2010 and fifteen in 2012.

9. Action against vertical segregation

283. The Brussels Region and the French Community provide financial support for the not-for-profit association Jump, which since 2010 has honoured by an annual award managers who have distinguished themselves by their commitment to ensuring that women are represented in director and manager posts.

284. The Brussels Region also supports the project “Women on Board”, which dates from 2009 and seeks to promote the presence of women on the boards of management of companies. Concretely, this not-for-profit association serves as a database for candidates qualified to serve on a board of management.

10. The right to social security

285. The right to social security is guaranteed under article 23 of the Belgian Constitution. Social Security benefits are of course provided without gender distinction. A difference remained in respect of pensionable age. Since 1 January 2009 and following a transitional period of more than 11 years, the normal pension age is now 65 years for men and women and a full career consists of 45 years of work or equivalent.

Article 12 Health

286. The differences between men and women in matters of health are due both to social factors and differences in lifestyles and to biological differences. In 2009, life expectancy at birth was 77.15 years for men and 82.43 years for women. Healthy life expectancy shows no significant difference between the sexes. In 2001, the healthy life expectancy of women was 1.5 years higher than that of men; in 2007, it was only about five months higher than that of men. In 2009, the situation was reversed for the first time: the healthy life expectancy of men was now about 2.5 months higher than that of women. The age at which health problems arise is thus seen to be at about the same for men as for women.

287. The four-yearly health survey in Belgium conducted most recently in 2008 also includes questions on psychological well-being. It reveals that the percentage of depression is twice as high among women as among men and that women are also twice as prone to symptoms of anxiety and physical pain linked to mental problems. In addition, 13.5 per cent of women and 8.7 per cent of men have at some time or other had suicidal thoughts, with 5.9 per cent of women and 3.2 per cent of men having gone so far as to attempt suicide. It is noted, however, that the very great majority of suicides are committed by men. Given the existence of sexist stereotypes, it may be thought that men are more subjected to social pressure than women and that they have a greater tendency to deny health problems, and mental health problems in particular.

288. Concerning pregnancies and abortions, in 2009, 18,870 abortions were practised, nearly half of which concerned women between the ages of 20 and 30. Seventy-nine abortions concerned girls between the ages of 10 and 14, and 2595 concerned girls between the ages of 15 and 19. From 2004 to 2009 there was a steady increase in the number of abortions, rising from 16,021 to 18,870.

289. Lastly, where the costs of health care are concerned, the average annual health-care expenditure of the National Health Insurance Institute (INAMI) is €441.4 more for women than for men. This figure is of course linked to the fact that women live longer than men and that they usually have health problems during these “extra” years. It is also linked to pregnancy and childbirth care. In the case of persons between the ages of 60 and 80 years, average health costs are about €300 more for men than for women.

1. Sexual health

290. Flanders invests a great deal in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-AIDS, with particular attention to groups at risk. For this purpose, the Flemish authorities conclude agreements with various organizations.

291. The activities of the not-for-profit association Sensoa are directed towards sexual health and well-being. Specific target groups include young people, gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, persons of foreign origin and HIV patients. The not-for-profit associations Pasop and GH@pro provide support and prevention services, aimed particularly at sex

workers, who can anonymously turn to them for free professional medical, psychosocial, administrative and legal assistance.

292. Sensoa also supports the organization “Volle maan” in the development and implementation of its activities, which centre on contraception and are aimed at foreign-born women in Brussels. The organization deals primarily with intermediaries in contact with the target group (postnatal care) and offers information, advice, training and expertise.

293. The incorporation of a gender dimension in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases is also one of the concerns of the French Community. It has funded a three-year action-oriented research project on the gender approach and differences in sexual orientation as part of its work of prevention on the ground. The object of the project is to make outreach personnel more aware of these issues so that they integrate them into their work.

294. In the sphere of international cooperation, in the last few years the Centre for Distance Training has been researching and making recommendations on approaches to reproductive and sexual health and rights. It produced recommendations under the heading “Sexual and reproductive rights and gender: the current situation” in 2008 and was involved in the World March of Women in 2010 and the eleventh international meeting on women and health in 2011. On those occasions, exchanges with women from different regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo provided an opportunity for grassroots feedback, particularly in connection with the activities of local associations.

2. Cancer prevention

295. Belgium, women between the ages of 50 and 69 years have since 2001 been able to undergo free mammogram screening every two years. In the Flemish Community, about 48.1 per cent of women were screened in 2010, as against 41.7 per cent in 2007. In the French Community, the figures were 7 per cent in 2007 and 9 per cent in 2010.

296. Starting in the 2010/11 school year, a free HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccination is offered to all girls in the first year of secondary education (Flemish Community) or the second year (French Community). Young women who have been vaccinated are required to undergo Pap smear screening at the age of 25.

3. Sex education

297. In Flanders, Sensoa receives a subsidy granted by the Minister of Public Health in support of the policy implemented in schools in the matter of relationship skills and sexual behaviour. Sensoa uses various means to this end:

- The “Vlaggensysteem”, a system that enables schools to broach the subject of deviant sexual behaviour;
- A new handbook on relationship skills and sexual behaviour offers schools a basis for developing an appropriate policy framework. It focuses mainly on relationships, feelings and the experience of sexuality. Different target groups are taken into account, with attention to such matters as sexual orientation, (trans)gender and socio-cultural context, and having regard also to the various educational contexts (diversity of the pupil group, age, level of sexual development, etc.). The handbook was the subject of a presentation at a workshop held on 22 March 2011.

298. The French Community encourages education in relationships and emotional and sexual life (EVRAS) as early as primary school. Under an EVRAS action-oriented research programme, a project exists for the gradual introduction of education in relationships and emotional and sexual life in all schools of the French Community, with special attention to

respect for women. The training of EVRAS outreach personnel is entrusted mainly to federations of family planning centres.

4. Promotion of health and gender equality

299. In the French Community, the gender equality dimension is present in all policies applied under the five-year health promotion programme 2004–2008 and the operational community programme, which has been extended until 31 December 2011 without operational change. The operational community programme sets out six priorities (prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer prevention, AIDS and STD prevention, tuberculosis prevention, vaccination and prevention of domestic accidents), some of which are particularly relevant to women.

300. The development of strategies to combat all forms of discrimination is also one of the criteria for granting subsidies to health promotion projects.

301. In order to ensure that women have access to medical services, including family planning services, and that they are provided with appropriate and, if necessary, free care during pregnancy and during and after childbirth, the National Childhood Office (ONE) arranges for:

- The promotion of preconception consultations. Under a pilot project, free preconception consultations are offered in the Office's prenatal consultation services;
- Free prenatal consultations throughout the territory of the French Community. The Office also reimburses medical examinations during prenatal visits for mothers in difficult situations;
- A liaison service which ensures that all newly-delivered mothers receive a visit in the maternity clinic from the Office's medical and social workers. These visits are a means of informing and supporting mothers and monitoring the health of mother and child.

302. In October 2010, the Childhood Office organized an international symposium to promote and integrate preconception consultation in primary care and to draw the attention of actors on the ground and political decision-makers to the value of organized and structured preconception consultation. The Office also began a projected reform of prenatal consultations and provides pregnancy monitoring, with increased attention to the most vulnerable families. A wellness unit offers shelter, confidential counselling and prevention assistance in cases of violence and sexual or psychological harassment, as well as conjugal violence. Lastly, the medical and social databank lent itself to collaboration for the purposes of publishing a document entitled "Teenage girls: sexuality and reproductive health. The present situation in Wallonia and Brussels".

303. In the Walloon Region, a vast network of family planning and consultation centres caters to girls and women and provides them with support for contraception and pregnancy, including in cases of undesired pregnancies. Integrated health associations (transfer of responsibility to the Walloon Region) also receive subsidies. These medical facilities are set up mainly in working-class districts of big cities and reach out more generally to patients in precarious living conditions. In addition, their community health-programmes usually target women, particularly immigrant women.

Article 13

Economic and social benefits

304. In the French Community, access to cultural activities is encouraged by the decree of 17 July 2003 on support for voluntary sector continuing education activities, by the ministerial circular of 15 May 2001 on subsidies for individual continuing education and creativity projects, and by the financing of Centres for Expression and Creativity. Direct support for the “article 27” association helps to allow people in socio-economic difficulty to have access to cultural outreach events.

305. At the request of the Department for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media of the Flemish government, a wide-ranging study on participation was conducted in 2009: 3,144 Flemish citizens aged between 18 and 85 years were questioned about their cultural behaviour. In comparison with 2003, the figures show that, by and large, the cultural participation of women is the same as or slightly higher than that of men. Nevertheless, women are less active in associations. The overrepresentation of men in the life of associations is, however, entirely due to their numerical superiority in sports associations. Women are more highly represented than men in associations catering to specific target groups, local associations and social movements. Men are more often members of recreational associations. Men and women are both very present in political and cultural associations and youth associations. Women are more drawn to culture than men. Men and women are more or less equally involved as amateurs in artistic activities, but differences are seen in the type of activity. Women go in more for dance, theatre, sculpture and singing, while men tend more towards the visual arts (film, photography) and music. Although the membership of men and women in associations is quite comparable, it is more difficult for women to rise to managerial positions. The databank “*ledereen kan zetelen*” (“everyone can serve”) aims to achieve greater diversity within advisory bodies, commissions and boards of management. Anyone can register in the databank, but in the recruitment of new members special attention is given to diversity and hence also to the balanced distribution of men and women.

Article 14

Rural women

306. Women who live in rural areas enjoy the same rights, services and benefits as all citizens residing in Belgium. No discrimination exists in that regard.

307. In 2011, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department of the Flemish government carried out a study on the role and position of women in Flemish agriculture and horticulture. The study concluded that women are underrepresented in these sectors and, more particularly, among entrepreneurs. Moreover, they are drawn more towards other areas of activity on account of the crisis in the sector and financial considerations. They are usually in charge of farm management but the fact that they are required as spouses to act as assistants does not necessarily mean any improvement in their position in the agricultural enterprise. In addition, women working in the agricultural sector often do not have a clear idea of the possibilities and implications of matrimonial systems, inheritance law, company law, etc., important though these are in agriculture and horticulture. This study therefore calls for greater attention to the opinion of women in these sectors.

308. Agriculture and food security are a Belgian development cooperation priority. In 2008, at the High-level Conference on World Food Security in Rome, Belgium made a lasting commitment in this area by setting the goal of allocating 10 per cent of official development assistance to agriculture in 2010 and 15 per cent in 2015.

309. A strategic note “agriculture and food security” was approved in 2010, according to which Belgium would provide support for family farming and undertook to assist in the process of transition from subsistence farming towards human, professional and economically viable family farming, while respecting the principles of the right to food and equality of rights of men and women.

310. The individual and collective empowerment of rural women is a Belgian strategic priority in the agriculture and food security sector. Belgium considers women to have an active role in development and accordingly directs its international action towards the goal of empowerment. The specific aims of Belgium’s action to further the economic empowerment and capacity-building of rural women by seeking to ensure, in particular, that they have access to resources and to the means of production and to decision-making. Belgium seeks to ensure that women participate, on an equal footing with men, in agricultural development and in the resulting benefits and thereby contribute fully to food security and economic growth in rural areas.

311. Moreover, at the international level, Belgium makes it a systematic requirement that the gender dimension should be duly taken into account in the main international agreements concerning food security and rural development. For example, Belgium insisted that the European Union strategic framework for food security should target small producers, and first and foremost women. Similarly, in ongoing international negotiations concerning the “Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Land Tenure” within the Committee on World Food Security of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Belgium has made every effort to ensure that these guidelines encourage the establishment of a legislative and administrative framework that enables women to have stable and safe access to the land and to benefit from all necessary services for the effective operation of this basic factor of production.

312. Lastly, the Centre for Distance Training has carried out research and published recommendations and guidelines to identify the obstacles preventing women from achieving food security and to ensure that cooperation policies and programmes give them greater access to land resources, outreach services, markets and credit.

Article 15

Equality before the law

313. The Belgian State has no further information to share with the Committee concerning article 15 of the Convention. In Belgium, women and men have long enjoyed the same rights in respect of legal capacity, freedom of movement and freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16

Marriage and family life

1. Amendment of legislation on family names

314. Changes to Belgian laws governing the transmission of family names in order to create greater equality between women and men are justified by changes in society and by international recommendations calling for reforms to that end. The Federal Government has thus undertaken to consider the question of name attribution having regard to the fact that a woman who is married to or cohabits with a man cannot at the present time transmit her family name to her child. The Institute has issued an opinion on the transmission of names to children, which recommends that the Civil Code be amended to enable the names of both

parents to be given to the child. This opinion was published in 2012 and transmitted to the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Equal Opportunity.

2. Prevention of forced marriages

315. Belgian legislation sets several conditions for marriage. The main ones are a minimum age of 18 years, barring exceptions on serious grounds, consent of the prospective spouses, absence of kinship ties and the prohibition of bigamy.

316. Belgium is actively engaged in efforts to prevent marriages contracted without the free consent of either of the two spouses. Under article 391sexies of the Criminal Code, inserted by a law of 25 April 2007, forced marriage is a criminal offence. This article provides for the punishment of persons who, by violence or threat, coerce someone or attempt to coerce someone to enter into a marriage. In addition, under article 146ter of the Civil Code inserted by the same law, a marriage concluded without the free consent of both spouses and for which the consent of at least one of the spouses was obtained by violence or under threat is null and void. The purpose of this new law is to protect the right of victims to enter freely into a marriage, and to protect their freedom, dignity and physical integrity. Lastly, an article inserted in 2006 in the law of 15 December 1980 on the admission of aliens into the territory, residence, settlement and removal provides for a more severe penalty for persons who have used violence or threat to coerce someone into a marriage of convenience.

317. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the scope of the national action plan 2010–2014, adopted on 23 November 2010, has been extended to cover new forms of violence, including forced marriage.

318. Since 2009, there has been a specific indictment code for forced marriage in the databank of correctional chambers of courts of first instance. According to the figures, 12 cases of forced marriage were registered in prosecution services in 2010 and 15 cases in 2011. There is also a specific police code for this offence. Police crime statistics show 13 complaints of forced marriage (11 actual cases and two attempts) in 2010. Improved awareness on the part of victims and better detection by professionals will probably have the effect of increasing the number of complaints.

319. Mention may also be made of two bills, one to introduce a voluntary temporary prohibition on leaving the territory in cases of a forced marriage abroad, and the other to amend the Criminal Code in order to provide for the special case of forced marriage by fraud under the offence of trafficking in human beings.

320. In 2011, following the partnership established between the Brussels-Capital Region and the Federal State, a study on forced marriage was commissioned in the territory of the Brussels Region in order to obtain a better idea of the seriousness and extent of the phenomenon and to improve prevention and assistance in line with the specific needs of victims.

321. Specific training concerning forced marriage was also given to police officers and the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office in 2012.

322. As part of the grassroots action carried out by the King Baudouin Foundation since 2004 on the theme "Marriage and migration" the Directorate for Equal Opportunity of the French Community has widely circulated among educators, mediators and mobile teams a brochure entitled "Holiday season: marriage season?". It was first distributed in June 2008 to all front-line associations in the Community. In June 2010 it was distributed to all psycho-medical-social centres, Walloon and Brussels mediators and members of mobile teams. This brochure is regularly sent free on request to actors on the ground and can be

downloaded from the website of the Directorate for Equal Opportunity of the Ministry of the French Community (www.egalite.cfwb.be).

323. Since 2009, the French Community, in collaboration with the French Community Commission, has been providing substantial financial support to the “Marriage and Migration” network. This network for discussion and action is composed of 16 associations concerned with the issue of marriage in the context of migration, including forced marriage, early marriage, last-minute marriages, “grey marriages” (tricking into marriage for migration purposes), therapeutic marriages, arranged marriages, common-law marriages, etc. It provides training for professionals who may come into contact with persons in forced marriages and engages in information and awareness-raising activities.

324. The French Community also supports the circulation of a dramatized form of awareness training on forced/arranged marriages. Young people form the main target group, both within and outside formal education (open community assistance services [AMO], youth centres, etc.), but efforts are also made to reach parents through literacy centres, the goal being eventually to reach out to the entire French Community. In 2012, the French Community also financed the awareness-raising campaign “My marriage belongs to me”, aimed at young men and women and launched in June by the “Marriage and Migration” network.

325. In 2010, the Walloon Region supported, as a pilot experiment, a private initiative designed to protect women under threat of forced marriage and to make young women aware of the problem. Unfortunately, the experiment was discontinued because of financial difficulties. In addition, two symposia organized by “*Synergie Wallonie*” on the subject of forced marriage in collaboration with the federal police and the regional authorities. The symposia were followed by a publication.

326. The call for projects under the banner “Wanted: diversity managers”, as part of Flemish policy to promote integration, establishes a link between integration policy and equal opportunity policy. In 2010, the call for “Diversity managers” focused on marital migration. More than half of foreign-born young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin marry someone from their country of origin. In his call for project applications, the Minister of Integration encouraged discussion of the issue, through meetings, dialogues, talks with parents, and a lifting of taboos. In all, 15 projects were approved, totalling €979,643.04. The projects were launched in 2011 and will extend over a maximum period of three years.

List of annexes

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 - Annex 2 Statistics on complaints of gender-based discrimination filed with the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IEFH).
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