

# Belgium

Belgium is a Member State of the Council of Europe (COE) and of the United Nations (UN), and has human rights obligations at the regional and universal levels.

## Regional: European System



As a Member of the COE, Belgium has ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and is subject to the jurisdiction of the [European Court of Human Rights](#). Belgium has ratified the Revised European Social Charter, and has authorized the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) to decide collective complaints against it. Its human rights policies and practices are also monitored by the [COE Commissioner for Human Rights](#), who identifies gaps in human rights protection, conducts country visits, engages in dialogue with States, and prepares thematic reports and advice.

Individuals and groups have submitted complaints of human rights violations committed by Belgium to the European Court of Human Rights. For example, the Court held that Belgium violated an individual's right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment,

as well as his rights to liberty and security, when he was detained for more than 15 years in the psychiatric wing of a prison without receiving necessary health care. See ECtHR, [Claes v. Belgium](#), no. 43418/09, ECHR 2013, Judgment of 10 April 2013. Additionally, the Court may grant [interim measures](#) to protect people in urgent situations of risk in Belgium.

As a State party to the Revised European Social Charter, Belgium must submit regular reports to the European Committee of Social Rights on its implementation of the Charter's provisions. The Committee has also decided collective complaints against Belgium. For example, the Committee addressed the State's failure to provide adequate care, including accommodation, to foreign minors who were unlawfully present or seeking asylum in the country. See ECSR, [Defence for Children International \(DCI\) v. Belgium](#), Complaint No. 69/2011, Merits, 23 October 2012.

Belgium is [party](#) to the following **regional human rights treaties**:

- European Convention on Human Rights and several of its [protocols](#)
- Revised European Social Charter
- COE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

## United Nations System

As a UN Member State, Belgium is subject to the oversight of various [UN human rights bodies](#), including the [Human Rights Council](#) and its [Universal Periodic Review](#) and thematic [special procedures](#). As a party to specific universal human rights treaties, Belgium's policies and practices are monitored by UN [treaty bodies](#). It has accepted the complaints procedure of seven treaty bodies.

Belgium has ratified the following **UN human rights treaties**:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

Belgium has submitted a reservation, declaration, or understanding that modifies its obligations under the following treaties: [ICCPR](#), [ICESCR](#), [CERD](#), [CRPD](#), and [CRC](#).

Belgium has also ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aimed at abolishing the death penalty, and optional protocols to the CRC addressing children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. Belgium has a duty to submit **State reports** to the UN treaty body associated with each UN human rights treaty Belgium has ratified. These reports must be submitted on a periodic basis and describe the steps taken to implement the treaty provisions.

Belgium has also ratified [optional protocols](#) and made appropriate declarations allowing individuals to submit **complaints** against the State alleging violations of the ICCPR, CED, CEDAW, CAT, CRPD, CERD, and CRC. Additionally, certain UN treaties contain **inquiry procedures**, which allow the UN treaty body to consider allegations of grave or systematic human rights violations. Belgium has accepted the inquiry procedures of the CAT, CED, ICESCR, CEDAW, CRPD, and CRC.

March 2001, Belgium extended a **standing invitation** to UN special procedures, which means that any such mandate holders are welcome to conduct visits in Belgium. For example, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent went on a mission to Belgium in June 2005 and published its [report](#) on that visit in February 2006.

For more information on Belgium's engagement with [UN human rights bodies](#), visit <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/BEIndex.aspx>.

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