



WHEN TIMES GET DARKER, WE SHINE BRIGHTER

PRESS RELEASE
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Brussels Pride celebrates its 30th anniversary on Saturday 16 May

The streets of Europe's capital will once again be decked out in the colours of the rainbow for Brussels Pride. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Brussels hosting this celebration of diversity and 30 years of advocacy and visibility for the LGBTQIA+ community. The theme of Brussels Pride 2026 is **When Times Get Darker, We Shine Brighter**. It's a powerful and unifying message, more necessary than ever in a troubled global context where all too often the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community remain under threat.

It was in **1996** that the **Belgian Lesbian and Gay Pride – Roze Zaterdag – Samedi Rose** was established in Brussels. Thousands of people gathered in the streets of the capital to demand rights for the LGBTQIA+ community. Over the years, the parade has grown, mobilisation has intensified and gained credibility. Since its creation, Pride has raised the profile of the community and raised awareness of its causes among the public and politicians. **Marriage equality was secured in 2003, same-sex parenting was granted in 2006, and the law on transgender people came into force in 2017, making Belgium one of the most progressive countries in terms of LGBTQIA+ rights. But the fight does not stop there**, because today, more than ever, it is crucial to remember how much every member of the community, regardless of their identity or gender, deserves to be recognised and respected for their true worth.

As it does every year, Brussels kicks off the European Pride season. On Saturday 16 May, around 200,000 people are expected to take to the streets to defend their rights and celebrate diversity. This mobilisation is essential to preserve the fundamental rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. This year, **to mark its 30th anniversary**, organisers will be expanding the programme to make **Brussels Pride 2026** a truly historic edition.

This year, the theme chosen by **RainbowHouse Brussels** for Brussels Pride is **When Times Get Darker, We Shine Brighter**. For thirty years, Brussels Pride has embodied struggle, resilience and progress. As the capital of Belgium and Europe, Brussels has a responsibility to continue moving towards greater equality. It must combat multiple and intersectional discrimination. Organisers also call for our constitution and laws to be amended to combat hate speech online and in all media (hate is not an opinion) and urge that it be made clear that it is necessary to protect all LGBTQIA+ people, whether they are visible or not. Lastly, they call for international human rights treaties to be supported, developed and enforced. For 30 years, Brussels Pride has been putting people who are made invisible in the spotlight. They demand the right to safety, health, family and protection and call for the rights of all to be improved.

“When times get darker, we shine brighter, prouder, more united and more visible. We become unstoppable”.



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On Saturday 16 May, **Brussels Pride March** will take over the streets of the city centre, while the **Brussels Pride Village** will gather together numerous associations. LGBTQIA+ artists and allies will perform on multiple stages set up in the heart of the capital. In total, almost a hundred partners, associations and artists will unite to make this day a powerful and unforgettable moment.

Located in the Saint-Jacques district, in the heart of the capital, the **Brussels Rainbow Village and its LGBTQIA+ establishments** will, once again, be joining forces for this year's event. They will be bringing the city centre's iconic streets to life throughout the weekend.

Brussels Pride aspires to be an inclusive event, accessible to all. To ensure that everyone can enjoy themselves with peace of mind, a **Safer Zone** will be set up. This space will allow people to take a break, receive care from medical staff if they feel unwell, and report any inappropriate or offensive behaviour related to gender and/or identity.

Brussels Pride isn't just on May 16th: it kicks off much earlier in the capital. The festivities will begin in early May with the launch of **Brussels Pride Week**. Throughout the week, **Brussels RainbowHouse** – the city's federation of LGBTQIA+ associations – along with numerous activist and artistic collectives will be taking over Les Grands Carmes and other venues to offer a rich and varied programme of events. Mid-May sees **Mini-Pride**, with its festive parade that winds its way through the streets of the Saint-Jacques district, kick off the celebrations. Along the way, it will pay tribute to the famous Manneken-Pis, who will be wearing a costume specially created for the occasion.

The cultural sector will be getting involved in the event too, with LGBTQIA+ artists and projects being featured in collaboration with Brussels Pride.

Last but not least, during **Brussels Pride Week and Brussels Pride**, numerous buildings across the Brussels-Capital Region will also be decked out in the colours of the rainbow flag.

Brussels Pride is much more than a celebration of diversity! It sends a clear message about inclusion and equality. Beyond the festive atmosphere, Brussels Pride is, now more than ever, an opportunity to highlight the rights and claims of the community and to stimulate political debate.

More info available at <https://brusselspride.eu/>

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Explanation of the theme for Brussels Pride 2026

Across Europe and around the world, the far right is gaining ground. LGBTQIA+ rights are being rolled back and limited and Pride events are being banned or restricted. In Hungary, the government has attempted to restrict Budapest Pride. In the United Kingdom, recent court rulings have reignited debates about the legal definition of gender and its consequences for the trans community. In the United States, bans on gender-affirming care and systematic exclusion measures directly target trans people.



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Broadly speaking, over the past few years, sexist and anti-LGBTQIA+ hate speech has proliferated online, driven by masculinist circles that are viscerally opposed to gender equality and often view gender and sexual orientation diversity as a threat. When flags disappear and hatred becomes political, the community responds with visibility, solidarity and resistance.

Hate speech and violence are on the rise — in public spaces, on social media and in political debates, including here in Belgium. Too many LGBTQIA+ people still feel unsafe, particularly on the streets, at school and in sports clubs. Transgender and intersex people and LGBTQIA+ refugees are attacked and dehumanised in Belgium as elsewhere in the world.

Rights enshrined in law are not enough if attitudes remain unchanged.

For thirty years, Brussels Pride has embodied struggle, resilience and progress. As the capital of Belgium and Europe, Brussels has a responsibility to continue moving towards greater equality. It must combat multiple and intersectional discrimination. Organisers also call for our constitution and laws to be amended to combat hate speech online and in all media (hate is not an opinion) and urge that it be made clear that it is necessary to protect all LGBTQIA+ people, whether they are visible or not. Lastly, they call for international human rights treaties to be supported, developed and enforced. For 30 years, Brussels Pride has been putting people who are made invisible in the spotlight. They demand the right to safety, health, family and protection and call for the rights of all to be improved. ***“When times get darker, we shine brighter, prouder, more united and more visible. We become unstoppable”.***