TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL Belgium

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

What Happened This Summer? A Look Back at TI-BE

October | 2026 | www.transparencybelgium.be

Belgian Integrity Awards 2026

The call for nominations is now open for the **Belgian Integrity Awards 2026.** As part of the fight against corruption in Belgium, the Belgian Integrity Awards recognise **outstanding projects** that combat corruption and promote integrity, transparency and a culture of accountability.



The Awards are open to projects from organisations across the public, private, academic and non-profit sectors. Eligible initiatives may include community awareness campaigns, education and research programmes, exemplary professional practices, innovative organisational initiatives, and efforts to foster a more ethical political and public environment. Projects must have been **completed in 2026 or be ongoing in 2026.**

NOMINATION DEADLINE

28 OCTOBER 2026

More Details:

TI Belgium website

connect@transparencybelgium.be

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Research Project: Shield EU: Protecting whistleblowers, strengthening the rule of law

TI-BE has recently been selected to take part in a research project on the **protection of whistleblowers and the strengthening of the rule of law,** alongside other TI chapters, including the TI Secretariat, TI Greece, TI France, TI Netherlands and TI Spain. This two-year project forms part of TI-BE's strategic plan and aims to develop the research and content produced by Transparency International Belgium. Over the course of these two years, TI-BE will focus on developing an easily accessible **guide for potential whistleblowers** and will create a **publicly accessible repository onwhistleblowing.**

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

These two projects are fully in line with TI-BE's commitment to supporting the fight against corruption in Belgium. Whistleblowers play a vital role in a healthy society; they help to bring wrongdoing in the workplace to light. As this task can sometimes prove difficult, whistleblowers are afforded legal protection.

Would you like to know more on whistleblowing protection and legislation in Belgium:

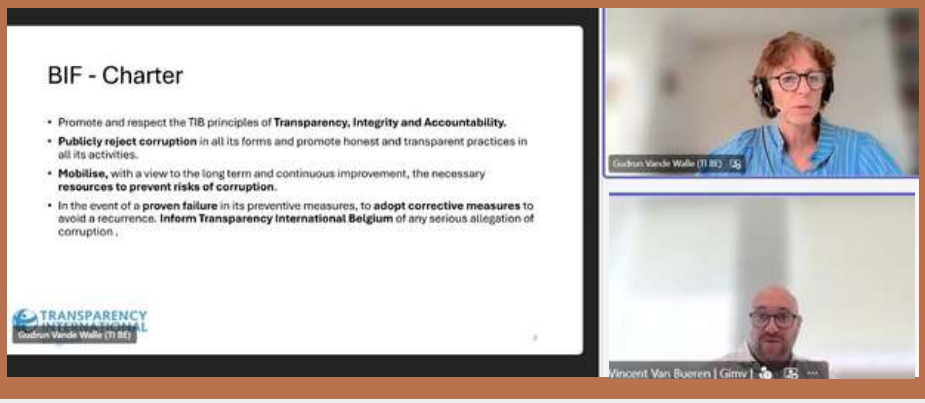
Click here to read more

Business Integrity Forum (BIF) Sessions

September BIF Session:

Application of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) through the Lens of Integrity

On 22 September, around 20 participants gathered to discuss the **application of the CSRD and the role of integrity in sustainability reporting.** The session was presented by Vincent Van Bueren — Corporate Communications & Sustainability Director at Gimv.The session explored the gap between having policies in place and demonstrating their effective implementation, as well as the challenges of measuring integrity culture and the effectiveness of controls.



Key questions included:

How can "tone at the top" be measured?

What does "zero reported incidents" really mean?

How transparent should companies be about incidents?

The discussion also addressed the role of compliance, the importance of cross-functional ownership, and the growing relevance of integrity across the value chain. Participants shared experiences on ethics climate surveys, incident monitoring, and collaboration between compliance and sustainability functions.The session also highlighted the need for practical tools and support to help smaller companies embed integrity into their practices. Also it highlighted the importance of moving beyond reporting requirements to ensure that integrity is effectively embedded in business practices, while creating space for companies to share practical experiences and learn from one another.

Join BIF

Events and Conferences

Le Soir Event

On Monday 21 September, Transparency International Belgium took part in an event organised by Le Soir entitled **'From shootings to white-collar crime: how to make Brussels safer'**, which featured a guest of honour, the Public Prosecutor of Brussels, Mr Moinil. He addressed issues relating to **youth as victims of organised crime and how young people are involved in organised crime, the resources available to the criminal justice system and the rise of in crime in Brussels.**

The event also provided an opportunity for Gudrun Vande Walle**,** Executive Director of Transparency International Belgium, to raise questions about (transnational) corruption. Referring to the recent **Semlex case**, in which the Belgian company will face legal proceedings over allegations of bribery of foreign public officials — and in which TI-BE has joined as a civil party — the director of TI-BE asked whether transnational corruption would now be the subject of increased scrutiny by the Belgian judiciary, highlighting the shortcomings identified by the OECD in March 2025.

Political Integrity Bootcamp & SAFE Democracy Exchange

From 15 to 17 september Gudrun Vande Walle participated at the **political Integrity Bootcamp & SAFE Democracy Exchange in Berlin**. Through workshops, debate and simulation exercises the participants were trained in setting up advocay plans and actions for the transposition of the EU Anti-Corruption Directive. We also took part at a silent protest for the murdered journalist Daphne Caruana Gilizia at the Maltese embassy to express our disagreement with the decision of the Maltese justice in the criminal case.



Recent Publications and Legal Updates

Bad Start : The New Belgian Penal Code

The 1st of September 2026 the new Belgian Penal Code went into force. One modification attracted already a lot of criticism, also from TI-BE. **The criminal offense conflicts of interest (belangenneming – Prise d'intérêt)** is one of the most common types of corruption within the public sector. This criminal offence of conflict of interest is intended to prevent public officials from abusing their official position for personal gain. Under the former Article 245 of the Penal Code on conflict of interest, it was sufficient for there to be an appearance of abuse of public office for personal gain. **The new Article 637 of the Penal Code weakens this offence. A conflict of interest is still forbidden. But a ground for exemption of punishment says that a conflict of interest by a public offical is acceptable if it happens also in the public interest and in a transparent way.** This loosening of legislation opens the doors for abuse of power: a politician can today approve a land-subdivision permit for an area in which he himself owns land as long as he does not keep this a secret and it is also in the public interest. Vooruit submitted a draft legislation to restore the original meaning of the law.

Sources:

- *Wetsvoorstel 1735/001, De Kamer;*
- *Pol Deltour, 'Public officials may henceforth derive personal benefit from representing the public interest',*
- *De Juristenkrant, 23/09/2026, 534, p. 34*
- *Kubra Mayda, Voortaan toegelaten: openlijke belangenvermenging die het algemeen belang dient", De Standaard, 30/07/2026.*

EU Rule of Law Report

On 17 July 2026, the European Commission released its annual Rule of Law Report, assessing developments across all EU Member States in four key pillars of the rule of law:

⚖️ Justice System
🛡️ Anti-Corruption Framework
📰 Media Freedom & Pluralism
🏛️ Institutional Checks & Balances

The report is based on a qualitative assessment conducted by the European Commission, drawing on contributions from national authorities, civil society, professional associations, international organisations and other stakeholders. It also reviews the progress made in implementing the recommendations issued in the 2025 Rule of Law Report.

What does the report say about Belgium?

Belgium continues to benefit from strong democratic institutions, a high level of public trust on judicial independence, and a robust framework for media freedom. The report also recognises progress in areas such as judicial digitalisation, integrity initiatives and anti-corruption cooperation.

However, several longstanding challenges remain. The Commission highlights the need to:

- **Reduce lengthy court proceedings and address shortages of judicial staff;**
- **Strengthen lobbying transparency and conflict-of-interest safeguards;**
- **Improve asset declaration systems and the practical implementation of whistleblower protection;**
- **Enhance integrity frameworks across all levels of government;**
- **Continue protecting journalists from harassment and ensuring transparency in media ownership.**

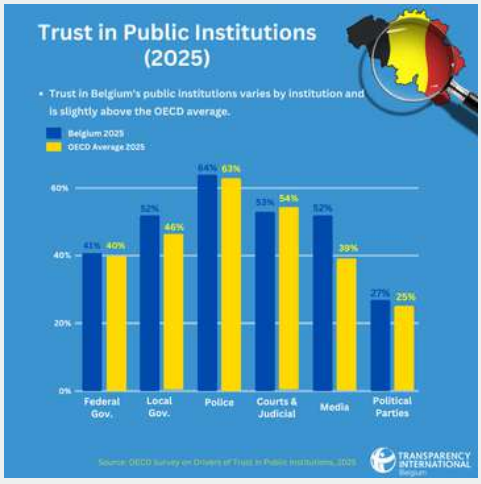
While Belgium maintains a solid rule of law framework, the report underscores that continued efforts are needed to strengthen transparency, accountability and integrity.

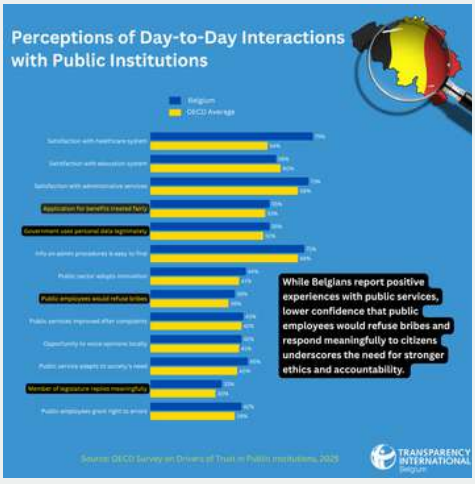
Would you like to explore the key findings of Rule of Law Report for Belgium?

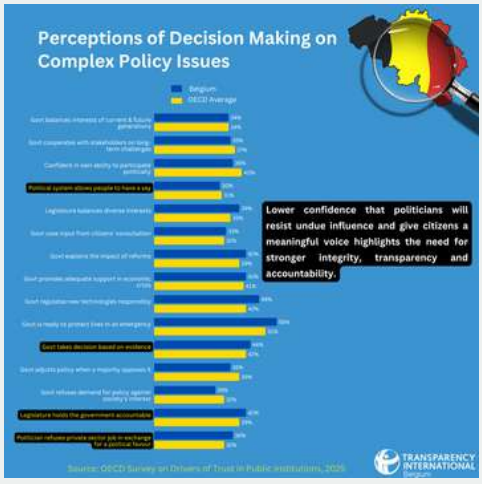
Click Here

OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (2025)

The latest OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (2025) published in July 2026, provides valuable insights into **how people in Belgium perceive their public institutions**. While trust in Belgium is generally slightly above the OECD average, the findings also highlight important gaps across population groups and areas where public confidence can be further strengthened.







Would you like to read the full report?

Click Here

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Recent Cases

Semlex Case

International corruption is part of the Belgian criminal code since 1999. In practice almost no cases have been prosecuted and since now we are informed about one case that was referred to the criminal court.

At the beginning of September the Belgian company Semlex is referred to the criminal court to answer in court over allegations that **it bribed foreign public officials.** Semlex is a Brussels-based company that provides biometric documents such as passports and driving licenses to governments and international bodies.

The Brussels Council Chamber referred 14 defendants of the Semlex case to the criminal court. They will face allegations of bribery of foreign public officials, money laundering and tax fraud linked to a contract for biometric passports in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Curious to know more? **Click Here**

Recent interviews, podcasts, and contribution to research projects by TI-BE

- Interview for Apache on what Belgium can learn from Ukraine's good practices to prevent corruption **Check the interview**
- Interview for RTL TVI documentary on corruption (broadcast foreseen for September) - Marc Beyens and Gudrun VanDe Walle
- Podcast for IBR on Anti-money laundering (will be available in November) - Gudrun Van De Walle
- Interview for a research project of the University of Aberdeen - Frederica Storci (June 2026) on environmental crime and Anti-corruption
- Interview for a research project of Basta on whistleblowing (Interviewing as a contribution to the National Data Collection Report on Whistleblowing with a Focus on Public Procurement. (September 2026)

What's Next !

Belgian Integrity Award Ceremony

The winners of the Belgian Integrity Awards 2026 will be announced during an evening dedicated to celebrating integrity, transparency and accountability.

📅 **7 December 2026**
🕐 **From 18:00 onwards**
📍 **Royal Belgian Library (KBR), Brussels**

The evening will include the announcement of the winning project, followed by an opportunity to connect and network with others working to promote integrity in Belgium.

Registration will open soon. Stay tuned for more details!

October BIF Session: Navigating New Legal Challenges for the Business Sector

The legal landscape for businesses in Belgium is evolving, bringing new challenges and new questions for companies, compliance professionals and legal practitioners.

📅 **16 October 2026**
🕐 **Time: 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM**
📍 **Location: DLA Piper (Wolstraat 70, 1000 Brussels)**
Registration: complete this form

It will focus on two important developments: the new Belgian Criminal Code and the Private Investigation Act. The session will explore what these changes mean in practice for the business sector and how organisations can navigate the new legal environment while strengthening integrity, compliance and responsible business practices.

TIBE Academy - Trainining future leaders in integrity

In partnership with UCLouvain and under the academic responsibility of Corentin Hericher, assistant professor at UCLouvain, the Academy will allow Belgian schools to have introductory courses related to integrity and will also make an inventory of courses on this subject. This project supports two pillars of TI Belgium: **education and research**. This initiative aims to raise future leaders' awareness of how to prevent corruption. **Interested in supporting it? We are still looking for sponsors for next year**.

Follow us & get in touch!

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL Belgium

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