

II. BELGIUM

Population: 10,263,414

Religious Make-up:

Recognized Religions

Catholicism: 75% (church-goers: 15%)

Protestantism (EPUB): about 40,000

Judaism: about 40,000

Anglicanism: about 6,000

Islam: 250,000 - 350,000

Orthodoxy: about 40,000

Recognized Philosophical Movement: Secular humanism (1994): about 18%

Non-Recognized Religions

Federal Synod of Protestant and Evangelical Churches in Belgium: about 50,000

Independent Protestant congregations: about 10,000

Jehovah's Witnesses: about 25,000 (50,000 churchgoers)

Church of Scientology: claiming about 5,000 members

Mormons: about 3,000-4,000

Buddhism: about 3,000

Adventists: about 1600

Smaller unrecognized groups, numbering some hundreds of members: Baha'is, Hare Krishna, Sahaja Yoga, Sukyô Mahikari and the Raëlian movement.

Groups with less than 150 believers: The Family, Soka Gakkai, Unification Church, Nouvelle Acropole, Fraternité Blanche Universelle, Human and Universe Energy, Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, Church of Christ of Brussels, Ogyen Kunzang Chöling, Le Mouvement, Institut Gnostique d'Anthropologie, Antoinism.

Membership OSCE: Original - Helsinki Final Act: Original - Charter of Paris: Original

Membership Council of Europe: 05/05/49 - Membership U.N.:27/12/45 - Member OF European Union

A. CONSTITUTION

Constitution adopted on 7 Feb 1831

Article 11

Enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized for Belgians should be ensured without discrimination. To this end, laws and decrees guarantee notably the rights and freedoms of ideological and philosophical minorities.

Article 19

Freedom of worship, public practice of the latter, as well as freedom to demonstrate one's opinions on all matters, are guaranteed, except for the repression of offences committed when using this freedom.

Article 20

No one can be obliged to contribute in any way whatsoever to the acts and ceremonies of a religion or to observe religious days of rest.

Article 21

The State does not have the right to intervene either in the nomination or in the installation of ministers of any religion whatsoever, nor to forbid them from corresponding with their superiors, from publishing their acts, except, in the latter case, taking into consideration normal responsibilities in matters of press and publication. A civil wedding shall always precede nuptial benediction, except in cases to be established by law, should this be necessary.

Article 24

§ 1: Education is free ; any preventative measure is forbidden; the repression of offences is only governed by law or decree.

The community offers free choice to parents.

The community organizes neutral education. Neutrality implies notably the respect of the philosophical, ideological or religious conceptions of parents and pupils.

Schools organized by the public authorities offer, until the end of obligatory scholarship, the choice between the teaching of one of the recognized religions and non-denominational moral teaching.

§ 3 : Everyone has the right to education with the respect of the fundamental rights and freedoms. Access to education is free until the end of obligatory scholarship.

All pupils under obligatory scholarship have the right to moral or religious education at the community's expense.

§ 4 : All pupils or students, parents, teaching staff and institutions are equal before the law or decree. The law and decree take into account objective differences, notably the characteristics of each organizing authority, that justify appropriate treatment.

Article 181

§ 1. The State awards remuneration and pensions to religious ministers; those amounts required are included in the budget on an annual basis.

§ 2 : The State awards remuneration and pensions to representatives of organizations recognized by the law as providing moral assistance according to a non-denominational philosophical concept; those amounts required are included in the budget on an annual basis.