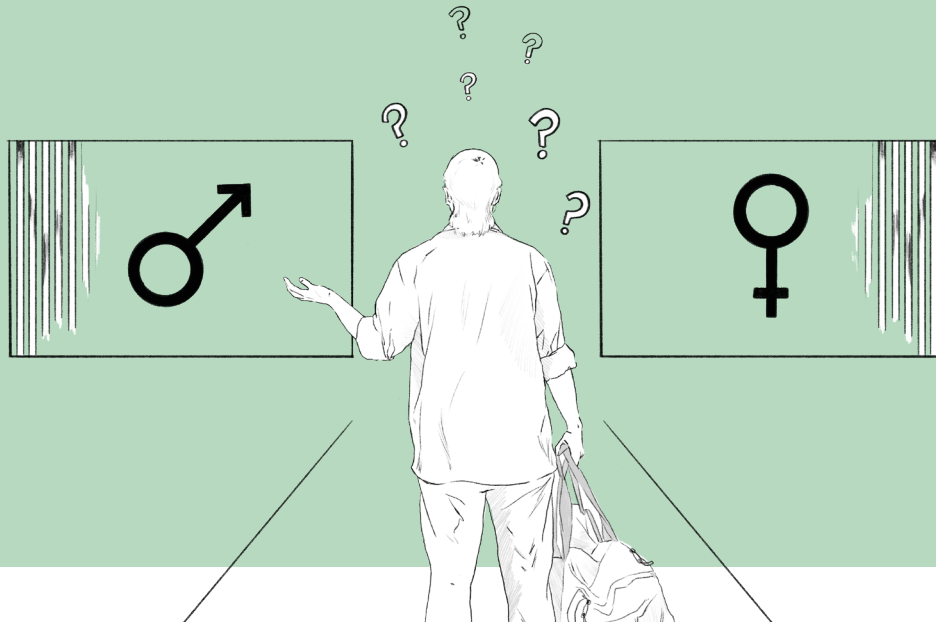


A SELF-HELP GUIDE FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS IN
BELGIAN PRISONS

BEYOND BINARY BARS



BEYOND

BINARY

BARS

COLOPHON

This self-help guide was created through a collaboration between the Transgender Infopunt (TIP) and experience experts (imprisoned and ex-prisoned transgender persons), the Directorate of General Penitentiary Institutions (FPS Justice), researcher Aurore Vanliefde (KU Leuven), the Justice and Enforcement Agency (Flemish Government), the Justice Welfare Work Services (JWW) of the Centres for General Welfare (CAW) and the Institute for Equality between Women and Men (IGVM).

Note: the original guide was written in Dutch and translated into English.



WHY DO WE NEED SUCH A GUIDE?

If you are in prison as a transgender or gender-questioning person, you may be faced with a lot of questions or challenges. You want information and support, but you may not know who can help you with that or who you can trust.

The purpose of this self-help guide is to inform and help detained persons with questions about their gender or who identify as transgender persons.

In the self-help guide, difficult terms are used. To help you understand these terms, you will find a comprehensive glossary at the very back.

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WHAT QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED IN THIS GUIDE?

We answer some frequently asked questions in two parts.

PART 1: GENERAL

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PART 1

GENERAL

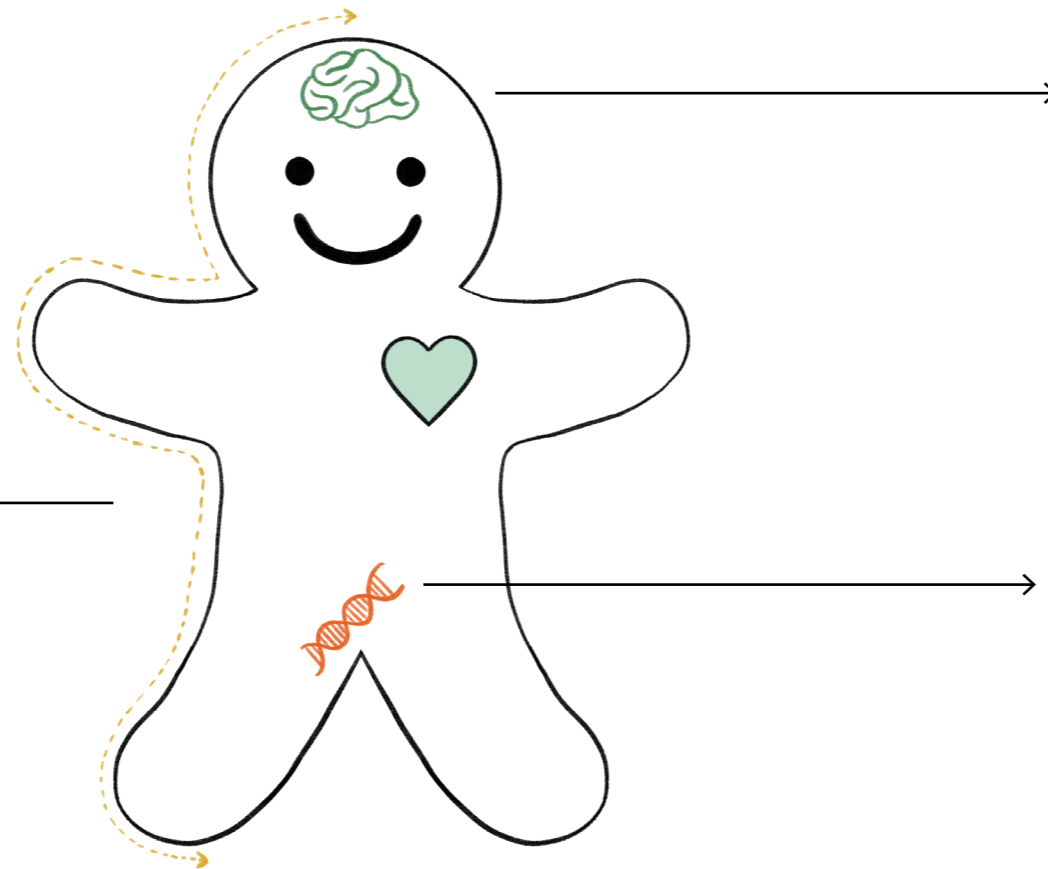
1. What does the genderbread person stand for?

The genderbread person is a useful model to explore and explain our identity in terms of gender and sexual orientation.

This model stems from a study by Shively and De Cecco (1993), who found that our gender, our sense and our identification are not fixed, not binary and not one-sided details. They consist of an interplay of several parts.

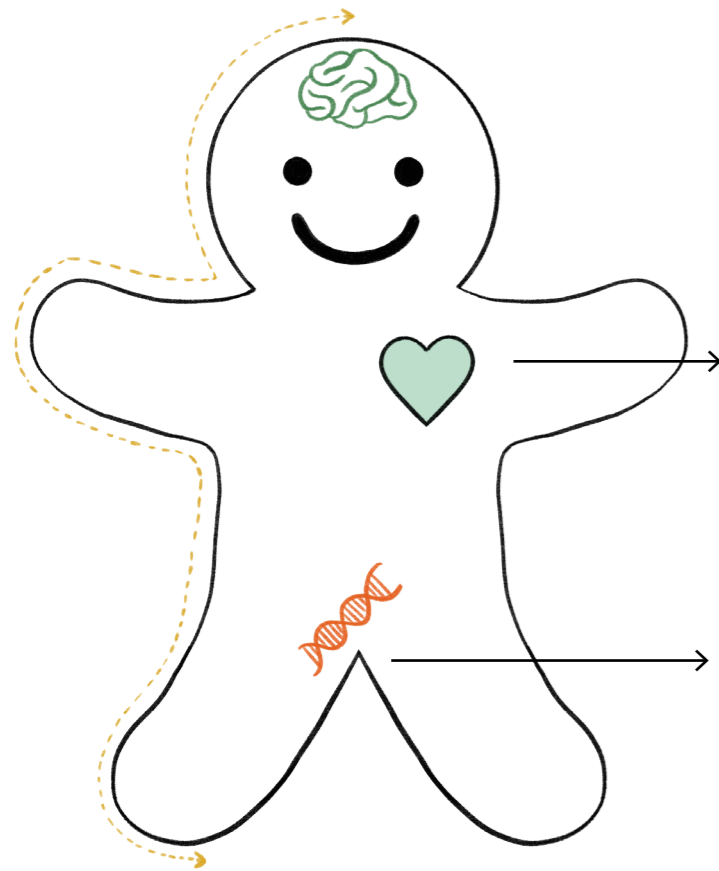
GENDER EXPRESSION is about the way you present yourself. For example, through clothing, accessories, hairstyle, voice or tone of voice, language use, behaviour, way of walking/sitting/standing, job/hobby/study choice etc.

Gender expression is influenced by the culture, time, and place in which you find yourself. For example, something that we in Belgium see as very feminine may be considered gender-neutral or masculine elsewhere in the world.



GENDER IDENTITY is about how you feel and identify. You can feel like a man, woman, both or neither. The development of our gender identity starts from an early age and continues to evolve as we get older. For most people, their gender identity coincides with their sex assigned at birth: these are cisgender people. For some people, gender identity does not completely coincide with their sex assigned at birth: these are transgender people.

GENDER/SEX/SEX CHARACTERISTICS: everyone is assigned a sex at birth based on certain physical characteristics: reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes... Based on these characteristics, a doctor decides whether it is a boy or girl, and this is registered on the birth certificate. But actually, gender/sex/sex characteristics are not delineated. Many variations are possible. For example, the body of an intersex person does not fully fit into the classic male/female division.



ROMANTIC ATTRACTION is about who you are emotionally attracted to. Who can you fall in love with or not? Romantic attraction can go hand in hand with sexual attraction, but this is not always the case.

SEXUAL ATTRACTION is about who you are sexually and physically attracted to. Who are you sexually aroused by or not? Sexual attraction can go hand in hand with romantic attraction, but this is not always the case.

The romantic and sexual attraction (together 'sexual orientation') are completely separate from gender identity.

But all too often these terms are used interchangeably.

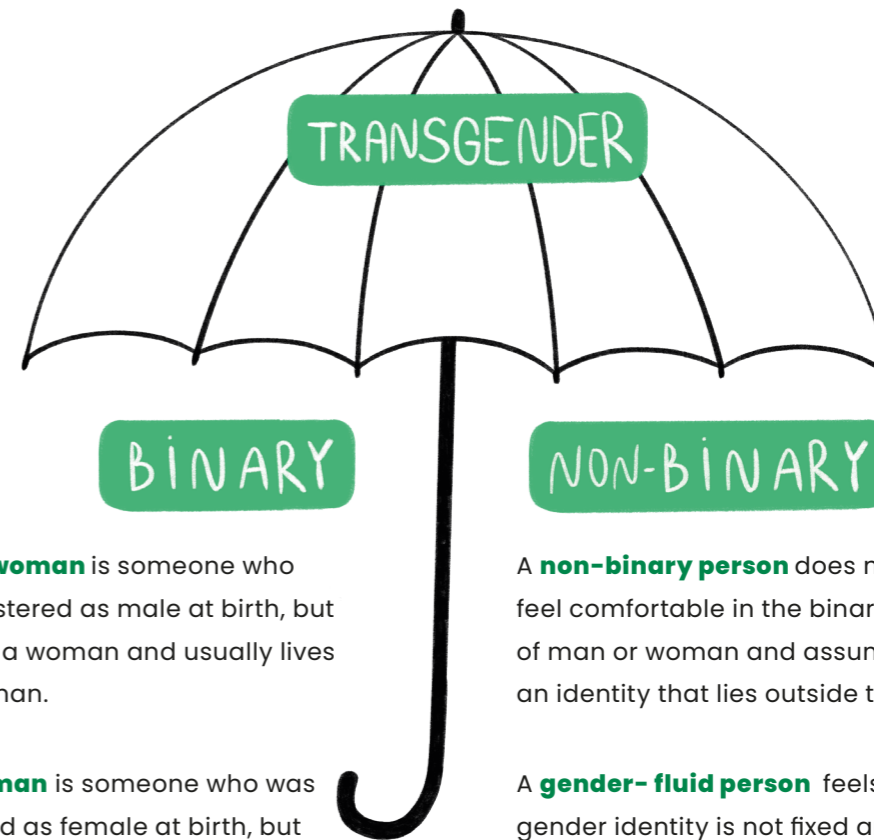
Transgender people are not necessarily straight, gay, lesbian, bi etc.

When someone goes into transition, it does not mean that someone's sexual orientation changes.

2. Who is or what is transgender?

Transgender is an umbrella term for a broad group of people whose gender identity does not fully match the assigned sex at birth. This umbrella includes both binary gender identities, such as trans men and trans women, and non-binary gender identities, such as non-binary or gender-fluid individuals.

There are other identities and experiences that fall under the trans umbrella. At the back you will find a glossary with definitions.



A **trans woman** is someone who was registered as male at birth, but feels like a woman and usually lives as a woman.

A **trans man** is someone who was registered as female at birth, but feels like a man and usually lives as a man.

A **non-binary person** does not feel comfortable in the binary box of man or woman and assumes an identity that lies outside that.

A **gender-fluid person** feels that gender identity is not fixed and can change anytime.

3. How many people are transgender?

It is impossible to say exactly how many transgender people live in Belgium. Not only because the group is so diverse, but also because not all transgender people take social, legal and/or medical steps (see question 4). Transgender people who do take social, legal and/or medical steps become visible in figures.

If we look at the legal figures, we see that 3,262 people changed their official gender registration between 1 January 1993 and 31 December 2021. Figures are best compared to an iceberg: the top protrudes above the water and is visible, but the actual amount remains hidden.

From research and practice we know that some transgender persons are imprisoned in our Belgian prisons and that this leads to a number of points of concerns.

There are no official figures known because transgender identity is not recorded in the statistics of the penitentiary administration. After all, registering gender identity (which differs from legal gender registration) can lead to forced disclosure.

It cannot be the intention to force a transgender person to reveal their gender identity without the person wishing to do so.

4. What can a transition consist of?

A transition, also called a 'gender transition', is one of the possible life changes that someone can go through. It is a process that is different for everyone. Not everyone wants to or can take every possible step. We make a division between **emotional, social, legal and medical transition**.

An **emotional transition** refers to a process of awareness and self-acceptance. It is the process in which the gender search (exploring your gender identity) takes place. You can realise at any age that you are not fully comfortable with your assigned sex at birth. Many people know their gender identity at a young age, but others will not understand their gender identity until later in life.

The process of awareness and acceptance of your gender identity is therefore different for everyone. For some trans people, it can help to enlist the help of a mental health professional. This professional can help you identify your needs and support you in any other steps in your transition.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR GENDER IDENTITY? FIVE TIPS.

1.

Write or draw about how you feel. You can use the empty genderbread person at the back of this guide.

2.

Look for situations where you feel uncomfortable with your gender and write them down. Do parts of your body, words or ways in which people speak to you feel good or bad?

3.

Read books, articles, or testimonials from people who have investigated their gender. Do their stories resonate with you?

4.

Talk about your experience with someone you trust (a caregiver, pen pal, family etc.) – see also question 5. 'I have questions about my gender. Who can I turn to?'

5.

Imagine what it would feel like to wear different clothes, use a different name or form of address, or make changes to your body. What feelings, fears, or hopes come up when you imagine these changes?

A **social transition** is a process in which you make changes in your social life. You do this to be able to live your life according to your gender identity and with a gender expression that feels good to you.

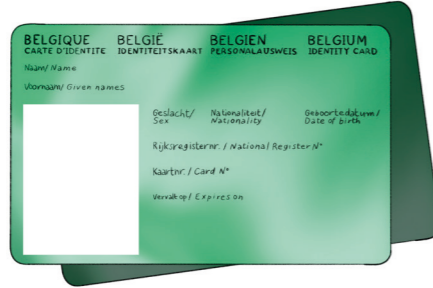
A transition can therefore be an important social event and also has an effect on the people around you.

They also have to adapt their thinking, acting and speaking, and this sometimes takes some time.

This process can consist of several changes:

- Telling people that you are questioning, transgender or non-binary;
- Asking people to address you with your new name;
- Asking people to use other pronouns (he/she/they) or form of address (Mr, Ms etc.);
- Experimenting with your appearance: dressing, grooming (e.g. hair removal) and presenting in a way that feels safe and good to you when others can see you;
- Using your voice differently when you talk to others;
- Seeking contact with other questioning, transgender or non-binary persons.

Note: discuss social changes with an assistant, as they can be tricky (and even dangerous) in a prison context.



A **legal transition** consists of administrative adjustments that you can make to get legal recognition for your gender identity.

Since 2018, transgender people can have their name and/or gender registration changed on their ID for free. If you only want to change your name, you pay a maximum of 10% of the municipal rate (often free or a low cost). If you change your gender registration, 'M' will be changed to 'V' or vice versa.

An 'X' or neutral registration is not (yet) possible in Belgium at the time of writing (2023). *Read more under question 12.*

A **medical transition** is about physical changes that you need to confirm your gender identity. This step is also called transgender care or gender-affirming care and refers to the care you need to confirm your gender.

In Belgium, various medical steps are possible, such as hormone therapy and/or surgical procedures. Again, it is important to know that not every trans person wants to take all possible medical steps.

Everyone's needs are different, and whether or not you can have a medical procedure is also determined by your health and capacity. *Read more under questions 14 and 15.*

5. I have questions about my gender. Who can I turn to?

You can go to different services to talk about your gender identity or gender expression.

Intern services

You can always contact the psychosocial service (PSD / SPS) and medical service (MD) with questions or concerns. These professionals are not specialised in the transgender topic, but they do have basic knowledge and can listen to your story, needs etc. and make a referral if necessary.

Extern services

There are also external services within the prison where you can go to.

In the Flemish and Brussels prisons, you can ask for help from JWW (Judicial Welfare Work) or CGG (Centres for Mental Health). The providers from JWW observe professional secrecy and can help you with practical matters. You can also contact them for an open conversation.

In the Walloon prisons you can turn to ASJ (Social and Judicial Assistance) or SAD (Assistance Service for Detainees). You can also contact I.Care for information and questions about your health. Specifically for detained trans persons, this service works together with Genre Pluriels (see further).

Outside of prison, there are a number of services and organisations you can contact with specific questions about your gender identity, sexual orientation, or because you need someone to talk to.

The opposite page gives you an overview.



Transgender Infopunt

0800 96 316
contact@transgenderinfo.be

Tuesday to Friday
09:00 - 16:00

Free and anonymous
Video call by appointment possible



I.Care

02 218 51 01
info@i-careasbl.be

Counselling for (trans) detained persons in prisons¹

¹ At the time of writing (2023), I.Care is only active in the prisons in Haren, Jamioulx, Bergen and Lantin.



Lumi

0800 99 533
vragen@lumi.be

Monday & Wednesday
18:30 - 21:30
Free and anonymous



Façe à toi-même

0478 26 86 53
asblfaceatoimeme@outlook.com

Association for and by transgender persons



Merhaba

0487 55 69 38
info@merhaba.be

For LGBTQIA+ people with a migration background

Video call and visit possible



Genres Pluriels

0487 63 23 43
contact@genrespluriels.be

Supporting and defending the rights of transgender/gender fluid and intersex people. Collaborates with I.Care.

**6. I am treated unfairly or discriminated against because of my gender or sexual orientation.
Who can I turn to?**

People who are treated unfairly or feel discriminated against during their detention can report this internally and/or externally.

Intern

You can discuss the situation with a care provider, your contact person at the PSD/SPS or the prison management. You can also send a report letter to the Monitoring Commission (CvT) to make a report. They will (in principle) meet with you for a confidential conversation and possibly file the report with the prison management. This is not an official complaint. If the situation is the result of a decision by the management, the CvT can help you to file a complaint with the Complaints Commission (in Dutch: Klachtencommissie).

Extern

You can contact the Institute for Equality between Women and Men (IGVM) free of charge for reports of discrimination based on gender, gender change, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.

For reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation, you can contact Unia.

If you have been the victim of a criminal offence (for example, visible homophobic or transphobic violence by other detainees or by prison staff) and you intend to file a complaint with the police, you must always report this to the prison management and/or clerk's office. In that case, a police officer(s) will come to meet you.



Institute for Equality
between Men and
Women

0800 12 800

Monday to Thursday
09:00 -12:00

Free and anonymous



Unia

0800 12 800

Monday to Friday
09:30 - 13:00

Free and anonymous

PART 2

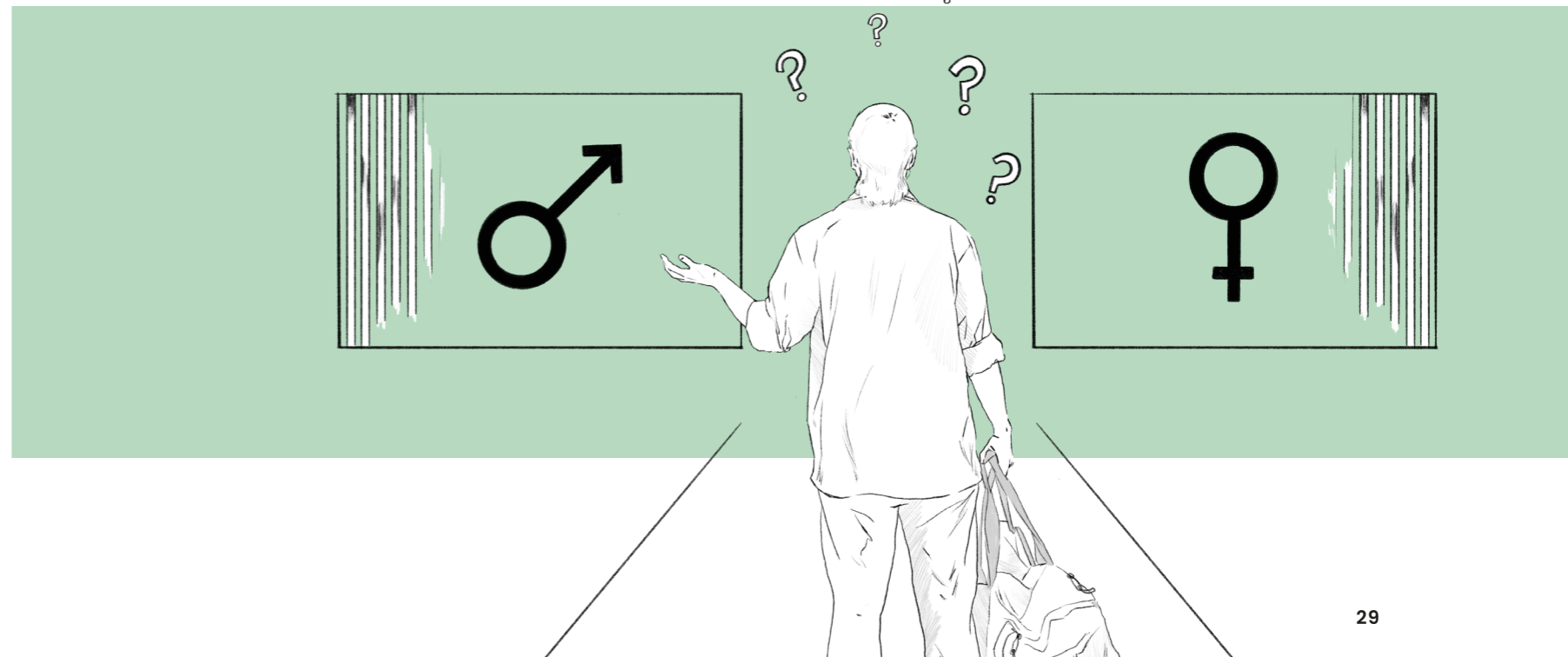
TRANS


IN DETENTION

7. What prison do I end up in as a transgender person?

Prisons are organised as gender-binary. This means that there is a separation between male and female detainees. This separation is legally enshrined in the Basic Law for Prisoners.

Most Belgian prisons only have space for male detainees. There are also some prisons that house male and female prisoners. Some transgender people are concerned about the department where they are placed. There is no clear answer to the question of where you end up as a trans woman, trans man or non-binary person. Every situation is personal and is therefore viewed and assessed individually.





Specifically, the investigating magistrate can decide after an arrest to have you detained during the further investigation and also determines in which prison. Usually, this is the prison in the region where the crimes were committed.

The most important condition for determining the place is that the prison houses people in pre-trial detention. The investigating magistrate takes various factors into account.

If your gender identity does not match the gender as stated on your identity card, you can report this (yourself or through your solicitor) to the investigating magistrate and ask that your preference be taken into account.

Upon entering the prison, the prison management may take into account your gender identity and gender expression. In principle, you will be placed in a department that matches your gender identity, and your physical characteristics or gender registration on your passport will not matter. This requires open communication about your private situation and can be sensitive.

If you have any doubts or questions, the official who receives you will inform the prison management. It is the prison management who decides in which department and, if necessary, in which cell you end up. The aim is to find out how you identify yourself, in which role you usually live and/or whether a (medical) transition has already started. They also take into account your personal safety, the safety of other detainees and staff in the department.

8. Can I ask for a transfer because of my gender identity?

It may happen that you are in a prison or department that does not match your gender identity or expression. Or maybe you did not dare to share anything about your gender identity when you arrived. Know that any detainee can request a transfer.

If you are staying in a mixed prison (with women's and men's sections), you can go to the prison management and ask for a transfer to the other section.

If there is only room for male detainees in the prison where you are staying, you can request a transfer to another prison. Convicted detainees can request a transfer from the prison management or directly from the Detention Management Service (DMS / DDB).

Persons in pre-trial detention may apply for a transfer to the investigating magistrate. To do this, you can contact the investigating magistrate by letter, through your solicitor or by requesting a new hearing from the investigating magistrate during the hearing before the council chamber.

Once your transfer has been approved, the management of the destination prison will be informed of the situation. The information provided is limited to information necessary for the continuation of safe and humane detention. Your contact person at the PSD / SPS shares important information about your file with colleagues in the other prison. They do this in accordance with the instructions they receive and to ensure that your file can be continued.

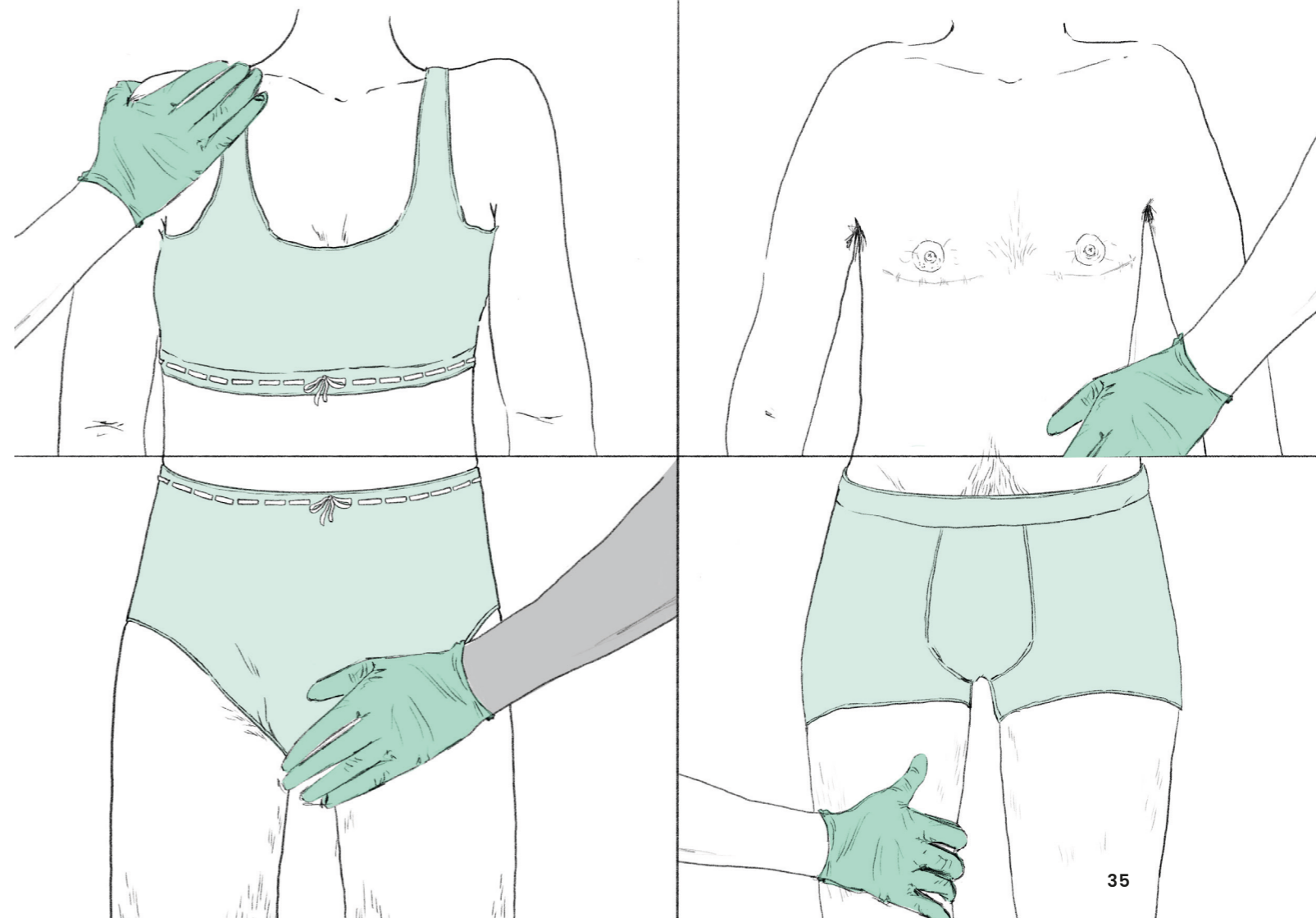
The data they pass on to services responsible for transporting you to the other prison is limited to what is necessary for a safe transfer. The data that these employees have is your official name and points of attention for protection against other detainees during transport.

9. Who will I be searched by?

In the case of **a search of the clothing**, the same procedures apply to transgender prisoners as to the entire prison population. This means that the examination of the clothing can be done by a penitentiary officer of any gender.

In the case of **a search of the body**, it is legally stipulated that it may only be done by officials of the same gender as the detainee.

This also applies to the official who acts as a witness. As with the classification decision (see question 7), you can ask the prison management to collect all useful information to come to a decision that takes into account your gender identity and preference. In order to properly map your individual situation, you can talk to the prison management, PSD / SPS, medical service or other employees.



Please note: it is not a legal obligation to follow the preference of a detained (transgender) person. In practice, it will also not always be possible for you to be searched by someone with the same gender identity or in accordance with your preference. This may, for example, be related to the availability of staff of the elected gender identity. For example, there are not always enough female officers present in the department or in the establishment to have the search done by them.

In addition, it remains important to find a good balance between respect for your needs and wishes on the one hand, and respect for those of the officials carrying out their assignment on the other.

If you experience difficulties, inconveniences or insulting comments during the search, you can report this to the prison management or/and talk about this with a care provider, the PSD / SPS or medical service. Together with you, they will look for the most appropriate way to handle your report and to give it the necessary follow-up.

You can also report this to the Institute for Equality between Women and Men (see question 5) or to the Monitoring Commission (see question 6).

10. Can I get access to clothes, products or accessories I need to feel good about my appearance/gender expression?

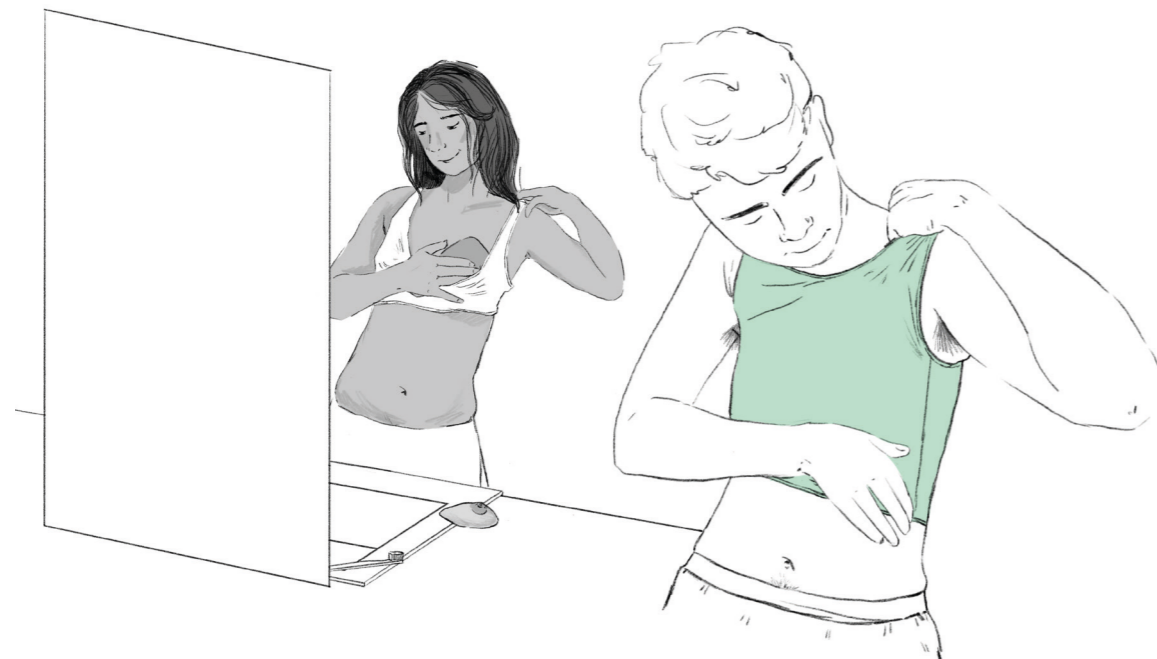
Because prisons are gender binary (see question 7), the purchase lists and dress codes are also different for detainees in a men's or women's department.

In general, prisons have their own canteen with a list of approved items that you can order or purchase with your own money. These items are often gender-specific, so people in a men's department can't buy items for people in the women's department and vice versa. Examples include a bra, sanitary napkins, make-up, nail polish, hair dye etc



Access to gender-specific clothing, products or accessories depends on:

- **The prison where you reside:** does the department/prison where you reside match or not match your gender identity or gender expression?
- **The type of article:** is the article on the canteen list or not? And if not, can you possibly order the item through the outside canteen, pharmacy canteen or through the medical service? For items that are not included in the canteen, an agreement from the prison management is required.
- **Financial resources:** do you have enough money to buy an item?



In some countries (e.g. Malta) prisons have evolved into a gender-neutral canteen, so that male, female and trans detainees are given the same canteen list. Also in the Belgian prison of Haren (since 2022) prisoners have the same canteen list, regardless of residence in a men's or women's department.

It is important that your gender expression feels right and comfortable. There are several ways to adjust or experiment with your gender expression. For example: dressing differently, trying a new hairstyle, wearing a wig, using your voice differently, hair removal, wearing makeup or nail polish etc. Provided that the articles do not disturb order and safety, you can ask for this through the prison management and/or the medical service.

Nor is experimenting with your appearance in a prison a simple matter. Maybe you will only want to do that in a private cell, but you are currently in a cell with other people? If necessary, ask the prison management for an individual cell.

10a. What accessories are usually used by transgender people?

There are several aids to obtain a more masculine, feminine or neutral/ androgynous appearance.

This can be either to replace, pending, or as a supplement to medical options. They help to increase gender euphoria and reduce gender incongruence.

Did you know that the Transgender Infopoint (TIP) is a donation point for gender-affirming accessories?

This means that we can help people who do not have enough money by giving them a free accessory (mainly bras and binders).

Contact the TIP and/or discuss this with a care provider.



Binder

A kind of vest with which you create a flat chest. Wear a binder for a maximum of 8 hours a day to prevent pain.

Wash the binder at max. 30 degrees and do not put it in the tumble dryer.



Tucking underwear

Corrective underwear specially designed to hide the penis more. In tucking, the penis is tucked away between the legs/ buttocks to the back so that it is not visible along the front of the body.

Wear tucking underwear only during the day (max. 8 hours) to prevent pain and infertility.



Wig

If you don't have hair, or have short hair or bald patches, you may want to consider using a wig or hair prosthesis.



Trouser padding

There are several flexible and soft silicone packers (in the shape of a penis) to fill your pants. In addition to silicone packers, there are also “bulges” in the form of a penis. These can also be slid into your underpants and are lighter in weight.

There are also pant fillings (STPs: Stand To Pee) that allow you to urinate upright.

Make- Up



Makeup can help you express yourself the way you want. There are several tricks to make beard growth less visible, for example. It is best to use a good covering foundation to cover any facial hair or stubble that may be present. When you want stubble, for example, as a trans man, you can colour your beard.

Chest prostheses and bras



There are breast prostheses made of fabric or silicone that can provide a fuller breast area.

There are also bras that are specially designed to hide your filling. An extra layer in the bra ensures that the filling stays in place.

10b. What about your voice?

In addition to clothing and products, the way we use our voice is also important when it comes to gender expression. Not every trans person finds the voice disturbing, but some would like to change it.

For example, because they experience that the voice “betrays” them in a (telephone) conversation, causing the listener to misunderstand gender identity. How you sound depends on the structure of your voice box. Hormones have an influence on this, but also the way you use your voice box. Each voice is unique, and different characteristics are important for the listener’s perception: the timbre, the pitch, intonation and non-verbal language.

Trans people who want to work with their voice are advised to seek counselling from a specialised speech therapist. After an appointment with the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor, a trans persons can receive a reimbursement for speech therapy under the category 'voice disorders (dysphonia)'. You can inquire about this at the medical service. If an appointment with an ENT doctor or speech therapist is not possible, you can also get started with language and voice exercises yourself.²

² Voice exercises prepared by Katrien Eerdekens – Speech therapist/voice therapist at Find your Voice and coordinator of Gendercentrum ZOL Genk.

Exercise 1

The relationship with your voice

Exercise 2

Non-verbal communication

Consider the following questions:

- Try to figure out how you feel about your voice right now. Which parts do you like about your voice, and which parts bother you?
- Are certain situations more difficult than others?
- Which things would you like to 'hear' and feel differently in your voice?
- How do you want to come across to others? How do you want others to see you?
- Where would you place your ideal vocal tone on the gender spectrum?

man

woman

How the listener perceives us is largely determined by our non-verbal communication: your posture, facial expression, supporting hand movements, body language etc. Be aware of your non-verbal communication.

Sit in front of your mirror and look at yourself. Tell yourself a nice memory and see/feel what is happening to your body. Notice what your shoulders do, your chest area, your head, your feet, your legs etc. If you do the same thing with a less pleasant memory, you will notice that your body language will also become different and you will use your body differently.

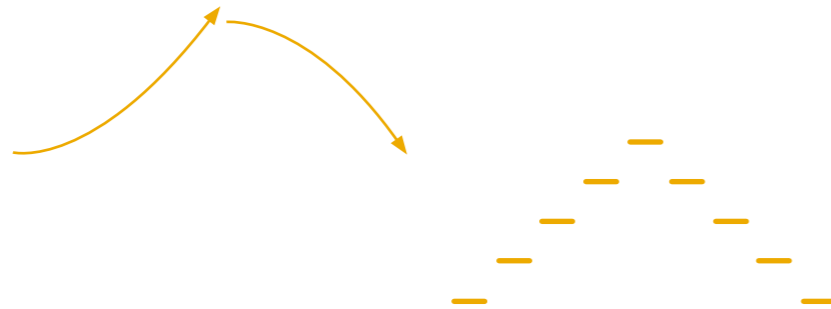
Exercise 3

Flexibility of the vocal cords

In order to use our voice in a different way, the prerequisite is that the voice be flexible. Muscles relax and tighten to control the voice opening and thus vibrate the air that comes from the lungs. The muscle can tense up or relax more. This will determine the speed at which the voice vibrates and thus the pitch of our sound.

That's why you should do this exercise. Try to raise and lower your voice as much as you can. Choose what you like the most in terms of pitch: rather high (more feminine) or rather low (more masculine).

- Slide your voice on different vowels: oe, ie, aa, ee, oo, uu
- Slide on the consonant m



Exercise 4

Resonation of your voice in your voice box (timbre)

Our voice box consists of our pharynx, oral cavity and nasal cavity. When the sound is formed by the vibration of the vocal cords, it will resonate. The shape of the voice box determines the timbre of our voice.

In addition, we see that this resonance is actually the factor that determines how the listener understands our gender.

It is true that if you feel the vibrations at the front of your mouth, you are more likely to be seen as female. If you feel the vibrations more at the back, you will be seen more as male.

Say "mmm" at a higher pitch. Note that the vibrations are at the front of your oral cavity and nasal cavity. Can you feel this?

Say "aaaa" at a lower pitch. Note that the vibrations are more at the back of the mouth at your throat. Can you feel this?

We are now going to practice with these sounds based on how you want to sound. So choose the resonance that feels best to you.

*mmmmommmm - mmmmaammm - mmmmieeeeeennn
nnnaaaaammmmm - nnneeemmmmm - nnnammm*

11. I am sometimes addressed with my old name or the wrong form of address. How can I deal with this?

It can happen that someone calls you by your old name, also called “dead naming”. It can also happen that someone uses a pronoun (such as he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs etc.) or form of address (such as sir, ma’am etc.) that does not fit your gender identity. This is called “misgendering”. For example, referring to a trans woman as “he” or addressing her as “sir” is misgendering.

There are two forms of dead naming and misgendering:

- **Intentionally:** this is a form of verbal (micro) aggression. Someone knows that you prefer to be addressed by a different name or with a different pronoun and ignores this wish.



- **Unintentionally:** When someone mistakenly misgenders you, the reason is often that the person misunderstood your gender. For example, because of external characteristics, voice or information that the other person has. It can also happen that someone has known you for a long time and the adaptation to the new name or pronouns is difficult for that reason.

Dead naming and misgendering can provoke uncomfortable feelings: embarrassment, shame, frustration, sadness, suffering, anger etc. Everyone reacts differently to this. How you deal with these situations is different for everyone.

Maybe you don't dare to use your new name in prison yet, but you do want to experiment with it. Maybe you can trust a care provider and ask them to use your new name and pronouns? Agree that they only do this in the space where you are alone, so that your privacy and safety are guaranteed.

TIPS TO DEAL WITH THIS.

1.

Don't assume that the other person means it badly. Is the other person aware of which name and/or pronouns you prefer? Is this the first time the person has addressed you incorrectly? Or do you recognise a pattern that could indicate that the other person might be doing it intentionally?

2.

A golden rule is that your safety, in addition to that of others, and your own feelings always prevail. Is the situation safe enough to correct the other person? Is your transgender identity known in this environment? How are you feeling today? Do you have enough energy to react or does it feel better not to respond to it (this time)?

3.

If you choose to respond, try to maintain your calm and convey the message in an understanding way. For example, you might say, 'I heard you called me by the name Steven, but I use the name Sarah because it suits me better. It doesn't feel good to be confronted with my old name. It would be nice if you address me as Sarah next time.'

4.

You can also ask the prison management to communicate the name and/or pronouns you use to the staff so that they speak to you correctly.

5.

Do you continue to experience dead naming or misgendering, and by the same person every time? Discuss this with the prison management or a care provider. They can work with you to see what actions might be needed.

12. I want to legally change my official first name and/or gender registration. How should I approach this?

Since the law of 25 June 2017, transgender persons can apply for an adjustment of the first name and/or gender registration with the civil registrar of the municipality where they are registered. For people with a non-Belgian nationality and residence card, this is the municipality of Brussels.

There are no psychological or medical conditions for this. You make a first statement in which you declare that you are convinced that the gender stated on your birth certificate does not correspond to your inner gender identity. The official passes on your first statement to the Public Prosecutor. The Public Prosecutor has three months to issue a negative opinion. Between three and six months after your first statement, you make a second statement to the official. In the second statement, you confirm your request again.

For detainees, this is not an easy procedure. You must appear in person before the civil registrar, for both your first and your second statement. You can do this, for example, during a permit (UV) or penitentiary leave (PV).

For persons who cannot go to the municipality, the civil registrar may be asked to come to prison (just like for a marriage).

The official may do so when:

- You are in (pre-trial) custody;
- You cannot possibly go to the town hall;
- The Public Prosecutor has been informed.

Definitely discuss this with your PSD / SPS contact person. They can consult the legislation on the website of FOD Justitie / SPF Justice:

www.justitie.belgium.be/nl/themas_en_dossiers/personen_en_gezinnen/transgenders

13. What are the options for transgender care in Belgium?

In Belgium, there are three options to start a (medical) transition process:

1. You register with a **multidisciplinary gender team** affiliated with a Belgian hospital;
2. **Designing your own care path** through independent care providers;
3. A **combination**: registering with a gender team and while waiting for an intake with a gender team, starting counselling with an independent care provider.

Ask a caregiver you trust to print the Transgender Infopunt care brochure for you.

In this brochure you will find an overview of and explanation of the (medical) options for transgender care in Belgium.

The brochure is available in seven languages: Dutch, French, English, Arabic, Turkish, Persian (Farsi) and Spanish.

You can register with a multidisciplinary gender team in consultation with the medical service. There are several gender teams in Belgium.

The medical service can find an overview for you on the website www.transgenderinfo.be/nl/genderteams.

When registering, your details will be noted. The address, phone number and email address may be those of your emergency responder. The most important thing is that the applicant can be reached at the time that an appointment can be scheduled. When the details change (for example because you are transferred or released), you must pass this on to the gender team.

An intake interview with a gender team takes place in a hospital. If you are unable or not allowed to leave the prison, you can request a teleconsultation (video call). A psychologist attached to a gender team cannot come to the prison.

14. Can I continue or start hormone therapy if I am in prison?

Continuing hormone therapy

If you started hormone therapy before going to prison, you can continue this treatment. There may be a short break, because the medical service must examine what dose you should be given, what type of medication, how often you should be given it etc. Do you not know this yourself? Then ask the medical service to contact your treating doctor or psychologist from outside. In this way, the medical service can take over your medical file accurately and continue the care you need.

Starting hormone therapy

If you have not (yet) started hormone therapy before you went to prison, it is best to discuss this with the medical service.

Are you already in counselling with a mental health professional connected to a gender team? Then the medical service can contact your care provider to see what steps can or cannot be taken for the period you are in prison.



15. Can I have gender-affirming surgery if I am detained?

Each request for an operation, including a gender-affirming one, is always considered and assessed individually by the medical service in consultation with the penitentiary administration.

When looking at your request for an intervention, the medical service and penitentiary administration will also take into account how long you will have to stay in prison. This is because prisons are insufficiently equipped to provide quality aftercare, which you need to be able to recover properly. If you have to serve a short prison sentence, it may be better to wait until after your detention period.

What gender-affirming surgical options are there?

- Storage of sperm or ova (fertility preservation)
- Hair removal from places on the body
- Upper body surgery: breast removal (mastectomy), breast enlargement (breast augmentation) or breast reduction
- Surgery on the lower body: vaginoplasty (construction of vagina/vulva), phalloplasty (construction of penis), metoidioplasty (construction of micropenis);
- Surgery on the head, nose, neck or voice;
- Surgery to the gonads: removal of testicular tissue (orchidectomy), removal of uterus (hysterectomy) and removal of ovarian tissue (ovariectomy).

Conditions and costs are associated with every medical procedure. Discuss this with the medical service.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS*

Agender: a gender identity that usually falls under the umbrella term “non-binary”. These individuals do not experience gender or experience an absence of gender.

Androgyny: a person who expresses themselves androgynously does not allow themselves to be influenced by the current binary gender norms in their appearance. They use characteristics from a broad spectrum of gender expression to express themselves.

Binary: the assumption that society is made up of two opposing pairs. For example: male versus female, black versus white, straight versus gay. This binary assumption is incomplete and can exclude people. Binary thinking in the area of gender erases the experiences of persons who do not have a binary gender identity.

Cisgender: an umbrella term for people who experience a gender identity that matches the gender they were assigned at birth. A cis woman is someone who has been assigned as female at birth and also feels and identifies as such. A cis man is someone who was assigned as male at birth and also feels and identifies as such.

*This glossary was drawn up in collaboration with çavaria VZW.

Cisnormative/Cisnormal: the assumption that everyone is cisgender. The cis norm is also the reason why transgender people, or people who express or behave differently than expected, are quickly seen as “different”. That being different indicates a deviation from the norm.van de norm.

Coming-in: the introduction of an LGBTQIA+ person to the LGBTQIA+ world. People often seek out others with whom they share a part of their identity. Many find a sense of recognition in that. It is about getting in touch with others who share a similar experience with you. This can happen in different ways: by reading testimonials or a book, by getting to know someone in the department, by writing letters with someone etc. Not every LGBTQIA+ person experiences a coming-in.

Coming-out: synonymous with “coming out of the closet”. Refers to a process in which you make something personal public. You may come out about different parts of your identity, but most often this is about your gender identity (not being cisgender) or sexual orientation (not being straight). For example, you might tell people you are transgender. Not everyone can come out: some people prefer to keep private how they feel or who they fall in love with.

Drag: collective term for people who adopt a gender expression that does not match their gender identity and do so for a performance or show. A drag queen is a man who performs with a female expression. A drag king is a woman who performs with a male expression. So it is not just about clothes and makeup but also about hand gestures, attitude and way of walking or dancing.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Gender affirmation: an umbrella term for the set of actions, changes, and opportunities involved in living our authentic gender self. What gender affirmation looks like or is interpreted is unique to each person. After all, it is based on what is personally affirmative, what feels safe to do, and what is accessible and available. A myth is that gender affirmation is a linear experience from A to B, when in reality we affirm our gender in many different ways. There is no right or wrong way.

Gender diversity/Gender diverse: An umbrella term used to describe gender identities that demonstrate a diversity of experience and expression outside of the binary framework.

Gender dysphoria/Gender incongruence: the feeling of tension that someone may experience between gender identity and their body characteristics. The feeling that your body characteristics do not match how you feel or identify. This feeling of incongruence occurs mainly in trans people. In order to reduce feelings of incongruity, psychosocial and medical counselling are used. Important: You can also be transgender without experiencing gender incongruence or dysphoria.

Gender euphoria: the pleasant feeling, comfort or joy you feel when you are acknowledged and affirmed in your gender identity. This is possible, for example, when a trans person is addressed with the self-chosen or new name, is satisfied with a certain intervention etc. There are different ways to achieve gender euphoria, and this is different for everyone.

Gender fluid: an umbrella term for people who feel that gender identity is not fixed and can change. These changes in identification can go between binary or non-binary gender identities

Gender norms: social agreements and expectations that a society connects to a particular gender or gender identity. The current Western norms are binary. They assume a division between men and women and argue that these two groups should behave in two different ways. Men are expected not to wear dresses. Women are expected not to be able to repair a car. In addition, everyone is expected to be cisgender (see cisnormative) and straight (see heteronormative).

Gender queer: if you do not feel at home within the binary gender identities and gender roles (male and female) and you do not see yourself fit into a fixed gender box. Then you may choose to identify as gender queer.

Gender spectrum: a way to describe your gender without starting from a binary view of gender identity and gender expression. The gender spectrum model proposes gender as a continuum that encompasses masculine and feminine but does not describe it as two opposites.

Heteronormative/Heteronormal: the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and follows/meets the associated (unwritten) social rules and expectations. The heteronorm is also the reason why people who do not enter into a male-female relationship are seen as "different".

Holebi: an acronym with abbreviations that stand (in Dutch) for "gay", "lesbian" and "bi".

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

LGBTQIA+: an acronym with abbreviations that stand for:

- **L - lesbian:** a woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women may call herself a lesbian.
- **G - gay:** a man who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other men may call himself gay.
- **B - bi(sexual):** means that you may feel attracted to people of more than one gender identity.
- **T - transgender:** see below.
- **Q - queer:** see below.
- **I - intersex:** describes people with a natural variation in sex characteristics. Intersex variations are simply variations where a person's body does not fully fit within what we culturally consider to be typically male or typically female.
- **A - agender (see above) or asexual:** An asexual person generally feels little or no sexual attraction to others.
- **+:** stands for all other gender identities and sexual/romantic orientations.

Non-binary: an umbrella term used by people who do not recognise themselves in the binary division of gender, the classic Western division into male and female, and all the expectations and roles that are linked to that within the binary gender norms.

Polygender: a term to describe your gender identity. If you find yourself experiencing different gender identities that are present at the same time or alternate, then you may call yourself polygender. Polygender is usually covered by the non-binary umbrella.

Queer: the word queer has different meanings. It is a way to identify your gender identity and/or sexuality. It is often used by people who are still looking for exactly where they are within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, as an umbrella term or by people who want to make a clear statement against the cisgender norm and heteronorm. It is also a stream of activism based on rejecting the heteronorm and cisgender norm. For example, many punkers also identify as queer. It is also an academic research field.

Trans: abbreviation for "transgender".

Transgender: an umbrella term for people who experience a gender identity that does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

Trans man: someone who was assigned as female at birth based on sex characteristics, but feels male, identifies as male and usually goes through life as male.

Trans woman: someone who was assigned as male at birth based on sex characteristics, but feels female, identifies as female and usually goes through life as female.

Transvestism: people who engage in transvestism temporarily move into a gender expression that does not match their gender identity. This can be done by playing with, for example, clothing, make-up and hairstyle, but also through language and posture. Transvestism is also called crossdressing. Anyone can do transvestism. In the context of show and performance, transvestism is also called "drag".

GENDERBREAD PERSON TO FILL IN

GENDER EXPRESSION

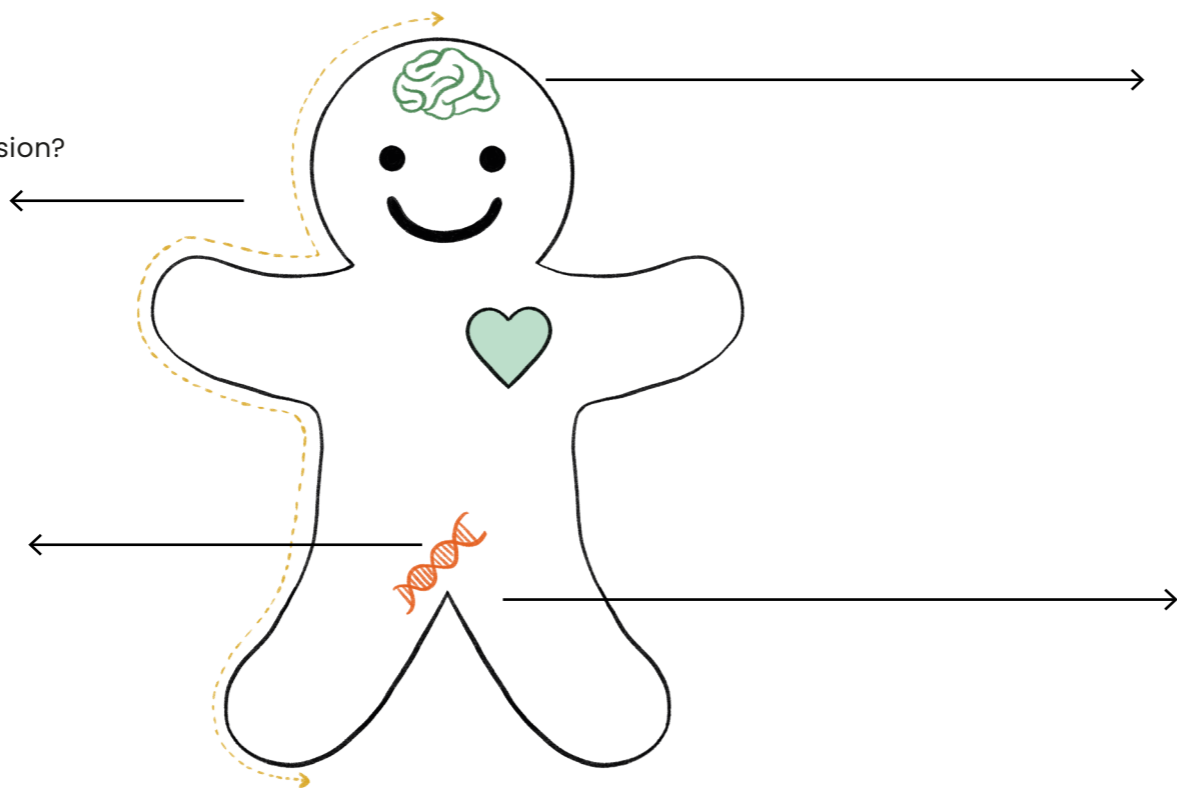
How would you name your appearance/gender expression?

- rather masculine
- androgynous
- rather feminine

GENDER/SEX/SEX CHARACTERISTICS

What gender were you assigned at birth?

- male
- intersex
- female



GENDER IDENTITY

How do you feel inside?

- male
- non-binary
- female
- I don't know

ROMANTIC AND/OR SEXUAL ATTRACTION

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

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