

WALK IN A GIRL'S SHOES

Girls are less present in public spaces in Brussels. Although they also like to meet up outside. How can we improve the public space in Brussels in order to make the public arena feel safe and pleasant?

Together with girls from Brussels aged 16 to 22, we researched these questions. This walking route takes you along various public spaces in Brussels. The route offers you a glimpse into the everyday feeling that girls experience at these places. They experience some places as pleasant, while they prefer to leave others as quickly as possible.

On the map you will find the experiences of the girls, the strengths and challenges of some places and general tips on how to improve public spaces in Brussels.

This route was created by the girls themselves and developed by Kind & Samenleving, with the help of Urban Foxes. With thanks to Equal.Brussels and the Flemish government.



Clemenceau square

“When you leave the metro you immediately see a lot of men sitting on the benches especially around the entrances of the metro. As a woman, it is better to walk on. Then again, in the middle of the square there are a lot of playgrounds and you also see a lot more women. It is much more pleasant to be there.”

“To get to the pleasant area of the square, you have to pass by the men first. The benches attract the men, so maybe it would be a good idea to move the benches so they are less present at the subway entrances.”



O.L.V.-Onbevlekt-Ontvangen Church

“It's a closed space. They should open it up. Make it a place for everyone. You could do this by placing shops that attract women and families. For example: an ice cream shop, a small supermarket or a nail salon.”

“There are coffee bars and a barbershop. The target group is clearly men. You feel very much watched. They look at you as if to say, “What are you doing here?” There is no place where you can sit comfortably as a woman.”

RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“Make sure open space does not focus on one (target) group. You do this by having a varied design of space and range of services.”



Alphonse Lemmens Square

“Alphonse Lemmens Square is a boring square with a lot of open space. There is nothing that makes it attractive to stay here. There are benches and two petanque terrains and there are lots of pigeons.”

“You just walk by this place without stopping. Something could be installed so it would become more attractive to us. The benches are placed in a strange way. It seems like they are only used to sit on for a little while, but not to stay.”

RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“Turn a stony square into a green space where you would like to stay and where there is plenty to do for young people. Make sure there is enough lighting so girls feel safe.”



Beurs Square

“La Bourse is a gathering place, where we meet up. There are a lot of people on the square, so usually you feel safe here. But you are also often harassed by men, near McDonald's for example. The Bourse square has a lot of empty space and asphalt, there is almost no greenery.”

“There should be more police surveillance at the Bourse. In that way there is more attention to possible harassment of girls and women. It is primarily female police officers who can make us feel secure. Male officers could be coached in this regard.”

This place could become even more a meeting place by creating more seating areas, such as a long bench or table (like the one at the Black Tower).”

RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“A space with enough social control makes girls feel safe. Police, community guards and street workers play an important role in this. Specific coaching can help them recognize unsafe situations for girls more quickly and respond correctly.”



Sint-Goriks Square

“This square usually has a cozy atmosphere. It is a place where you can gather with friends and everyone can do their thing. When it is summer the place is full of people. This place is mainly for students. This place is less interesting to young people because you always have to pay if you want to sit here.”

“St. George's Square is not really attractive to young people. Besides that it's really cool, I wouldn't want to change anything.”



RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“In the nightlife district, pubs play an important role in maintaining a safe atmosphere. Girls need to be helped in an accessible way if something goes wrong. Make clear rules and communicate these to your customers.”

Simone de Beauvoirpark



“To me this is real family park, everyone can come here to play and chill and that in the middle of the city centre. There are several places where you can go to, you're not in anyone's way. The picnic benches are also nice.”

As a girl it is also very easy to play some soccer here or do something else. The big soccer field is mostly used by boys, but there are plenty of little fields where we can also kick a ball.

This park is a good example of a girl-friendly place. Perhaps it is less pleasant after dark, but otherwise there is no immediate improvement here.”

RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“Girls also like to play soccer and sometimes they do so together with the boys. Make sure this playing together is facilitated (by youth organisations, schools...). But also make sure there is enough space for different groups to play ball sports.”



Annessens Square

“Girls prefer to avoid this square as much as possible. There are a lot of men hanging around who want to talk to you. When you arrive here you are already thinking about how you are going to deal with them. This square could be very nice because there is a school and there are several stores. But the men are really annoying and the place does not invite you to take a seat.”

“The stores and the square are not connected, maybe one road could be removed so it becomes a big square, with a family cafe or a cheap bakery so you get a sandwich and eat on the square.”



RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“Make sure the place invites people to stay. Do this by placing picnic benches and playground equipment. Make it more colourful so it becomes a place for everyone, and not just something for one target group.”



Dauwpark

“When you go to this park, you immediately notice the large playground. There is a lot of green space for chilling out.”

“What makes this a good place? It is not one big space, but the parts stay connected to each other. There are lots of trees and nature that you can hide behind if you want to. There is just a lot to do. There is even a shelter to shelter from the rain and sun.”

RECOMMENDATION FOR BRUSSELS

“This park is somewhat hidden. Organize activities in the public space so that it becomes a familiar place and girls can claim the place more easily.”

