



Sing Out Brussels! asbl
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Sing Out Brussels! Activity Report 2023-2024 (season 6)

NB: links included in this report lead to web articles providing further details on the events discussed (www.singout.brussels).

1) A lively and vibrant community, ever more inclusive

Following the major success of our show "School's Out" at the end of season 5 in June 2023, the Board of the ASBL took stock of the past season and started planning our next show, "Various Voices Rising".

Members interested in being a part of running the association took part in this process alongside the Board and were then elected at our General Assembly on 20/09/2023. Our then president had completed his term and, after the resignation of two other Board members during season 5 (2022-2023) and one resignation during the summer of 2023, the Board needed to recruit. Four seats were vacant and specific skills were sought, as some members were finishing their term during this new season 6 (2023-2024) and the sustainability of our non-profit organisation depends on volunteers and specific functions such as treasurer or coordination with the Joy Teams (small groups responsible for a theme). The duly elected team was a mixed group, representative of the choir: with representation of all voices (SATB), as well as non-chorister members, representation of the three languages of the choir, diversity in terms of nationality, length of experience in the choir, and of course the various gender identities and sexual orientations of our LGBTQI+ association.

A survey conducted at the end of Season 5 indicated that the season had not provided enough space for members to get to know each other and build relationships alongside the creation and shaping of the "School's Out" show. We therefore decided to slow the pace during Season 6, including pushing back the auditions for new choir members to the end of October 2023, with September and October being dedicated to reconnecting within the existing community (culminating on the weekend of 30/31-09). This theme, discussed in Section 3 of this report, has stayed at the core of our activities throughout the season.

As such, our Joy Team Community Building played a significant role during Season 6 and stepped up its work. Whether at the beginning of the season, after the auditions, at the end-of-year and end-of-season dinners, or during our "Various Voices Rising" show with our guest choirs, it was this team that planned and led activities to welcome newcomers and to encourage choir members to bond. In addition, the Joy Team Community Building organised regular social activities open to all.

Regarding auditions, in September 2023 we had over 230 individuals registered

on our waiting list - a record number - after only 5 seasons of existence. Of course, it is not possible for us either to audition or accept such a large number of singers and we were aware that the introduction of new members would have an impact on our community. Having consulted the choir members via the end-of-season survey, we therefore decided that, in addition to the musical quality and skills of the people auditioned, we would focus our recruitment this season on favoring LGBTQI+ candidates who share a real need for community. That is to say, feeling welcomed in a group that felt like a “safer space” for them (i.e. a space more inclusive and secure). Priority was also given to candidates from racial minorities.

After season 5 and the departure of some members, we decided to extend our community to no more than 20 active members per section (SATB). This still represents 80 choristers in total, not counting our 18 non-chorister members. As in previous seasons, we proceeded in two stages: a pre-selection via an audio recording of two excerpts from our songs (37 recordings received) and then a meeting with our choir director for some vocal exercises, and with some of our volunteer members and the Board for a discussion on the choir project, its values, and volunteering. We auditioned 25 people and offered 18 people the opportunity to join us. Of these, 16 became active choristers, which brings the number of members to 97, including 79 choristers.

2) Events to spread our values

The choir was invited to participate in numerous concerts and events throughout the season. We offer free activities in public spaces (concerts during Pride Week and Pride, pop-up performances with an activist aim, Winter Vox at Plaisirs d’hiver, etc.), small private or public concerts at the invitation of external organisations (Belgian Presidency of the EU, Municipality of Woluwe-Saint-Pierre), and ticketed concerts in a theatre (“Various Voices Rising”) with an adapted pricing policy (reduced rate for groups, social rate, invitations for the associative sector, etc.). These concerts and events have also allowed us to define milestones and to fine-tune our repertoire in preparation for our show “Various Voices Rising” which is discussed below.

[Recording of the album “School’s Out” - October](#)

In October 2023, for three days, Sing Out Brussels! took over the Jet Studio in Koekelberg, where the choir members spent two days recording part of the repertoire for the show “School’s Out”. The album, which was released in July 2024, brings together 13 songs, recorded live or in the studio. The distribution of our songs will help to spread our message and our values. The work was done in good spirits, though it was both intense and tiring. It may seem strange to release an album mixing live and studio recordings, but we believe it is a good reflection of our project; some live songs give an emotion and energy that we could not have reproduced in the studio. This album is a way of leaving a trace of the “School’s Out!” project that kept us busy for two years. The album is now available on music platforms such as [Apple Music](#) or [Spotify](#).

[End of year festivals: “Winter Vox” concert at Plaisirs d’hiver / Winterpret](#)

As part of the “Winterpret” / “Plaisirs d’hiver”, “Winter Vox” festival puts the spotlight on Brussels’ choirs with concerts organised on Place Sainte-Catherine /

Sint-Katelijneplein. This concert has become a tradition for Sing Out Brussels! This year, it was also the first concert for several choir members who have been part of our group since the beginning of November.

[Lesbian Visibility Day: “Do you see us now?”](#)

Following our flashmob on Transgender Visibility Day in 2023, Sing Out Brussels! continues its work to raise awareness of LGBTQI+ sub-communities that are less often in the spotlight. On the occasion of Lesbian Visibility Day, Sing Out Brussels! organised a pop-up concert at the Brussels Stock Exchange to honour the members of our choir who identify as lesbians. The choir performed several songs, with a large banner reading “Do you see us now?” intended to engage the audience. The concert was broadcast live via our Instagram account and was the subject of a video featuring interviews with several of our members who identify as lesbians, also highlighting two Brussels non-profit organisations run by and for the lesbian community.

[Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU: Signature of a European commitment for LGBTQI+ rights](#)

Sing Out sang at a high-level event in the context of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union. A few weeks before the European elections, 18 EU Member States committed to continuing policies implemented to strengthen the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. The Belgian Secretary of State for Equal Opportunities Marie-Colline Leroy and the European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli were notably present at this event symbolically organised on 17 May, the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia at the Résidence Palace.

[Singing Brussels Pride](#)

Our choir took part in Brussels Pride on 18 May 2024, a great moment of joy and queer pride.

Our association participated in the discussions, working groups and selection jury of the Rainbowhouse around the Pride 2024 project, which allowed our representatives to maintain close ties with the organisers. As a member of the Rainbowhouse, our association actively participates in the development of political demands. Our objective is twofold: to protect LGBTQI+ minorities and to strengthen public policies that improve our rights and visibility. We are also committed to fighting against discrimination and hostile discourse towards our community.

We were invited, as last year, to open the Pride Day festivities on the main stage (Albertinaplein / Place de l'Albertine) in front of a large, friendly and enthusiastic audience. After a photo with Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and Deputy Prime Minister Petra de Sutter, we then took our place in the march, which we animated by enthusiastically singing our repertoire, which also attracted media attention. The day before, we performed a concert at the Grands Carmes, the LGBTQI+ community centre in Brussels, as part of Pride Week.

[LGBTQI+ awareness evening in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre / Sint-Pieters-Woluwe](#)

Alongside the artist Biche de Ville, our choir performed a concert as part of an evening to raise awareness of LGBTQI+ rights organised by the municipality of Sint-Pieters-Woluwe / Woluwe-Saint-Pierre. Before the concert, associations

informed the public about the activities they carry out on a daily basis in favor of the rights of LGBTQI+ communities. Present: Le Refuge / Het Opvanghuis, GrIS Wallonie-Bruxelles, Amnesty International and L-Tour. Then, it was time for the show! Sing Out Brussels! opened the evening by presenting its entire new repertoire, which we subsequently performed at our end-of-season show "Various Voices Rising".

Let's Zing Ensemble at Bozar

Sing Out Brussels! took part in this event celebrating ten years of success of Bozar's annual project "Singing Brussels", which aims to make Brussels sing through various organised activities, with the participation of amateur choirs and the general public. Singing is used to bring people together across generations, genders and ethnic and cultural identities. To mark the occasion, ten composers with links to Brussels, but representing different generations and styles, were invited to create a piece inspired by the city. Each choir worked on a selection of these new songs. A final event took place in Bozar's Henri Le Bœuf Hall during a full day of concerts on the occasion of the Fête de la Musique.

Sing Out Brussels! invited to the Hand in Hand festival in the UK

Thanks to contacts made at the European Various Voices festival in Bologna in 2023, Sing Out Brussels! was invited to take part in the regional Hand in Hand festival, which has been organised by choirs from the United Kingdom and Ireland since 2013. Around fifty choirs take part in this festival. Sing Out Brussels! was the only continental choir to take part. Thanks to its Fab Fund, the choir was able to offer financial support to choir members whose financial situation would not have allowed them to take part in the festival otherwise.

3) "Listen, care & share" - To reinforce the spirit of community

This project, focused on well-being within the group, began during our season 3 (2020-2021). A survey at that time had made it possible to diagnose various problematic phenomena within the group (sexism, racism, fatphobia, transphobia or lesbophobia, etc.). During season 4 (2021-2022), we organised various workshops, with the support of Equal.Brussels, on the theme of Safer Spaces and non-violent communication. These workshops contributed to a gradual change in mindset within the choir. It was planned that this work would lead to the writing of a manifesto. During season 5, we continued this project by improving decision-making within the group through "systemic consensing" and by writing this manifesto which evolved into a code of conduct that we adopted at the beginning of season 6.

During season 6, we continued this project on many axes with the objective of strengthening the community spirit in the choir.

On the financial side, our membership fee pricing policy is established to allow the most vulnerable people to participate in the Sing Out Brussels adventure! A reduced fee (€100 rather than €200) is reserved for those who do not have sufficient resources to join us. Payment facilities (splitting or spreading out) help members in difficulty to honour their membership fee. In addition, our Fab Fund, financed by the income from our community bar that opens before and after rehearsals, or the sale of snacks during our annual show, allows us to collect

money that will be used to help our members to lighten the financial burden of participation in events. Our members in greatest difficulty are able to pay a lower price or receive financial assistance during our travels (concerts, weekends and courses outside Brussels, participation in festivals with paid registration).

On a systematic level, our Board has integrated reflections around inclusion and the impact on our community into its decision-making process, notably through a “Strategy Hotline” which has facilitated closer collaboration with our Joy Strategy Team. The Board can now ask the team an urgent strategic question and will receive a response within 24 hours. At times when difficult decisions have had to be made, the Board has therefore been able to count on the analysis of this group which is used to thinking deeply about subjects that are important to the choir, before making a final decision. The aim of this system was to ensure that the Board is always able to make decisions in full knowledge of the facts and taking into account the different points of view and issues in the choir.

Regarding inclusivity, we continued with good practices: internal and external communication in three languages (French, Dutch, English), wearing badges with first names and pronouns... But this season, our Board had the objective of making our activities more accessible to everyone in advance. We therefore systematically questioned ourselves when planning the choir's activities and consequently set up regular breaks and relaxation areas for those who might need them during our weekends and full-day rehearsals.

Furthermore, concerned about the limitations of our current rehearsal room (space, ventilation, lighting, acoustics, etc.), our board members started looking for a new room. Our president visited about ten spaces throughout Brussels during the season. While we identified a few options that would be better suited to our group, each would have brought its own set of new concerns (unavailability one evening during the week, distance from the city centre and inaccessibility by public transport, unavailability of a bar before and after our rehearsals to support our Fab Fund, significantly higher rental costs, etc.). We therefore decided to continue our collaboration with GC Elzenhof for season 7.

The main focus of our project this season has been on developing our sensitivity and consideration for interpersonal connections and a sense of unity within the team. As previously stated, we have increased the number of non-singing activities through our Joy Team Community Building in order to redress the balance between “work” and “fun” for our members.

In particular, the team has organised:

- “Icebreaker” activities to get to know each other better at several moments during the season (integration of new members, end-of-year/season meals, arrival of guest choirs, etc.)
- A karaoke evening
- An UNO tournament
- A trip to Antwerp to attend the concert of another LGBTQ+ choir, Pink Noise
- A pre-rehearsal drink
- An after-party to celebrate together after the Various Voices Rising concert
- Two pot-luck dinners at the end of the year (December) and the end of the season (June)

Our two annual working weekends were also particular high points for community building.

[The first working weekend of the season](#) (30th and 31st September) brought together our fabulous choir in Brussels, at GC Elzenhof. We spent more time than before building our community and getting to know each other better. It was about strengthening our community and reconnecting. We started our weekend with a tour of the Various Voices festival sites that will be held in Brussels in 2026. We couldn't resist sharing our music, so we sang some songs from our repertoire outside. The rest of the weekend was spent at GC Elzenhof. There, our choir had the unique opportunity to participate in vocal workshops led by Allan Wright, the founder of "Chanteur Moderne". On Saturday evening, we had dinner together, with a meal prepared by "Apus et les cocottes volantes". Charlotte, its founder, has accompanied Sing Out Brussels! and our moments of sharing for several seasons.

We also started a series of discussions that were important not only for our choir, but also for the entire LGBTQI+ community. During these discussions, we had the opportunity to share ideas and opinions on topics such as gender, identity and age, both in general and in the context of the choir. Everyone was encouraged to express their point of view as they wished and to bring new insights to the conversation. These moments were really valuable, as we exchanged not only our perspectives and understandings, but also our personal feelings, finding support within the group.

Around 60 singers including most of our new members took part in [our second weekend](#), a residential trip to Hastière. There was work to be done - songs and choreography to learn for our "Various Voices Rising" show - but the Board sought to take account of individual needs and preferences through a flexible programme allowing members to plan their own weekend. At several times during the weekend, different activities took place at the same time. It was therefore up to the choristers to choose what interested them and whether they would prefer something more rigorous or quiet, strategic or social. With the members of the Joy Team Strategy, for example, the choristers discussed the invitations that the choir receives: which invitations should we accept, based on what criteria and with what objective. The Joy Team Community Building organised a karaoke on Friday evening, a friendly speed-dating activity on Saturday morning, a walk in the forest in the afternoon, and an evening punctuated by a game of musical chairs and an introduction to line-dancing by two of our North American choristers!

4) Various Voices Rising: an experience of solidarity on a European scale

After the "School's Out" show, dedicated to our experiences as LGBTQI+ minorities at school, Sing Out Brussels participated in the Various Voices Festival 2023, organised in the city of Bologna, in Italy. Since Brussels, via Various Voices 2026 asbl (sibling association of Sing Out Brussels asbl), was designated as the organising city of the event for the next edition, the challenge of our participation was twofold: first, a significant number of our members took part by performing in prestigious concert halls in Bologna; secondly, we tried to establish links with other European choirs. One of the objectives for season 6

(2023-2024) was to organise a joint concert with two other LGBTQI+ vocal ensembles in Brussels, with the aim of creating a springboard and visibility for the major event in 2026.

We listened to many groups from all over Europe and made friendly contact with a few choirs whose musical quality, repertoire and musical identity complement that of Sing Out Brussels! The DynamiQ Voices choir from Utrecht in the Netherlands, a small ensemble of mostly young and queer singers, and the Voces Gaudii choir from Warsaw in Poland accepted our invitation to share the stage of the Uccle Cultural Centre on 15 June 2024. It seemed important to us to invite choirs that represent a sample of the variety of identities (musical, of expression of the presence of our LGBTQI+ minorities, but also of the diversity of struggles and activism that these groups bring to their respective national communities).

In total, nearly 150 choir members were gathered on stage. At the Uccle Cultural Centre, each choir presented a selection from its repertoire, in front of a packed house, before singing "Brave" all together, a song inviting people to proudly assert their identity. We targeted both LGBTQI+ audiences (with a view to inclusivity) and non-LGBTQI+ audiences (with a view to education). We are able to reach these audiences in particular through our communication campaigns managed by our Joy Team Communication, which created physical (posters, leaflets) and digital (for social networks, our website and our online ticketing) media.

As for Sing Out Brussels!, we performed 6 songs that will also be part of our next show "Queeroes", on 26 April 2025. Our Creative Joy Team has been working on this show since season 5, and the first scores were delivered during season 6 by our arrangers, all artists recognised for their composition work in Belgium. But we still have a surprise and many other new original arrangements to discover in spring 2025. "Queeroes" will be a show about what it means to be heroic, and how queeroes (i.e. queer heroes) have succeeded, continue to succeed, and change the world for the better every day. It is about standing up for yourself by being yourself, by living outside the norms imposed on you. It is about community, solidarity, chosen family, activism, mutual aid. This is a show about success through self-expression. It's about fighting the good fight. Just being there can be heroic. Sometimes there are losses, but that doesn't mean the fight stops. It's about resilience. It's about finding strength wherever it is. It's about those who can stand up and are willing to think outside the box.

The Sing Out Brussels Board of Directors also sought to welcome the guest choirs in the best possible conditions, in particular by offering the possibility to its less privileged members to be hosted by the choristers of our group during the concert weekend. Our objective was also to create personal and human connections during these meetings, to ensure the weekend was rich not just in musical terms. It all started the day before the show, with rehearsals organised on Friday afternoon, which allowed us to establish initial contact, in particular with the choristers hosted by locals. On Saturday, the choristers were invited to participate in various activities: a guided LGBTQI+ tour of the centre of Brussels, organised in collaboration with L-Tour asbl, a visit to the places that will host the Various Voices festival in 2026, a presentation of the festival's artistic project by

its artistic director Simon Paco, and even small games to get to know each other better organised by our Joy Team Community Building. After the concert, the party continued until the early hours in a downtown bar privatised for the occasion. On Sunday lunchtime, a closing brunch allowed the weekend to end in style, with a delicious meal, some singing, laughter and a few tears.

We also note that the event was organised on the sidelines of the "Rendez-vous à Bruxelles" organised by the European Federation of LGBTQI+ Choirs: Legato, to promote the 2026 festival. Delegates from around twenty choirs, from various European countries including England, Italy, Spain, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, participated in the event.

Our project was supported by the public authorities: the municipality of Uccle (Equal Opportunities - Maëlle de Brouwer), the Brussels-Capital Region (Equal.brussels), the City of Brussels (Equal Opportunities - Lydia Mutyebele Ngoi), and Cocof (Culture). Their support allowed us to finance the implementation of the project and the show.

5) Conclusion

Many positive points emerge from this season:

- The musical quality of the choir and the artistic quality of its projects and professional collaborations
- The many positive emotions felt and shared during various key moments (Various Voices Rising / working weekends / Brussels Pride)
- The financial stability of the association and its ability to raise funds to finance its projects
- The success of Various Voices Rising and the construction of the show (guest choirs, professional collaborations, participatory work)
- The visibility of the association during key events (Pride, Lesbian Visibility Day) and the prestigious invitations received (such as for the Belgian Presidency of the EU) linked to the in-depth work carried out to create partnerships and build the reputation of the choir
- The close collaboration with several LGBTQI+ associations in Brussels
- Strengthened community spirit and social cohesion and the success of activities outside of singing (workshops and discussions in small groups, variation of activities on weekends)
- The integration of new members
- The general feeling of having succeeded in achieving our objectives.
- The time dedicated to working on the well-being of the community

Areas for Attention and Improvement

- The lack of availability of our members to perform volunteer tasks at certain key moments
- The difficulty in finding a rehearsal room that meets our needs
- The challenge of internal communication at certain times (between the Board, Joy Teams, members and external collaborators)
- The late scheduling of rehearsals outside of our normal schedule

This season has been a period of significant learning and growth for our choir. Thanks to the commitment and dedication of each member, we have been able

to overcome obstacles and make remarkable progress, both musically and as people. The challenges encountered have offered us valuable opportunities for improvement, strengthening our adaptability and cohesion. We are grateful for the moments of shared joy, the enriching collaborations, and the continued support of our community. Although we are aware of the road that remains to be travelled, particularly in internal organisation and communication, we approach the future with confidence and enthusiasm. Our aspiration is to continue growing together, remaining true to our values of inclusivity and diversity, while constantly seeking to improve our art and our positive impact on society.