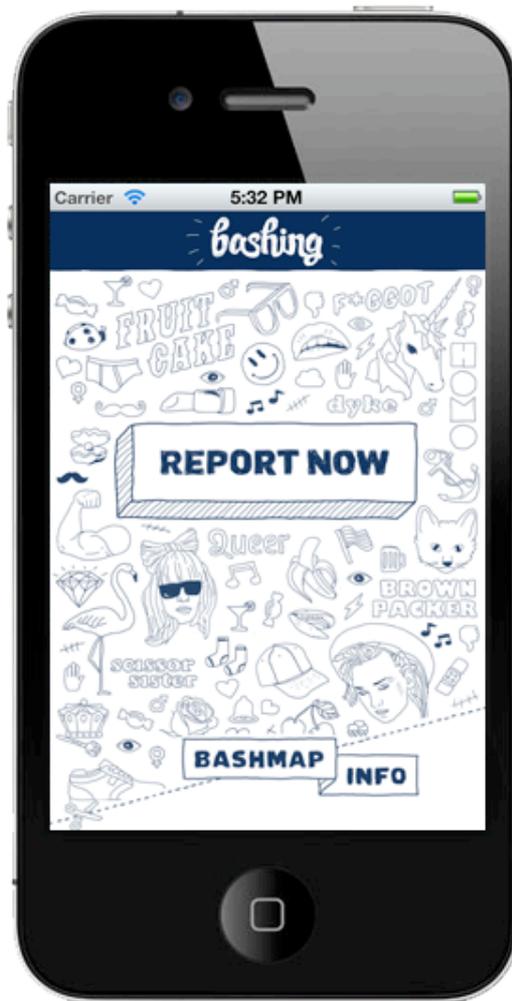


# BASHING.EU

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: BASHING.EU

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## ABOUT BASHING.EU

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### **What is bashing.eu?**

Although the term 'gay bashing' certainly does not require any explanation within the holebi community, the concept is completely alien to all too many (hetero) outsiders. Moreover, official complaint figures are lamentably low and do not reflect the actual situation.

Bashing.eu is a smartphone application that wants to bring homophobic violence into the spotlight and call on people to no longer tolerate this sort of behaviour. It wants to raise awareness among the community and the political world and galvanise them into action. After all, gay bashing needs to be addressed in a structural manner by the competent authorities. By putting incidents of gay bashing literally on the map, the application can illustrate the gravity of the situation.

The smartphone application indicates all the reported locations where homophobic violence has ever been perpetrated. In this way, the initiators want to demonstrate that gay bashing is a real problem that needs tackling (despite the very low official police statistics).

The Bashing app can be downloaded via the Apple and Android store free of charge.

Bashing.eu was launched in Belgium on 18 January 2012 by the anti-gay-bashing movement Outrage! and the advertising agency FAMOUS.

### **In what context was the Bashing application in Belgium conceived? Direct cause?**

In mid-June 2011, Belgium was uproar over the attack on Bart, a young man who had been beaten up badly on account of his sexuality. A friend shared this event on his facebook page and unleashed a wave of indignation in the (social) media. Gay bashing was brought out in the open and the holebi community was eager for change.

After all, homophobia and gay bashing are not new and affect many men and women every day.

A month later in Antwerp, another incident of homophobic violence involved a lesbian couple this time. Once again, the entire holebi community was in shock. Once again, the media reacted with outrage. Once again, there was hope for political action. Once again, little seemed to change once the media storm had subsided.

This is when the anti-gay-bashing movement Outrage! was set up and posted an appeal on its facebook page: 'how can we bring the problem of 'gay bashing' into the spotlight so that action is taken?' It was Bert Vermeire, developer at the advertising agency FAMOUS and gay himself, who in this context came up with the idea of the Bashing app.

With the app, he sought to call attention to homophobic violence and call on people to no longer tolerate it. It wants to raise awareness among the community and political world and galvanise them into action. After all, gay bashing should be addressed in a structural manner by the competent authorities.

### **Is the application a scientific tool?**

Bashing.eu does not claim to be a tool that charts the problem of gay bashing in a scientific manner. The app wants to demonstrate that the actual situation (number of homophobic incidents) is much higher than the official figures lead us to believe. The results will not be 100% relevant or

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: BASHING.EU

representative, but do give us an idea of the seriousness of the situation. In that way, the initiators want to make the community and political world aware of this problem and galvanise them into action. Gay bashing should, after all, be addressed in a structural manner by the competent authorities. This can only be done when the issue is brought to their attention.

## **How is the accuracy of the reports checked?**

All reports are screened on a regular basis. Those that are considered irrelevant are removed.

Bashing.eu does not claim to be a tool that charts the problem of 'gay bashing' in a scientific manner. Rather, the app seeks to demonstrate that the actual situation is much more serious than official statistics lead us to believe. The results will not be 100% relevant, or representative, for that matter, but they do give us an idea of the gravity of the situation. In that way, the initiators want to make the community and political world aware of this problem and galvanise them into action.

## **How to use the Bashing app?**

On the Bashing application, holebis can report a homophobic incident in two simple steps.

1. The user indicates whether the violence used is physical or verbal.
2. Then, s/he indicates the location where, and time when, the incident took place. The app will automatically look for the location where the user is at that time.

All reports are collected on the Bashmap that can be viewed via the application, but also via [www.bashing.eu](http://www.bashing.eu). The Bashmap is based on Google Maps and can be used anywhere in the world. There are two different icons on the Bashmap: a fist and a speech bubble. The fist represents physical violence, while the speech bubble stands for verbal abuse. An incident can only be reported via the application, not via the website.

## **What is the Bashmap?**

All reports of gay bashing incidents are collected on the Bashmap. This is a map based on Google Maps. There are two different icons on the Bashmap: a fist and a speech bubble. The fist represents physical violence, while the speech bubble stands for verbal abuse. The Bashmap can be viewed via the Bashing app, but also via [www.bashing.eu](http://www.bashing.eu). An incident can only be reported via the application, not via the website.

## **Can the Bashing app be used in countries other than the Netherlands and Belgium?**

All reports of gay bashing incidents are collected on the Bashmap. This is a map based on Google Maps and can be used anywhere in the world.

## **Is it possible to report an incident via the website?**

No, reports can only be registered via the application. The website does, however, give an overview of all the reports that have been received to date.

## **Does a report via the Bashing app also constitute an official complaint?**

Since victims of gay bashing incidents cannot file official complaints via the application, the initiators urge the victims to go to the police to lodge an official complaint. This is the only way the police will gain insight into the problem, which, in turn, will allow them to apprehend the perpetrators more effectively. Make sure you mention to the police that it is a case of homophobic aggression.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: BASHING.EU

Via the gay bashing app, a direct link has been established to [www.meld-it.be](http://www.meld-it.be) for the benefit of those using it in Belgium. That website contains all the information needed to file an official complaint with the police. For the people in the Netherlands too, there is a direct link to websites that give all the necessary information.

### **Where can I find more information about filing a criminal complaint?**

The initiators call on the victims to inform the competent authorities every time an incident occurs.

#### For Belgium:

In Belgium, a criminal complaint can only be lodged with the police or the public prosecutor. The police are contactable 24/7 on 112. For more information, you could also contact the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism [Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding] on 0800 12 800. It is important that victims, when filing a complaint, mention that the incident involves homophobic aggression.

#### For the Netherlands:

In the Netherlands, victims must file a complaint with the police. More information on gay bashing can be found on <http://www.nationaleombudsman.nl/stop-homopesten-kaart>. This link is also indicated on the Bashing app. It is important that victims, when filing a complaint, mention that the incident involves homophobic aggression.

#### Elsewhere in the world:

Complaints must always be lodged with the competent authorities.

### **Should you lodge a complaint with the police as well as report the incident via Bashing.eu?**

The initiators wish to underline that lodging a complaint with the police is an absolute necessity. By reporting it via the Bashing app, however, there is a major added benefit that the public and politicians will be made aware of it, as the app seeks to demonstrate that the 'homophobic aggression' problem is much more widely spread than was believed to date on the basis of official police figures. In this way, the app wants to spur people into action. Moreover, reporting the incident takes less than a minute.

The app is also an outlet for incidents of verbal abuse. After all, since it is impossible to file a verbal abuse complaint, the Bashing app can be seen as the digital punching bag for victims of verbal homophobic abuse.

### **Whose brainchild is the application?**

Bert Vermeire, developer with advertising agency FAMOUS conceived of, and developed, the application. Bert, from Brussels and gay himself, has been the victim of homophobic incidents on more than one occasion. One day, when Bert came home, the letters 'PD' (term of abuse for homosexual) were painted on his front door. This incident left him quite shaken. The idea of the Bashing app grew after reading a facebook appeal of the anti-gay-bashing movement Outrage! following a series of gay-bashing-incidents in the summer of 2011 in the Belgian cities of Brussels and Antwerp. Outrage! jumped at the idea and Bert set down to work straight away. For this, he could count on the full backing of his employer FAMOUS, and advertising agency based in Anderlecht (a borough of Brussels, the capital of Belgium and Europe).

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: BASHING.EU

### **Can the Bashing app also be used to report forms of discrimination or aggression, other than homophobic violence?**

The initiators regret that apart from holebis, other minority groups occasionally have a hard time too. Nobody has the right to hurt other people. Nobody deserves to be hurt, verbally or physically.

In order to keep the statistics of the Bashing app as authentic as possible, is it, however, of key importance that only homophobic incidents should be reported. It is, after all, these figures that need to illustrate the real problem of 'gay bashing' so that public opinion and the politicians can become aware of the problem and do something about it.

Like holebis, it is, of course, crucially important for minorities who are at the receiving end of aggression to file a complaint with the police.

### **The map charts the locations where homophobic incidents occur regularly. Do you not worry about avoidance behaviour (in other words, create the application of fear)?**

The aim of the application is to demonstrate to public opinion (mainly targeting non-holebis) and the politicians that the problem is more extensive than originally thought. Holebis have been facing gay bashing for years and are all too familiar with the problem districts. Some have chosen to avoid those areas over the years while other holebis have learnt to deal with the situation and continue to frequent the areas. The application is no reason why either of these groups should change their set routines.

## **BASHING APP LAUNCH**

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### **BELGIUM**

#### **Where, when and how was Bashing.eu launched in Belgium?**

Bashing.eu is originally a Belgian application intended to report aggression sustained by holebis. Its launch on 18 January 2012 in Brussels involved a round-table discussion to which the press was invited. Apart from the launch of the application, this discussion mainly served to bring the problem of gay bashing to the fore, along with ways of tackling it.

#### **Who was present at the round-table discussion in Belgium?**

State Secretary for Equal Opportunities Bruno De Lille, Flemish MP Khadija Zamouri, holebi organisations Çavaria, Arc-en-ciel Wallonie and Regenbooghuis Brussel, Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en Racismebestrijding, Gaycops Belgium, Bert Vermeire, Outrage! and hands-on experts.

Sven Pichal (Radio 1 radio presenter) and Xavier Ess (Pure FM radio presenter) led the debates.

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

#### **Which organisation launched Bashing.eu in the Netherlands?**

The Bashing app was launched in the Netherlands by SVGK (Stichting Vrienden van de Gay Krant) and the Belgian advertising agency FAMOUS. SVGK has been fighting for equal holebi rights since 1979. SVGK communicates via its Gay Krant newspaper and GK.nl website. The launch of the application received full backing from the City of Utrecht, headed by Mayor Aleid Wolfsen.

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: BASHING.EU

## **Where, when and how was Bashing.eu launched in the Netherlands?**

Bashing.eu is originally a Belgian application that is intended for reporting aggression against holebis. In the Netherlands, the app's launch, that was backed by the city of Utrecht, took place in café Kalff in Utrecht on 30 May. Apart from the launch of the application, this discussion mainly served to bring the problem of gay bashing in the Netherlands to the fore, along with ways of tackling it.

## **Who was present at the press launch in the Netherlands?**

Head of the Board of Attorney Generals of the Public Prosecutor, Holland's National Ombudsman, Mayor of Utrecht Aleid Wolfsen, Bert Vermeire (creator of the Bashing app), Henk Krol (SVGK Manager), Hans van Velde (SVGK Operational Manager), among others.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Can the application also be used internationally?**

All reports of gay-bashing incidents are collected on the Bashmap. As this map is based on Google Maps, it can be used anywhere in the world.

## **ABOUT HOMOPHOBIC AGGRESSION IN BELGIUM**

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Belgium is, in terms of legislation, a progressive country. There are few countries in the world where holebis are allowed to enter into wedlock and adopt children. Yet, Belgium still faces frequent and, at times, excessive, homophobic violence.

### **What about the gap between official police figures of homophobic aggression and real figures in Belgium?**

Research carried out on behalf of the Belgian Justice Minister has shown that one Belgian holebi in three feels unsafe at least three times a month on account of their proclivity. Nearly six in ten have already been exposed to verbal abuse. Twenty percent no less have been threatened at some stage. One holebi in ten has been the victim of physical aggression \*.

Although these figures speak for themselves, according to official complaint figures, there is a wide chasm between the number of official complaints and the real picture. For a variety of reasons, victims of homophobic violence are slow to report incidents, as a result of which the problem is downplayed.

The key goal of the Bashing app is therefore to make the community aware of the problem and galvanise them into action. The app wants to illustrate that the actual situation is much worse than official figures lead us to believe. Gay bashing should, after all, be addressed in a structural manner by the competent authorities.

*\* See Written request 4-5669 dated 7 December 2009 by senator Bart Tommelein*

### **It is said that mainly immigrants (from Islam cultures) are to blame for homophobic thought and action. Is that true?**

Homophobia is a problem that knows no boundaries in terms of culture or country. It is, of course, the case that holebis in certain countries and cultures are accepted with great difficulty, if at all, not least on account of the macho culture that prevails in many cultures.

We have noticed, however, that immigrant (Islam) communities in Belgium are gradually seeking rapprochement with holebis. In these communities too, we clearly notice that certain groups wish to look for solutions and compromises.

### **Why is it that gay bashing mainly seems to occur in big cities?**

The problem of big cities is that a great number of people live in a very small space. To take the example of Brussels: different (sub) cultures suddenly find themselves living next to each other socially and geographically, something which increases the risk of conflict considerably, of course.

## **INTERIM RESULTS BASHING APP IN BELGIUM (APRIL 2012)**

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### **What was the outcome of the campaign – Where are we now?**

#### **1. Immediately following the press launch**

On the day of the launch, different politicians, victims, organisations and journalists sat together to discuss the problem and look for possible solutions. After this round-table discussion, the debate carried on on television, radio, the newspaper and the social media. After 24 hours, the Bashing app had received over 80 reports of incidents.

#### **2. Two months later (April 2012)**

There is no doubt that the application has put homophobic violence on the political agenda. The following action has been taken to date (April 2012):

- The national safety plan has been adapted and a chapter on gay bashing has been added.
- In Brussels, homophobic behaviour has become an offence: anyone displaying signs of aggression towards holebis is liable to receive a fine of up to 200 Euros, even before the case is heard.
- Ministers want to change federal legislation in terms of attempts to perpetrate physical violence. In that way, they want to come down harder on discrimination-based violence.

Number of reports to date (date): XX

Number of downloads of the Bashing app: XX

Number of visitors of the website: XX

## **WHO ARE THE INITIATORS OF THE BASHING APP?**

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The Bashing app is originally a Belgian initiative that was launched in January 2012 by the anti-gay-bashing movement 'Outrage!' and advertising agency FAMOUS. Bert Vermeire came up with the idea for the application.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: BASHING.EU

In the Netherlands, the application was launched a few months later by SVGK (Stichting Vrienden van de Gay Krant) and the Belgian advertising agency FAMOUS.

### **What is Outrage! ?**

Outrage! is a Belgian, open community, based on the LGBT community, united in the fight against homophobia, discrimination and violence against holebis. They seek to join forces with associations as well as individuals, and will assert their rights and dignity by taking specific, political, radical, yet peaceful action so as to bring about positive change.

More information: [www.outrage.be](http://www.outrage.be)

Follow Outrage! on facebook: [www.facebook.com/Outrage.be](http://www.facebook.com/Outrage.be)

### **Who is Bert Vermeire?**

Bert Vermeire is developer with advertising agency FAMOUS where he develops websites, facebook and smartphone applications. Bert came up with the idea of the gay bashing application and developed it. The idea was born after a facebook appeal of Outrage! further to a series of gay-bashing incidents in Brussels and Antwerp in the summer of 2011. Outrage! jumped at the idea, and Bert set to work immediately. He received full backing from his employer FAMOUS in the process. Bert is gay himself and has been the victim of homophobic incidents on a few occasions himself.

### **What is FAMOUS?**

FAMOUS, an independent advertising agency located in the heart of Belgium, Brussels, employs 75 people in total, and is responsible for campaigns for Bacardi-Martini, De Lijn, De Morgen, Electrabel, GAIA, Hyundai, ABInbev, SITA, VT4, Aquarius and Vandemoortele, to name but a few.

More information: [www.famous.be](http://www.famous.be).

Follow FAMOUS on twitter: [@FamousBrussels](https://twitter.com/FamousBrussels)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/famousbrussels](http://www.facebook.com/famousbrussels)

### **What is SVGK?**

Association Friends of the Gay Newspaper (Dutch abbreviation SVGK) has been fighting for equal holebi rights since 1979. Its biggest success was the lobby that culminated in the right to civil marriage as the first country in the world. Anti-bullying campaigns and projects for holebi youngster are now top of its agenda. SVGK communicates via its publication Gay Krant newspaper and GK.nl website.

More information: [www.gk.nl](http://www.gk.nl)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/gaykrant](http://www.facebook.com/gaykrant)

Follow Gay Krant on twitter: [@Gaykrant](https://twitter.com/Gaykrant)