

**'EP Working Group of the Moment': A joint initiative between the EHRA National Cardiac Societies Committee, the EHRA Young EP Committee and the EHRA E-Communications Committee**

**The Rhythmology Working Group of the Belgian Society of Cardiology: the Belgian Heart Rhythm Association (BeHRA)**



Belgium, located in Western Europe, is a small yet vibrant country known for its rich history, diverse culture, and significant contributions to art and cuisine. It is bordered by France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, making it a crossroads of European cultures. Belgium is divided into three main regions: Flanders, where Dutch is spoken; Wallonia, where French is predominant; and the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. This linguistic diversity reflects the country's complex political landscape and cultural richness.

Belgium has a population of approximately 11.5 million inhabitants. The country has a relatively high population density, with major urban areas like Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent being particularly populous. The demographics of Belgium are diverse, reflecting the country's linguistic and cultural divisions among the Dutch-speaking Flanders, French-speaking Wallonia, and the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. This diversity contributes to a mixture of cultural influences and social dynamics within the population.

Historically, Belgium has played a crucial role in European affairs, serving as a site for various battles and treaties. The capital, Brussels, is not only the administrative center of the European Union but also boasts magnificent architecture, such as the Grand Place and the Atomium. Belgian cuisine is renowned worldwide, especially for its chocolates, waffles, and a wide variety of beers, many of which have been brewed for centuries. The country is also famous for its comic culture, being the birthplace of iconic characters like Tintin.

# Healthcare in Belgium

Belgium has a well-developed healthcare system, featuring around 800 hospitals across the country. These hospitals include both public and private institutions and provide a wide range of medical services. The healthcare system is characterized by a mix of general hospitals, specialized facilities, and clinics, ensuring comprehensive coverage for the population.

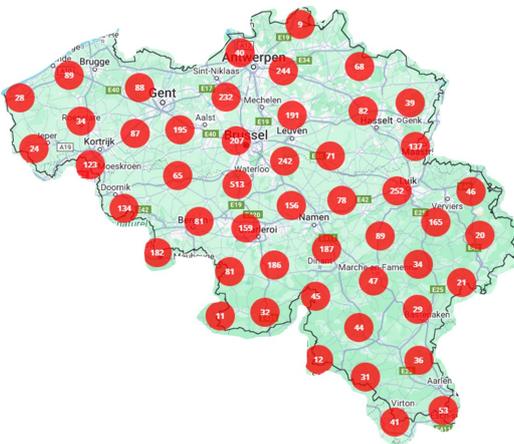
Belgium has 20 B2 cardiology centers. These centers are specialized facilities that focus on the diagnosis, treatment, and management of cardiovascular diseases. They play a crucial role in providing advanced cardiology care, including interventional procedures, cardiac rehabilitation, and heart failure management. The centers are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and staffed by highly trained cardiologists and healthcare professionals, ensuring comprehensive care for patients with heart conditions.

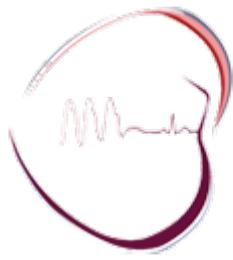
Belgium has around 10 B3 cardiology centers. These centers are advanced facilities that provide highly specialized care for complex cardiac conditions. B3 centers typically offer a full range of cardiology services, including advanced diagnostic testing, interventional procedures for coronary care, structural heart disease and electrophysiology and surgical interventions. They also focus on research and education in the field of cardiology, contributing to advancements in treatment and care.

There are 94 hospitals implanting pacemakers, 23 hospitals implanting defibrillators and CRTD. 41 centers are implanting CRTP devices. The number of pacemaker implanted is just below 13000 per year. In 2022, there were 2853 ICD implants of which 1217 CRT devices.

There are 38 hospitals undertaking electrophysiology (EP) procedures. 16278 ablations to correct heart rhythm disorders were performed in 2022, 10394 for atrial fibrillation. There were 3081 diagnostic EP procedures performed.

There are plenty of AED's available in public places. Registration of the AED's is voluntary. 5059 AED's are registered across the country.





**BeHRA**  
Belgian Heart Rhythm Association

Created in 1980, the BeHRA (Belgian Heart Rhythm Association) is a working group of the Belgian Cardiology Society that brings together Belgian cardiologists who specialise in treating cardiac rhythm disorders.

The mission of the BeHRA consists of promoting the study and development of cardiac stimulation, electrophysiology and cardiac rhythmology in the broader sense by organising scientific meetings, exchanging information and supporting fundamental and clinical research.

The BeHRA is a non-profit association made up of effective members (who form the Nucleus) and associate members.

The BeHRA's effective members are cardiologists who specialise in rhythmology in particular. They play an active role in the various projects developed within the BeHRA, whose aim is to improve the quality of treatment for patients suffering from cardiac arrhythmia. Effective members are required to attend meetings of the Nucleus on a regular basis, comply with the BeHRA's rules of good practice and assist in the development of its databases.

Associate members may be cardiologists, doctors or surgeons, but can also be engineers, technicians or qualified nurses whose professional activities are partly or totally related to cardiac rhythm disorders. They do not take part in the day-to-day running of the association nor do they attend the General Meeting. Consequently, their role is essentially one of supporting the BeHRA's mission.

The day-to-day management of the BeHRA is undertaken by the Board of Directors or Inner Nucleus, which is made up of six elected effective members: the President and Vice President (one of whom must be of French mother tongue and the other of Dutch mother tongue), one French-speaking secretary, one Dutch-speaking secretary, a treasurer and the previous Past President.

# BeHRA Restricted Board

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## Past-Presidents

Full name	University	Years
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Dr Paul BOHYN	ULB, Bruxelles	1987-1991
Dr Roland STROOBANDT	AZ Damiaan, Oostende	1991-1995
Prof Luc De ROY	UCL, Mont-Godinne	1995-1999
Dr Eddy VANAGT	ZNA, Antwerpen	1999-2003
Dr Thierry VERBEET	ULB Brugmann, Bruxelles	2003-2007
Dr Marnix GOETHALS	HHR, Roeselaere	2007-2011
Dr Georges MAIRESSE	CSL, Arlon	2011- 2015
Dr Yves VANDEKERCKHOVE	AZ Sint-Jan, Bruges	2015-2019
Dr Ivan Blankoff	CHU Charleroi	2019-2023

## The Belgian Heart Rhythm Meeting!



The Belgian Heart Rhythm Meeting (BHRM) is a two-day national event organised annually by the BeHRA which focuses on sharing knowledge and expertise about recent key issues related to arrhythmia disorders.

This congress is specially designed to update every cardiologist on the various diagnostic tools and best therapeutic possibilities available to practitioners when deciding upon which approach and treatment (combining drugs, devices and ablation) best serve arrhythmic patients.

For more general information on the BHRM, visit [www.bhrm.be](http://www.bhrm.be).



## **BIPIB**

Founded in October 2008, BIPIB (Belgische ICD Patiënten - Belgian ICD Patients) is a non-profit organisation made up of patients, cardiologists, representatives of the medical industry or sympathisers, which aims to provide the best possible support to patients with a defibrillator.

If you have benefited from the implantation of a defibrillator, please do not hesitate to contact these volunteers who will be happy to answer your questions, share their experiences, and provide you with advice and any ICD-related information that may be useful to you.

Of course, you can already find a lot of information on the website [www.bipib.be](http://www.bipib.be).