Checklist for Expats in Belgium

Some practical advice for getting settled and living in Belgium

We hope this checklist will help you prepare for your move to, and stay in, Belgium. There are a few important things to take care of before leaving and upon arrival.

Good preparation is the key to an excellent expat experience.

Good luck!

All the information in this document has been carefully gathered from sources we believe to be reliable. Nevertheless, we cannot guarantee the contents of websites or the quality of service providers. We therefore kindly request that you double-check the quality of the services offered and that you take account of any changes that may have occurred since the publication of this document.

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Formalities and documents required

Documents

• international passport
  • not required for EU nationals (local ID card will do), but required for all other countries and also whenever a visa is necessary
  • the children may need one too
  • preferably with the maximum period of validity.

• work permit (via your employer). Not required for most EU nationals.

• residence permit (long-term visa). Not required for (most) EU nationals. There is useful information on the website of the Belgian Immigration office.

• de-registration in your home country, registration in Belgium:
  ‘Service Population/Bevolkingsdienst' of the Belgian commune you will be living in. Website: name of the commune followed by “.be”. If not found, please put the name of your commune in your preferred internet search engine.

• take civil status documents, e.g. birth, marriage certificate, etc., with you.

• If you come from outside the European Union, take your international driving licence with you.

Formalities

• enquire about the length of procedures

• translations: French, Dutch and German are the official languages of Belgium. English is widely used, but not an official language in Belgium.

• photocopies of relevant documents: birth, marriage, etc.

• passport photos
Relocation, moving and accommodation

Finding your home in Belgium

• **Temporary accommodation**
  • International and local hotels in Belgium are a short-term option.
  • There are also many “apart hotels” available, particularly in Brussels and in some other large Belgian cities. Type “apart hotels” + your city of destination in your preferred internet search engine.

• **If you want to rent your home**
  • General information on renting property in Belgium: see for instance [the ING Renting page](#).
  • Renting your home: see for instance [this real estate website](#).
  • Contacting a real estate agent: see for instance [this real estate website](#).
  • Be sure to enquire about certain practical details:
    • furnished or not
    • rental guarantee
    • connections to water, gas, electricity, telephone, cable, WiFi, etc.

• **If you want to buy your home in Belgium:**
  • General information on buying property in Belgium. See for instance «[Buy a property with ING](#)».
  • buying your home: see for instance [the following real estate website](#).
  • contacting a real estate agent: see for instance [the following real estate website](#).

Installation of your home in Belgium

• **utility contracts**
  • Water: can typically be taken over from the former tenant. See for instance [this website](#).
  • electricity or gas: can typically be taken over from the former tenant. See for instance [Brugel](#) (Brussels Capital region; only in French or Dutch), [www.creg.be](#) (Walloon Region), or [www.vreg.be](#) (Flanders Region).
  • phone: see for instance (only in French or Dutch) [http://www.astel.be/operateurs/](#).
  • mobile phone providers: see for instance [http://mobile-belgium.be/](#).
• internet providers: see for instance http://www.ispa.be/#.
• satellite television
  • TV from Home
  • LyngSat
  • ...........................................................

• where appropriate, take out home or fire insurance: see for instance ING Home and Family.

• make the necessary arrangements for the mail to arrive at your new address (in Belgium)
  • forwarding of any magazines and subscriptions

**Relocation (professional assistance with the move)**

• check whether the employer has arranged for a “removalist”
  
  *if yes:*
  • check whether the employer will pay for the “removalist”.
  • check the services provided by the “removalist”
    • arriving in Belgium
    • assistance with the formalities in your country of departure
    • introduction to Belgium
    • finding accommodation
    • finding a school
    • assistance with local formalities
    • ..........................................................
    • ..........................................................
  
  *if no:*
  • enquire about “relocation” in Belgium
    e.g. Relocation companies that are members of the “Association of Belgium Relocator Companies” (ABRA).
    Others: ..........................................................
Taking your family with you

• your spouse's career
  • dual career planning and support abroad via the employer: www.netexpat.com.
  • MBA Schools in Belgium: see for instance: Vlerick or Solvay.

• travelling with the children
  e.g. www.travelwithyourkids.com: advice for making the journey as pleasant as possible for the children

• education for the children
  • international schools in Belgium
    Type those 4 words in your preferred internet search engine. You may change “Belgium” by the city you will be living in. There are also 4 European schools in Brussels: 4 Europese scholen in Brussel.
  • Belgium's education system is organised by region
  • Education in the Brussels Capital Region
  • Education in Flanders
  • Education in Wallonia
  • enrol in due time
    • to avoid waiting lists
    • as the school year can start at different times

• pets
  • compulsory vaccinations
  • means of transport

• www.ipata.com: world-wide information on the international transportation of pets and compulsory vaccinations
Health & pension

- **before leaving:** medical check-up for the whole family (not forgetting the pets).

- **vaccinations:** consult your medical doctor or the Institute for Tropical Medicine at [www.itg.be](http://www.itg.be).

- enquire about the medical infrastructure in Belgium, for instance hospitals, doctors, etc. see, e.g., [www.hospitals.be](http://www.hospitals.be).

- if necessary, update medical treatments and medicines (equivalents).

- **take your own medical supplies.**

- find out about changes to your social security status and update insurance (ask your employer about this as well). For Belgium: see e.g. [Partena and their expert in mobility](http://www.partena.com).

- **Pension:** there are 3 pillars in Belgium:
  - State pension: see for instance: [Social Security](http://www.socialsecurity.com).
  - company pension: check with your employer
  - private pension: see for instance: [www.ing.be/pension](http://www.ing.be/pension)
Integration in Belgium

• information on Belgium, for instance:
  - general information
  - Information for Brussels
  - Information for Flanders
  - Information for Wallonia
  Others: .................................................................
  or travel guides published by Lonely Planet, Marco Polo, etc.

• the local language: info on language courses see for instance: Ceran and Elanlanguages: companies specialising in linguistic and socio-economic support for expats and their partners.
  Others: .................................................................

• contact with other expats
  - Foreign embassies and consulates in Belgium enquire about:
    • the list of nationals in Belgium
    • the existence of associations
    • the organisation of expat events.
  • associations that bring foreigners living in Belgium into contact with each other, including “Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Belgium”: check via your preferred internet search engine.
  • expat websites in Belgium, for instance: xpats, expatica, angloinfo, expatsinbrussels
  Others: .................................................................

• information seminars

• Local newspapers in Belgium: for instance:
  - www.lesoir.be (French)
  - www.standaard.be (Dutch)
  - www.lecho.be (French: focus and Business and finance)
  - www.tijd.be (Dutch: focus on Business and finance)
  Others: .................................................................

• particular (name, address, phone and e-mail) of contacts in Belgium provided by the company, colleagues or friends:
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Financial aspects

• Contact a bank that knows about Expats in Belgium: opening a bank account, bank cards, rental guarantees, civil liability insurance as a tenant, ...
  
  • www.ing.be/expat
  • send an e-mail to expat@ing.be
  • Bel
  • call 02/464 66 64 (English), 02/464 66 62 (French), 02/464 66 63 (German), or 02/464 66 61 (Dutch)
  • app in the Belgian app store: ING Smart Banking

• enquire about options for banking via your computer, tablet and smartphone at the expat bank:
  
  • Internet banking
  • Mobile banking

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Taxation

Income tax

- if you do not have a special tax status (Diplomat, International Civil Servant, Beneficiary of the Special Tax Status for Expats in Belgium) when coming to Belgium, you will be required to file tax returns as a resident in Belgium.

- it is important to do your final tax declaration in your home country upon leaving. That way your tax status there will be clear for the authorities.

- for current legal information on Belgian income tax, please refer to: Minfin (in French and Dutch). Belgium has an online income tax filing system: Tax-on-Web (in French, Dutch and German).

- with a view to optimising your financial assets, ING can offer you a free tax check without any obligation on your part: expat@ing.be

- contact the Belgian Ministry of Finance via https://www.belgium.be.

Your car

- when buying a car in Belgium: after registration at your Belgian commune
  - Belgian car licence plate
  - car insurance in Belgium

- if you are bringing your car with you:
  - importing and registering your car in Belgium.
  - seek information about the formalities with your mover, garage or removalist.
  - check the validity of your driver's licence. If necessary, order an international driver's licence

- renting a car: for instance
  www.avis.com
  www.hertz.com
  www.europcar.com
  ...

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Contact with your home country

- Register as soon as possible with the local consulate of your country in Belgium. Addresses of Foreign Embassies and consulates in Belgium.

- International bookshops, food stores, ... in Belgium. See for instance:
  
  Books and bookshops
  International and specialist foods
  British products
  Rob-brussels, gastronomy
  Others: .................................................................

- Address, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of people or companies with whom you would like to remain in contact:
  
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  Contact 2: ........................................................................................................................................
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  Contact 3: ........................................................................................................................................
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