

WELCOME TO BELGIUM!

A short guide for incoming new
entrepreneurs



Camera di Commercio
Belgo-Italiana

Welcome to Belgium – A short guide for incoming New Entrepreneurs

Table of Contents

<i>Belgium.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Belgium: a federal constitutional monarchy.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Regions.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Brussels Capital Region.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Administrative organisation.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Brussels – European Capital</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>How to get around in the city.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Accommodation.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Wallonia</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Visit Wallonia.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Administrative organisation.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Public transport – TEC</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Local bike sharing system – Libia Velo.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Accommodation.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Flanders</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Visit Flanders.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Administrative organisation.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Public transport – DE LIJN.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Local bike sharing system – Velo Antwerpen</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Accommodation.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Transport</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Trains in Belgium SCNB.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Reach Belgium and travel from Belgium: Airports and international links.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Blue-Bike: Belgium's nationwide bike sharing system.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Health Care.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Mobile providers</i>	<i>21</i>

Belgium

Belgium is strategically located in the heart of Europe. Nestled between Germany, the Netherlands, France and Luxembourg, and only a stone's throw from the UK, it lies at the centre of the richest and most densely populated area in Europe. Thanks to its position, Belgium enjoys excellent access to Europe's key markets and suppliers. Precisely because of its strategic location, Belgium is an international hub for economic and political institutions. The headquarters of the European Union and NATO are located in the country, which is also home to many European politicians, international lobbyists and European headquarters. Belgium is a federal state, composed of communities and regions. The power in the country is shared among various partners, who independently exercise their authority within their domains.

Although Belgium only became an independent country in 1830, its territory has an interesting history stretching long before that, in which the population experienced both wealth and poverty, as well as starvation and war. Perhaps the most striking feature of the long Medieval period was the international trade that brought great wealth and prestige to the area that is now Belgium. In the centuries that followed, it was ruled by Spain, Austria, France and the Netherlands, and many wars were fought out on Belgian territory. After a revolution, in 1830 Belgium gained its independence and the country's borders were definitively laid down. The kingdom of Belgium has now developed into a federal State.

Belgium has a total GDP of more than €400 billion (2014). It has a mainly export-oriented economy – indeed, in terms of export per capita, Belgium is the world's leading export country. Belgium has a well-developed road and rail network, while air connections are provided by one national airport (Brussels) and four regional airports. The country's main ports are Zeebrugge and Antwerp, which is the fourth largest port in the world.

The constant contact Belgium has had with other peoples and cultures influenced art and culture in the past and continues to do so. Architecturally, the centuries-old buildings in Belgian cities, such as cathedrals, town halls, belfries and castles, immediately catch the eye, while the traces of the Art Nouveau style of Victor Horta, among others, are still very much in evidence. With the Flemish Primitives, Pieter Paul Rubens, James Ensor, René Magritte and Jean-Michel Folon and many other artists, Belgium boasts an amazing painting tradition extending through the centuries and taking in a whole range of styles. In terms of music, you have no doubt heard pieces from Jacques Brel, Toots Thielemans and the opera singer José Van Dam. In Belgium, comic strips are also an art form. The wonderful Tintin, Lucky Luke and Smurfs comic strips are all Belgian handiwork.

Of course, Belgium is not just about these creative individuals, sports personalities and other famous figures, but about a whole population that is open to the world and

is renowned for its hard-working and well-educated and trained staff who together make Belgium a country where it is pleasant to live.

Nowadays Belgium has three communities: the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community. These communities therefore correspond with the population groups. Simultaneously, the Belgian territory is divided into three regions: the Flemish Region, the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Region. Flanders and Wallonia are among the most attractive regions in Europe, while Brussels is in the top 10 major European cities in terms of infrastructure, quality of life and human resources. The regions have a substantial degree of autonomy, making the Belgian State one of the most advanced in the world. The regions' responsibilities include: trade, economy, employment, industrial zones, agriculture and environment. Up to a certain level they can be compared with the American states or the German 'Länder'. The country is further divided into 10 provinces and 589 municipal councils.

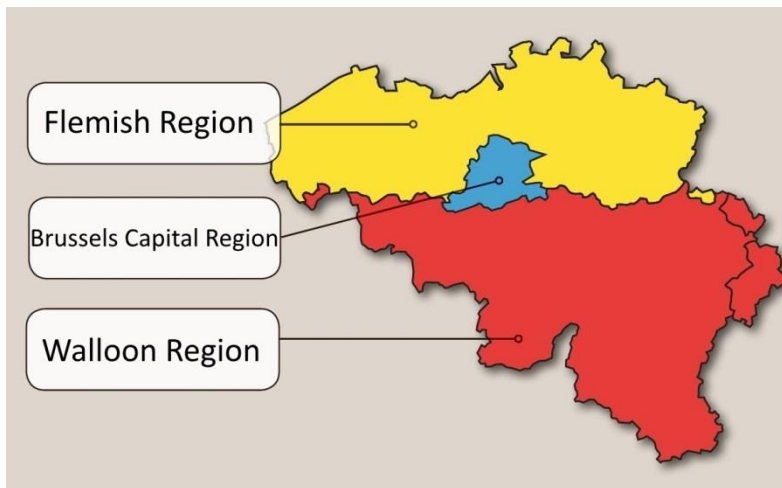
The most important sectors of Belgium's economy in 2014 were public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities (22.7 %), wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food services (19.8 %) and industry (16.8 %). Belgium's main export partners are Germany, France and the Netherlands while its main import partners are the Netherlands, Germany and France.

Belgium: a federal constitutional monarchy

The Kingdom of Belgium is located in the heart of Northern Europe and is bordered by the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg and France, with a short coastline along the North Sea. Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of governance. The King of Belgium's duties include contacts with a wide range of representatives of Belgian society: members of the federal government, of the community and regional governments, MPs and political leaders, representatives of the economic, social, cultural and scientific sectors, academia and the media. The King and the members of the Royal Family also keep in close touch with the citizens of Belgium, promoting private and public initiatives that help bring about social improvements. The King and the members of the Royal Family represent Belgium abroad at the highest levels (State visits, trade missions, participation in international meetings). Since 2013, the king of Belgium is Philippe Léopold Louis Marie, who is engaged to Mathilde d'Udekem d'Acoz since 1999. They have 4 children.



The Regions



Capital: Brussels
Geographical size: 30 528 km²
Population: 11 203 992 (2014)
GDP: € 402.027 billion (2014)
Languages: Dutch, French and German
EU member state since 1958

Don't just say Belgian to a Belgian. Every Belgian is in many cases first a Fleming, Walloon, citizen of Brussels, German-speaking Belgian or as a result of recent naturalization a 'new Belgian'. Belgium's linguistic diversity and related political and cultural conflicts are reflected in the political history and a complex system of government. Belgium is a true federal state. It has a complex political structure with division on different levels (federal level, community level and regional level).

Brussels Capital Region

Brussels is quickly gaining a reputation as one of Europe's must-see destinations, with its small town charm, trendy bars and restaurants, fabulous food, great nightlife, fantastic shopping, numerous museums, and other attractions including the diverse and interesting exhibitions and festivals organized there every year. Brussels is also becoming known as a mecca of style, art, and design. While attracting more and more big names in international fashion to its growing shopping districts, home-grown Belgian designers are rapidly gaining global notoriety. The streets of Brussels feature art and architecture created from an unmistakably Belgian point of view that cannot be replicated. This beautiful city is a center for fashion, art, and Belgian culture.

Administrative organisation



Brussels, officially the Brussels-Capital Region, is a region of Belgium comprising 19 municipalities, including the City of Brussels which is the capital of Belgium, the French Community of Belgium, and the Flemish Community. The region has a population of 1.2 million and a metropolitan area with a population of over 1.8 million, the largest in Belgium.

Historically a Dutch-speaking city, it has seen a major shift to French from the late 19th century onwards. Today the majority language is French, and the Brussels-

Capital Region is an officially bilingual enclave within the Flemish Region. All road signs, street names, and many advertisements and services are shown in both languages. The city is divided in 19 municipalities' "communes" which are in charge of the local administration. Further information concerning administrative services can be found on the city's website in [the administrative procedures section](https://www.brussels.be/artdet.cfm/4131).¹

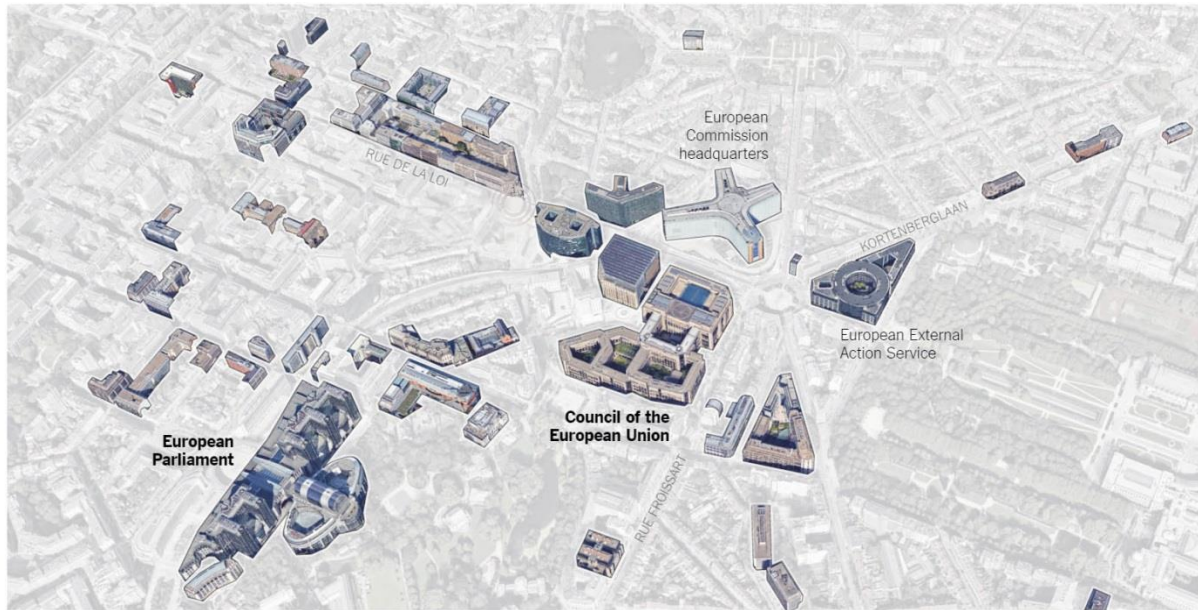
Brussels – European Capital

Brussels is not only the capital of Belgium, the Brussels-Capital Region and both the Flemish and French Communities, it is also the de facto capital of Europe.

Since the decision of the member states to make Brussels the seat of the European institutions in 1997, Brussels has become the de facto capital of Europe.

In the course of successive enlargements more and more European institutions have been established in the Brussels-Capital Region, which has created a European neighbourhood in the heart of the Region.

¹ <https://www.brussels.be/artdet.cfm/4131>)



The New York Times: Image by Google Earth

The European Neighbourhood

Most of the European institutions are located in the Léopold neighborhood and the vicinity of the Schuman roundabout. This area is bounded by the Petite Ceinture, Rue Stévin, Parc du Cinquantaire and Rue du Trône. It constitutes the primary concentration of office space in the Brussels-Capital Region.

European Institutions and political bodies

The European Commission, which drives the integration process given it is the only body permitted to propose EU legislation as well as being the guardian of the Treaties, is located at Berlaymont.

The **Council of the European Union** is made up of representatives of the governments of the EU member states. The Council is the most important legislative body and the decision-making centre of the European Union

The **European Commission** has its headquarters in the Berlaymont building, while the **Council of the European Union** is located in the Justus Lipsius building opposite, both in Law Street.

Once a year, usually on Europe Day (9th May), the main EU institutions open their doors to visitors for a day. This is a good opportunity to see the meeting rooms of the EU Commissioners and European heads of state in the Berlaymont and Justus Lipsius buildings.

The European Parliament is the community institution representing the combined 470 million inhabitants of the member states of the EU. As the only EU institution elected directly by universal suffrage, the European Parliament has three

fundamental powers: legislative power, budget power and political control of the European institutions.

Strasbourg is the official seat of the Parliament, while Brussels hosts MEPs three weeks out of every four as well as additional plenary sessions and the meetings of parliamentary committees and political groupings.

The European Parliament's main entrance is in Belliard Street, just above the Brussels-Luxembourg Railway Station. The EU Parliament is made of of two wings, the Paul-Henri Spaak building (constructed from 1988) and the Altiero Spinelli building (erected between 1991 and 1997). The whole parliament has an built area (on the ground) of 35,000 m2.

The EU Parliament is open to visitors. When the parliament is in session, headphones give almost instantaneous translations of what is being said in all of the EU's 20 official languages.

The European Economic and Social Committee, an advisory body, is the assembly of European economic and social partners and the voice of organised civil society organisations (consumers and other interest groups). It issues the recommendations of its members and defends their interests in the political discussions with the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament.

The Committee of the Regions, an advisory body, is the political assembly representing local and regional levels of Europe. The Committee of the Regions must be consulted prior to all decisions of the EU on matters that affect the local and regional authorities, such as regional policy, environment, education and transport. It is housed on the same premises as the European Economic and Social Committee.

Community agencies

The Brussels-Capital Region is also the seat of eight community agencies: the European Defence Agency, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation, the Community Fisheries Control Agency, the European GNSS Supervisory Authority, the Research Executive Agency, the European Research Council Executive Agency and the Trans-European Transport Network Executive Agency.

EU Open Doors Day

Each year, the European institutions open their doors to visitors Europe Day (5th May, open doors on 4th May if the 5th is a Sunday). This is the opportunity to have a look inside the Berlaymont building, home of the European Commission, see where EU heads of governments hold summits at the Council of the European Union, take a guided tour of the European Parliament, or visit any of the numerous other EU

institutions in the neighborhood, such as the Committee of the Regions, the European Court of Auditors, or the European Ombudsman, among other.

Brussels as the decision making heart of Europe:

International organisations: headquarters of more international organisations than Washington, D.C., ranking number one in the world with 3,063 organisations based in the city, including NATO, the Western European Union (WEU) and the Benelux.

International NGOs: Brussels is also home to 837 international NGOs (source: 'Yearbook of International Organisations' by the Union of International Associations).

Diplomatic: Brussels is 2nd only to New York, with some 3,800 diplomats and 159 embassies.

Business: 1,300 foreign companies are located in the European capital.

Public affairs and lobbying: Brussels has over 1,000 lobby groups, hundreds of PR and public affairs firms, consulting and law firms offering lobbying services, NGOs, dozens of corporate-funded think tanks as well as several hundred 'EU affairs' offices run by individual corporations.

Media: Brussels' worldwide press centre is 2nd only to Washington, D.C., with about 1,200 journalists permanently stationed in the city working for hundreds of press agencies, television broadcasters, radio stations and newspapers.

Pressure groups: headquarters for thousands of lobbying agencies, representatives of 400 regions and cities, and legal and consulting firms.

Conferences: the world's 2nd largest conference hub for hosting international business meetings.

Ideal test market

Brussels is a very cost-efficient test market; a successful launch in Belgium is a good indicator of similar success in other European markets. In fact, many companies, both European (Beiersdorf, etc.) and non-European (Coca-Cola, etc.), have already successfully used Brussels as a consumer market test case. Why is Brussels the ideal test market? It's because Brussels is a truly international city, with a huge multicultural workforce and consumer base. About one-third of the city's one million inhabitants are foreign nationals. Nationals from each of the 27 EU Member States are represented here, as are those from many other countries around the world.

With such a rich mix of nationalities, Brussels is an international city that is open for international business. No fewer than 1,300 foreign companies are already based here. Straddling the border between Anglo-Saxon, Latin and Germanic cultures,

Brussels is an international and cosmopolitan city where different cultures and nationalities meet, mingle and do business.

What makes Brussels the ideal test market?

- High acceptance of foreign products.
- Gateway to European market.
- Multicultural population.
- A microcosm of European diversity.
- Exports account for 74% of local GDP; imports accounting for 73% of local GDP.
- International city, located at the crossroads of the Anglo-Saxon, Latin and Germanic cultures.

How to get around in the city

Public transport – STIB

The city of Brussels is well served by a network of **public transport (STIB)** which includes metro, trams and buses. Tickets for public transport can be purchased at the counters inside subway stations (Bootik, Kiosk and GO vending machines). It is possible to buy the tickets directly on trams and buses but at a higher price. Tickets are valid on buses, trams and metro and they can be used for up to 70 minutes since the first obliteration. In case of change of vehicle, they need to be obliterated again in order to be considered valid.

Tickets

Standard ticket (Bootik, Kiosk and GO vending machines):

Single ticket € 2.10 (€ 2.50 if purchased on board);

Daily travel card (from the time it is purchased up to the end of service) € 7.50

Rechargeable keycard MOBIB (available at Bootiks and Kiosks and costs 5 euros):

- Carnet 5 trips: € 8.00;
- Carnet 10 trips: € 14.00;
- Unlimited travel ticket valid for 24 hours: € 7.50;
- Unlimited travel ticket valid 48 hours: € 14.00;
- Unlimited travel ticket valid 72 hours: € 18.00.

For more information visit: www.stib.be.

Taxi

To move by **taxi**, it is possible to book the service with the following companies:

- Taxis Bleus: Tel. 0032 (0) 2 268 00 00
- Taxis Orange: Tel. 0032 (0) 2 349 43 43
- Taxis Verts: Tel. 0032 (0) 2 349 49 49

The cost of the fare varies according to the destination:

- Initial tariff: € 2.40
- 1,80 € / Km within the 19 municipalities of the City of Brussels
- € 2.70 out of 19 municipalities
- During the night hours (between 22:00 and 6:00), the initial tariff increases to € 4.40.

Local bike sharing system – VILLO!

VILLO is the bike sharing system of the city of Brussels. You will find 180 VILLO stations in the city, one every 450 meters. The bikes can be used for short or longer routes. The system allows you to rent one bike at one of the stations and once you no longer need it relocate it in one of the stations around the city, not necessarily the original one.



You can move freely without any limit in time and space, the first 30 minutes are free of charge. For longer movements you will be charged with an additional fare.

Subscription fares:

- 1 year € 32,00
- 1 day: € 1,50
- 7 days: € 7,00.

For further information: <http://en.villo.be/>

Accommodation

An accommodation in Brussels can be easily found thanks to various websites which are updated daily. Here you can find some of the most used:

- Immoweb: <http://www.immoweb.be/en/>
- Appartager: <http://www.appartager.be/bruxelles/colocation-bruxelles-brussel?l=1>
- Immo Vlan: <http://immo.vlan.be/en>

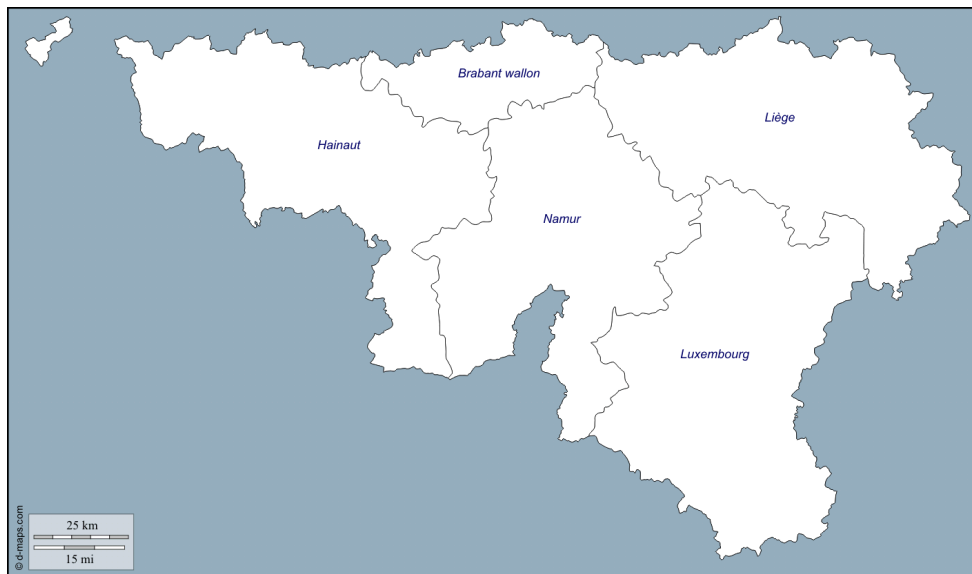
On top of that various studio rent services are active in the city:

- Brukot <http://www.brukot.be/>
- Kots Bruxelles <http://kotsbruxelles.be/>
- Skot <https://skot.be/en/>

An alternative could be represented by directly contacting an estate agency which operates in the area:

- <http://www.wimmo.be/>
- <http://www.aidb.be/>
- <http://www.century21.be/>
- <http://www.fieldimmo.be/fr/>

Wallonia



The Walloon region is predominantly French-speaking. It accounts for 55% of the territory of Belgium and a third of its population. Unlike Flanders, the Walloon Region was not merged with the French Community of Belgium which is the political entity that is responsible for matters related mainly to culture and education. The German-speaking minority in the east forms the German-speaking Community of Belgium, which has its own government and parliament.

During the industrial revolution, Wallonia was second only to the United Kingdom in industrialization, capitalizing on its extensive deposits of coal and iron. This brought the region wealth, and, from the beginning of the 19th to the middle of the 20th centuries, Wallonia was the more prosperous half of Belgium.

The capital of Wallonia is Namur but the city with the greatest population is Charleroi. Most of Wallonia's major cities and two-thirds of its population lie along the Sambre and Meuse valley, the former industrial backbone of Belgium.

Visit Wallonia

Wallonia as a region offers several tourist destination from open spaces, culture and tradition, to city trips or escapes to the country. Counting on several natural attractions, its castles and fortresses and its well-known Unesco world industrial heritage sites, not forgetting its delicious culinary traditions

To find out more about it you can visit the [Region's website](http://www.wallonia.be/en/visit)² available both in English and French.

² <http://www.wallonia.be/en/visit>

Administrative organisation

Administratively, Wallonia consists of 5 provinces: Walloon Brabant, Hainaut, Liège, Luxembourg, and Namur. It is also divided into 20 administrative arrondissements and 262 municipalities.

Public transport – TEC

The public transport service which operates in the Walloon region is the TEC, you can easily find information about schedules and routes on the company website (<https://www.infotec.be>) which is available in English, French, Dutch And German.

Tickets for public transport can be purchased at the “**Espace TEC**” points where information and several services are provided. You can find [the list of addresses](#)³ in the Company's website.

Moreover tickets and cards can be purchased at the **SELF vending machines** located nearby bus stops and train stations.

You can find the nearest SELF using the [TEC online tool](#):⁴

Tickets

Single tickets: initial fare 2.10 €

The fare depends on the length of the journey and the number of zones covered by it, you can easily calculate [the price of your ticket on the company website](#).⁵

MOBIB Card: Rechargeable and nominative, you can charge the card with all the different tickets including reduced price tickets. It allows you to charge also tickets from the other public transport companies such as SNCB, STIB and Lijn. In case of loss a replacement card will be provided. **Price 5 €**

MOBIB basic card: Rechargeable and non-nominative, it offers the same services of the Mobib Card except replacement in case of loss. **Price 5 €**

Where to buy it: ESPACES TEC and online on the [E-shop](#)⁶

Local bike sharing system – Libia Velo

A bike sharing service is available in the city of **Namur**. 24 Stations are located in the city centre and Salzinnes, Saint-Servais and Bomel. With a total of 240 operative bikes the service allows customers to rent a bike from one of the stations and return it in one of the 24 stations available.



³ <https://www.infotec.be/fr-be/acheteruntitre/r%C3%A9seaudevente/espacetec.aspx>.

⁴ <https://www.infotec.be/fr-be/acheteruntitre/r%C3%A9seaudevente.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.infotec.be/Acheteruntitre/Titresestarifs/Calculdutarif.aspx>

⁶ https://eshop.infotec.be/?utm_source=infotec&utm_medium=lien

Different types of subscriptions are available:

- Day Card which can be purchased at the station terminals - 1€/day
- Week Card which can be purchased at the station terminals - 3€/week
- 1 year subscription € 30 including
 - Unlimited use of Libiavelo,
 - First 30 minutes for free per trip.

For more information you can visit the [company website](#)⁷ available in French and English.

Accommodation

The best source to find an accommodation in Wallonia, especially if coming from outside the country is still the web.

In addition to the links also valid for the research in Brussels few can be added

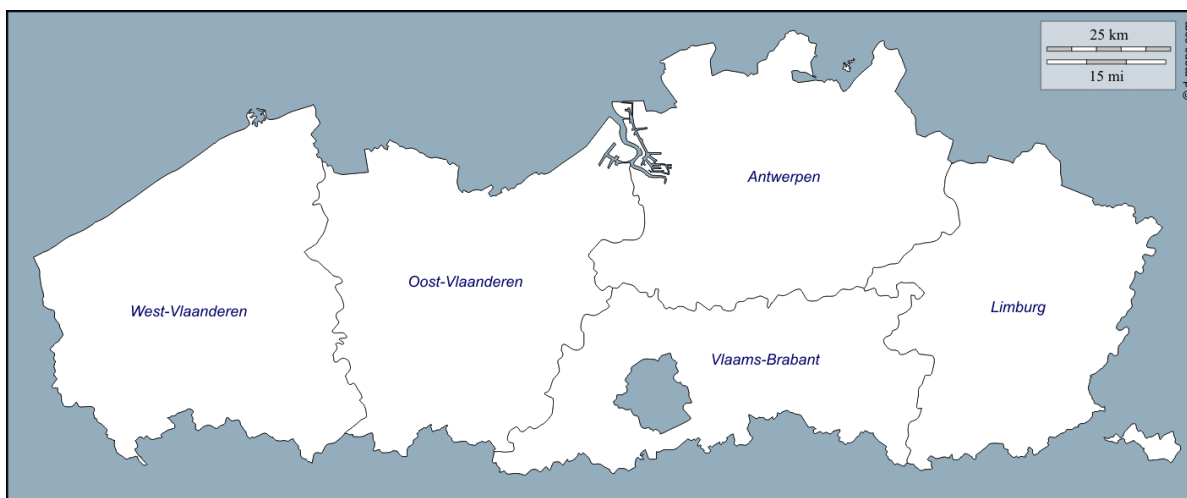
- Immoweb: <http://www.immoweb.be/en/>
- Appartager: <http://www.appartager.be/bruxelles/colocation-bruxelles-brussel?l=1>
- Immo Vlan: <http://immo.vlan.be/en>
- J'annonce.be: <http://www.jannonce.be/immo/louer/>
- Logic Immo: <http://www.logic-immo.be/>
- Zimmo: <http://www.zimmo.be/>

You can also rely on local branches of various estate agencies like:

- Cap sud: <http://www.cap-sud.com/en/>
- The Walloonian Schmidt Branch: <http://www.schmidtwallonie.be/>
- Wauters: <http://www.immo-wauters.be/>
- Crescendimmo: <http://www.cre.be/>

⁷ <http://en.libiavelo.be/>

Flanders



Flanders is the northern part of Belgium. The region borders on the North Sea, with 65 km of beach. Flanders covers 44.8% of the country's surface and accounts for some 60% of the total population. Due to its central location in Europe, many major European cities, like Paris, London, Amsterdam, are only a short distance away and can be easily visited on a day-trip from Belgium.

Visit Flanders

Flanders has many beautiful spots and tourist attractions worth visiting. Planning a holiday trip to Flanders? Then definitely visit the website <http://www.visitflanders.com/en/>, which offers plenty of information about historic art cities, the Flemish coast and gastronomy, among other things.

Administrative organisation

Flanders is the umbrella term for the Flemish Region (roughly the northern half of Belgium) and the Flemish Community (the inhabitants of the Flemish Region and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Brussels). The Flemish Region and the Flemish Community are governed jointly as a parliamentary democracy by the Flemish Parliament and Flemish Government, supported by the Flemish administration. The Flemish region is divided into 5 provinces: Antwerp, Limburg, East Flanders, West Flanders and Flemish Brabant created recently in 1995.

Public transport – DE LIJN

The Flemish Region is served by the De Lijn Company which provides both transports by bus and tram. The company's website is available in Dutch, French and English (<https://www.delijn.be>).

Tickets

The company provides different solutions based on your needs and journeys, different solutions are available also to travel on the Coast and in the Limburg province.

- **Single ticket:** 3.00€ validity: 60 minutes
- **Lijn Card** – 10 journeys: 14.00 € validity: 60 minutes per journey
- **Day Pass:**
 - 1 Day pass: € 6,00/€ 8,00 (on bus)
 - Child day pass: € 4,00/€ 5,00(on bus)
 - Three day pass: € 12,00
 - Five day pass:€ 17,00
 - Buzzy Pazz and Omnipass: The Buzzy Pazz is a pass for children and young people from 6 to 24 years old. With a Buzzy Pazz you have unlimited travel on all scheduled transport of De Lijn, except on the *Limburg express lines*. If are older than 25 you can benefit from the same services with an omnipass :

Validity period	Buzzy Pazz (<24)	Omnipass (> 25)
1 month	€ 30,00	€ 46,00
3 months	€ 75,00	€ 114,00
12 months	€ 199,00	€ 299,00

Where you can purchase tickets and passes :

- Automated ticket machine
- Lijnwinkel: point of contact and services by De Lijn
- [Authorized points of sale](#)⁸
- From the driver on the bus or tram
- [E-shop](#)⁹

Night transport: In Ghent and Leuven you don't have to worry about transport on Friday and Saturday nights. On weekend nights night bus services are provided in these two cities. In Bruges and Ostend the service is provided all the week thanks to the Evening Lines. In Hasselt, Genk, Tongeren and Sint-Truiden you can also travel in the evening with the Evening Lines.

For more information you can check the following link:
<https://www.delijn.be/en/avond-nachtvervoer/>

⁸ Find your nearest one in the company website :

<https://www.delijn.be/en/vervoerbewijzen/verkooppunten/voorverkooppunt-in-uw-buurt.html>

⁹ <https://www.delijn.be/en/vervoerbewijzen/verkooppunten/eshop.html>

Local bike sharing system – Velo Antwerpen

A bike sharing service is available in the city of **Antwerp**. The different Velo stations are located on walking distance from each other (max 400 m) between the Singel and the Schelde, as well as on Linkeroever. You can easily register on the company website for a day or week pass, or a year card. For a short visit to Antwerp, a day or week pass is ideal. You can order them up to 30 days in advance. Users of a day or week pass receive a user code and password. With these codes you can immediately take a bike at any available station.



Fares:

- 37€/year;
- 9€/week;
- 3,8€/day.

For further information: <https://www.velo-antwerpen.be/>

Accommodation

Once again the web is still a good source of information, with some useful link especially for flanders.

- Immoweb: <http://www.immoweb.be/en/>
- Appartager: <http://www.appartager.be/bruxelles/colocation-bruxelles-brussel?l=1>
- Immo Vlan: <http://immo.vlan.be/en>
- <https://www.wonenvlaanderen.be>
- Kapaza.be: <http://www.kapaza.be/>
- Hebbes: <http://www.hebbes.be/>
- Proxio.be: <http://www.immoproxio.be/>
- Specifically for Gent: <http://www.furnishedapartments-gent.be/>

If the web is full of information and resources cons have to be taken into account, Flemish websites are rarely provided with an English version and offer, not systematically, only a French translation.

Transport

There are multiple ways to travel around in Belgium. The public transport network is quite extensive and you will easily be able to go from one place to another. One of its strengths is an integrated train, tram, metro, and bus system, which makes connections easier between different transport types. Three regional operators manage the network: De Lijn (Flanders), TEC (Wallonia) and STIB (Brussels). Along the Belgian coast runs the world's longest tram route, providing easy access to the entire coastline from the French and Dutch borders. Increasingly across Belgium the MOBIB-card is replacing old magnetic cards and paper tickets, which are expected to be completely phased out in some areas in the next years. The card costs EUR 5 and lasts five years, and travelers can load on any kind of ticket or season pass.

Trains in Belgium SCNB

Timetables and train ticket prices for trains in Belgium are available on the website www.belgianrail.be. Furthermore, there is a dedicated section for trains which connect Belgium to the rest of Europe (Paris, Amsterdam, and London).

It is possible to buy discounted return tickets for trains scheduled during the weekend, from Friday (after 19.00) to Sunday. It is also possible to buy tickets for 10 trips that can be used by groups.

International and super-fast trains:

Trains that cover international routes (eg. Bruxelles Gare du Midi - Amsterdam), are available at this website: www.b-europe.com. Usually, these are intercity trains and they don't require any reservation and there are no additional fees if bought on the same day of departure. Instead, super-fast trains prices are not fixed but vary from day to day. Promotions (es.Bruxelles-Paris € 50 A / R) are available when booking in advance at the website of TGV Europe (www.tgv-europe.be).

Reach Belgium and travel from Belgium: Airports and international links

How to reach the centre of Brussels:

- From the main Brussels Airport - Zaventem:

TRAIN: Airport City Express links the airport to Gare du Nord; Gare Du Midi or Gare Centrale. The price of the ticket is € 7.80. Four trains are available every hour and the trip takes about 20/25 minutes. From the train stations, it is then possible to take the subway to reach the final destination. See: www.sncb.be.

TAXI: the price from Brussels Airport - Zaventem to the city centre is approximately € 40.00.

BUS: The bus lines 12 and 21, which connect Brussels to Zaventem, arrive and depart from Place du Luxembourg (European Parliament) and pass for Schuman (European Commission). The ticket costs € 4.00 (€ 6.00 if purchased on board). From Schuman, with the same ticket (which required being re-obliterated) it is possible to take the subway.

For further information: <http://www.stib.be/airport-line.html?l=fr>.

- From the airport of Charleroi:

SHUTTLE BUS: they connect the Charleroi airport to Gare du Midi, with rides every 30 minutes. The departures timetable of the shuttles and the vending machines to buy tickets can be found on the sidewalk just outside the airport.

The price of a single ticket is € 17.00 (€ 14.00 online), while the return ticket costs € 28.00. The journey time is 45 minutes. From Gare du Midi it is then possible to take the metro (line 2 or 6), tram or a taxi to easily reach the final destination. For more information and reservations consult the page: <http://www.brussels-city-shuttle.com>.

TAXI: The taxi station is just outside the terminal. The price of the transfer from Charleroi to Brussels by taxi varies from 130.00 to 150.00 €. Sharing a taxi with 8 other people can cost from € 14.00 to € 18.00 each. For booking a taxi in Brussels call: +32 22680000 Taxis Bleus, Taxis Verts +32 23494949 or book through www.italiansonmove.com.

Blue-Bike: Belgium's nationwide bike sharing system

Managed by the national railway company SNCB, [Blue bike](#)¹⁰ is designed to help railway travellers continue their journey from the station to their destination point, be it their work place, a museum, a friend's house, or a natural area not served by public transport. It is organized as a network of rental stations that lie next to train stations in about 40 Belgian cities.¹¹



In order to use this service, you must sign up for a subscription worth 10€/year. You can either do this online, and then wait for your membership card to be delivered by post, or you can visit one of 12 Bike Points¹² (Point vélo in French, Fiestpunt in Dutch) during their opening hours to become a member right away. Also, a number

¹⁰ <http://www.blue-bike.be/>

¹¹ You can find your nearest one on the website's tool <http://www.blue-bike.be/en/find-blue-bike-location>

¹² <http://www.blue-bike.be/en/signing-up-in-a-cycle-point>

of companies and organisations have partnered with Blue-Bike to offer extra facilities to their employees.

Once signed up, you can rent a bike from any of the 44 stations open all around Belgium. For every bike hire, you will pay maximum 3€ for 24 hours. In some cities, like Bruges or Mechelen, you will only pay 1€/24 hours, while in others, such as Hasselt, Eeklo or Ottignies, you pay nothing for the first 24 hours. The cost can vary according to local agreements with the public administration which subsidizes the service.

The main difference with the local Bike sharing systems active in Brussels Namur and Antwerpen is that the bike has to be returned to the same station where it was originally picked.

Health Care

Health Care insurance and disability coverage is mandatory for everyone in Belgium. If during your stay you are officially registered in Belgium you will be able to subscribe for health insurance coverage without any problem.

You can choose your insurance provider among those active in Belgium:

- [Alliance nationale des mutualités chrétiennes](#)¹³
- [Union nationale des mutualités neutres](#)¹⁴
- [Union nationale des mutualités socialistes](#)¹⁵
- [Union nationale des mutualités libres](#)¹⁶
- [Caisse auxiliaire d'assurance maladie-invalidité](#)¹⁷
- [Caisse des soins de santé de HR Rail](#)¹⁸
- [Union Nationale des mutualités liberales](#)¹⁹

For further information on the reimbursement policy and medical expenses for new entrants you can consult this link: <http://www.newintown.be/fr/index.html>

¹³ <https://www.mc.be/>

¹⁴ <http://www.mutualites-neutres.be/>

¹⁵ <http://www.solidaris.be/Pages/Home.aspx>

¹⁶ <http://www.mloz.be/>

¹⁷ <http://www.caami-hziv.fgov.be/Model4-10-F.htm>

¹⁸ <http://hr-railcare.be/fr/>

¹⁹ <http://www.ml.be/>

Mobile providers

There are many mobile providers in Belgium, but only three actually own the physical towers and radio spectrum: Proximus, Mobistar, and Base. The other mobile providers buy their access from these three. For some information about the difference, check out the definitions.

List of mobile providers

The following is a list of the mobile providers in Belgium with links to more info about each. Providers come and go as the market changes, so expect this list to only ever be a partial listing. If you want a more complete list, you could also try this full list of mobile providers in Belgium.

- Proximus (www.proximus.be)
- Mobistar (<https://www.mobistar.be/fr>)
- Base (<https://www.base.be/>)
- Mobile Vikings (<https://vikingco.com/en/mobile-vikings/>)
- Telenet (<https://www2.telenet.be/nl/>)
- Scarlet (<https://www.scarlet.be/fr/>)
- Ello Mobile (<http://www.ello-mobile.be/fr.aspx>)

The Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce

The Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce (CCBI - www.ccitabel.com) is a private Belgian association founded in 1950. Since 1987 it is part of the Italian Chambers of Commerce Abroad network, which counts 140 offices in 54 countries of the world (including Israel), and is recognized by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development. First established as a Chamber of Commerce dedicated to promote trade exchanges between Belgium and Italy, the CCBI has expanded its mission to better fit in a world where international relationships assume new shapes. The CCBI participates, as leader or partner, in several international projects financed by the European Union, the Italian Ministry for Economic Development or other international organisations. By participating in these initiatives, the Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce ensures its members a variety of high added value services related to vocational training, internationalisation of enterprises and entrepreneurship of young people.

The Belgian Italian Chamber of Commerce has taken part in the “Erasmus for young Entrepreneurs” programme since 2009 as a partner of the Open EYE consortium in the projects Open EYE 2-3-4 and 6. On top of that CCBI has been the leader of the

projects Open EYE 5 and Open EYE 7. The Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce is indeed one of the intermediary organization within the European Partnership to be contacted before filling in the registration form. Open Eye supports the submission of the application and facilitates the meeting with the hosting company, providing information on the country of destination. Thanks to the plurennial experience gained through the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs' programme, the CCBI has gained significant expertise and can be considered today a reliable partner in the different phases of implementation and project design of European projects.

For Further Information

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Or Consult the Chamber's website : <http://www.ccitabel.com/ccib/en/>