

BELGIUM

1. A few words about Belgium

Belgium is a constitutional monarchy located in the northwest of Europe. To the north, it borders the Netherlands and the North Sea; to the east lies Germany and Luxemburg; and to the west and southwest it borders France. The Netherlands, Luxemburg and Belgium form Benelux. Belgium covers a total area of approximately 30,528km² and the population is 10,274,595 inhabitants (according to the 2002 census). It is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe (337 inhabitants per km²). The greatest population concentrations are found in: Brussels, which is also the capital of Belgium; the industrial areas of Antwerp, Liege, and Ghent (Gent); And in the small industrial area between Mons and Charleroi. Approximately 10% of all Belgians live in Brussels; the city is also home to a very large number of foreign workers.

It is important to know that Belgium is officially a federal nation. It is divided in 3 regions: Flanders, the Brussels area, and Wallonie, and it consists of 3 communities: the Dutch-speaking (Flemish), the French-speaking and the German-speaking. It is also important to know that all administrative steps must be made:

- In the Dutch language in Flanders (Vlaanderen).
- In the French language in Wallonie.
- In the French or the Dutch language in Brussels (Bruxelles), where both these languages are officially spoken.
- In the German or the French language in the small area between Liège and the German border, where both these languages are officially spoken.

Due to this linguistic particularity, anyone wishing to take up residence in Belgium is very likely to face difficulties, especially in the beginning. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Belgium are fairly friendly with foreigners, most of them speak both of the main languages (French, Flemish), while quite a few also speak English. Finally, even a limited knowledge of the vernacular of each region is usually a great help. {[3], [6]}

1.1. Conditions and quality of life

1.1.1 *The cost of living in Belgium – Finding housing*

Belgium has a very high cost of living, compared to many other European cities. This is especially so in Brussels, which is the seat of two large international organisations, the European Union and NATO. The cost of living, the prices of goods, services, and transportation, as well as the purchase or lease of property, are all relatively quite high.

Most foreigners who settle in the country for professional reasons prefer to lease rather than purchase their homes, because usually they remain in Belgium for a specific length of time, and also because the taxation and the fees of the notary for the purchase of a residence can amount up to 18% of the purchase price. {[5]}

The availability of housing, across the price range, is fairly large in the Brussels area and throughout Belgium. Sixty-eight percent of residences are privately owned and the remaining 32% are leased. Eighty-five percent of residences are detached houses, while 15% are apartments. Overall, both furnished and unfurnished residences are available. Housing costs are significantly higher in the Brussels area, compared to other cities in Belgium, but they still remain relatively low, compared to other European capitals. Outside the urban areas, the prices are significantly lower.

-- Important details regarding residences for rent

The owner may raise the rent annually at a rate of 2% inflation. The cost of utilities, which is significant, is not included in the rent price. Information about leasing residences can be found in local newspapers and realtor companies.

-- Important information regarding residences for sale

Most banks offer housing loans. Taxes, legal expenses, and bank charges may amount up to 17% of the purchase price, one of the highest prices in Europe, while approximately 40% of this cost may be amortised if the residence is sold within 5 years. {[4]}

For offers related to the leasing and purchase of residences, you may consult the website <http://www.expatriates.com>.

1.1.2 Education of children

Primary and secondary education

In Belgium, primary and secondary education is mandatory. The duration is 12 years, from the ages of 6 to 18 years old. Students are required to attend school regularly up to the age of 15, and to complete primary and at least two years of secondary education. Those who do not wish to continue full-time schooling until the age of 18 may attend part-time schooling, which is mandatory until the age of 18. Students who have not completed the first two years of secondary education are required to attend school full-time until the age of 16.

The school year usually begins on September 1st and ends on June 30th.

Tuition fees

Mandatory education is provided for free to all students. Tuition fees are not required, but it is possible for parents to be asked for a financial contribution for school meals, transportation, and extra-curricular activities. The local region is responsible for the free distribution of books and school supplies.

Financial contribution

Students in primary education do not receive any financial support in the form of school benefits. Each student in secondary education, who is attending school successfully and whose parents do not possess the financial means to finance his/ her studies, is eligible for financial assistance from the public authorities. The financial assistance consists of student benefits, which are granted under certain conditions, mainly related to the family income. Eligible for this assistance are those who have lived in Belgium for over a year. Furthermore, there is a system for granting student loans, which are granted based on the same criteria that are valid for the student benefits, and which permit the receipt of financial assistance by families who have at least three children in their custody.

University and non-university tertiary education

- French and Flemish communities:

There are three kinds of tertiary education: short-duration tertiary education, long-duration tertiary education, and university education.

- German-speaking community:

There is only one kind of tertiary education (non-university tertiary education of short duration).

Academic year

The academic year normally begins from September 15th until the first Monday in October, and it ends at the latest on July 15th in Wallonie and Brussels, and at the end of June in Flanders. It is divided in two semesters.

Degrees

- French community:

The awarded university degrees are the following:

- candidate degree (candidat), which is awarded after two or three years of study;
- certificated degree (licencie), which is awarded after two or three years of complementary study;
- doctorate degree (docteur).

The tertiary education of short duration leads to the degree of graduate (gradue).

- German-speaking community:

Tertiary education in the paramedical and education fields leads to the degree of graduate (Graduierte - gradue).

- Flemish community:

The first round of basic university education leads to the receipt of the intermediate candidate title (candidaat). The second round leads to the degree of certificated (licentiaat). The third round is equivalent to a doctorate degree.

Financing – Scholarships

Students who have successfully completed school and whose parents do not possess the adequate financial means to permit their children to attend regular education, may receive financial and practical assistance from the public authorities. This assistance is granted based on the family income, the age of the student who is enrolled in the first year of study, and the student's performance, and it is available to all residents, regardless of their nationality. It consists of financial aid with scholarships and student loans, and it is granted by each community. {[1]}

Useful addresses

FRENCH COMMUNITY

(Ministry of education, research and formation, Secretary general)

Ministère de l'éducation, de la recherche et de la formation

Secrétariat général

Bd. Pacheco, 19 bte 0

B-1010 BRUXELLES

Tel.: (+32) 2 210.55.25

Fax: (+32) 2 210.55.38

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

(Ministry of education, research and formation)

Ministère de l'éducation, de la recherche et de la formation

Place Surllet de Chokier, 15-17

B-1000 BRUXELLES

Tel.: (+32) 2 221.89.38

Fax: (+32) 2 221.89.23

TERTIARY EDUCATION

(National French-speaking Agency ERASMUS)

Agence Nationale Francophone ERASMUS

Place du Parc, 20

B-7000 MONS

Tel.: (+32) 65 37.10.16

Fax: (+32) 65 37.32.07

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

[Network of national centres of information for the academic recognition of degrees]

Equivalence of higher education

Ministry of education and scientific research of the French Community]

NARIC (Réseaux des centres nationaux d'information sur la reconnaissance académique des diplômes)

Equivalence de l'enseignement supérieur

Ministère de l'éducation et de la recherche scientifique de la Communauté Française

Rue Royale 204, Quartier des Arcades / 6e étage

B-1010 Bruxelles

Tel.: (+32) 2 210.55.77

Fax: (+32) 2 210.55.17

GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY:

Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft

Abteilung Organisation des Unterrichtswesens

Agentur Eurydice

Gospertstraße 1-5

B-4700 Eupen

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft

Organisation des Unterrichtswesens

SOKRATES-Agentur

Gosperstraße 1-5

B-4700 Eupen

Tel.: (+32) 87 74.45.30

Fax: (+32) 87 55.64.75

TERTIARY EDUCATION

There is no national ERASMUS service for the German-speaking community of Belgium.

FLEMISH COMMUNITY:

Department Onderwijs

Secretariaat-generaal

Afdeling Beleidsgerichte Coördinatie

Rijksadministratief Centrum

Arcadengebouw
B-1010 Bruxelles
Tel.: (+32) 2 210 51.11
Fax: (+32) 2 210 53.72

Belgische Eurydice Eenheid 1
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Departement van het Onderwijs
Arcaden - bureau 3101
B-1010 Bruxelles

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Departement Onderwijs
Administratie Basisonderwijs
Koningsstraat 136
B-1000 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (+32) 2 211.45.22
Fax: (+32) 2 211.45.03

Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Departement Onderwijs
Administratie Secondaire Onderwijs
R.A.C. Arcadengebouw, 5de verdieping
B-1010 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (+32) 2 210.51.11
Fax: (+32) 2 210.53.72

Socrates-agentschap
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Departement Onderwijs
Afdeling Beleidsgerichte Coördinatie
Cel International Beleid
Rijksadministratief Centrum
Arcadengebouw
B-1010 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (+32) 2 211.51.75

Fax: (+32) 2 211.53.72

Vlaams Leonardo da Vinci Agentschap vzw
Bischoffsheimlaan 27 bus 3
B-1000 Bruxelles
de heer T. Clooten
Tel.: (+32) 2 219 65 00
Fax: (+32) 2 219 12 02
Email: clooten@VL-Leonardo.be

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Vlaams Erasmusagentschap
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
AHOWO/CIA
Koningsstraat 136
B-1000 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (+32) 2 211.43.43
Fax: (+32) 2 211.43.85

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

(Network of national centres of information for the academic recognition of degrees)

NARIC (Réseaux des centres nationaux d'information sur la reconnaissance académique des diplômes)
Ministerie van Onderwijs, Bestuur van het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek,
de heer Erwin Malfroy
Koningsstraat 136
B-1000 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (+32) 2 211.42.47
Fax: (+32) 2 211.42.52
Email: erwin.malfroy@smtpgate.depond.be

1.2 Working conditions

1.2.1 Ways to find employment

In order to find employment, a person can directly submit an application to enterprises or organisations. They may also answer work offers that are published in the Belgian press (daily or specialised), which constitute a good means of information for the sectors and businesses interested in hiring employees. However, bureaus of temporary employment,

hiring offices and occupational guidance offices, as well as the public services, all constitute useful intermediaries that can provide significant assistance in the search for employment.

The following ways to find employment are presented below:

- I. The European network of employment services (EURES)
 - II. Certain public employment agencies, such as: VDAB, FOREM, ORBEM/BGDA
 - III. Finding employment through communication with Belgian engineers associations on the Internet
- I. In order to find employment in Belgium, a person may consult public employment agencies, both in his/ her country of origin and in the country where he/ she wishes to work. All these agencies are connected through a network named EURES (EUROpean Employment Services) and they include a department with the same name, which specialises in international hiring. In these EURES departments there are one or more “euroconsultants”, who inform, advise, and assists on issues of finding employment for European citizens who move from one EU member-country to another. These euroconsultants have permanent connections with the EURES services of other member-countries. They also have continuous access to two databases: one which contains the available international job offers in all the member-countries of the European Union, as well as in Norway (1) and Island (2); and the other which gives a clear idea of the existing living and working conditions in the seventeen countries that are members of the network. Based on information from this latter database, one can form an idea about the prevailing trends in each regional job market. In various border regions, similar advice is provided by euroconsultants from public employment agencies, wageworkers’ or employees’ syndicates, and employers’ associations.

Public employment agencies

- II. In Belgium there are three regional and communal employment agencies:
 1. VDAB (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding) for Flanders;
 2. FOREM (Formation-emploi – Formation-employment) for Wallonie (including the German-speaking section);
 3. ORBEM/BGDA (Office régional bruxellois de l'emploi / Brusselse Gewestelijke Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling – Regional Brussels office of employment) for the Brussels area.These agencies have local offices and a computer-based information system for work offers.

Specific competencies

Professional formation is under the auspices of VDAB for Flanders and the Dutch speaking population of Brussels and under the auspices of FOREM for Wallonie, including the German-speaking section. The Institut Bruxellois Francophone pour la Formation

professionnelle (IBFFP) is responsible for issues of professional formation for the French-speaking population in the Brussels area.

The VDAB, the FOREM and the ORBEM/BGDA are also connected with a network of psychological centres, where those looking for employment can request advice for free. Also available is information about temporary employment (T-service) and about formation programmes for the long-term unemployed.

The VDAB provides formation for the seeking of employment (Jobclub) and support in the placement of specialised employees, whose work position is threatened.

The ORBEM/BGDA provides a guidance centre for the unemployed for whom it is very difficult to find employment, as well as an active employment research workshop (ARAE), which allows those seeking employment to access its database. This service also provides programmes for the composition of résumés and candidacy letters. Lastly, it offers preparation for job interviews with employers, with the assistance of videotaped simulations. There is also a “kindergarten” for the children of those looking for employment, in order to facilitate them in their job search.

The three public employment agencies can also provide information about state regulations and measures regarding employment issues. {[1]}

III. Finding employment through communication with Belgian engineers associations on the Internet

Another way to find employment that is available for engineers in Belgium is through sending a résumé to Belgian engineers associations. This process can be effected over the Internet, by visiting the websites of the corresponding professional associations that provide this possibility. The relevant websites are listed below. {[2]}

Les Jeudis.com

<http://www.lesjeudis.com/>

Website for finding employment in French-speaking companies, for computer and informatics engineers

Indutec

<http://www.indutec.be/emploi/emploifr.htm>

Finding employment for Belgian engineers

Keljob

<http://www.keljob.com/>

Website for finding employment in general

Stepstone

<http://www.stepstone.be/>

Website for finding employment in general

ORBEM

<http://www.ORBEM.be/>

Employment opportunities for unemployed engineers and employees for companies

Monster.be

<http://www.monster.be/>

Website for employment on the international scale

Useful addresses

BRUSSELS

(Regional Brussels Office of Employment)

Office Régional Bruxellois de l'Emploi (ORBEM)

/Brusselse Gewestelijke Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling (BGDA)

Bd Anspach/Anspachlaan 65 - B 1000 Bruxelles/Brussel

Tel. (+)(32)(2) 505 14 20 / Fax. (+)(32)(2) 505 14 22

(Brussels French-speaking Institute for Professional Formation)

Institut Bruxellois Francophone pour la Formation Professionnelle

Avenue Louise 166 - B 1050 Bruxelles/Brussel

Tel. (+)(32)(2) 626 78 11 / Fax. (+)(32)(2) 626 78 14

WALLONIE

(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment

Central Administration – Wallonie Community and Region)

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)

(Administration Centrale - Communauté et Région wallonnes)

Bd Tirou 104 - B 6000 Charleroi

Tel. (+)(32)(71) 20 61 11 / Fax. (+)(32)(71) 20 61 98

*(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment
German-speaking Community)*

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)
(Communauté germanophone)
Neustrasse 77 - B 4700 Eupen
Tel. (+)(32)(87) 74 21 80

(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment)

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)
Rue des Marcottes 1, (4e étage) - B 7000 Mons
Tel. (+)(32)(65) 31 12 87 / Fax. (+)(32)(65) 35 12 02

(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment)

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)
Rue Natalis 49 - B 4020 Liège
Tel. (+)(32)(41) 344 92 11 / Fax. (+)(32)(41) 341 51 56

(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment)

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)
Rue Molitor 8 - B 6700 Arlon
Tel. (+)(32)(63)22 05 31 / Fax. (+)(32)(63) 21 94 09

(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment)

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)
Aachenerstrasse 77 - B 4780 Sankt-Vith
Tel. (+)(32)(80) 28 00 60 / Fax. (+)(32)(80) 22 90 83

(Community & Regional Office of Professional Formation and Employment)

Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM)
Bd Tirou 104 - B 6000 Charleroi
Tel. (+)(32)(71) 20 61 11 / Fax. (+)(32)(71) 20 61 98

FLANDERS

Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB)
(Hoofdbestuur, Vlaams Gewest-Vlaamse Gemeenschap)
Keizerslaan 11 - B 1000 Brussel

Tel. (+)(32)(2) 506 15 11 / Fax. (+)(32)(2) 511 29 60

Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding
(VDAB/EURES)

Kasteelkaai 1 - B 8500 Kortrijk

Tel. (+)(32)(56) 23 22 33 / Fax. (+)(32)(56) 23 22 36

Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding
(VDAB/EURES)

Kongostr. 7 - B 9000 Gent

Tel. (+)(32)(9) 265 47 11 / Fax. (+)(32)(9) 233 04 16

Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding
(VDAB/EURES)

Somersstraat 22 - B 2018 Antwerpen

Tel. (+)(32)(3) 202 18 27 / Fax. (+)(32)(3) 202 18 76

Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding
(VDAB/EURES)

Stationsstraat 145 b2 - B 3620 Lanaken

Tel. (+)(32)(89) 71 82 41 / Fax. (+)(32)(89) 71 83 24

Other organisations

Syndicates

(Christian Syndicate Committee / Interregional Syndicate Council)

Comité Syndical Chrétien (CSC)/ Conseil Syndical Interr.(CSI)

Rue Saint-Pierre 52 - B 7700 Mouscron

Tel. (+)(32)(56) 33 03 03 / Fax (+)(32)(56) 34 76 12

(Christian Syndicate Committee /Interregional Syndicate Council)

Comité Syndical Chrétien (CSC)/ Conseil Syndical Interr.(CSI)

Place de l'Eglise 6 - B 4720 La Calamine

Tel. (+)(32)(78) 65 91 13 / Fax (+)(32)(78) 65 34 79

(General Federation of Employment of Belgium / European Confederation of Syndicates)

Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (FGTB)/ Confédération Européenne des Syndicats

Rue des Maux 26 - B 7500 Tournai

Tel. (+)(32)(69) 22 71 86 / Fax (+)(32)(69) 84 32 81

(General Federation of Employment of Belgium / European Confederation of Syndicates)

Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (FGTB)/ Confédération Européenne des Syndicats

Place St. Paul 9/11 - B 4000 Liege

Tel. (+)(32)(41) 221 95 83 / Fax (+)(32)(41) 223 11 44

Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond (ABVV)/ Interr. Vakbondsraden

Ieperstraat 1- B 8930 Mene

Tel. (+)(32)(56) 52 02 01 / Fax (+)(32)(56) 51 82 62

Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond (ABVV)/ Interr. Vakbondsraden

Kruindersweg 28 - B 3630 Maasmechelen

Tel. (+)(32)(89) 77 31 40 / Fax (+)(32)(89) 77 52 72

Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond (ACV)

Korte Begijnenstraat 22 - B 2300 Turnhout

Tel. (+)(32)(14) 40 31 11 / Fax (+)(32)(14) 40 31 31

Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond (ACV)/ Interr. Vakbondsraden

President Kennedypark 16D - B 8500 Kortrijk

Tel. (+)(32)(56) 23 55 25 / Fax (+)(32)(56) 23 55 23

Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond (ACV)/ Interr. Vakbondsraden

Mgr. Broekxplein 6 - B 3500 Hasselt

Tel. (+)(32)(11) 29 09 42 / Fax (+)(32)(11) 29 09 37

IVR Maas-Rijn

Neustrasse 52 - B 4700 Eupen

Tel. (+)(32)(87) 55 78 48 / Fax (+)(32)(87) 55 71 94

Employers' associations

NCMV/Stichting werkgevers Euregio
 Lange Steenstraat 10 - B 8500 Kortrijk
 Tel. (+)(32)(56) 22 40 64 / Fax (+)(32)(56) 21 90 08

1.2.2 Technological development indexes – Unemployment

A look at some recent indexes for Belgium shows a country that possesses many advantages and prospects, but has not as yet taken advantage of its potential to the fullest degree. Let us present some indicative and significant numbers. In Belgium, total expenditures on research and development are slightly lower than the average in the European Union. Specifically, they are 1.8% for Belgium and 1.9% for the European Union. Research activities, which are implemented in industry and in businesses, are in percentage approximately equal to those recorded for the European Union, i.e. 1.3% for Belgium and 1.2% for the European Union. So Belgium has a lower percentage than Sweden, Finland, Germany and France, but better than the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, Belgium is a country of the future, since 3.5% of employment takes place in high technology, telecommunications, and research enterprises. This percentage is higher than the Netherlands and Germany. {[2]}

Information about unemployment in Belgium can be found at the following address:

L'Office National de l'Emploi (ONEM) [*The National Office of Employment*]
 7, boulevard de l'Empereur
 B- 1000 BRUXELLES
 Tel: 32-(0)2-515 47 14

1.2.2. Unemployment benefits

Entitled to unemployment benefits are the people belonging to the following categories: {[7]}

AGE	NUMBER OF WORK DAYS	IN THE PERIOD PRECEDING THE APPLICATION – REGISTRATION
<18 YEARS OLD	75	10 MONTHS
FROM 18 TO 26 YEARS OLD	150	10 MONTHS
FROM 26 TO 36 YEARS OLD	300	18 MONTHS
FROM 36 TO 50 YEARS OLD	450	27 MONTHS
>50 YEARS OLD	600	36 MONTHS

1.2.3 Representation of engineers

Engineers in Belgium are organised in associations, mostly based on the University from which they received their degree. These associations are presented below, along with the corresponding websites, through which one can be informed about the activities developed by each association. { [2] }

- *Royal Association of Engineers, graduates from the free University of Brussels*
Association Royale des Ingénieurs sortis de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles (A.Ir.Br.)
<http://www.ulb.ac.be/assoc/airbr>
- *Association of Engineers, graduates from the University of Liège*
Association des Ingénieurs sortis de l'Université de Liège (A.I.Lg.)
<http://www.ulq.ac.be/ailq/>
- *Association of Engineers from the Polytechnic School of Mons*
Association des Ingénieurs de la Faculté Polytechnique de Mons (A.I.Ms)
<http://www.aims.fpms.ac.be/>
- *Association of Electrical Engineers, graduates from the Electrotechnical Institute of Montefiore*
Association des Ingénieurs Electriciens sortis de l'Institut Electrotechnique Montefiore (A.I.M.)
<http://www.conf-aim.skynet.be/>
- *Royal Association of Engineers of the School of Application for the Artillery and the Corps of Engineers*
Association Royale des Ingénieurs issus de l'Ecole d'Application de l'Artillerie et du Génie (A.I.A.)
<http://www.rma.ac.be/>
- *Royal Association of Engineers, graduates of the School of Agronomical Sciences of Gembloux*
Association Royale des Ingénieurs issus de la Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques de

Gembloux (A.I.Gx)

<http://www.aiqx.be/>

- *Association of engineers from the School for Biological Engineers, Agronomists, and Environmental Engineers of Louvain*

Association des Ingénieurs de la Faculté d'ingénierie biologique, agronomique et environnementale de Louvain (A.I.A.Lv.)

<http://www.agro.ucl.ac.be/>

- *Association of Civil Engineers, graduates of the Catholic University of Louvain*

Association des Ingénieurs Civils sorties de l'Université Catholique de Louvain (AILv)

<http://www.aiv.ucl.ac.be/>

- *Royal Union of Civil Engineers, graduates of the Catholic University of Louvain*

Union Royale des Ingénieurs Civils sorties de l'Université Catholique de Louvain (UILLv)

<http://www.aiv.ucl.ac.be/>

- *State Association of Engineers*

- *Federal Association of Belgian Engineers (FABI)*

Fédération des Associations Belges des Ingénieurs (FABI)

<http://www.fabi.be>

Other useful addresses

- *Royal Belgian Society of Industry Engineers*

Société Royale Belge des Ingénieurs Industriels (SRBII)

<http://www.srbii.be/>

- *Committee for the Liaison of European Unions of University Engineers*

Comité de Liaison des Associations d'Ingénieurs Universitaires de l'Union Européenne (CLAIU)

<http://www.claiu.org/>

-

Koninklijke Vlaamse Ingenieursvereniging (K VIV)

<http://www.kviv.be/>

- *Federation of Belgian Enterprises*
Fédération des Entreprises Belges (FEB)

<http://www.feb.be/>

- *Engineers Without Frontiers*
Ingénieurs Sans Frontières (ISF)

<http://www.isf-iai.be/>

- *Wallonie Union of Enterprises*
Union Wallonne des Entreprises (UWE)

<http://www.uwe.be/>

- *Technique and Management*
Technique et Management

<http://www.technique-et-management.be/>

- *Federation of Pensioners and Individuals who have taken early retirement*
La Fédération des Pré-retraités et retraités (FPR-FBG)

<http://www.fpr-fbg.be/>

<http://www.ailv.ucl.ac.be/>

1.3. Recognition of degrees

1.3.1 Engineers Specialities

The specialities of engineers in Belgium are the following: { [2] }

- Civil Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil architecte**
- Chemical Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil chimiste**
- Civil Engineer of Constructions – **L'ingénieur civil des constructions**
- Electrical Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil électricien**
- Engineer of Electromechanical Installations – **L'ingénieur civil électromécanicien**
- Geological Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil géologue**
- Programmer Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil informaticien**
- Informatics Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil en informatique et gestion**
- Applied Mathematics Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil en mathématiques appliquées**

- Mechanical Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil mécanicien**
- Metallurgist Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil métallurgiste**
- Mineralogist Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil des mines**
- Natural Processes Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil physicien**
- Engineer of the science of materials – **L'ingénieur civil en science des matériaux**
- Army Engineer – **L'ingénieur civil polytechnicien**
- Bio-engineer – **Les bio-ingénieurs**

1.3.2 Recognition of degrees – engineers

The profession of engineer is not subject to any particular rules in Belgium. Consequently, a person can practice this profession without requiring a particular degree. So there is no reason to take action in order to get a foreign engineer's degree recognised in Belgium. {[1]}

Useful addresses

Information centre: (directive 89/48/EEC):

Mme Chantal Kaufmann,

Equivalences de l'enseignement supérieur,

Ministère de l'éducation & de la recherche scientifique de la

Communauté française,

Rue Royale 204, Quartier des Arcades,

B - 1010 Bruxelles

Tel: +32.2.210.55.77

NARIC

M. Erwin Malfroy,

Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap

Departement Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek,

Koningsstraat 136,

B - 1000 Bruxelles

Tel: +32.2.211.42.47

Fax: +32.2.211.42.52

1.3.3 Recognition of degrees – architects

In order to get a foreign degree in architecture recognised, an application must be submitted to the Ministry of the Middle Classes – Ministère des Classes Moyennes. Professional experience of at least 2 years, which can be proven to have taken place, is required.

Required documents:

Copy of identification card, copy of degree in architecture, proof of professional certification, proof stating that there is no bankruptcy, and letters of recommendation. If a person wishes to have the right to provide services in Belgium, they need only present their certificate of legal practice of the profession of architect in their member-country of origin; a certificate from the authorities of that country stating that the applicant's qualifications fulfil the requirements of Directive 85/384/EEC; information about two years of professional experience; and a statement in advance that the services to be rendered will be relevant to some specific project being implemented in Belgium. The above documents may also require translation, the cost of which is the responsibility on the applicant, along with the fees of the application. {[1]}

Communication points

A. WAUTHIER,
Ministère des Classes Moyennes et de l'Agriculture,
WTC-Tour III,
Boulevard S. Bolivar 30, 1000 Bruxelles
(Tel. 32 2 208 32 11, Fax 32 2 208 52 90)

Ordre des Architectes, Conseil National
Rue de Livourne 160/2,
1050 Brussels

1.4 Labour relations

1.4.1 Engineers compensation – employees' rights – benefits

Engineers compensation

From the beginning of 2003, the compensation of civil engineers, agronomist engineers, chemical engineers, and bio-engineers, who enter the profession in the private sector, is determined at a monthly compensation amount of **2470 €**, gross. The first minimum wage

refers to the beginning of an engineer's career. However, the beginning of said career does not always correspond to the time when a degree is acquired.

The possession of a doctorate degree in applied science and in the sciences of agronomists, or of an MBA or any other degree of the third cycle of higher education may justify a raise of the first wage. This is usually awarded in the form of fictitious years of previous service, or in the form of a benefit awarded on a monthly basis. This raise is different each time and it depends on the nature of the education of the doctor and/ or the interest that the doctor's speciality holds for the employer.

Development of compensation

In regards to the development of the wages of an engineer, it is usual that following a ten-year career, a good engineer can have an income consisting of the sum of the salaries of twelve months, benefits, the thirteenth salary, as well as all kinds of bonuses and supports he/ she may have, which all together can amount to approximately double his/ her income at the beginning of his/ her career. The above is valid if we leave out the influence of inflation and the limiting provisions of the legislation regarding the amount of salaries. {[2]}

Employees' rights – benefits

It is usual to receive the thirteenth salary. Engineers employed in companies contracted with the National Committee for Employees (or other similar Committees or Organisations) will, in most cases, receive an extra bonus at the end of each year, depending on the provisions of the said Committee.

Apart from the thirteenth salary, it is also customary to provide a benefit, the amount of which depends on the professional abilities and "virtues" of the employee or on the effectiveness of his/ her work.

When an employer participates actively in their employees' retirement plan, in the event that an employee leaves the said employer, the benefits or reserves from the employer's work protection scheme must be returned in full to the employee. This is effected in accordance with the originally anticipated scheme (either group insurance or pension expenses) (see paragraph 1.6 Engineers' Pension).

The increasingly more rapid development of technology and science constitutes an important factor that maintains competition between companies. Engineers need to remain aware of developments and to possess the means and the necessary time to receive further training in issues of technological innovation. This is so that they may effectively deal with the challenge of the new technologies, but also in order for them to gain the non-technical training that is nevertheless associated with the furthering of their career. For this purpose, within the framework of their professional activities, engineers are provided with the opportunity to devote a period of at least one week every year to the maintenance and enhancement of their qualifications. {[2]}

1.4.2 Methods of payment of compensation – Types of contracts – Trial clause

Methods of payment of compensation {[7]}

Compensations may be paid in the following ways:

Compensation based on percentages

This method is based on percentages of the cost of the project. The cost of the project is the actual, total expenses of the customer for the design and direction of the project.

This expenditure must also include the value of the work force, the new materials, and the tools; and the value, in new condition, of the second-hand tools and materials.

Compensation based on the “total work” time

In this case, the compensation is calculated based on the following formula:

$$P = S(N*T)$$

Where:

T is the hourly wage for a given employee

N is the number of working hours

Instead of the hourly wage, the contract may provide for daily, biweekly, or monthly wages.

This method is implemented particularly in missions where the content or the extent of the project cannot be fully determined at the time when the contract is signed, or in the execution of the first phase of the project, e.g. in the basic study. Furthermore, it is implemented in the elaboration of research and particular studies.

Determination of “total work time”

This includes (apart from the necessary time required for the project itself) the necessary time for preparatory works, travelling and return transfers between the office of the consultant-Engineer and the work site. Furthermore, also included is the time required for the composition of all the reports and documents relevant to the project.

The normal duration of the work is determined in the contract. It is expressed in hours per day, per week, per month or per year, depending on the circumstances.

For additional work, the additional compensation must constitute the object of a particular agreement.

Revision of the hourly wage

The contract may include a clause for the revision of hourly wages. This revision is accomplished based on the following formula:

$$T_M = T_0 (K_1 * S_M / S_0 + K_2)$$

where:

T_M = Revised amount for the month when the services were rendered

T_0 = Amount determined by the contract

S_M = General index of the contractual wages for the month that is determined in the contract

$$K_1 + K_2 = 1$$

K_1 and K_2 are determined by the contract, in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Method of the “additional time”

This method determines, depending on the “total work time”, the compensation owed for the interventions of the Consultant-Engineer.

The formula used for the calculation of the compensation presents its various elements, such as general expenses and profit, which constitute the additional elements of the immediate costs, i.e. the expenses for wages.

The formula is:

$$P = S(N \cdot C) + F + B$$

where:

N is the number of the work hours

C is the hourly cost for the employee or the category that the employee belongs to

P is the hourly direct cost. It is determined by the division of the annual direct cost by the annual direct number of work hours.

The direct cost of an employee includes:

- the gross annual salary, where also included are the vacation benefit, the bonuses, and the extraordinary returns

- the legal contributions of the Consultant-Engineer as an employer, such as:

- the employer's share in social security
- social contributions
- additional levies for family benefits
- the insurance against work accidents
- the individual private life insurance
- the employers' contribution for the creation of non-legal alimony.

F represents the general expenses.

B represents the gross income that covers the payment of invested capital, the ability of investment programmes for development.

The general expenses (F) and the profit (B) are calculated as a percentage of the direct profit, but they may also be calculated arbitrarily.

Types of contracts { [7] }

The law provides for:

- the definite time contract
- the explicitly determined project contract
- the indefinite time contract

Trial clause {[7]}

The trial clause is optional. It must be in writing and last no less than one month or more than three months, if the compensation is up to 300,000BF per year, or not more than six months if the compensation is over 300,000BF per year. If the provision for the duration of the clause is omitted, then it is assumed to be for one month.

1.4.3 Work – Compensations of new engineers

The public and community enterprises are required to accept trainees at a rate of 2% of their potential, not including trainees already members of the said potential.

Training aims to secure a practical education for the trainee, which will constitute the transition from studying to work. The activities exercised during training must correspond to the studies and the speciality of the trainee. The duration of training is 6 months. It can be extended only for an additional 6 months. The trainee's compensation is equal to 90% of the first salary of an employee of the same speciality. {[7]}

1.5 Insurance

Generally, the Belgian social security system consists of two regimes: one for salaried employees and one for independent professionals. The regime for salaried employees includes the following insurance branches: illness & maternity, disability, old age, insurance for work accidents and professional illness, death compensation and survivor pensions, unemployment insurance and family benefits. The mandatory regime for independent professionals includes illness insurance, disability insurance, old age and survivor insurance, and family benefits.

Registration for social security

In regards to salaried employees, the employer is responsible for taking the necessary actions in order to register the salaried employee with the social security services. The physical presence of the person is not required at any contiguous organisation. The sole exception to this rule is the event of insurance for illness-disability. In this case, the insured person must register at the organisation of his/ her choice or at the regional office of the Auxiliary fund for illness-disability insurance – Caisse auxiliaire d'assurance maladie-invalidité (CAAMI). The insured person must also contribute a social security levy, the amount of which is equal to a specified percentage of the insured person's salary. The employer deducts this levy from the employee's salary and deposits it at the National Social Security Office – Office national de sécurité sociale (ONSS).

An independent (non-salaried) professional must be registered at a social security organisation for independent professionals, at the latest within 90 days from the commencement of his/ her professional activity in Belgium. At that time, a social security levy

is paid, the amount of which is equal to a specified percentage of the gross income accrued from the professional activity. The interested party must also enrol at an auxiliary fund of his/her choice. {[1]}

Useful addresses

Information for salaried employees:

Ministry of Social Affairs, Public Health and the Environment (International Relations)

Ministère des Affaires Sociales, de la Santé Publique et de l'Environnement

(Relations internationales)

3c, rue de la Vierge Noire

B-1000 BRUXELLES

Tel: 32-(0)2-509 82 26

Information for independent professionals:

Ministry of the Middle Classes and Agriculture (Social Statute of the Independents)

Ministère des Classes Moyennes et de l'Agriculture (Statut social des Indépendants)

7, rue J Stevens

B-1000 BRUXELLES

Tel: 32-(0)2-504 62 00

Information about medical-pharmaceutical care can be found at the following address:

National Institute of illness-disability insurance

L'Institut national d'assurance maladie-invalidité (INAMI)

211 avenue de Tervueren

B-1150 BRUXELLES

Tel: 32-(0)2-739 71 11

1.6 Engineers' pension

It is usual for engineers, agronomists, chemical engineers, and bio-engineers to be offered the option of a pension scheme where the employer also contributes actively. When an employee leaves their employer, the benefits or reserves from the employer's work protection scheme must be returned in full to the employee and this is effected in accordance with the originally anticipated scheme (either group insurance or pension expenses).

This pension can be deducted by the employer, so that it may be rendered at the completion of the years required for the retirement of an engineer; or it may be rendered in the form of a benefit to the engineer, so that they themselves may complete their own pension.

For the cases of syndicates or unions, which do not have similar decrees and benefits for pensions, the basic compensations (i.e. the initial salary values) must be increased in such a way as to permit working engineers to save up the supplement to their future pension on their own.

The government has approved the royal decrees that increase the upper limit for income from professional activities after the retirement age, in order to raise it to the amount of 8.676,27 € (minimum) by early 2002. This equals a raise of approximately 50% for the pensioners who justify their pensions having worked as independent professionals, salaried employees, or public servants. For pensioners who have not yet completed the legally required number of pensionable years, the upper limit of income was raised by 2%. {[2]}

1.7 Taxation in Belgium

Income tax

The permanent residents of Belgium are required to pay income tax to this country on all their incomes, regardless of their country of origin. However, Belgium has bilateral tax accords with each one of the other member-countries of the EU, in order to avoid instances of double taxation on the same income.

Consequently, if income is accrued in another member-country, then first of all one is obliged to pay taxes on that income only in that member-country. There exist four categories of taxable incomes: income from real estate assets (real estate); income from capital and personal assets (such as, e.g., shares and interest); income from professional activities; and income from various sources. Initially, the amount of the tax to be paid is calculated based on the sum total of the net profits of each category, deducting a priori certain expenses that are tax-deductible. However, in practice, certain kinds of income constitute the object of separate taxation, unless it is more beneficial for them to be added to the income total. The taxable income is calculated for the tax year (which corresponds to the calendar year) and overall, progressive tax coefficients are applied. Beyond the income tax, one is also required to pay the solidarity levy. In the calculation of the tax owed, one may receive certain tax breaks and deductions, depending on the personal circumstances of the taxpayer. One can also benefit from certain tax deductions related to expenses made during the tax year.

Certain categories of income from capital and personal assets, such as shares and interest, may constitute the object of a deduction at the source (as an advance). For employees, the employer will deduct an amount from the salary and pay it to the taxation authority on behalf

of the employee, as an advance on the income tax owed by said employee. In order to avoid the possibility of a significant surcharge of the tax, the self-employed, the directors of enterprises, and the independent professionals are required to pay in advance an amount against the estimated income tax for the entire year.

Each taxpayer is required to file a tax return after the end of the tax year, and usually until June 30th of the following year. If the tax return has not been received, the taxpayer must request the documents before June 1st of the same year. Subsequently, the revenue authorities send a statement to the taxpayers, which bears the amount of the owed tax. Normally, payment must be effected within a period of two months.

Personal estate, inheritance, and grant tax

In Belgium, there is no tax on personal estate. The inheritance tax is applied to the current value of the inherited goods, while the taxation coefficient varies depending on the value of the inherited estate, as well as the degree of relation between the heir and the devisor. The grant tax is paid for grants of personal estate, for which there exists a relevant legal document, and for grants of real estate located in Belgium.

Other taxes

It is possible that one may be required to pay an extra income tax to their Municipality or Community of residence. If someone owns real estate, then they must pay real estate tax, which is calculated based on the estimated leasing value. The applied taxation coefficient depends on the area where the real estate is located. In the event of ownership occupancy, the said real estate tax may be partially deducted from the owed income tax. {[1]}

Useful addresses

Ministère des Finances

Administration centrale des Contributions directes

Cite Administrative de l'Etat

Tour des Finances - Boite 32

Boulevard du Jardin Botanique 50

1010 BRUXELLES

Tel.: (+32) 2 210 2211

Fax: (+32) 2 210 4118

Information office: Tel.: (+32) 2 210 2453

Administration centrale de la T.V.A., de l'Enregistrement et des Domaines

Cite Administrative de l'Etat

Tour des Finances - Boite 39

Boulevard du Jardin Botanique 50
1010 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (+32) 2 210 2611
Fax: (+32) 2 210 2899
Information office: Tel.: (+32) 2 210 2852

1.8 Frontier workers

The treatment of frontier workers in regards to taxation is rather complicated.

If a person is not a resident of Belgium, but is employed in this country, Belgium usually has the right to tax their income from this occupation (although this depends on the time period that the person remains in Belgium during the tax year in question). On the contrary, the permanent residents of Germany, France, or the Netherlands, who are frontier workers, will continue being taxed in their country of residence, as is determined in the accord regarding double taxation that has been signed between Belgium and each one of these three member-countries of the EU.

If an employee is a non-permanent resident of Belgium and isn't a frontier worker, then, at the calculation of the tax they owe to Belgium, they can benefit from some or all of the tax breaks available to the residents. This is true provided that they have maintained a permanent residence in Belgium during the entire taxation period, or that they have collected in Belgium at least 75% of the income that results from their professional activity. The tax is deducted at the source, by the employer.

In the event that someone is self-employed or practices an independent profession in Belgium (but does not reside in the country), then Belgium may have the right to tax the income that accrues from this activity, if there exists permanent settlement or a stable base in the country. Furthermore, one can benefit, under certain conditions (see above), of some or all the tax breaks available to the permanent residents of Belgium.

The tax due from the non-permanent residents is imposed in accordance with the same coefficients that are valid for permanent residents, but the municipal surcharge (which is equal to a variable percentage of the main tax) is replaced by a national surcharge, which amounts to 6% of the main tax. {[1]}

Useful addresses

For more information regarding the taxation system that is applied to frontier workers in Belgium

Ministère des Finances
Administration centrale des Contributions directes
Cite Administrative de l'Etat
Tour des Finances - Boite 32
Boulevard du Jardin Botanique 50
1010 BRUXELLES

Ministerie van Financien
Hoofdbestuur der directe belastingen
Rijksadministratief Centrum
Financietoren - bus 32
Kruidtuinlaan 50
1010 BRUSSEL
Tel.: (+32) 2 210.22.11
Fax: (+32) 2 210.41.18
Information service: Tel: (+32) 2 210.24.53

For more information regarding the social security system that is applied to frontier workers in Belgium

Ministère des Affaires sociales
Service des Relations internationales
Rue de la Vierge Noire 3 c
1000 BRUXELLES
Tel.: +32 2 509 84 42
Fax: +32 2 509 85 34

1.9 Collective tables of useful addresses

	FRENCH COMMUNITY	GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY	FLEMISH COMMUNITY
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	Ministère de l'éducation, de la recherche et de la formation Secretariat general Bd. Pacheco, 19 bte 0 B-1010 BRUXELLES Tel.: (+32 2 210.55.25 Telecopieur: (+32) 2 210.55.38	Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Abteilung Organisation des Unterrichtswesens Agentur Eurydice Gospertstraße 1-5 B-4700 Eupen	Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap Departement van het Onderwijs Arcaden - bureau 3101 B-1010 Bruxelles

	BRUSSELS	WALLONIE	FLEMISH COMMUNITY
PUBLIC SERVICES FOR EMPLOYMENT	Office Régional Bruxellois de l'Emploi (ORBEM) /Brusselse Gewestelijke Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling (BGDA) Bd Anspach/Anspachlaan 65 - B 1000 Bruxelles/Brussel Tel. (+)(32)(2) 505 14 20 Fax (+)(32)(2) 505 14 22	Office Communautaire et Regional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (FOREM) (Administration Centrale - Communauté et Région wallonnes) Bd Tirou 104 - B 6000 Charleroi Tel. (+)(32)(71) 20 61 11 Fax (+)(32)(71) 20 61 98	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB) (Hoofdbestuur, Vlaams Gewest-Vlaamse Gemeenschap) Keizerslaan 11 - B 1000 Brussel Tel. (+)(32)(2) 506 15 11 Fax (+)(32)(2) 511 29 60

<p>INFORMATION ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT</p>	<p>L'Office National de l'Emploi (ONEM) 7 boulevard de l'Empereur B-1000 BRUXELLES Tel: 32-(0)2-515 47 14</p>
<p>INFORMATION ABOUT THE RECOGNITION OF DEGREES (FOR ARCHITECTS)</p>	<p>A. WAUTHIER, Ministère des Classes Moyennes et de l'Agriculture, WTC-Tour III, Boulevard S. Bolivar 30, 1000 Bruxelles (tel.32 2 208 32 11, fax. 32 2 208 52 90)</p>
<p>INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSURANCE OF SALARIED ENGINEERS</p>	<p>Ministère des Affaires Sociales, de la Santé Publique et de l'Environnement (Relations internationales) 3c, rue de la Vierge Noire B-1000 BRUXELLES Tel: 32-(0)2-509 82 26</p>
<p>INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSURANCE OF INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS</p>	<p>Ministère des Classes Moyennes et de l'Agriculture (Statut social des Indépendants) 7, rue J Stevens B-1000 BRUXELLES Tel: 32-(0)2-504 62 00</p>
<p>INFORMATION ABOUT MEDICAL-PHARMACEUTICAL CARE</p>	<p>L'Institut national d'assurance maladie-invalidité (INAMI) 211 avenue de Tervueren B-1150 BRUXELLES Tel: 32-(0)2-739 71 11</p>
<p>INFORMATION ABOUT TAXATION – MINISTRY OF FINANCE</p>	<p>Ministère des Finances Administration centrale des Contributions directes Cite Administrative de l' Etat Tour des Finances - Boite 32 Boulevard du Jardin Botanique 50 1010 BRUXELLES Tel: (+32) 2 210 2211 Fax: (+32) 2 210 4118 Information responsible: Tel: (+32) 2 210 2453</p>

1.10 Bibliography and websites

All the information that was presented here came from research conducted on the Internet and from the use of relevant literature. At the end of each paragraph, written inside brackets, is the number that corresponds to the specific website or literature from where the information was drawn. Hence, in the event that someone wishes to look at this information in more detail, they may recur to these sources. The literature and websites referenced are the following:

[1]: <http://citizens.eu.int>

[2]: <http://www.eurocadres.org>

[3]: <http://europa.eu.int>

[4]: <http://www.fabi.be>

[5]: [http:// www.goinglobal.com](http://www.goinglobal.com)

[5]: <http://www.worldstates.ws>

[6]: Mousouliotis D., Touliatos D., Xatzipanos P., Chrisolouri F.

“Recording and investigation of the profession of engineer in the field of construction in the EEC member-countries”, Technical Chamber of Greece, EEC Committee.

Other useful websites are the following:

<http://belgium.fgov.be>

<http://www.expatica.com>

<http://www.expatriates.com>

<http://www.stepstone.be/>

<http://www.monster.be/>

<http://www.ulb.ac.be/assoc/airbr>

<http://www.feb.be/>

<http://www.isf-iai.be/>