



2023 • 2024

ULB

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International researcher's

# GUIDE

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GET STARTED IN BELGIUM

## INTRODUCTION

This guide, for international researchers coming to Belgium, aims to help you settle in Belgium and guide you in your administrative procedures.

However, it cannot cover all situations and particular requests. It is therefore not exhaustive and does not detail every procedure that you must carry out.

Regarding visas and residence permits, please refer to the website of the Immigration Office **Immigration Office | IBZ** and contact the Belgian Embassy in your country.

For any other questions, please contact us at [welcome@ulb.be](mailto:welcome@ulb.be)



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## BELGIUM AND BRUXELLES

Belgium is a federal state consisting of three regions: Brussels (the bilingual capital where French and Dutch are spoken), Flanders to the north and Wallonia to the south. The official languages are French, Dutch, and German.

Although it is a small country, Belgium has its fair share of celebrities. They include the famous composers and singers Jacques Brel and Stromae; the actors Benoît Poelvoorde and Matthias Schoenaerts; the writers Amélie Nothomb and Maurice Maeterlinck (Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911); the artists and cartoonists Georges Rémi (Hergé, Father of Tintin), Franquin (Gaston Lagaffe), Peyo (the Smurfs), Morris (Lucky Luke); the film directors Chantal Akerman, Jaco Van Dormael, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne; the painter René Magritte; the architect Victor Horta; and the athletes Eddy Merckx (cyclist), Eden Hazard (football) and Nafissatou Thiam (athletics).

Belgium would not be Belgium without its mouth-watering chocolates, its wide range of local beers and mussels served with French fries! Belgium has many historical, artistic, gastronomic, architectural and natural wonders which we cannot wait for you to discover during your stay here.



### Bruxelles, ma belle

Brussels is among the world's most diverse capitals, home to the headquarters of the European Union, NATO, and countless international companies and organisations. While the main working languages are French and Dutch, the fact that there is an incredible number of different nationalities present in the city makes it a modern-day Tower of Babel.

Brussels is a very lively city that boasts many cultural activities: you can enjoy concerts, theatres, cinemas, exhibitions and shows of all kinds, as well as beautiful museums and monuments, such as the world-famous Grand Place or the many Art Nouveau buildings.

Brussels is also one of Europe's greenest cities with many parks

and forests in and around it. Its manageable size and its cultural and economic energy create an outstanding living environment.

In addition, with the Thalys train you are only an hour and a half from Paris. Which brings us to yet another benefit of being in Brussels: it is also just a short hop away from London and Amsterdam.

### For more information about Brussels

You can visit the official **Brussels Tourist Office website**.



## ULB, A FREE-THINKING UNIVERSITY!

ULB was founded in 1834, just four years after Belgium's independence. At the very beginning, ULB only had 96 students. Today there are over 38,000, 32% coming from abroad. With twelve faculties, two schools and one institute, ULB covers all disciplines and all academic levels.

Initially based solely in Brussels, ULB has extended its activities to Wallonia and now has a network of research centres, hospitals and libraries, all with cutting-edge equipment.

The "L" in ULB's name stands for libre, French for "free". Libre refers to an attitude of free thinking, as adopted by free individuals, who reject all dogma and totalitarian ideas. It signifies our moral commitment to always keeping our freedom of conscience. This means that through their teachings, our University's academic staff will develop your critical thinking skills and train you to engage in free thinking.

Today, ULB is a world-renowned French-speaking University and has many courses and degrees in English.

## Campuses

The Université libre de Bruxelles has several campuses. Depending on your field of study, you will be either in Brussels (Solbosch, La Plaine, Flagey, Usquare or Erasme campus) or outside Brussels on the Charleroi or Gosselies campus.

## For more information

### Maps and access

## Did you know?

Our University has a long-standing tradition of excellence, as evidenced by the many accolades given in recognition of its researchers, professors and alumni: four Nobel Prizes in science (including François Englert in 2013), two Nobel Peace Prizes (including Denis Mukwege in 2018), a Fields Medal, three Wolf Prizes, two Abel Prizes and many more.

## BEFORE LEAVING YOUR COUNTRY

### A. Check whether you need a visa:

Profilee	Long stay	Short stay
EEA	/	/
Non-EEA	YES	YES but there are some exceptions : <b>List of third countries whose nationals are exempted from holding a visa</b>

### B. Prepare your documents.

B. The documents required will depend on your status and nationality but will generally include: passport, diplomas, birth/marriage certificates, medical certificate, health insurance – **see Healthcare and insurance**, extract from the criminal record and proof of funding.

If your diplomas and certificates are in any language other than French, Dutch or English, please obtain certified and legalised translations.

If you are coming to Belgium with family members and if your birth and marriage certificates are in any

language other than French, Dutch or English, please obtain **legalised translations of birth and marriage certificates**.

You'll find all the information you need about visas on the **Immigration Office page**.

### C. Book temporary or permanent accommodation – see **Accommodation**.

## VISAS FOR NON-EU NATIONALS

### Long stay (more than 90 days)

Profile	Administrative formalities to be completed with ULB before applying for a visa	Documents to be enclosed with your visa application
PhD candidate doing a thesis solely at ULB or under joint supervision at ULB.	Apply for admission to the <b>ULB PhD programme</b> <b>Complete the joint supervision agreement</b> , if applicable	PhD acceptance letter issued by the ULB Registration Department. If you are in receipt of a scholarship from ULB, the Belgian state, a Belgian government body, a Belgian research institution or an international organisation, documents confirming your scholarship and the visa fee waiver.
Visiting PhD candidate, enrolled at another university outside Belgium	Apply for registration as a visiting researcher: <b>the International Certificate in Doctoral Research Training</b>	Letter of admission to the International Certificate in Doctoral Research Training issued by the PhD office. Proof of funding from your home country.
Researcher with a scholarship, postdoc	Contactez le Département des ressources humaines de l'ULB <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit
Visiting professor/guest	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit
« PATGS (administrative, technical, managerial and specialised staff) »	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit
Academic and scientific staff	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit

### Short stay (less than 90 days)

Profile	Administrative formalities to be completed with ULB before applying for a visa	Documents to be enclosed with your visa application
Visiting PhD candidate, enrolled at another university outside Belgium	Apply for registration as a visiting researcher <b>the International Certificate in Doctoral Research Training</b>	Short stay visa (less than 90 days) <b>Short Stay Visa   IBZ</b>
Researcher with a scholarship, postdoc	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit
Visiting professor/guest	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit
« PATGS (administrative, technical, managerial and specialised staff) »	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit
Academic and scientific staff	Contact the ULB Human Resources Department <b>permisunique@ulb.be</b>	Single permit

## Long-stay visa – financial resources

In order to be eligible for a long stay visa, you need to prove that you have sufficient regular financial resources to cover accommodation and living expenses during your stay in Belgium. The minimum financial resources required will depend on the type of visa you are applying for. Information about financial resources can be found here:

**Sufficient means of subsistence | IBZ**

If you are a ULB doctoral student, you have access to the ULB blocked account service:

**«Blocked account» information for visa application or residence permit renewal - ULB**

## Long-stay visa – Health insurance

Non-EU researchers must also be covered by health insurance valid in Belgium. To obtain your visa, you will be asked to provide proof of health insurance covering at least the first three months of your stay in Belgium. This proof may be a private Schengen-type insurance policy (**Globe Partner** or **Expat&Co**) or proof of future coverage with a mutual insurance company in Belgium. For the latter, which costs around €12 per month, you can contact the International Welcome Desk (**welcome@ulb.be**).

## Visa fee

Applicants for a long-stay visa (Visa D) generally need to pay a visa processing fee. Information about the administrative fee and how it should be paid can be found here: **Fee | IBZ**

## Tracking the status of your visa application

You can check the status of your visa application on the Immigration Office website:

**Follow up a visa application | IBZ**

We strongly advise you to submit your visa application as early as possible.

## Family reunion visa

Information about family reunion visas can be found on the website of your Belgian consulate or on the website of the Immigration Office: **Family reunification | IBZ**

Family members should apply for their visas at the same time as the person joining ULB. If they do not do so, you risk being separated from your family for several months. In the event of a problem, please contact the International Welcome Desk immediately. As proof of accommodation is required for family reunion visa applications, the International Welcome Desk can issue a document confirming that the university will assist you with finding accommodation as soon

as the visa has been issued. For more detailed information about the conditions for obtaining your visa, please check the immigration website: **Visa | IBZ**

The embassy will ask you for proof of health insurance covering at least the first three months of your stay in Belgium. See section n°10 (health care).

## Exception

It is possible for non-EEA (European Economic Area) doctoral students, researchers and non-EEA employees (and their families) who do not require a short-stay visa to enter

Belgium (e.g. non-EEA citizens who have a valid residence permit for another Schengen country, citizens of Japan, Brazil and the USA) not to apply for a long-stay visa, and to register directly with the municipality (known as the “commune” in French) in Belgium on arrival (providing all the documents they would have needed to apply for a long-stay visa). **However, this procedure is not recommended, as obtaining a Belgian residence permit will take much longer (3 to 6 months or more), and you may not be able to travel abroad.**



## SINGLE PERMIT

As of 1 March 2023, all foreign researchers from outside the European Union (except doctoral students) require a single permit to enter and reside in Belgium. Hosting agreements previously issued to postdoctoral researchers are no longer accepted as a document for obtaining a visa. For further information, please contact the Human Resources Department at [permisunique@ulb.be](mailto:permisunique@ulb.be)

The application for a single permit is submitted by the employer to the competent Region in which the person will be working. As soon as the Region has made its decision, it transfers the file to the Immigration Office, which decides on the residence permit (processing time: 4 months).

If both authorities agree, the application for a single permit is approved and the worker receives a document called Annexe 46 by e-mail. A copy of Annexe 46 is also sent to the Belgian consulate where the worker will apply for a visa.

On arrival in Belgium, the worker must register with his or her commune (municipality) of residence. The commune issues a document called Annexe 49 authorising the employee to work in Belgium, pending receipt of the single permit..

## ARRIVING IN BRUSSELS

If you are paid by ULB, visit the Human Resources Department in order to finalise your contract or fellowship.

Look for long-term accommodation – see **Accommodation**.

Register with the commune – see **Commune registration**.

Register for medical insurance – see **Healthcare and insurance**.

Open a bank account – see **Bank account**.

It is very easy to get around Brussels by public transport. The majority of visitors travel by plane, landing at one of the two major airports that serve the city: Brussels Airport (Zaventem) and Charleroi Airport (also known as Brussels South). Others take a train to the Gare du Midi (Brussels South Station).

### From Brussels Airport

Brussels' main airport is very well connected to the city centre, allowing you to travel easily by train, bus, taxi, car sharing or **picking up a rental car**. The train into the city centre only takes 17 minutes; the bus to the European Quarter downtown takes a little longer (30 minutes) but is also a little cheaper. If you have a lot of luggage, particularly if you are travelling in

a group, you may want to consider getting a taxi. It will cost you around €50 to get to the centre, but the convenience is well worth the cost if you split the fare between 3 or 4 people.

### From Charleroi Airport

The **Flibco** shuttle company is the most convenient way to get to Brussels from Charleroi airport. Bus times are also scheduled to fit in with the flight times and buses start running at 3.30 am. There is a bus every 20 to 30 minutes. To get the fairest price, you can pre-book your ticket online.

If you do decide to travel to Brussels by taxi, expect a €100 fare for the whole vehicle.

### Getting here by train

You can easily travel to Brussels by train from abroad. The Eurostar and Thalys make it possible to reach Brussels from several stations in France as well as from London, and the national lines also connect all regions of the country to the capital.

## Getting to ULB (Brussels)

How to get...	To the Solbosch Campus	To the Erasme Campus	To the La Plaine Campus
From Gare Centrale (Central Station)	Take the <b>number 71 bus heading towards Delta</b> and get off at the «ULB»	Take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Erasme</b> and get off at the last stop.	Take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Hermann-Debroux</b> and get off at the «Delta» stop.
From Gare du Nord (North Station)	Take the <b>number 25 tram heading towards Boondael</b> and get off at the «ULB» stop.	Take the <b>number 3 tram heading towards Churchill</b> and get off at the « De Brouckère » stop. Then take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Erasme</b> and get off at the last stop.	Take <b>metro line 6 heading towards Roi Baudouin</b> , and get off at the «Arts-Loi» stop. Then take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Hermann-Debroux</b> and get off at the «Delta» stop.
From Gare du Midi (South Station)	Take the <b>number 81 tram heading towards Montgomery</b> and get off at the « Montgomery » stop. Then take the <b>number 25 tram heading towards Boondael</b> and get off at the «ULB» stop.	Take <b>metro line 6 heading towards Roi Baudouin</b> , and get off at the « Gare de l'Ouest » stop. Then take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Erasme</b> and get off at the last stop.	Take <b>metro line 6 heading towards Roi Baudouin</b> and get off at the « Arts Loi » stop. Then take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Hermann-Debroux</b> and get off at the « Delta » stop.
From Etterbeek Station	Take the <b>number 25 tram heading towards Boondael</b> and get off at the «ULB» stop.	Take the <b>25 tram heading towards Rogier</b> and get off at the «Pétillon» stop. Then take <b>metro line 5 heading towards Erasme</b> and get off at the last stop.	Take the <b>number 91 bus heading towards Wiener</b> and get off at the «Thys» stop.

## Getting to ULB (Charleroi)

How to get...	To Charleroi Campus	To Gosselies Campus
From Gare de Charleroi Central (Charleroi Central Station)	Take <b>metro line M4 heading towards Gilly Soleilmont</b> and get off at the « Charleroi Waterloo » stop.	Take the number 68 bus and get off at the « Gosselies ULB (Aéropôle) » stop.



## COMMUNE REGISTRATION

### Long stay (over 3 months)

If your stay in Belgium exceeds 3 months, you must register with your commune of residence and apply for a residence permit. The residence permit is compulsory, including for EU citizens (registration certificate), and you must carry it with you at all times. For non-European Economic Area citizens, it replaces the entry visa, allowing them to travel throughout the Schengen area and to re-enter (for example, if you're spending the holidays in your home country).

### Obtaining a residence permit (long stay: over 3 months)

Officially, you are required to register with the Immigration Office («Office des Étrangers») in your commune within 8 days of your arrival in Belgium (notification on your visa). In practice, however, this deadline is difficult to meet (time to get an appointment at the commune, difficulty in finding

### Short stay (less than 3 months)

If you're staying in a hotel, you don't need to register with the commune: the hotel will do it for you.

**EU nationals** : if you are not staying in a hotel, it is advisable to go to the commune (with a valid passport or identity card) within 10 days of your arrival in Belgium to obtain a declaration of presence, valid for the duration of your stay (maximum 3 months).

**Non-EU nationals** : if you are not staying in a hotel, you must go to the commune within 3 days of your arrival in Belgium to obtain a declaration of arrival, valid for the duration of your stay (maximum 3 months). You'll need your passport and a passport photo. The procedure is free of charge.



permanent accommodation, etc.). You can therefore exceed this deadline. However, you must register with the commune within three months of your arrival. To register with the commune, you must have a permanent home (domiciliation possible – see «Housing» section). You cannot register with a temporary address (Airbnb, hotel...). To register with the commune, you must have a permanent home (domiciliation possible – see «Housing» section). You cannot register with a temporary address (Airbnb, hotel...).

Registration procedures vary from one commune to another, so we recommend that you check your commune's website before you go. You will be asked to present your identity card or passport, as well as your ULB registration certificate.

A few days after your visit to the commune, a police officer will pay you a visit to check that you actually live at the address you have given. Don't forget to display your name on your letterbox and/or doorbell. A few days after the officer's visit, you'll receive a notification to finalise the registration process at the commune, with the list of documents to be provided at this second appointment: ID, passport photos and payment for your card (between €20 and €25 depending on the commune).

At this second appointment, you will receive a temporary document, the Annexe 15, pending receipt of your residence permit.

**Please note that it is not possible to travel outside Belgium with the Annexe 15; you must have your residence permit to do so.**

## Checklist

- Check your commune's website before going there
- Register at your local Immigration Office
- Apply for a residence permit
- Put your name on your letterbox and doorbell
- Wait for the police officer's visit
- Finalise your registration process at the commune
- Do not forget to notify your commune when you leave Belgium

## RESIDENCE PERMIT RENEWAL



It is advisable to start the renewal procedure at least 60 days before the expiry date of your residence permit with the commune in which you reside. Your file will then be forwarded to the Immigration Office, which will make the final decision.

It can take between 2 and 3 months for the Immigration Office to process your application to renew your residence permit.

**We advise you not to plan any trips outside Belgium until you have received your new residence permit.** If you need to travel urgently for any reason, please contact the International Welcome Desk.

If the renewal procedure is started 15 days or less before the expiry date of your residence permit, you will have to pay an additional administrative fee of €204 and the renewal procedure will take considerably longer.

**For non-EU doctoral students:** please ensure that your supervisory committee meeting takes place at least 6 weeks before your residence permit expires, so that you can finalise your re-registration at ULB and start the renewal procedure on time.

Non-EU postdoctoral researchers and non-EU ULB academic or administrative members of staff must provide their commune with the following documents:

- single permit (to be renewed 3 months in advance)
- proof of health insurance
- identity photos with a white background
- €20 - €25 processing fee, depending on the commune.

## Renewal of the residence permit for job-seeking

**EU Directive 2016/801** states that on completion of their studies or research, graduates and researchers should be able to renew their residence permit for a minimum of 9 months in order to remain in Belgium and look for a job. Contact your municipality for more information about the procedure.

## TAX AND SOCIAL SECURITY (RESEARCHERS)



### Income tax

A **tax return** (déclaration d'impôts or déclaration fiscale) must be completed by anyone living in Belgium on the 1st of January of the relevant tax year.

It is mandatory to indicate on page 4 of the tax form whether you have any bank accounts outside Belgium.

If you do have bank accounts outside Belgium, you need to :

- Tick the box on **the tax form** confirming that you have informed the Belgian national bank about the accounts.
- Complete the form available at **Communication des comptes étrangers au PCC**.
- Send the completed form, along with a copy of both sides of your Belgian residence permit, to: Banque nationale de Belgique, Point de contact central, Boulevard de Berlaimont 14, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.

### PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers (EEA and non-EEA) with a scholarship or fellowship

PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers receiving a scholarship or fellowship do not pay income tax, but do need to complete a tax return. When submitting your tax return, you should enclose a copy of your scholarship or fellowship award letter, which confirms that it is not taxable income.

### PhD candidates, researchers, academic and administrative staff with an employment contract

PhD candidates, researchers and academic and administrative staff with a ULB employment contract need to complete a tax return relating to income earned during the previous calendar year.

### Unemployment benefits and pension rights

Belgium has signed many international bilateral social security agreements that take account of increasing international mobility and the need for 'exportable' rights to benefits.

Your embassy or consulate should be able to tell you whether such a bilateral agreement exists between your home country and Belgium and whether, following employment in Belgium, you would be entitled to unemployment benefits or a pension in Belgium or in your home country. Information is also available on the **Social Security** website, **My Pension**, and from the ULB Human Resources Department.

## COST OF LIVING

A single person will need around €14.000 for a year, excluding travel costs. Accommodation will be the biggest expense item in your budget. Your actual expenses will of course depend on your lifestyle. In addition to accommodation costs, per month you should allow at least:

- €250 for food
- €30 for health insurance and medical fees
- €100 - €200 for service charges not included in the rent
- €30 for internet and €20 for your mobile phone

The cost of living in Belgium is not exactly low but it is still cheaper than other EU countries, despite being home to the EU headquarters. It is close enough to other popular European destinations like Germany, France and Austria. Given this proximity, students in Belgium can enjoy regular trips to these countries. You can compare and calculate it here : **Current cost-of-living index on a map (numbeo.com)**

### Utility costs

In Brussels, you can expect to pay about €125 a month for utilities, which generally includes electricity, water, heating and waste collection, for an apartment measuring around 85 sqm. Depending on your area, this estimate may vary, but not by much. The monthly rent for student accommodation often includes utility costs but be sure to check with your landlord beforehand.

### Accommodation

As it is the capital of Belgium, you can expect higher rents in Brussels and more competition for rentals than elsewhere in Belgium. In Brussels city centre, prices average around €850 to €950 per month for a two-bedroom apartment or €400 to €550 for a student room or studio (« kot »).



## ACCOMMODATION

Most researchers live in private housing. The cost of sharing a private flat is around €400 - €500 per person.

The best way to find accommodation is to look around when you actually get to Brussels.

Also, please beware of fraudsters when looking for accommodation.

### Long-term accommodation

If you are planning to spend several months or years at ULB, you will need to look for long-term accommodation. The rental market is fast-moving and there are many options available at various prices.

The neighbourhoods most favoured by our students at the Solbosch and La Plaine campuses are Ixelles, Etterbeek, Auderghem, Saint-Gilles and Bruxelles-Ville. If you want to check how conveniently located an

apartment is for ULB, you can use the **public transport website**.

### Domiciliation

If you are staying in Belgium for more than three months, you must be able to register with your municipality using the address of the accommodation you are renting in your own name. You must therefore check that domiciliation is possible. If your rental agreement states that you cannot register your address (e.g. if you are subletting), we advise you not to take up this accommodation, as you will then be unable to register with the commune and apply for your residence permit.

If you are staying with family or friends, it is possible to register your address. In this case, your hosts must make an appointment with their municipality to declare that they are hosting you. You will then be officially domiciled with these persons.

### Let's find you a home!

The ULB Housing Office can support you in your search for suitable accommodation and advise you on many aspects of student housing.

Their webpage lists a wide range of accommodation options, including university and private residences.

### ULB Accommodation

Helpful tip: have a look at the ads that international students who are moving out put up near the restaurants and lecture halls.

If you would prefer to book in advance, ULB has a partnership with **Studapart**, a platform that enables you to book private accommodation from your home. On this platform, you can see pictures and videos of different places, and even chat with the landlord before making a booking securely.

You can also use these websites:

- **Housing Anywhere**
- **Appartager**
- **Immoweb**
- **Mykot**
- **Brukot**
- **ImmoVlan**
- **BNB Brussels**
- **Vivastreet**
- **Student.be**



## Rental contracts

Most rental contracts are for 3 years or less and are generally fixed-term contracts, which cannot be broken without payment of penalties. Short-term rental contracts are often negotiated for furnished accommodation. Before signing the contract, take care to clarify the notice period and compensation due in the event of an early termination of the contract.

We recommend that, whatever the type of rental contract, you always try to negotiate the inclusion of a clause authorising you to find someone to replace you, should you need to break the rental contract earlier than planned, and thereby avoid payment of any compensation.

The first month's rent must be paid when the rental contract is being signed. In addition, before you receive the keys, you will need to arrange tenant liability insurance (this service is offered by banks,

among others) and set up a rental deposit (generally the equivalent of 2 months' rent). We advise you to put the rental deposit into a blocked account in your name at the bank – see **Bank account**.

## Good to know

Some landlords require an official entry inspection to be done by an expert before you can move in. An official exit inspection will also be done when you leave. The cost of the inspection is shared between the tenant and the landlord (the amount can be several hundred euros depending on the type of accommodation). Some landlords are willing to do a more informal inspection without a professional. In this case, we recommend that you take plenty of photos and carefully check the inventory provided by the landlord.

### Recycling your rubbish

In Brussels, sorting and recycling your rubbish is compulsory (failing to recycle can result in fines).

You need to buy special bags sold in supermarkets and groceries:

- Blue bags: for food and drink cartons, plastic bottles, cans, aluminium...
- Yellow bags: paper and cardboard
- White bags: residual waste (all the rest, except for glass)
- Orange bags: food waste (meat, fish, vegetable and fruit peelings, coffee, papertowels, handkerchiefs, napkins, etc.) - these may not be in use/mandatory in all districts.

Collection days vary depending on your district and the bag colour. Please check the collection days **here**.

Glass bottles and jars must be brought directly to the **glass container closest to your home**.

## GETTING AROUND IN BRUSSELS

From the city centre train station to the very outskirts of the city, public transport in Brussels has you covered. The smart integration of buses, trams, metro and trains means that you can get wherever you need to go with minimal hassle and usually within a short journey time.

The price of a single ticket inside Brussels (except for trains) is €2.60, or €2.10 on board (contactless payment only).

You can also top up your Mobib card with 75-trip, 10-trip or 5-trip bundles, which works out cheaper than buying single tickets.

You can check timetables before leaving by installing the **STIB mobile app**.

### Noctis bus

Don't want to miss the end of the movie? Want to stay out a while longer during the weekend? The STIB night network can grant all these wishes. There's a bus every 30 minutes on each Noctis line (night line) on Friday and Saturday nights from midnight to 3am.

### Metro

The metro system is good in Brussels with 70 stations across the city - recognisable by the white "M" on a blue background. The city is also known for displaying impressive artworks at many of its public transport stations.

Some tram lines are partly underground ("pre-metro" lines) and are accessed by metro stations identified with an "M". Access to these tram lines is not indicated from the outside.

### All public transport on one ticket

With lines crisscrossing the entire length and breadth of the city (and far beyond it), the bus, tram, metro and train lines are tried and tested ways of getting around in the whole Brussels area. With the unified ticketing system used in the city (a single pricing system for the four public transport companies that operate in Brussels: STIB, TEC, De Lijn and SNCB), there's no need to buy several tickets: buy a BRUPASS ticket or a BRUPASS season ticket and enjoy the trip (€2.40 for a BRUPASS ticket)!

**Good to know:** Brussels has many small train stations (SNCB network) which allow you to get around very quickly, with a BRUPASS ticket or season ticket.

### Cycling

There are more and more cycle paths in Brussels. You will find **more info here** on cycling to ULB or elsewhere.

### Car sharing

ULB has entered partnerships with several car sharing companies (including **Cambio** and Zipcar), for members of the university community to enjoy discounts.

### Brussels Mobility



### Taxis

If you need a taxi, it is best to book it by phone, as there are generally few available on the streets. Official taxis are black with a yellow stripe. You should expect to pay €1.80 - €2.70 per kilometre, an initial charge of €2.40 - 4.40 per ride, plus 50 cents per minute if you are in a traffic jam.

The two main taxi companies in Brussels are:

**Taxi Vert** : +32 (0) 2349 49 49

**Taxi Bleu** : +32 (0) 2268 00 00

The STIB public transport company offers a **shared taxi service**, « Collecto » between 11 pm and 6 am. There are around 200 pick-up

points around the city (at STIB bus or tram stops) and the taxi will drop you off wherever you want in Brussels.

It may take some time to get home, as they are shared taxis, but the ride only costs €6 (or €5 if you have a Mobib card). The shared taxi has to be booked in advance (by phone or through the online app) and when making the booking you need to mention the stop where you will be waiting for the taxi, your name and your destination address.





## HEALTHCARE AND INSU- RANCE

### Health insurance

In Belgium, individual health insurance is compulsory.

Researchers from the EU who have health insurance must bring proof of this insurance (the European health insurance card) to the Belgian health insurance company (known as a mutuality or “mutuelle” in French) of their choice. You can apply for this card from your health insurance organisation in your country. EU citizens generally only have to pay a supplement.

### Choice of mutuelle

You are free to choose whichever mutuelle you want. Here is **a list of mutuelles** with offices in Brussels.

Among these mutuelles, the national mutuelle CAAMI is free.

However, paying for a mutuelle means you will receive better coverage.

When you register with a Belgian mutuelle, you benefit from the same conditions as a Belgian. You will be covered for medical/dental expenses, sick leave, maternity and paternity leave, physiotherapy etc.

### Public liability insurance

All ULB students benefit from public liability insurance covering any accidents related to their university activities.

### Medical services at ULB

**A medical service** (general practitioners, medical specialists, sports medicine, paramedical) is available to the university population at the rates set by INAMI (National Institute of Health and Disability Insurance), i.e. fully reimbursed by the mutuelle.

Along with providing help in choosing a study programme, PsyCampus, our psychological counselling service, welcomes those who are finding it hard to adapt to university life, are in search of personal well-being or need psychological support of any kind. PsyCampus is part of the **Service de Santé Mentale** (SSM), ULB's counselling service. The SSM has other facilities offering counselling: the «La Plaine» centre and the ULB Guidance Centre in Les Marolles.

The **Centre de consultations universitaire pluridisciplinaire** (CCUP) also offers on-campus counselling.

« **Aimer à l'ULB** » a family planning centre, offers various medical, psychological and legal services. A multidisciplinary team is available to assist those who have emotional or sexual problems, in complete confidentiality.

### Repatriation insurance

Please note that the mutuelle will cover the cost of medical expenses in Belgium, but will not repatriate you to your home country in the event of illness or accident. You may therefore wish to take out a private repatriation insurance in your home country. Should you do so, we advise you to read the small print carefully (particularly regarding the number of months you can spend abroad). Home insurance

It is generally stipulated in the rental contract that the tenant must take out liability insurance to cover against damage caused to the home and/or any equipment provided by the landlord. Basic home insurance covers damage caused by fire, water or natural disasters. Here's a list of home insurance policies: **Comparez 18 prix en assurance habitation en Belgique (comparatif-assurance-habitation.be)**

### Family insurance

“Family insurance” or “third-party liability insurance” covers damage you cause to other people or their property. If the policy includes personal legal protection, it will also defend your interests should you suffer any damage yourself. Here's a list of family insurance policies: **Comparez 18 prix en assurance habitation en Belgique (comparatif-assurance-habitation.be)**



## CAMPUS LIFE

### Culture

**ULB Culture** organises CinéClub film screenings, concerts and exhibitions. Their office is located on the Solbosch Campus, Building F1, Level 4.  
Tel. +32 2 650.21.57.

More culture, more fun!

- **Brussels Tourist Office**
- **Fine Arts Museum**
- **Comic Strip Museum**
- **Royal Museums of Art and History**
- **Temporary exhibitions**

### ULB Sports

A wide range of **sports activities** are organised at ULB. The activities take place throughout the entire academic year on the various campuses of the University (Solbosch, Erasme, Charleroi) depending on the specific programme. An annual card will give you access to group sports classes and a discount on sports facilities.



### Buddy system

ESN ULB Brussels is one of 19 Belgian sections belonging to the international and European Erasmus Student Network. We are fortunate to be able to use their buddying platform. It matches international and local researchers based on the languages they speak, their hobbies, etc.

#### **Buddy System**

## INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

### Pre-school childcare

In Belgium, children often start going to a day-care centre (crèche) or child-minder at the age of 3 months (at the end of standard maternity leave).

Pre-school childcare is monitored by the Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance (ONE) and by 'Kind en Gezin'. A list of crèches and child-minders (for children aged 3 months to 3 years) and préguardiennats (pre-school childcare facilities for children aged 18 months to 3 years) that are regularly monitored and approved by these organisations can be found on the **ONE website** and the **Kind en Gezin website**.

As there is a shortage of pre-school childcare places, it is important to enrol your child well in advance. Demand is highest for subsidised pre-school childcare where the amount paid by parents depends on their income.

The ULB has **crèches on the Solbosch and Erasme campuses**. Here too, places are limited and in high demand, so it is important to contact the crèche well in advance. Information (in French only) about the registration procedure can be found **here**.

If you are paying income tax in Belgium, you should **declare the amount you pay for pre-school child-care on your tax return**, as a certain proportion is tax-deductible.

### Local Belgian Schools

Demand for places at many schools exceeds supply, with some schools having long waiting lists, so it is advisable to enrol your child(ren) well in advance.

In Brussels, the language of education in local schools is either French or Dutch; in Wallonia it is French and in Flanders it is Dutch.

Free schooling is provided in Belgium as from the age of 2 years 6 months/3 years (depending on the school and the child's date of birth). Many schools offer additional language support for children who do not yet speak French or Dutch.

While local schools are basically free of charge, parents do need to pay for extra-curricular activities, school lunches, school trips and after-school clubs.

### Pre-primary school (École maternelle): from 2 years 6 months / 3 years to 6 years old

Free pre-primary education is provided for all children from the age of 2 years 6 months/3 years (depending on the school and the child's date of birth).

## Primary school (École primaire): from 6 to 12 years old

Children start primary school at the end of August - beginning of September of the year during which they turn 6. Primary school is compulsory and lasts for 6 years.

You can look for a French-speaking pre-primary or primary school [here](#), and for a Dutch-speaking school [here](#).

Information about schools with places available can be found [here](#) (French-speaking schools) and [here](#) (Dutch-speaking schools). As the information on these websites is not always up to date, it is advisable to call schools to check availability of places.

## Secondary school (École secondaire): from 12 to 18 years old

Children start secondary school at the end of August - beginning of September of the year during which they turn 12.

Secondary school is compulsory and lasts for 6 years. You can look for a French-speaking secondary school [here](#) and for a Dutch-speaking secondary school [here](#).

For further information on French-speaking local schools, see [here](#). For further information on Dutch-speaking local schools, see [here](#).

## International schools

There are several international schools in Belgium, mainly in the Brussels area. English is the language of education in most of these schools, but there is also a Deutsche Schule (in Wezembeek Oppem), a Lycée Français (in Uccle) and a Japanese School (in Auderghem). All these schools are fee-paying and more expensive than local schools. A list of international schools in and around Brussels can be found [here](#).

Brussels is also home to 4 European schools (Uccle & Berkendael, Woluwe-St-Lambert, Ixelles and Laeken), offering education in the languages of many countries of the European Union. These schools are primarily intended for the children of officials working for the European institutions and it is exceedingly difficult – if not impossible – for other children to get a place there. There is also a European School in Mol, near Antwerp. Information about the European School network can be found [here](#).

## Child benefit

If you receive a salary or fellowship from the ULB or another Belgian institution, you are entitled to receive monthly **child benefit** (allocations familiales) for dependent children living with you and also a fixed amount on the occasion of the birth or adoption of a child.

Information about child benefit can be found [here](#).

## LEARNING FRENCH

### Parlez-vous français ?

Whether you are a beginner or looking to brush up your language skills, there are many opportunities to do so, on the campus or in Brussels.



### ULB langues

If you are willing to improve your level of French, ULB offers free language courses to foreign students all year long. Some classes are for exchange students only. Taking a test to determine your level is mandatory.

There are also some intensive classes organised over the summer. **Get all the information.**

### Classes in your neighbourhood

Information (in English) about French lessons organised for foreigners in each municipality of Brussels can be found on the website of the **Maison de la francité**. The website provides information about lessons subsidised by the local authorities and about private language schools.

### Good to know

**F9** offers special rates and free courses for ULB students and researchers.

There are other language schools offering courses in a variety of languages at affordable prices.

You can check **their websites**.

### What if you want to learn Dutch instead?

More information about **Dutch lessons in Brussels**.



## BANK ACCOUNT

### BANK ACCOUNT

For paying for your accommodation and daily expenses, we advise you to open an account at a bank of your choice, once you have arrived in Brussels. To do this, you can open an account online or simply go to any bank branch, taking with you:

- your passport or identity card (for EU citizens)
- proof of registration at the University
- rental contract
- proof that you have initiated registration with the commune (Annexe 15)

If you need to open a euro account quickly and you do not yet have your Annexe 15 (registration with your municipality), you can open an account with a neobank (for example: Revolut, Wise, Nickel...).



## OTHER INFORMATION

### Libraries

Your ULB student card doubles as your library card. More information about all **ULB's libraries**.

### S&SAME

Are you lost on campus, having difficulty locating a university department, auditorium, computer room or any other useful service, or struggling to find the timetable of a course? In every library, S&SAME can help you.

The S&SAME teams are also at your disposal to explain how to connect to the Wi-Fi and access your email, MonULB or the Virtual University.

### Food on campus

There are several cafes and restaurants on the Solbosch campus (building F1). The cafeterias on the La Plaine and Erasmus campuses also offer a wide variety of affordable food options. There are also restaurants, cafes and supermarkets near the three campuses. Students in the Faculty of Medicine can use the hospital canteens during their internship at the hospital.

Good to know: a market selling local, organic, seasonal food takes place on the Solbosch campus (avenue Paul Héger) every Tuesday, from 4 pm to 6.30 pm.

### Telephone and internet

There is a wide range of providers; you will be able to compare prices and offers online or once you are settled in Brussels.

On each campus you will find ULB's dedicated Wi-Fi network: Eduroam. To get access, all you need to do is follow **this procedure**. Your first need to have your ULB email address.

## NEED HELP?



### Psychosocial Aspects Service (SAP)

This service helps ULB researchers who feel they have been victims of moral or sexual harassment, incivility, intimidation or psychological pressure, by offering them a listening ear and support. **ULB staff portal.**

### Emergencies and safety

If you experience or witness a medical emergency, an accident or an assault, or if you have found a suspicious object, please contact our Protection and Safety unit, open 24/7.

From any ULB landline, please dial one of the following numbers as soon as possible:

- 7 (on the Solbosch, La Plaine and Charleroi campuses)
- 22 (on the Erasme campus)
- 112 (on other campuses)

From a mobile phone: +32 2 650 26 14 or 112

Below you can find all the other relevant emergency numbers:

- Medical Emergencies (Fire and Ambulance): 100
- European number in case of violent crime and accidents: 112
- Federal Police (accidents without casualties): 101
- Red Cross: 105
- Anti-Poison Centre: 070 245 245
- Burn Victims Centre: 071 448 000



## LEAVING BRUSSELS AND BELGIUM

When you are leaving Belgium permanently, please notify your municipality of your departure. Should you receive a tax return form, send it back with a copy of your student card or enrolment certificate and a letter in which you declare you are a foreign student, stating your country of origin and the length of your stay at ULB. Also, make copies of all your documents for future reference if needed.

### Residence Permit

You should return your residence permit to the municipality prior to departure; you will then receive a 'Model 8' form confirming that you have deregistered. The customs authorities may ask to see this document when you leave Belgium. If you do not return your residence permit prior to departure, you need to write to the municipality (enclosing a copy of your residence permit) and ask to be deregistered. Make sure that you inform the municipality of your new address and of your permanent address in your home country.



## Mutuality

Do not forget to terminate your affiliation to the mutuality with which you were registered.

## Bank account

If you wish to keep your bank account in Belgium provisionally open after your departure, contact your branch and ask for an email address at which you can contact them when you wish to close your account.

## Housing arrangements

Make sure that you give your landlord notice of your intention to leave your apartment well ahead of time. In

Belgium, notice must generally be given by registered letter 3 months before the expected departure date or the end of the rental contract.

It is essential to inform the landlord of your intention to leave the apartment even if you have a 1-year rental contract. If you do not do so, your contract will be automatically renewed. Schedule the exit inspection with your landlord and transfer water, gas and electricity contracts to the landlord's name or the new tenant's name.

Do not forget to cancel all phone and internet contracts.

## CAMPUS MAPS

For more information :  
**Maps and directions**



For any other questions, please contact us at  
**welcome@ulb.be**