

Living in Belgium!

Adapting to a new society and finding your place can be challenging.

Upon arrival, you will be faced with many changes, and you will probably experience many things you have never encountered before.

Like all Belgians, you will be expected to follow certain rules that govern our lives together. You will also be faced with a series of questions that are specific to “new members” of society: administrative formalities, learning French, signing up for Social Security, getting your job skills validated, etc.

For this reason, both in Brussels and in Wallonia, usually in partnership with local associations and government agencies, we have initiated a policy of welcoming new immigrants in order to help them participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of our regions.

Finding your place in Belgium can take time, especially if you do not have the right information and if you do not know your rights, your obligations and the procedures you have to follow.

With this guide, “Living in Belgium”, we want to provide you with basic information about how our society functions and make your first steps easier. This guide will also tell you where you can find useful information and further support.

We know that it will not answer all of your questions, but we are convinced that this guide will clarify how Belgian society works and hope that it will help you take your first steps in getting settled here.

We hope you will enjoy reading this information.

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How to use this guide

What – and for whom – is this guide?

This guide is an easy-to-use tool that is aimed at helping people from outside the European Union who have recently arrived in Belgium, as they take their first steps in getting settled here.

Why? It is fundamental for newcomers to get to know the reality around them in order to begin their new life project in a calm, well-planned manner. This practical guide is meant to facilitate this path.

How? This guide is a collection of the information you will need to know and the “first steps” you will take after arriving in the country. It includes **advice** and **links to places where you can find help or more information**.

It contains **ten chapters**, which correspond to the needs you will have to meet (housing, health care and jobs, among others). The chapters are organized as questions.

The services described in this guide are open to everyone who resides legally in the country. Some services are available for **undocumented persons**. This guide identifies those services.

The information in this booklet applies to French-speaking Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia).

This guide may not answer all of your questions. There are many resources available at the local level, including places where newcomers can find information and support. Please contact the centers listed in the **“Information & Advice”** chapter or the place where you obtained this brochure.

You will also gain a lot of information by talking with the people you meet in your neighbourhood, village, work, school or leisure activities.

Important

The information found in this guide is up-to-date as of January 2012. It comes from many different sources and is presented in language that everyone can understand. However, it does not replace legal texts, policy statements or official programmes. For access to the latest information, please consult the websites listed in the “Information & Advice” chapter or contact the locations cited.