



rights work permit training freelance
work contract job search degree equivalency
unemployment salary trade unions

≡ Jobs and training



Working allows you to provide for yourself and your family, to help you integrate into society and to meet other people.

Do I have the right to work?

Both men and women have the right to work and to freely choose their job activity. However, some people who are not Belgian nationals must first obtain a work permit in order to work legally.

Please contact your municipality to find out if, in addition to your residence card, you need to obtain a **work permit**. There are several types, and each permit comes with specific conditions.

→ For more information:

- Walloon Region :
www.emploi.wallonie.be
- Brussels-Capital Region:
www.bruxelles.irisnet.be

All jobs must be properly declared and comply with labour law.

If you do not have a residence card, you are not allowed to work.

Employee or freelance?

If you have a work permit, and depending on its exact nature, you can work either as an employee or freelancer.

When you find a job as an **employee**, your employer must have you sign a written **work contract** specifying your work hours, salary, any benefits, pay days, contract duration and type, etc.

A freelancer is not under the authority of an employer. He or she has a special status, notably as concerns Social Security. Freelancers can work in retail, markets, the liberal professions (lawyers, architects, pharmacists, physicians, etc.), trades, farming, etc. Special conditions may apply to some professions.

→ For advice and support: www.ucm.be

In principle, any foreigner who wants to work freelance must obtain a professional card.

→ For more information:
<http://economie.fgov.be/fr/>

What are my rights and duties as an employee?

As a worker, you have the right to:

- receive the salary indicated in your work contract and in line with your employer's sector of activity
- be protected as stipulated by law and in contracts
- join a trade union
- have a safe and healthy work environment



Your employer must provide you with several documents: work contract, workplace regulations, and documents specifying your compensation and the duties you must perform. Note: if your employer does not give you these documents, it is possible that you are being employed illegally.

As a worker, you have a duty to:

- comply with work rules and regulations, such as your work schedule
- perform your work properly and in good faith

What is a trade union?

A trade union represents company employees and defends their interests. The trade union intervenes between employer and employees when there is a dispute concerning the enforcement of regulations and agreements, whether these involve individual or group working conditions. A trade union can defend your rights as regards employment and unemployment.

To be defended by a trade union, you must be a member and pay your dues. There are a number of different trade unions.



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→ To find a trade union office near you, please consult their websites:

- FGTB (General Labour Federation of Belgium): www.fgtb.be



- CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions): www.csc-en-ligne.be



- CGSLB (Liberal Trade Union): www.cgslb.be



I have a work permit, and I am looking for a job. Where do I start?

First of all, you must register as a job-seeker with your region's Employment Office.

- If you live in **Brussels**:
ACTIRIS,
www.actiris.be
- If you live in **Wallonia**:
FOREM,
www.forem.be
- If you live in **Flanders**:
VDAB,
www.vdab.be
- If you live in the **German-speaking community**: **ADG**,
www.adg.be



Where can I find job offers?

You will find job offers at ACTIRIS, FOREM, VDAB and ADG, in newspapers and on job sites on the Internet.

→ In Brussels, you can also contact a local agency: www.mission-locale.be

You can register with private employment agencies as well.



You can also get support for your job search. → Please contact ACTIRIS, FOREM, VDAB or ADG.

Gross salary and net salary: what are they?

The salary indicated in your work contract is the gross salary. Net salary is your take-home pay: the amount you receive directly from your employer. When you work, part of your salary is not paid to you. It goes into Social Security contributions and income taxes. Social Security contributions go towards a fund (Social Security) that is used to pay health care costs, sick leave, lost-time injury leave, unemployment insurance, pension contributions and family allowances. Taxes pay for the public services that you enjoy as a citizen or resident alien (school, police, etc.). This mechanism of solidarity also enables the social aid system (CPAS) to function.

And unemployment insurance?

If you lose your job, for example, the Social Security system enables you, under certain conditions, to receive unemployment insurance (“the dole”). These payments may be made to you via a public agency (*Caisse Auxiliaire de Paiement des Allocations de Chômage*, or CAPAC) or by one of the three trade unions mentioned above.

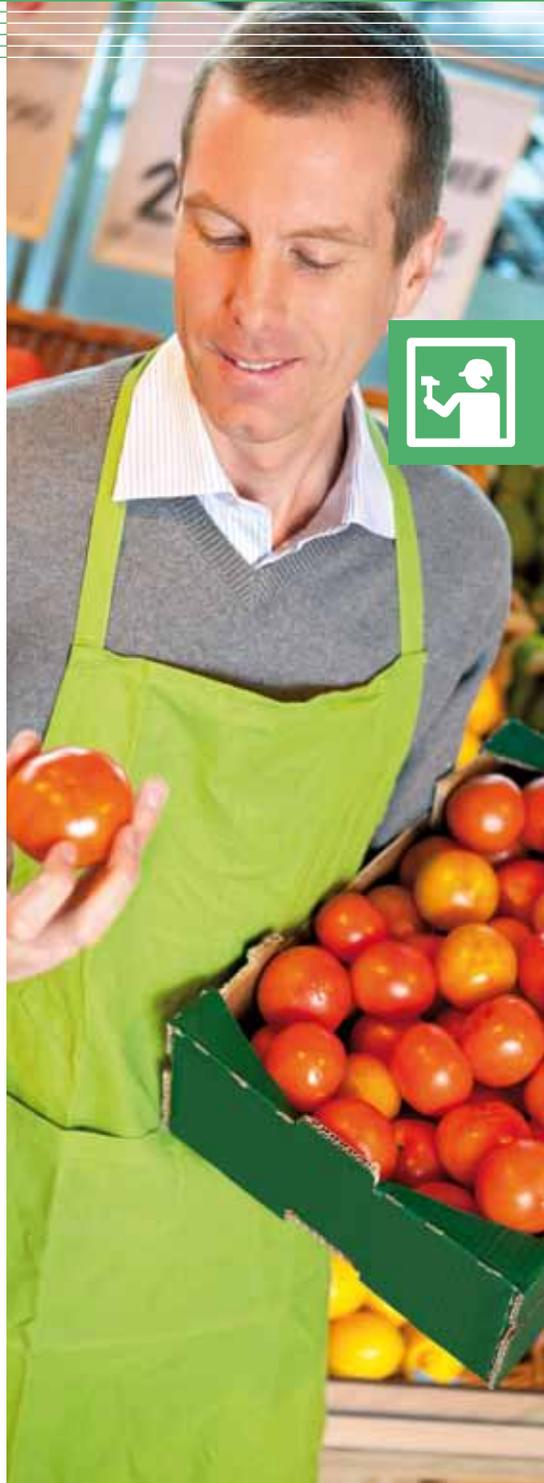
➔ To learn more, contact your trade union or CAPAC: www.capac.fgov.be

What is undeclared work?

We talk about undeclared work when the employer does not officially register the employee and does not declare his or her hiring to the Social Security administration, in order to avoid paying Social Security contributions and income taxes.

Undeclared work is not legal.

It weakens the mechanism of general solidarity, because the money that should go to Social Security and income taxes does not. Both the employer and the employee risk large fines. Also, in case of illness or accident, undeclared employees are not protected. They have no right to unemployment insurance or a pension. They have no guarantee that they are being paid a fair salary. They are not protected against unfair dismissal, and they can be let go at a moment's notice.





How do I increase my chances of finding a job?

Employers almost always require some qualifications, as proven by a diploma or certificate. If you have a diploma (original copy) from your country, you can go to an agency to determine its **equivalency** , under certain conditions.

→ The associations cited in the “Information & Advice” chapter can help you.

For some jobs, you can have your skills recognized (validated) officially and for no charge.

→ For more information: www.cvdc.be

If you do not have a diploma or if it is not recognized, you can choose to enhance your job opportunities by undertaking training courses in order to obtain a certificate that will prove your aptitude.



Speaking French well (and Dutch, particularly in Brussels) and improving your qualifications with training will help you find a job.

There are many professional training courses for adults: language classes and job-specific courses that lead to a diploma or other qualifications.

→ You can consult a training advisor at one of the following agencies:

- Public training services: ACTIRIS, FOREM, VDAB and ADG.
- In Brussels, Bruxelles-Formation: www.bruxellesformation.be or a local mission: www.mission-locale.be
- In Wallonia: FOREM or a regional employment mission (for example www.mirec.net/mires.html)
- Educational and Professional Information Service (SIEP): www.siep.be



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