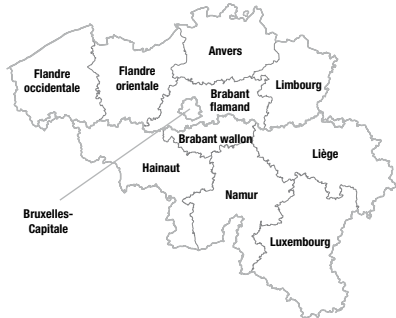




Belgium is a federal state. It is composed of three communities

Federal state: decision-making power is shared between the federal government, communities and regions, each of which has its own Parliament and government cabinet.

The federal government has authority over all areas of national interest (diplomacy, military, justice, finance, Social Security, a major part of public health, etc.).



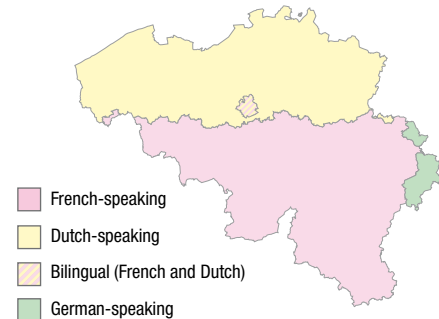
10 provinces and 589 municipalities

The **Municipality** is the institution closest to residents. You will have contact with the municipality where you reside for a number of important matters in your daily life, such as birth, death and marriage records; culture; youth and sports programmes; the environment; health; education; safety; jobs and training.

The municipality runs many services (police, schools, day-care centers, roads, etc.) within its borders. It is also the place to begin many administrative formalities and procedures.

Three communities

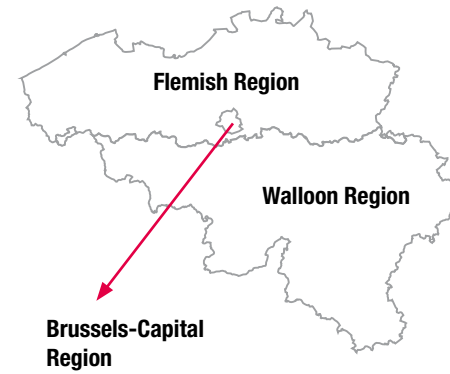
The communities have jurisdiction in matters concerning language: culture, education, youth programmes, etc.



and three regions.

Three regions

The regions are in charge of all matters concerning economic development, jobs and land use (planning, housing, environment, farming, transport, economics, applied research, etc.).



For the French-speaking community, the French Community Commission (**COCOF**) in Brussels and the Walloon Region also have authority for welfare, professional training, social inclusion and tourism.

For the Dutch-speaking community, the communities and regions are merged.

Belgium is a member of the European Union

Its currency is the Euro (€).

