Brussels Programme on European Foreign Policy

Practical Guide to Brussels
Dear Student,

The beginning of your studies at the IES will soon be here!

In order to get you settled in Brussels we have put together this practical guide that will hopefully be able to answer all of your questions regarding day-to-day life in Brussels.

Moving to a new city can be a daunting task. And when the move includes a new country on a new continent, it provides an even bigger challenge. Our aim is to have your move to Brussels happen smoothly so that you will be able to hit the ground running once here, giving no more time than necessary to annoying paperwork.

This guide is not designed to be exhaustive, because there is plenty of information available on the IES website at www.ies.be/education, but it does answer the most commonly asked questions.

We look forward to meeting you soon!
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Institute for European Studies

The home of the Programme is the Institute for European Studies (IES), a thriving Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Studies and a policy think tank that focuses on the European Union in an international setting. The staff at the IES comprises people of over 25 nationalities, almost half of whom are doctoral researchers in international and EU affairs.

The Institute advances academic education and research in various disciplines, and provides services to policy-makers, scholars, stakeholders and the general public. While promoting European Studies in general, the IES specifically explores EU institutions, policies and law within the context of globalization and global governance, including a focus on the EU in international affairs and institutions. The disciplines applied at the IES include law, social/political sciences, economics and communication sciences, and the Institute’s activities focus on the various ways in which institutions, law and politics intersect with each other in the EU, its member states and at the international level.

The IES also engages in academic education and organises a Master in European Integration and Development, the LLM in International and European Law (PILC), a Summer School on European Policy-Making EU Modules as well as a Postgraduate Programme.

The location of the IES at the VUB in Brussels enables the Programme to benefit from the immediate vicinity of EU institutions and numerous international organisations, law firms and companies.
Practical information

Brussels: Capital of Europe

If you are moving to Belgium and you are planning to settle in the Brussels-Capital Region, you will be delighted to know that Brussels is an international city where you are sure to settle very quickly. This cosmopolitan city that loves good food lives life its way and expresses itself in a style very much its own: sometimes rebellious and mischievous, sometimes thoughtful and composed, but always very likeable. Despite its European dimension and despite all the different languages spoken on the corner of every street, Brussels is still inspired by a very “village-like” spirit. Of course, it's well known for its Grand-Place, the Atomium, the Manneken-Pis, the special Gueuze and Kriek beers, the waffles and chocolates... (don’t miss them!). But, just one tip: also take the time, to soak up the very special atmosphere of its many different districts. Take a stroll to Rue Dansaert, Halles Saint-Géry and Place Sainte-Catherine. Head for Saint-Boniface, Châtelain or Flagey... You’ll discover a Brussels that’s in the spirit of the times, a capital that’s relaxed and comfortable, as much in its history as in its present-day reality. Very fashionable. Very designer. Very creative. In other words, to put it in a nutshell, just relish Brussels, a fine and beautiful city to explore and discover...

Headquarters of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O.), Brussels is an international financial centre and home to the European headquarters of over two thousand multinationals. Brussels offers high-calibre scientific resources and has flexible economic infrastructures that have enabled it to keep pace with the great technological changes of the 21st century.

Like the Parisian arrondissements and the London boroughs, the Brussels-Capital region consists of communes (19) and every Brussels commune is designated by a specific postcode: 1050 for Ixelles, 1000 for Bruxelles-Ville, etc.

Some Facts and Figures:

- Founded: 979
- Location: Europe, central Belgium
- Flag: Yellow marsh iris on a field of blue
- Flower: Yellow (or golden) marsh iris (Iris pseudocorus)
- Languages: Dutch and French
- City’s green spaces: parks, woods and forest account for 11.4% of the region’s territory
- Time Zone: Central European Time, GMT+1 in winter and GMT+2 in summer
- Elevation: Sea level
- Latitude and Longitude: 50° 50’ N, 4° 00’ E
- Coastline: None
- Climate: Moderate temperatures year-round with little snow in the winters, predictable rainfall and mild summers.
- Annual Mean Temperature: 12° C (50°F), ranging from 2° C (37° F) in January to 23° C (64° F) in July.
- Average Annual Precipitation: 70 cm (28 in)
- Population: around 1.1 million inhabitants. Roughly 30% of the city’s total population is foreign.
- Government: Mayor, congress, and district representatives under a constitutional monarchy
- Weights and Measures: Metric
- Monetary Unit: Euro
Dutch and French

Living in Brussels gives you a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in a new culture and new languages. There are several language course options available once you arrive. Here are some of the more popular ones:

www.cslangues.be
www.huisnederlandsbrussel.be

If you don’t want to spend money on language learning software such as Rosetta Stone or Berlitz, there is a similar online programme called Live Mocha that is free:
www.livemocha.com

Alternatively, there are always people in Brussels who are keen to teach their native language in exchange for some English lessons: www.mylanguageexchange.com. You can join Meet-Up groups to practice languages (http://www.meetup.com; https://my.vub.ac.be/nieuws/conversation-tables-2013) or connect with locals for language practice or just to meet new people via Couchsurfing (www.couchsurfing.com).

Transportation

From the Airport

There are two main airports in Belgium:
Brussels Airport, also known as Zaventem, is located just outside Brussels (www.brusselsairport.be) and Charleroi Airport, located about an hour south of Brussels (www.charleroi-airport.com).

Both are easily accessible by public transport. So if you would like to save some money rather than taking a taxi from the airport you can do the following:

From Brussels Airport
- Take the number 12 or 21 bus to the centre of Brussels. Timetable and info for the 21 bus: http://www.mivb.be or
- Take a train to Gare Central or Gare de Midi and then take the public transit to your location.

From Charleroi Airport
- Take the Shuttle bus just outside the airport to Midi train station in Brussels. Buses leave approximately every half hour from 8:15am until 11:45pm.

Getting Around in Brussels

Most students do not have a car here in Brussels as public transport is excellent (at least during the day!). Most buses, trams, and metros run on a regular schedule and are very reliable. A map of all of the bus, tram, and metro lines is available online: www.stib.be

Taxis

Available at taxi stands or by phone for a pick-up service. VAT and tip are included in prices. Taxi Vert (Green taxi) is one company that provides larger vans, as well as regular cars for service. You can also find Taxi Vert vans at the local IKEA.
Taxi Vert: 02/349 49 49.

12-2013

Public Transit Tickets / Passes

To ride any bus, tram, or metro you will need to purchase a ticket. Single “jump” tickets (€2) can be pur-
chased in most stations where you take the metro, either from the ticket windows or from the automated GO machines (which have an English language option).
You can also buy a ticket from the bus or tram driver for €2.50.

Note: If you need to buy a ticket, bring small bills and change. At many of the smaller stations there is no attendant on duty to purchase tickets from. Here one has to depend on the ticket machine. The machines allow you to purchase a range of passes, but do not accept bills. Change is given only in coin form. You can also use your bankcard (only bankcards with pin codes) at most machines.

It is also possible to purchase electronic MOBIB cards directly from the STIB "BOOTIK" offices located at a limited number of metro stations throughout the city or online at www.stib.be. Purchasing a monthly ticket for unlimited use can save you quite a bit of money depending on how often you use public transport.

**Medical Information**

**General**

VUB Doctors (building Y, entrance Y2) can be generally consulted with or without an appointment, for a very reasonable price (approximately €20) but there is often a break in services in the middle of the day.
Visits and emergencies:
• During working hours: Tel. 02-629 23 00. Calls for appointments are accepted before noon
• Casualty: The centre operates in casualty for all accidents and acute illness on campus or in university lodgings.

Physiotherapy

VUB Physiotherapy offers rehabilitation and physical therapy by appointment: Tel. 02/629.23.33

Dental Care

A completely equipped dental surgery clinic is available at the VUB by appointment: Tel.02/629.23.00

Mental Health Care Center

The VUB's University Centre for Mental Health Care (Dutch:"Universitaire Dienst voor Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg") is open to anyone seeking mental health services. The centre particularly aims to provide services to older adolescents and young adults. Consultations are held in English, Dutch, or French. Tel. 02/640 93 02

English Speaking Physicians

Brussels is truly an international city and your national embassy website should be able to provide you with a list of doctors by specialty.

For example, the U.S. Embassy website provides such a list: http://belgium.usembassy.gov/service/medical-facilities-doctors.html

Health Insurance

All Belgian residents are required by law to have medical insurance. You should arrange for health insurance before arriving in Brussels. The International Relations and Mobility Office of the VUB (IRMO) can also assist you to get health insurance.

Emergency Numbers

Medical Service (Service medical d'urgence / Medische spoedzorg) 100 or 112
Federal Police (Police Federale / Federale politie) 101
Fire Service (Pompiers / Brandweer) 100 or 112

Banking

Bank Account
One of the easiest ways to go about banking is to open an account at the ING on the VUB campus. See map at http://www.vub.ac.be/english/infoabout/campuses/etterbeek.html
This bank is open 10:00am to 17:00pm, Monday to Friday. If you need to call for further enquiries, the number is 02 626 9890.
In order to open a bank account with ING, please bring official proof of your permanent address (such as a driver’s license, utility bill, or tax return). If you have already secured housing in Belgium, you should also bring proof of your Belgian address. In addition, you should bring proof of admission at the IES.
You have several options regarding depositing your money here in Belgium.
You can bring a cheque denominated in dollars. This will take some time to clear, and there will be a surcharge for conversion.
Bring cash (in euros) and deposit it via your Belgian Bank’s ATM (once you have opened an account in Belgium).
You can bring enough money for immediate use, then open an account and have someone wire the money to you through an international transfer. The bank will give you the appropriate IBAN and SWIFT codes when you open the account. The transfer from your home bank usually requires a small surcharge and takes about a week for the transfer to occur. You can also bring travellers’ cheques. Again, a surcharge for each cheque will be levied.
Usually bank transfers are the easiest way to transfer money. Make sure you ask your bank for the option to wire money home in advance so that they know to expect funds to be withdrawn or put in.
In addition, most ATMs accept foreign cards; you can therefore withdraw money as you need while waiting for checks to clear or money to be transferred. However, to be safe, it is recommended that you check with your bank first, to determine whether they put limits on withdrawals abroad. This also counts for credit card purchases. It may be best to contact your bank to inform them that you will be abroad for the next year.

Card Stop

Attention: if you lose your credit card call Card Stop (070 344 344), they can block your account immediately. Be aware of the fact that you will have to give them your bank account number. Write it on a piece of paper in order not to forget it.
Mobile Phones

Many students have found that getting a mobile phone is one of the most important first steps after arriving in Brussels. Acquiring a means of contacting and being contacted quickly is essential in taking care of many practical issues. There are three major mobile phone providers in Brussels offering pre-paid options cards:

Proximus: www.proximus.be Tel: 02 205 4000
Base: www.base.be Tel: 0484 0062 00
Mobistar: www.mobistar.be Tel: 0495 9595 00

Institute for European Studies

Shopping

Whether you do your antique shopping in the stylish Brussels Sablon area, browsing through exquisite items or by flashlight early on Sunday morning at the flea market, the hunt in Belgium can be as entertaining as the purchase.

Take a walk along Rue Antoine Dansaert Straat and the surrounding area to discover the hub and heart of Brussels’ fashion and design world with the best concentration of avant garde designers and fashion boutiques.

The Avenue Louise is one long catwalk of famous fashion brands, including big international names like Chanel, Vuitton, Hermes, Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace and Christian Dior. The first section is one of the most attractive shopping districts in the city, with prestigious as well as more affordable shops clustered around the large department store Innovation.

If you are looking for bargains, then go shopping in the lower city around Rue Neuve in the city center. It is one of the most bustling of Brussels’ shopping areas and stretches all the way up to Rue des Fripiers. In the shopping center City 2 you will find more or less everything you would expect to find in an American shopping center, such as clothing, bookstores, electronics, and a food court.

Built in 1847, Galerie St Hubert is a gorgeous, glass roofed arcade in the center of town, lined with cafes, theaters and luxury stores. It has the distinction of being the first shopping arcade in Europe. It houses a number of well-known shops with wonderful window displays. Founded in 1829 in Brussels, Delvaux is the oldest fine leather luxury goods company in the world.

Follow the monthly vintage market, a great way to find some unique and inexpensive clothes www.brusselsvintagemarket.be.

Shops are open from Monday till Saturday from 8.30 till 18.30, usually they are closed on Sunday. Supermarkets, such as Colruyt, Carrefour, Lidl are open from 09.00 till 20.00. In the malls, or so-called shopping centres, you can find all kinds of stores. You can besides City 2, also visit Westland Shopping Centre or Basilix Shopping Centre.
Other useful stores

- IKEA Anderlecht (Bus stop: IKEA, Metro: CERIA/COOVI) www.ikea.be
- BLOKKER (household and appliances) www.blokker.be
- Casa www.casashops.com
- HEMA (Interior, bathroom, kitchen, school supplies) www.hema.be
- BRICO (Indoor and outdoor appliances) www.brico.be
- Media Markt (Electronics, Small Appliances, Britta, Hair Dryers, etc) www.mediamarkt.com
- Waterstone’s Bookstore (English bookstore near City 2 Shopping Center) www.waterstones.com
- Club (school supplies) www.club.be

Groceries

- DELHAIZE
- CARREFOUR / GB
- COLRUYT (Note: Only accept cash or debit payments, NO CREDIT CARDS)
- LIDL
- ALDI

Markets

For fresh fruits & vegetables, meat & fish, spices and even furniture and clothes we advise you to visit one of Brussels’ public markets. On Saturdays and Sundays you can visit the Anderlecht Market until 14.00 (take the metro to Clemenceau and follow the stream of people). On Sunday morning one of the biggest markets in Europe takes place, the so-called South Station Market. Another great place to wander around is The Marolles. It is one of the oldest and most authentic districts of Brussels. Every day from 7.00 till 13.00 there is a flea market on the Vossenplein. You can find a lot of cheap products over here and it is the place to be if you want to meet some locals. On Sunday mornings you can visit the Market in Jette. It has about 300 stalls and the ideal place to taste typical, fried chicken. Go to Koning Astridplein, in Jette (take a metro to Simonis).
Going Out

Student life is more than just studying, it also means freedom, adventure, socializing and culture. Belgians love to eat well and can spend a lot of time (and money) on dining out. Brussels is a multicultural city and all types of food are available (from Belgian cuisine, to Swiss, Italian, Asian and African).

Restaurants
A few hints downtown Brussels:

- Arcadi (World): Rue d’Arenberg 1b–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 511 33 43
- Chez Henri (Belgian): Vlaamse Steenweg 113–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 218 00 08 – www.restohenri.be
- Kasbah (Arabic): Rue A. Dansaert 20–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 502 40 26
- Kokob (Ethiopian): Rue des Grands Carmes 10–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 511 19 50 – www.kokob.be
- Tapas Locas (Spanish): Rue du Marché au Charbon 74–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 502 12 65
- Lune de Miel (Viet & Thai): Rue Jules Van Praet 15–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 513 91 81 – www.lunedemiel.be
- Big Mama: Place de la Vieille Halle aux Bles 41–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 513 36 59 – www.bigmama.be
- La Cantina (Brazilian): Rue Jardin des Olives 13–1000 Brussels, Tel: 02 513 42 76

Cultural links

Brussels is the place to be for all kinds of cultural events: from the concert hall Ancienne Belgique, the Cartoon Museum to countless cinemas and theatres. Brussels has a fascinating 7 days a week/24 hours a day culture agenda for you. Events such as Broodje Brussel, Couleur Café, Brosella, Eu’ritmix and Boterhammen in de stad are a must. And what about a real Drive-In-Movies?

Take a look at the websites below and enjoy cultural Brussels!

- Agenda or OPB: provide information on cultural and social live in Brussels.
- Ancienne Belgique: the nicest concert hall in Brussels for international and Belgian music. Tickets are available at reasonable prices.
- Cinebel: provides information on cinema programmes in Belgium.
- Kaaitheater: the place to be for contemporary theatre, dance and music.
- De Pianofabriek: the community centre for dancing, language and music classes.
- Brussels Museums: the website for museum addicts.
- BOZAR: the place to be for concerts, theatre, expositions and much more.

Cinemas

Kinepolis is a cinema complex where 24 movies are on display. There are bars and restaurants and the main attraction is a theatre where films are shown in IMAX on super screen. The complex is one of the biggest in the world.
Address: Bruparck–Eeuwfeestlaan 20–1020 Brussels

Other cinemas:

- UGC De Brouckère De Brouckéreplein 38–1000 Brussels
- Arenberg Cinema Koninginnengalerij 26–1000 Brussels
- Vendome Waverssesteenweg 18–1000 Brussels
- Actor’s Studio Korte Beenhouwersstraat 16–1000 Brussels
- Aventure Centrumgalerij 17–1000 Brussels
- Styx Gewijdeboomstraat 72–1050 Brussels
Sports

American Football in Brussels

If you want to keep in shape and play a sport, but not at a gym, you can join one of the two American Football teams in Brussels

Brussels Black Angels: www.brusselsangels.com
Brussels All Stars: www.njufom.com/allstars/main/all.htm

Indoor climbing walls

Terres Neuves: www.terresneuves.be
Stone Age: www.stone-age.be
New Rock: http://newrockescalade.be

Things to do in Brussels: Useful websites

Blogs/Online Magazines

The Bulletin is an online (and print) magazine for expats in English. Following this website is a great way to read about the latest news in Belgium as well as spotlights on things to do. This website also features a classifieds section which is quite active www.xpats.com.

Bxl La Belle is a blog written by a Belgian in English, highlighting interesting shops, unique cafes and restaurants in Brussels www.bruxelleslabelle.com.

A Canadian expat couple writes a blog about all things Belgian. They have excellent restaurant reviews and have pretty much seen every corner of Belgium. There is also a lot of great information about living and enjoying life in Brussels www.cheeseweb.eu.

Other Websites


News about Belgium and Flanders in English! www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english.


EUObserver is another great resource to keep up with what is going on in Brussels and in EU affairs generally. Very interesting articles on things happening throughout Europe www.euobserver.com.
Social – Meet People!

Couchsurfing – A great website that you can use to meet people in Brussels, which has a very active community. There are often events like language tables (French, Dutch, German, etc.) or going to fun events in Brussels together www.couchsurfing.com.

Meet Up – Meet Up is a social network where you can join a group based on your interests. There are tons of groups in Brussels ranging from language groups to general expat groups to a group for runners www.meetup.com.

Conferences and Networking

EU Agenda – An online agenda with a variety of Brussels (and European) conferences www.euagenda.eu.

Permanent Representation of France to the EU – The French Representation publishes a weekly and monthly calendar of events going on in Brussels (not necessarily in French, most are in English). Click on “Calendrier de la Semaine”. They also have a list of all the think tanks in Brussels www.rp-france.eu/-Calendrier-des-think-tanks,173-.html.
The Institute for European Studies is also hosting many events. It’s a great way to get to know the people at the IES as well as the external people who attend the events www.ies.be/events.

The German Marshall Fund is an American think tank dedicated to fostering EU-US relations. They also host a variety of events each week www.gmfus.org.


American Club of Brussels hosts monthly drinks on the last Friday of every month. They also host other events in Brussels and around Belgium www.americanclubbrussels.org.

Learn more about Current EU Affairs

Euractiv is a comprehensive website concerning all EU affairs and is often organized by topic. Are you interested in a specific policy area? You can sign up for weekly updates or other newsletters to stay informed www.Euractiv.com.