

# Moving to Belgium: Your Relocation Guide



By Appointment To  
Her Majesty The Queen  
Removals and Storage Contractor Abels

# ABELS™

THE ART OF MOVING

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Memb No: A001



FS 23942



198656



TELEPHONE:	Country code (32) + Area code
STANDARD TIME:	GMT + 1 hour
WEIGHTS & MEASURES:	Metric
ELECTRICITY:	380/220/127v, 50Hz
INOCULATIONS/VACCINATIONS:	Inoculation and vaccination certificate not required for EC citizens.
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:	Jan 1, Mar 31, Apr 1, May 1, 9, 19, 20, Jul 21, Aug 15, Nov 1, 11, Dec 25, 26
OFFICE HOURS:	0800-1200, 1300-1700 Mon-Fri
BANK HOURS:	0900-1530 Mon-Fri. All banks closed on Sat.
EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS:	100 - Emergencies
UK EMBASSY IN BELGIUM:	Avenue d'Auderghem 10 Oudergemlaan 1040 Brussels Tel: (2) 287 6211 Fax: (32) (2) 287 6355 <a href="http://ukinbelgium.fco.gov.uk/en/">http://ukinbelgium.fco.gov.uk/en/</a>
TOURIST & TRAVEL INFORMATION:	61 Grasmart B-1000 Brussels Tel: (2) 504 0300
BELGIAN EMBASSY IN LONDON:	17 Grosvenor Crescent London SW1X 7EE Tel: 020 7470 3700 Fax: 020 7470 3795 <a href="http://belgium.embassyhomepage.com/">http://belgium.embassyhomepage.com/</a>

**Belgium is part of the EU and as such, no official documents are required to import personal effects and household goods if originating from another EU country. However, should you be from outside the EU the following applies.**

To the best of our knowledge, the following documentation is required to import household goods and personal effects into Belgium from outside the EU. It is advisable to check with the authorities that documentation is in order, prior to despatch.

EU nationals must apply for a residence card, after three months in the country, at the local town hall. You will need to supply 3 passport photos, pay a nominal tax, and depending on the commune, have your fingerprints taken. A temporary residence card will then be issued, valued for three months, which is then renewed for a further three months, after which time you will receive a five year identity card and become part of the Belgian population. ID cards must be carried at all times - the police have a right to stop you at any time and ask to see it - if you cannot produce it, you may be held at the police station until your identity can be proven. Before you get your ID card, carry your passport with you.

### **Household Goods – All immigrants and Belgian nationals**

Documents required:

You will be required to supply the following, prior the departure of your effects from our warehouse, which should be submitted either prior to, or upon completion of packing at residence:

- Inventory, showing continuous numbers and signature of client
- Copy passport showing clients signature
- Original proof of living abroad for the twelve months prior to inscription/arrival in Belgium
- Certificate of residence from the Belgian commune where client will take up residence
- Customs declaration to be completed and signed by client (recommended document available with your destination agent)

Duty free entry for household goods provided the importation takes place within one year after the official change of residence.

If all documents are not available, guarantee (bond) must be paid.

The guarantee amounts to 10% customs duties, and 21% VAT as well as an eventual disciplinary penalty.

The total guarantee amount (if applicable) is refunded in six months on presentation of the original certificate of residence, or any other missing documents.

### **Removal goods to secondary residence in Belgium.**

Documents required:

- Inventory, showing continuous numbers and signature of client

Subject to payment of customs duty and VAT. Exact percentage depends on the nature of the goods.

Duty-free entry for secondary residence is no longer possible in Belgium.

### **Diplomats Removals**

Document required:

Declaration 136F signed and stamped by the persons with authority of the Embassy, and by the client.

Signatures and stamp shown on the declaration 136F must be on file at the Customs house, where the importation takes place.

Alcohol importation for diplomats see Wine and Alcohol section.

### **Wedding Presents and Trousseaux**

Documents required:

Same documents as for Household Goods, plus a marriage certificate.

The inventory must show the value of each item and must be endorsed “These are wedding gifts”.

### **Duty free entry provided:**

- The country of origin is granting the same rights (this does not apply to private vehicles and cattle, wedding presents, and goods to be used for commercial purposes)
- The importation is made two months before the marriage or within four months after
- The goods correspond in nature and quantity to the social standing of the party concerned
- No items value may exceed (11.155 Euro)
- Goods are manifestly part of their household effects
- No liquor or alcohol may be included

Free entry is only granted once, on the occasion of the marriage.

The shipment may be imported under one name or both names.

### **Inheritance**

Documents required:

- Application form for duty free entry
- Inventory in duplicate (must be signed)
- Certificate from the Town Hall of your place of residence or identity document issued prior to the death (evidencing that the heir is an inhabitant of the Belgo-Luxemburg-Economic-Union)
- Certificate that the customer is an heir, by means of an attestation from a notary or certified copy or extract of the declaration of succession
- Certified death certificate



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## Duty free entry provided:

- The goods are used
- The beneficiary of the exemption has your principal residence in the Belgo-Luxemburg-Economic-Union
- The importation takes place within 6 months of the date at which the goods were at the disposal of the heir

The exemption does not apply to goods to be used for commercial purposes, such as commercial vehicle, raw, semi-finished and finished products, cattle and agricultural equipment.

The date at which the goods are at the disposal of the heirs can be different:

- Date of the death
- Date of solution of disputes
- Date of the consignment of payment of the death duties
- Date of issues of the export permit, provided that, in regards to the last three dates, the party concerned has not adjourned these due to negligence or fault

Objects, which for humanitarian reasons and with the consent of the heirs, remain in use by the surviving spouse, can be imported within six months of the date at which the objects were placed at the disposal of the heirs. The same tolerance applies to objects left at the disposal of the person surviving a close relationship he or she lived with.

## New furniture and household goods

Document required:

- Original purchase certificates

Subject to payment of Customs duty and VAT.

Exact percentage depends on the nature of the goods.

## Antiques

Documents required:

- Original invoice (signed by the supplier)
- Certificate of age (showing that the articles are more than 100 years old)

Antiques can be imported duty free, but subject to VAT. VAT is 6%.

## Precious metal objects

Duty free entry if:

- Goods are manifestly part of your household effects
- Goods correspond in nature and quantity of the social standing of the party concerned

Silverware is subject to the same conditions as removal goods.

## Motor Cars

Documents required:

- Copy of passport showing your signature
- Motorcars must be shown on the inventory with make, chassis number, motor number and type and colour of the bodywork
- An insurance document valid for six months prior to the cars importation
- Original certificate of title
- Belgian or European insurance document
- Purchase invoice (Sales Contract)
- Certificate of residence from the Belgian commune where client will take up residence
- Official proof of living abroad during 12 months prior to arrival / registration in Belgium
- Customs declaration to be completed and signed by client (recommended document available from your Belgian mover)

Duty free entry provided the car has a minimum mileage of 6000km and the owners have had the car for their own use and in possession for at least six months before the change of residence and that taxes (sales tax or VAT) were paid in country of origin.

You must also be importing removal goods in order to get a VAT and duty free import.

If possible, licence plates needs to be kept on the car to avoid problems, and to allow driving on Belgian roads pending final naturalization of the car.

**Important Note:** Belgium requires EURO4 emission norm as a minimum, in order for vehicles to be registered and allowed on the Belgian roads. Please obtain advice from Abels Moving Services that the cars has this norm, prior to shipping to Belgium.

## Other motor vehicles, except motorcars (caravans, trailers etc).

Documents required:

- Customs form (Benelux 4 certificate issued against deposit of triptyque or carnet)
- If the trailer, semi-trailer or caravan is not imported under the conditions shown in the column "Customs Prescriptions"
- If imported with another means of transport (e.g trailers, which arrived per ship and continue their journey per road, after having been attached to a tractor vehicle, registered in Belgium or in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg)



### **Duty free entry for trailers provided:**

- The trailer is drawn at the time of importation by a motor-road vehicle registered abroad
- The trailer, if not registered abroad, shows visible traces of use

### **Machines, appliances and equipment**

Duty free entry (with some restrictions). If goods are manifestly part of their household effects.

The goods correspond in nature and quantity to the social standing of the party concerned.

### **Firearms**

Documents required:

- Shooting licence
- Name, number and caliber of the firearms must figure on the inventory
- Some firearms must be registered with the local Police department and registration of certificate / licence is needed

Firearms must be loaded in a way that they can be easily taken out of the removal goods during Customs inspection.

Do not ship any firearms unless specifically approved by the Belgian authorities prior to shipping.

### **Plants and Vegetable products**

Phytosanitary certificate (issued by the Ministry of Agriculture of the country of origin).

### **Pets**

Certificate of vaccination (vaccination against rabies).

Importation granted.

The certificate must be dated at least thirty days before the entry into Belgium but cannot be older than one year.

### **Presents and souvenirs**

Subject to payment of Customs duty.

### **Wood Packaging Regulations**

The European member states have adopted the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM). This regulation requires all wood packing materials to be treated for the transport of goods to the EU from other countries.

### **Wine and Alcohol**

Documents required:

- Detailed inventory list
- For diplomats only: separate 136F for wine and alcohol

**Non diplomats:** Subject to payment of taxes and duties.

**Diplomats:** Exemption from payment of taxes and duties, limited to an annual quota agreed by the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the respective embassies in the country.

## **General Information on The Kingdom of Belgium**

### **Background**

Belgium became independent from the Netherlands in 1830; it was occupied by Germany during World Wars I and II. The country prospered in the past half century as a modern, technologically advanced European state and member of NATO and the EU. Political divisions between the Dutch-speaking Flemings of the north and the French-speaking Walloons of the south have led in recent years to constitutional amendments granting these regions formal recognition and autonomy. Its capital, Brussels, is home to numerous international organizations including the EU and NATO.

### **Geography**

Belgium is a small country, less than 12000 square miles and with 10.1 million inhabitants. Northern Belgium, or Flanders (Vlaanderen), is a flat, fertile agricultural area dotted with attractive medieval towns such as Ghent and Antwerp. Southern Belgium - known as Wallonia (Wallonie) has a more picturesque landscape, including the mountains and forests of the Ardennes and embraces a small German-speaking area in and around the towns of Eupen, Malmédy and St. Vith.

Belgium suffers with flooding along rivers and in areas of reclaimed coastal land, they have protection from the sea by concrete dikes.

### **Environment**

The environment is exposed to intense pressures from human activities i.e urbanization, a dense transportation network, industry, extensive animal breeding and crop cultivation. Air and water pollution also have repercussions for neighboring countries. Uncertainties regarding federal and regional responsibilities (now resolved) have slowed progress in tackling environmental challenges.

### **Climate**

Temperate mild winters with cool rainy, humid and cloudy summers.

### **Population**

It is estimated at 10,364,388

### **Currency**

The unit of currency is the Euro

- Notes: 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 & 5 euros
- Coins: 2, 1 euros then 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 & 1 cents



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## **Economy**

This modern, open, and private-enterprise-based economy has capitalised on its central geographic location, highly developed transport network, and diversified industrial and commercial base. Industry is concentrated mainly in the more heavily-populated region of Flanders in the north. With few natural resources, Belgium imports substantial quantities of raw materials and exports a large volume of manufactures, making its economy vulnerable to shifts in foreign demand, particularly with Belgium's EU trade partners. Roughly three-quarters of Belgium's trade is with other EU countries.

In 2015, Belgian GDP grew by 1.4%, the unemployment rate stabilized at 8.6%, and the budget deficit was 2.7% of GDP. Prime Minister Charles MICHEL's center-right government has pledged to further reduce the deficit in response to EU pressure to reduce Belgium's high public debt, which remains above 100% of GDP, but such efforts could also dampen economic growth. In addition to restrained public spending, low wage growth and high unemployment promise to curtail a more robust recovery in private consumption.

The government has pledged to pursue a reform program to improve Belgium's competitiveness, including changes to tax policy, labor market rules, and welfare benefits. These changes risk worsening tensions with trade unions and triggering extended strikes.

## **Language**

The most striking feature of modern Belgium is its division into two main language groups - Dutch or Flemish in the northern part of the country and French in the South. Brussels, the capital, was originally a Flemish speaking town but has become 85% French in recent times. Friction between the two language communities has been endemic, though fortunately non-violent and strenuous efforts have been made to ensure that neither group feels discriminated against.

## **Religion**

75% mainly Roman Catholic and 25% protestant or other.

## **Health**

Medical Facilities; the quality of health care is excellent; Belgium is a world leader in such areas as fertility treatment, heart-lung transplants and certain digestive tract problems, to name but a few.

Emergency services and ambulances are quick, and help frequently arrives faster than it would in a comparably sized city in the UK. Children's vaccines are provided free but your pediatrician will charge for a regular office visit. Free vaccination centers will vaccinate your child routinely and an up-to date vaccination record is required for your child to enter a day-care centre or school.

Medical Insurance; insurance cover is required by law and can take six months from your first contribution to the start

of your coverage. Within the EU, private medical insurance which is contracted in one country is acceptable by the authorities in other community countries.

## **Housing**

Renting or buying a home poses no great problems. However, the perplexities that arise from the language situation can mean that you find yourself carefully selecting the siting of your new home, office or school still entails crossing cultural and linguistic borders. Rents, especially in Brussels, cost as much, or more, than mortgage payments on a comparable property in London.

Built-in cupboards are not standard in Belgium homes and be prepared for a surprise in the kitchen as a 'fully fitted' one may contain no more than bare essentials - a kitchen sink and some built-in units.

All the major European brands of electrical household appliances are available in the main specialist or department stores. Top quality furniture, period or contemporary, used or brand new, can be rented from a number of furniture rental companies (see telephone directory under 'Meubles - location').

Brussels is full of apartment hotels which cater to newcomers, executives on temporary assignment and all sorts of people who, for whatever reason, are between permanent lodging. These 'flathotels', as they are often called, try hard to make themselves welcoming but can be very basic.

## **Education**

Education is compulsory for all children aged 6 to 18, though some are allowed to attend part time after they are 16 years old.

The Belgium education system offers parents and pupils a remarkably wide choice. There are schools run by the linguistic community authorities, colleges, institutes, athenaeums, lycees, traditional and modern schools, academic, technical and vocational schools and schools of different religious following.

## **Driving In Belgium**

Driving is on the right hand side but be aware and alert to priority from the right rule; always assume that any car turning into the road you are travelling on, from the right, has priority, even if you are on what clearly is the major road.

Seatbelts are compulsory for front and back seats and children under 12 must always travel in the back.

Busses do have the right to pull out indicating with their left turning signal and have automatic right of way to join traffic. Trams also have absolute right of way at all times. At passenger stops where there is no central island for passengers to get out, motorists cannot pass the stationary tram or stop on its right.

Drivers must have a valid national or international drivers license, a national registration certificate of insurance (green



card). While a green card is no longer required for drivers from EU countries, it is advisable to obtain one.

Anyone moving from one EU country, to live in another, can exchange his/her drivers license for one in his/her new country of residence without having to take another driving test. Other nationals (i.e. US) have to take a written test after one year's residence. After passing, driving lessons and a driving test are required. Twenty hours of mandatory lessons is standard.

## Public Transport

If you already have a ticket, you can board a bus or tram at any door, otherwise you can buy a ticket at the front door. Failure to produce a ticket to an inspector, could result in a fine and you should retain it until your journey is completed as inspectors and police regularly check tickets at underground station exits as well as on buses and trams. Monthly and yearly season tickets are available for regular users.

Children under 6, accompanied by an adult travel free.

## Utilities

**Electricity:** Voltage in Belgium is 220 volts. British and Irish appliances work adequately despite the slight difference in voltage, but they may need plug adapters, whereas American appliances will need a transformer.

**Gas:** gas distributed by public companies is natural gas. If you are bringing in gas appliances from abroad, you will have to be sure that they are suited to natural gas and properly regulated (for this, call a plumber). Some appliances also work on bottled propane or butane gas, which can be delivered to your home.

**Oil:** known as mazout - is distributed locally by a number of private companies, some of whom can also arrange for the installation of an oil central heating system.

**Water:** water is metered, with meters being read every year. In some apartment buildings there may be an extra charge for hot water if supplied through a central heating system.

*Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in the Abels Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date Abels cannot accept liability for any inaccuracy.*