

Belgian work permits: A guide to Belgium's work permits

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Who needs a Belgian work permit? Find out which of Belgium's work permit you need, and the procedures and documents for applying for your Belgian work visa.

To legally live and work in Belgium certain nationalities require a Belgian work permit and, depending on the length of stay in Belgium, a [Belgian residence permit](#) may also be required. There are three different types of **Belgian work permits**, as well as exemptions depending on the employment conditions of your work in Belgium.

The **Belgian work visa** is closely linked to your residence status in Belgium; this means, in most cases, a job will need to be arranged before you can apply for any kind of permit to live and work in Belgium. It is thus advised to first [find a job in Belgium](#) or [start a business or as a self-employed worker in Belgium](#), before you consider applying for either a residence or work permit in Belgium, or see if you qualify for another type of [Belgian permit](#).

This comprehensive guide covers all aspects of **work permits in Belgium**:

- [Latest changes to Belgian work permits](#)
- [Who can work in Belgium?](#)
- [Which Belgian work visa do I need?](#)
- [Do I qualify for a European Blue Card instead?](#)
- [Work in Belgium as an au pair](#)
- [Work in Belgium as a student](#)
- [Volunteering in Belgium](#)
- [Working holiday programs: Australia, Canada, New Zealand](#)
- [More information and help](#)

Belgium work permit updates

- The Belgian government increased the minimum salary requirements in 2017 to qualify for a Belgian work permit B or Blue Card.

- The Belgian government is in the process of transposing an European Union (EU) directive, aimed at providing a single permit for non-EU employees to work in multiple branches of an EU-based multinational company; implementation has already taking longer than the 2016 deadline, however, it is predicted to bring significant change to Belgium's work permit procedures.
- Previous restrictions on newer EU member Croatia were lifted and citizens no longer require a work permit for Belgium.

Who can work in Belgium?

EU/EEA and Swiss nationals

Citizens from the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA – EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Switzerland can work freely in Belgium without the need for a Belgian work permit.

Non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals

In principle a Belgian work permit is required for any non-EU/EEA/Swiss national coming to work in Belgium. There are exceptions, however, depending on the nature of activities or residence status of the foreigner. For example, scientific researchers or those holding permanent residence permits entitling indefinite stay in Belgium are exempt from requiring a Belgian work permit.

In many cases, the right to a Belgian work permit will also be granted to family members (such as a spouse or child) of successful applicants who are granted Belgian residency.



Types of work permit in Belgium

There are three types of work permit in Belgium, and it depends on your situation as to which Belgian work permit is required. Below is an explanation of the different work permit for Belgium.

Belgian work permit A

A work permit A is valid for all employers and paid occupations in Belgium and is valid indefinitely – that is, you can work for any employer in Belgium for any amount of time – and conditions are stricter. Typically the employee must apply themselves.

To get a type A Belgian work permit, you must prove you have worked for four years on a type B Belgian work permit within a 10-year, uninterrupted legal stay in Belgium. 'Uninterrupted' is defined as not being outside of Belgium for longer than one year between your Belgian residency periods.

It's only three years to qualify if you're a national of Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Morocco, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey. These periods of three and four year can be reduced by one year if your spouse, registered partner or dependant children are living with you in Belgium.

Some types of workers can't apply for a type A Belgian work permit, including:

- highly skilled workers
- au pairs
- trainees
- workers on temporary assignment
- researchers and guest professors
- specialised technicians
- family members of people who hold type B permits, are self-employed, or who don't need work permits.

When you apply for this Belgian work permit, you will need to complete the form '[Application for obtaining a work permit A](#)' (*Aanvraag tot het bekomen van een arbeidskaart Aan*) and provide copies of your type B work permit, payslips and residence permit. You will need to apply at the [immigration office in your area](#), who can also provide more detail about how to get a work permit in Belgium.

If your request is rejected, you will be notified via mail; you can appeal by replying with a registered letter outlining your argument within one month. If your Belgian work permit is approved, you will be notified via the appropriate municipality department to collect your permit A.

Belgian work permit B

A Belgian work permit B is issued for a specific job for a specific employer for a maximum period of up to 12 months, despite the length of your employment contract. However, this permit can be [renewed](#) for as long as you still meet the requirements.

The Belgian work permit B requires employer sponsorship; your employer has to apply for your work permit to employ you. This work permit is valid for employment with the sponsoring company only, and for the position indicated in the application. In principle, a foreign worker is only allowed to work in Belgium when a labour market test indicates that no suitable candidate could be found on the Belgian or EEA labour market within a reasonable term.

Various categories of workers can, however, obtain a work permit without the need of a labour market test, for example, researchers, highly qualified workers or technical experts. Employers can also employ long-term residents from other EU states on the type B work permit if the job is listed as one of these [shortage occupations](#).

To qualify for a Belgian work visa, employers must offer above a set wage for highly qualified (at least in possession of a Bachelor) and executive employees in order to qualify, alongside certain [other jobs](#). Salary

levels are reviewed yearly; in 2017 the annual minimum salary levels were EUR 40,124 for highly qualified workers and EUR 66,942 for executives and managers.

To calculate a minimum salary, the following elements are considered:

- gross salary (taxable salary)
- taxable end-year bonuses
- any other taxable allowances and benefits for work done that is included under your employment contract.

What is generally not included, however, are so-called COLA's (Cost Of Living Allowances) or other allowances typically granted to compensate for costs incurred by foreigners working abroad, as well as bonuses based on performance or achievements.

If it is your first employment in Belgium, you must also supply a [medical certificate](#) less than three months old. For certain sectors, such as manual workers and clerical staff, you and your employee must also sign a prescribed contract of employment stating mandatory provisions (see the list of forms at the bottom [here](#)). See an explanation of the required application documents [here](#). The immigration authority aims to make decisions within 10 days on applications for work visas in Belgium.

A firm condition of the Belgian work permit B, however, is that the employee must still be abroad; if it is discovered an applicant came to Belgium with the intention to work before holding a permit, Belgian immigration reserves the right to refuse an application. This measure is designed to stop foreigners simply entering Belgium to find work, and an appeal against such a decision will not typically be granted.

If a type-B Belgian work visa is issued, you can then contact the [Belgian embassy in your home country](#) and apply for a [residence visa](#) to come and work in Belgium for that employer.

If you change employers you'll need a new work permit and a new residence visa. To renew this work permit, your employer must make an application no later than one month before your work permit expiry date; the process and documents required are similar to the first application. If rejected, an appeal can be made within one month.

Belgian work permit C

A [Belgian work permit C](#) is for certain foreign nationals who are staying in Belgium only temporarily, such as students or family members of consular officials, or whose right to stay is not confirmed, such as asylum seekers. It allows holders to take on paid employment in any field and for any job contract type for the validity of their residence permit, providing similar rights of employment as Belgian citizens. The permit is issued for up to one year and can be renewed under certain circumstances.

Professional Card

Non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals who want to work in self-employment or start a business in Belgium must apply for a professional card, which acts as a permit and authorises you to undertake your professional

activity in Belgium. You can apply for this card when organising a [Belgian visa](#), by contacting the [Belgian embassy or consulate in your home country](#) before you arrive.

Otherwise, you can ask for more information at your [local Belgian commune](#) or a one-stop-shop or business counter (*guichet d'entreprise/ondernemingsloket*) set up for businesses. You can find the nearest office [here on the FPS Economy portal](#). Read more about [setting up a business or as a self-employed worker in Belgium](#).



European Blue Card

The European Blue Card is a combined work and residence permit that allows highly skilled workers from outside the EU to live and work in Belgium for more than three months.

To be employed under the Blue Card Scheme, you must:

- possess a permanent, or minimum of a year-long, employment contract with a Belgian company;
- be paid a gross annual salary of at least EUR 51,882 (2017 figures);
- hold a recognised higher education qualification.

However well-qualified you are, you won't be able to get a Blue Card if you're a long-term resident, seasonal worker, researcher or have been posted to Belgium from overseas.

Your employer must get a temporary employment permit for you and at the same time, you can apply for the long-term visa for the Blue Card either at the [Belgian embassy in your home country](#) or, if you are already in Belgium, for the Blue Card via the foreign nationals department of the municipality in which you're living. Find your [local commune in Belgium](#) to ask where you need to apply.

Once the temporary work permit has been issued, you have 90 days to apply for the Blue Card. Blue Cards are issued for 13 months initially, after which they, and the employer's employment contract, can be renewed, as long as the same conditions are fulfilled.

After the second renewal, the card is valid for three years. After five years you may apply for long-term resident status, which gives you an electronic card as a 'Long-term-foreign resident card – EC – former European Blue Card Holder'.

Once you have a Blue Card, your family members (spouse, registered partner, dependent children) can obtain a type B permit if the employer has an employment permit for them.

New EU Intra-Corporate Transfers directive

A directive concluded between EU Member States (except Denmark, Ireland and UK) paves the way for a unprecedented EU-wide work permit for third-national foreigners (or non-EU citizens). The ICT is designed to allow foreigners the right to work in multiple EU states via a single permit procedure, provided they work in a multinational and are temporarily assigned to an EU entity of the same corporate group. The directive is aimed at managers, specialists and trainees and can be for a maximum period of one to three years.

As an EU directive, however, Belgium must first transpose the ICT Directive into national legislation before any permits can be approved. At the beginning of 2017 Belgium had yet to finalise any plan, partly a result of the ongoing issue with Belgium's division of immigration and labour authorities, which has also hindered Belgium's ability to present the single work permit that was promised in 2013.

However, as Belgium is one of the EU member states that doesn't allow transfers within a multinational group of companies, the ICT permit is expected to bring significant change. Read more on the [ICT permit](#).



Working as an au pair

In addition to Belgium's [work visa entry requirements](#), if you are aged between 18 and 26 and have not held a Belgian work permit before, you can come and work as an au pair in Belgium for a period of up to one year. However, before you can work, your employer must obtain work authorisation and a work permit for you, and you must fulfil certain conditions.

You must:

- have completed your education up to at least the age of 17 years, or hold certificates to show that you are eligible to move onto higher education;
- have at least a basic knowledge of the host family's language;
- not take on any other work while you're working in Belgium as an au pair;
- take a recognised course in the language of the region.

The host family also has to fulfil conditions, which include having at least one child under the age of 13 years, providing daycare for any child under six years, producing character references of all adults in the household, paying monthly 'pocket money' of at least EUR 450 and taking out health insurance for you. In any case, an au pair under this permit can not work more than four hours per day or 20 hours per week.

For more information about conditions, contact the [specific regional authorities](#).

Working while you're a student

If you're a foreign student enrolled at a Belgian educational institution and have a valid residence permit, you can work during term time up to 20 hours a week, provided your work doesn't interfere with your studies. You will need to get a written fixed term contract from your employer, which is known as a student employment contract, and a type C work permit (see above), which acts as your Belgian student visa work permit. You can work during official university holidays, however, without the need for a permit.

For more information, see our guide to [Belgian student permits](#).

Coming to Belgium to take on voluntary work

You can come to Belgium to take on short-term voluntary work without the need for a work permit, although the visa/residence requirements will still apply. See Expatica's guide to [Belgian visas and permits](#).

Working holidays for Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians

Nationals from these countries, aged 18 to 30, can come to Belgium for a year's holiday and can take on paid work without a work permit during this time. The requirements for this one-time only visa include:

- having sufficient finances for the trip (a minimum of EUR 2,500);
- a valid return ticket (or funds to buy one);
- health insurance;
- a certificate of good conduct from your local police.

More information

- dofi.ibz.be: Belgian Immigration Office
- [The Department for Work and Vocational Training](#) – information in French on work and permits in Wallonia.
- www.werk.be – information on work and permits in Flanders.
- www.bruxelles.irisnet.be – the official website of the Ministry of the Brussels-Capital Region with information on all aspects of working in Brussels,
- [Work permit tool](#): go through the steps to determine which Belgian work permit you need to [work in Brussels](#).
- www.dglive.be | www.adg.be: information on work permits in German-speaking areas.
- Check [what is happening to my visa application?](#)

Read more

- [Complete guide to Belgian visas and permits](#)
- [Studying in Belgium: Student visas and permits](#)
- [Moving to Belgium to join a relative or spouse](#)

- [Guide to Belgian citizenship and permanent residence](#)
- [EU/EEA and Swiss nationals moving to Belgium.](#)

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This information is for general guidance only and you should seek specific advice from the Belgian embassy or consulate in your home country.



Need advice? Post your question on Expatica's free [Ask the Expert](#) service to see if we can help.