

### LOCATION

Country: Belgium

Town: Brussels (Capital City)

Info to consider:

- You will require a Belgian ID card. Once posted to Belgium, always travel with your Belgian ID card (speak to the DET). Belgian law requires that everyone carry official identification at all times.
- The Belgian Government only recognizes foreign national (non-EU countries) children younger than 18 as dependents. Children 18 and older who are not enrolled full-time in school in Belgium may not reside at post or stay in the country longer than 90 days in a 180 day period.
- Family (non-dependents) can visit and stay 90 days **without a visa** (Schengen Area)

### POPULATION

**Size:** City – 1.2 million. Metropolitan area – 2.1 million. Belgium – 11 million

**Ethnicity:** Large foreign population (nearly 70% of the pop. in Brussels). 32% are non-Belgian European, and 36% are from other areas, including Morocco, Turkey, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Religion:** Brussels is the most diverse area within Belgium for religious beliefs, with the highest percentage of people identifying as Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish.

### LANGUAGE(S)

**Official language:** Flemish (Dutch), French, German

**Prevalence of French or English speaking:** French is predominant in Brussels and Flemish in the bordering municipalities in Flanders. Proficiency in English varies, mainly spoken in the city centre/tourist areas. Not consistently among locals. Locals in Flanders (Dutch) have a higher prevalence of English speakers.

### COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Euro

### QUALITY OF LIFE

**Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:**

- Moderate climate (proximity to coast areas). Approximately 200 days of rain per year (sometimes violent thunderstorms). Snowfall is infrequent, averaging 24 days per year.

**Laws and culture:**

- Alcohol is inexpensive. Beer plays a significant role in Belgian culture.
- Drinking age is 16 for wine/beer and 18 for hard liquor.
- A Canadian driver's licence and an IDP are no longer valid once you have obtained residence status in Belgium. Before it expires, you may exchange your Canadian driver's licence for a Belgian licence if it was issued by Alberta, New Brunswick, Ontario or Quebec.
- You must be at least 18 years of age to drive a car in Belgium.
- If you are a Canadian citizen, but also a citizen of Belgium, consular services may be limited.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.05%. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines, and your driver's licence may be confiscated immediately.

**Safety and security:**

- Violent crime is rare but does occur.
- Exercise normal security precautions and be particularly vigilant if attending events that draw large crowds.
- Pickpockets often target passengers boarding or disembarking public transportation or international train lines, including the Paris–Brussels–Amsterdam and Brussels–London routes.
- Individuals have been harassed or attacked for reasons of race or foreign-looking appearance.
- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorists have carried out attacks in several European cities. Further attacks in Europe are likely.

### Level of isolation:

- There are around 35 Canadian families posted to this location.



## HOUSING

- Residential neighbourhoods in Brussels. Many options: condos/townhouses/free-standing houses.
- Look closely for possible underlying issues while on your HHT
- Families with children will need to consider schools when choosing a home. The balance between a reasonable commute and the size of your home will need to be carefully weighed.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Are there employment opportunities for spouses?** Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in Belgium is not a realistic option.

- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, so families should be prepared to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting.
- Language abilities in French would be a condition for employment.

**Op tempo:** The op tempo will vary greatly depending on the position. TD is possible.

## HEALTH CARE

**Access:** High-quality medical facilities are widely available

- English and French services are widely available.
- Access to the American Forces Health Care Facility (USAG) and the CF medical team based out of SHAPE, Mons.
- The CFSU(E) Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP.

**Special needs:**

- Supports are available but are very limited depending on the language required (English/French), area of specialization, and degree of support needed.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

**Consideration for pregnancy/birthing:**

- Health care for pregnancy and birthing is available in Brussels.

**Dental:**

- Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay upfront, and you can then claim your expenses.

## SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically through the \*The International School of Brussels (IB) for grades JK-12, St. John's International School (IB) for grades JK-12, International School Montgomery (EIM) English Stream ONLY (IB) for grades 1-12, The British School of Brussels (IB) for grades JK-8, or Lycée Français Jean Monnet for grades JK-12.
- Belgian schools are closed on Wednesday afternoons.

**Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:**

- Curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography are not offered at any school.

**Resources for special needs children:**

- Access to special needs services depends on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, so it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and the school before making any commitments.

## CHILDCARE

- Local childcare is available.
- A comprehensive system of crèches (for up to three), daycares and kindergartens are available in Brussels.

- Several private international schools offer programs for preschool age children, and after-school activities (for a fee).

## TRANSPORTATION

- Airports: Brussels Airport (BRU)
- Public transit is extensive and reliable.
- Excellent trains and bus services.
- As bicycles are a common form of transportation, bike paths and lanes are common, and bicycles are treated as a vehicle when driving on roads.

## RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- Yes, under MFS(E) Brussels, Belgium.

Psychosocial/mental health resources:

- Not at the post, and the MFS(E) SW is for dependents only. The CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members and families is located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The chaplain is located at SHAPE, Belgium.

Communications (e.g. quality of Internet connection):

- Good, depending on the provider and location.

## ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Good access. Many sports are offered in the community with excellent facilities.
- NATO Staff Centre has an outdoor playground.

Availability of playgrounds: Yes

## RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes

Are same-sex couples recognized? Yes

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Cannabis is illegal

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- European Commission Country Reports (2022)  
[https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en)
- Canadian Travel Advisories  
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One pager from the US)  
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/belgium>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-belgium>
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)  
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

**For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below**

- MFS(E) Social Worker Andrea Liss: [liss.andrea@cfmws.com](mailto:liss.andrea@cfmws.com)
- CAF Social Worker: [GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca](mailto:GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca)
- MFS(E) Brussels: + 32 (0) 2210 9297, [MFSE.Brussels@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Brussels@cfmws.com)
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