

Professional card for non-European nationals

Non-European nationals need a "professional card" in order to exercise an independent activity in Belgium.

- Would you like to work as a self-employed professional in the Brussels-Capital Region?
- Would you like to set up your business as a natural person or as the agent of a company or association (paid or gratuitous)?
- You are not a Belgian national?
- You are not a national of a European member state, nor of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland?

If the answer to all these questions is yes, as a rule you need a professional card to register with the Enterprise Crossroads Bank. You will then be allowed to exercise activities in all of Belgium.

- **Who is exempt from the requirement of a professional card?**

Nationals of the European Economic Area (European Union, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and **Switzerland** do not need a professional card work permit to be able to work as a self-employed professional in Belgium, be it as a natural person or an agent of a company or an association.

Certain categories of foreign nationals are also exempt from the requirement of a professional card due to the nature of their activity, their residency status or in accordance with international treaties :

- **foreign nationals holding a valid identity card for foreign nationals or a valid and permanent CIRE** (*certificat d'inscription au registre des étrangers*, or proof of registration at the Register of foreign nationals);
- provided that they settle with him/her, **family members of national of the European Economic Area** :
 1. his/her spouse;
 2. his/her descendants or his/her spouse's descendants, under age 21 or who are in their care;
 3. his/her parents or his/her spouse's parents, who are in their care, with the exception of the parents of a student or a student's spouse;
 4. the spouse of the persons mentioned under 2 and 3;
- spouses of **Belgian citizens**, and, provided that they settle with one of them:
 1. the descendants of the Belgian or of his/her spouse, under age 21 or who are in their care ;
 2. the parents of the Belgian or his/her spouse, who are in their care ;
 3. the spouse of the persons mentioned under 1 and 2;
- **refugees** recognised by the Belgian authorities;
- **partners who assist or replace their husbands or wives** in the exercise of their self-employed professional activities;
- foreign nationals on **business trips**, provided their stay (required by the trip) does not exceed 90 consecutive days. Are considered as business trips: trips within Belgium by a foreigner whose main residence is not in Belgium and who travels on his own behalf or on behalf of his company in order to:
 - visit professional partners;

- seek and develop professional contacts;
 - negotiate and sign contracts;
 - participate in trade fairs and exhibitions to present and sell his/her products or those of the company;
 - participate in board of directors' or shareholders' meetings.
- foreign nationals whose main residence is not in Belgium and who come to Belgium to hold **lectures**, provided the duration of their stay (required by their activities) does not exceed 90 consecutive days;
- **foreign journalists** whose main residence is not in Belgium and who come to Belgium for professional reasons, provided the duration of their stay (required by their activities) does not exceed 90 consecutive days;
- **foreign athletes** as well as their self-employed assistants whose main residence is not in Belgium and who come to Belgium as part of their respective professional activities, provided the duration of their stay (required by their activities) does not exceed 90 consecutive days;
- **foreign artists** as well as their self-employed assistants whose main residence is not in Belgium and who come to Belgium as part of their respective professional activities, provided the duration of their stay (required by their activities) does not exceed 90 consecutive days;
- **foreign students** who have the right to stay in Belgium, on an internship required by their studies, for the duration of that internship;
- foreign nationals who come to Belgium to follow an **internship** approved by the competent authorities **within the framework of development cooperation or exchange programmes** based on reciprocity, for the duration of that internship;
- **independent executives** and **researchers** working for **coordination centres** falling under the Royal Decree n° 187 of 30 December 1982 regarding the creation of coordination centers.
- What conditions need to be fulfilled in order to obtain a professional card?

Setting up a business

What criteria must be met to obtain a professional card?

1. You must hold the right of residence;
if you do not, you must apply for this right at the diplomatic or consular post at the same time you apply for your professional card;
2. You must comply with the regulatory obligations, and especially those relating to the activity;
3. Your project must benefit the prosperity of the Brussels-Capital Region. Your project must contribute to one or more of the following economy and development aspects :
 - The improvement of existing sales channels
 - Operational improvement for companies or public or private organisations on the territory of the region
 - Innovation in the design and distribution of goods and services or in scientific research
 - The sustainable creation of salaried jobs
 - The cultural offerings or cultural promotion, in the sense of article 4 of the special law dated 8 August 1980 on institutional reforms

- The improvement of knowledge and the promotion of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions or of fundamental rights
- The contribution to the attractiveness of the Brussels Capital Region as a location for international institutions

The planned professional activity is not of interest when it concerns a supply of goods or services that are already abundant in the Brussels Capital Region.

Joining an existing company

If the application concerns joining an existing company or association, the following factors are taken into account, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions:

1. The company's financial situation
 2. The applicant's contribution to improving the functioning of the company or association or its range of goods and services. This contribution is examined in the light of:
 - the applicant's position, status and responsibilities within the company or association;
 - the extent of the applicant's contribution.
- **How to apply for a professional card (first request)?**

Applications should be made:

- **at the Belgian consular or diplomatic representation in your country of residence**, if you live abroad;
- **at a recognized [enterprise counter](#) of your choice**, if you have a valid "model A registration certificate" or a valid certificate of registration with the Register of foreign nationals, if you live in Belgium.

Documents to be provided

The application must include :

- The form duly completed, dated and signed.
 - **If you live abroad :**
 Form in French : [Formulaire de demande de carte professionnelle pour étrangers à introduire auprès du poste diplomatique ou consulaire de votre pays de résidence \(.pdf\)](#) ;
 Form in Dutch : [Aanvraagformulier beroepskaart voor vreemdelingen in te dienen bij de diplomatieke of consulaire post in het land van verblijf \(.pdf\)](#).
 - **If you live in Belgium** and have a valid "model A registration certificate" or a valid certificate of registration with the Register of foreign nationals :
 Form in French : [Formulaire de demande de carte professionnelle pour étrangers à introduire auprès du guichet d'entreprises de votre choix \(.pdf\)](#) ;
 Form in Dutch : [Aanvraagformulier beroepskaart voor vreemdelingen in te dienen bij een ondernemingsloket naar keuze \(.pdf\)](#).
- extract from the criminal record (certificate of good conduct);
- copy of your identity card;
- two identity photos;
- your business plan (or a summary). The transmitted document must comprise a maximum of 20 pages;
- any other document you consider useful for the examination of your dossier.

Depending on the planned activity, Brussels Economy and Employment will contact you to obtain any other additional documents it needs to process your dossier.

Cost

A professional card (first card or renewal) costs

- 140 € at the moment you submit your application at an enterprise counter or at a diplomatic representation or consulate;
- 90 € per year of validity when the [enterprise counter](#) issues the card.

• How is the request treated?

1. The **consular or diplomatic representation or the [enterprise counter](#)** which receives your application will forward it to the competent regional administration. If the intended place of establishment is located in the Brussels Capital Region, your application will be forwarded to Brussels Economy and Employment.
2. Brussels Economy and Employment verifies whether your application complies with the rules set out above.
 - If not, your application will be rejected and you will be notified via the consular or diplomatic representation or the enterprise counter which received your application.
 - If these rules are met, Brussels Economy and Employment will then assess your application.
3. Assessment will take place according to the **three criteria** that must be met to obtain a professional card :
 - The right of residence :
Brussels Economy and Employment verifies whether you have a valid right of residence in Belgium or in the country where you applied for your professional card.
 - Compliance with regulatory obligations :
Brussels Economy and Employment verifies whether you and/or your company possess basic management knowledge and in certain cases the necessary professional knowledge to meet the access requirements for the intended professional activities and whether all other obligations linked to your status are fulfilled.
To that end, you must enclose with your application for a professional card the certificates you have received at the enterprise counter.
 - The relevance of the project :
The economic utility is judged in terms of job creation, productive investments, economic benefits for Belgium and for businesses established on the Belgian territory, the opening of markets, rare, innovative or very specialized activities or activities meeting an unsatisfied or insufficiently satisfied need. Brussels Economy and Employment collects all necessary information in order to assess this criterion: description of the project, skills and experience of the applicant, financial standing; market study, financial analysis, contact with business partners, contract opportunities; company statutes or draft statutes, etc. In short, all evidence that allows to determine your project's relevance for the Brussels Capital Region.
4. The **decision**
If your application meets the required criteria, Brussels Economy and Employment will issue the professional card. Otherwise, Brussels Economy and Employment will notify the refusal and the reasons therefore.

The **professional card** will be delivered **through an [enterprise counter](#)**.

You will be informed of any **decision of rejection through**, according to the case at hand, **the consular or diplomatic representation or the [enterprise counter](#)**.

Are there any other conditions that you need to fulfill before carrying out an independent professional activity?

If you are self-employed, you must go to an [enterprise counter](#) once you have received your professional card, in order to:

- obtain your enterprise number;
- register with the Enterprise Crossroads Bank.

According to your business activity, you must also:

- register for VAT;
- register with a social insurance fund for self-employed workers.

If you are **responsible for the daily management** of a company as an agent, you must:

- register your professional card with the Enterprise Crossroads Bank via an enterprise counter;
- register with a social insurance fund for self-employed workers.

If you are an executive director or a partner, you are only required to register with a social insurance fund.

To set up a business in Belgium, you must register your company statutes with the Registry of the commercial court of the location where the headquarters of your company are established. In this process, the company will be registered with the Enterprise Crossroads Bank and will receive its enterprise number.

In addition, if the company engages in business activities, it must:

- obtain access to the profession via an [enterprise counter](#);
- register its activities with an [enterprise counter](#);
- register for VAT.

Finally, if it employs any personnel, it must register with the National Social Security Office.

• **What do I have to do in case of a change in activity or situation or if I lose my card?**

- You must obtain a new permit:
 - before changing your activity or adding new activities,
 - for any change made to particulars mentioned on the permit.
- If you lose your card or if your card is destroyed, you must request a replacement card. Your application for a replacement card must be accompanied by a sworn statement of loss or destruction.

Your application for a new professional card must be filed with the [recognised enterprise counter](#) of your choice :

- Form in French : [Formulaire de demande de carte professionnelle pour étrangers à introduire auprès du guichet d'entreprises \(.pdf\)](#)

- Form in Dutch : [Aanvraagformulier beroepskaart voor vreemdelingen in te dienen bij een ondernemingsloket \(.pdf\)](#)

Cost

Changing or replacing a card costs 140 euros at the moment you submit the application.

The enterprise counter does not charge any price when issuing a modified card or card in replacement.

- **How long is the professional card valid?**

The professional card is attributed for a **maximum period of five years**.

Generally, an initial card is granted for a probation period of two years.

The permit is issued for **one or more specific activities** as mentioned on the card.

The **validity of the card is linked to the cardholder's right of residence**. If this right is revoked, the card can no longer be used and must be returned to an [enterprise counter](#).

- **How to renew a professional card?**

Once it expires, the professional card may be renewed as long as you have met all your regulatory, tax and social security obligations as well as the criterion of economic utility on the basis of which the professional card was granted.

You must apply for renewal **at least three months before** the card's expiry date via the [enterprise counter](#) you have chosen.

Documents to be provided

The application must include :

- The form duly completed, dated and signed.
Form in French : [Formulaire de demande de carte professionnelle pour étrangers à introduire auprès du guichet d'entreprises de votre choix \(.pdf\)](#)
Form in Dutch : [Aanvraagformulier beroepskaart voor vreemdelingen in te dienen bij een ondernemingsloket naar keuze \(.pdf\)](#)
- extract from the criminal record (certificate of good conduct);
- copy of your identity card;
- two identity photos;
- your original licence (you will receive a declaration from the Counter stipulating that you have requested a renewal);
- an updated business plan (maximum 20 pages);
- any other document you consider useful for the examination of your dossier;
- proof that you have met your tax and social obligations:
 - a declaration issued by the direct tax authority stating that you do not have any personal tax debts (for freelancers and companies) or company tax debts (for companies).
 - a declaration issued by the VAT authority stating that you do not have any debts (for freelancers)/that the business does not have any debts (for companies);
 - a declaration issued by your social insurance agency stating that you have paid your social security contributions (for freelancers and companies) and that your company has paid its social security contributions (for companies);

- a declaration issued by the NSSO or your social security agency stating that you have paid your NSSO contributions, or a written declaration that you do not have employees (for freelancers and companies);
- proof that your project provides added economic value:
 - the tax statement for the last two years (parts I and II), or the tax declaration for the last two years (parts I and II);
 - the balance sheet and income statement for the last two years, certified by an accountant, **with an indication of the salary paid to the managers and partners** (for companies);
 - the sales book and receipts book for the last two years.

Cost

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- **What to do when your request is turned down?**

A new application

If your application has been rejected, you can reapply

- after two years, starting on the date of submission of your previous application ;
- immediately, if :
 - the refusal resulted from a decision of inadmissibility,
 - you can claim new evidence or
 - your application is related to a different professional activity.

An appeal

If your application for a professional card is rejected, you may appeal against this decision to the minister of Employment of the Brussels Capital Region. Your letter must specify the motivation for the application and must be written in French or in Dutch. It must be signed and sent by registered mail within the thirty days following the notification of the administration's decision to refuse you the card.

You will be notified of the minister's decision. Should the decision confirm the rejection or the withdrawal of the card, you can appeal before the Council of State within the sixty days following the notification of the minister's decision.

Forms

If you live abroad

[Form in French : Apply for a professionnall card at the diplomatic or consular post \(.pdf\)](#)

[Form in Dutch : Apply for a professional card at the diplomatic or consular post \(.pdf\)](#)

If you live in Belgium

and have a valid "model A registration certificate" or a valid certificate of registration with the Register of foreign nationals

[Form in French : Apply for a professional card at the enterprise counter of your choice \(.pdf\)](#)

[Form in Dutch : Apply for a professional card at the enterprise counter of your choice \(.pdf\)](#)

If the application is complete, it will take 3 months to process.

Regulation

- [Brussels-Capital Region Decree of 16 May 2024 implementing the Ordinance of 1 February 2024 on economic migration](#)
- [Ordinance of February 1, 2024 on economic migration in the "Work permits" regulation](#)
- [Royal decree dated 3 february 2003 exempting certain categories of foreign nationals from the requirement to hold a professional card in order to exercise a self-employed professional activity](#)
- [Notice concerning personal data treatment by and or for the SPRB-GOB \(.pdf\)](#)

Voir aussi

- [Créer son entreprise](#)
- [Prouver les compétences professionnelles](#)
- [Les autorisations spécifiques](#)