MENS & ORGANISATIE
PEOPLE & ORGANISATION

BROCHURE INTERNATIONAL STAFF

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WELCOME

Welcome to an exciting new chapter in your academic journey: you're about to embark on an adventure in Brussels, Belgium, where the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) will soon become your (academic) home. Whether you're arriving solo or with your family, this journey promises to be an enriching and transformative experience.

We at VUB are thrilled to welcome you to our vibrant city and diverse university community! Get ready to explore, connect, and thrive in Brussels, as you contribute to the dynamic research culture at the heart of Europe.

This guide is intended to assist international staff and student coming to the VUB and relocating to Belgium, providing support with settling in. While comprehensive, it may not address every unique circumstance or request.

For additional information about formalities like single permits, health insurance, commune registration, … We recommend to read our webpage 'International career' by clicking on the link and consult especially if you are planning on residing in Brussels, this website Brussels made easy - Commissioner Brussels Europe & International . The information Just arrived - Commissioner Brussels Europe & International is also a must-read.

I. PRACTICALITIES

1. BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

To come to Belgium as a foreigner, you must be able to present certain identity and residence documents. If you are not Belgian and want to move to Belgium, you must have the necessary residence documents to do so. Otherwise, you cannot gain access to Belgian territory.

There is a distinction between staff and students. Are you a (PhD) student and would like more information on this topic? Consult the VUB brochure for international students and be sure to check "apply with a foreign diploma" on our VUB-website. On this webpage you will find complete and detailed information about the enrolment process and the preparation of your stay (visa, accommodation and finances).

A. VISA FORMALITIES

DO I NEED A VISA TO COME TO BELGIUM?

VISA APPLICATION

A visa gives permission to **stay or travel** through Belgium for a certain period of time.

Whether or not you have to apply for work and entry visa depends on your nationality.

Be sure to check the page "immigration and visa" on our VUB-website.

EEA+ nationals

For employees within the European Union, there is a 'free movement of persons' which makes residence regulations for EU citizens much more flexible than those for nationals of other countries. If you are a national of a Member State of the European Union or Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland (EEA+ nationals) you can simply travel to Belgium with a valid international passport or identity card. You do not need to apply for a visa.

On arrival, you will have to register at the town hall of the municipality in which you will be residing.

Non-EEA nationals

Once your faculty and/or supervisor has confirmed your hiring as a staff member or grant holder, you can start planning your move to Belgium. First things first: the visa formalities.

A visa is placed in the passport at the consulate. It gives permission to stay or travel through Belgium for a certain period of time.

You must apply for a visa at the Belgian diplomatic mission or embassy in your country of nationality or current country of residence. In most cases, the first contacts, inquiries and submission of documents occur online.

As soon as your visa is issued, you can travel to Belgium from the date specified on the visa.

SHORT STAY (maximum of 90 days)

If you are planning for a short stay, please visit this page.

LONG STAY (more than 90 days)

If you are planning for a long stay, please visit this page.

B. THE SINGLE PERMIT for NON-EEA NATIONALS

Third-country nationals, **wishing to work** in Belgium for more than 90 days must submit an application for a work permit to the authorised Region via their employer. This application for a work permit is equivalent to an application for a residence permit.

WHO NEEDS A SINGLE PERMIT?

All employees on the VUB payroll who will perform duties in Belgium for VUB, including:

- Administrative and Technical Staff (ATP)
- Independent Academic Staff (ZAP)
- Assistant Academic Staff (AAP)
- Scientific and Pedagogical Staff (WPP)
- Postdoctoral Fellows (postdoc bursaal)

Employers based abroad who request one of their employees to perform duties in Belgium.

- Unpaid researchers
- Unpaid professor (visiting professor)
- Unpaid postdoctoral fellow (visiting post doc scholar)

HOW TO APPLY FOR A SINGLE PERMIT FROM OBROAD

Team HR-international at People&Organisation will assist you with the Single permit process.

The Single permit combines the residence permit and the work permit.

You will be asked to provide the necessary documents for your application. Once collected, your application will be submitted to the relevant authorities.

First, Brussels Economy and Employment will review your file for the labor section.

After this, the file will be forwarded to the Immigration Department, they will review it for the residence part.

Please be aware that this process may be time consuming. For more information regarding the Single permit please visit the website of the Immigration department: https://dofi.ibz.be/en/themas/onderdanen-van-derde-landen/werk/single-permit

Also, contact team HR-international P&O: m&o_international@vub.be

WHICH DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR A SINGLE PERMIT?

The application must be accompanied by documents related to residence and work.

The type of application and **the required documents depend on the employment status** (ATP/AAP/ZAP/WPP/postdoctoral fellow).

Below are the general guidelines for the required documents.

Documents related to residence include:

- Proof of payment of a contribution fee
- A copy of all pages of the applicant's valid passport or equivalent travel document
- Proof that the applicant has sufficient means of subsistence, the duration of employment as an employee, and, where applicable, the employer's VAT number
- An extract from the criminal record or an equivalent document if the applicant is over 18 years old
- **A medical certificate**
- Proof that the applicant has **health insurance** covering all risks in Belgium for themselves and their family members (this is done by the employer's commitment to have you join a mutual insurance company upon arrival in Belgium)

During the assessment, the Immigration Office may request additional information and documents from the applicant

Consult the regions' websites **for information on work-related documents**:

Brussels-Capital Region: **http://werk-economie-emploi.brussels**

C. ACCOMMODATION

Finding suitable accommodation is an important part of preparing your move to Belgium. Although you can start exploring the housing market before your arrival, securing long-term accommodation from abroad can be difficult. You may not be able to visit the property, check its condition or get a clear impression of the neighbourhood.

You can choose to arrange long-term accommodation before your arrival. Alternatively, if you prefer to search for a permanent home after arriving in Belgium, temporary accommodation may be available for your first days or weeks, subject to availability. This gives you the opportunity to visit properties and explore different neighbourhoods before choosing a permanent place to live.

IMPORTANT: MUNICIPAL REGISTRATION

International staff members who move to Belgium must register with the municipality responsible for their place of residence. The applicable registration deadline depends on your nationality and residence status. Non-EEA staff members arriving with a Single Permit are generally required to register within eight working days after their arrival in Belgium.

To complete the registration, you must have an actual place of residence where you can register your official address. Registration may therefore not be possible while you are staying in accommodation that does not allow official address registration.

If you have not yet found suitable accommodation or cannot obtain an appointment within the applicable deadline, contact the municipality as soon as possible to explain your situation and ask how to proceed.

Please note that temporary accommodation does not necessarily allow official address registration. Always verify this with the accommodation provider and the municipality.

TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION FOR VUB STAFF

VUB may be able to provide temporary accommodation through the options listed below, subject to availability. These accommodations can be used as a temporary place to stay while looking for long-term housing in Belgium.

Availability, eligibility and booking conditions differ for each option. Temporary accommodation therefore cannot be guaranteed.

LIVING LAB

Living Lab offers eight simple single rooms on the VUB Main Campus in Etterbeek. The rooms have shared bathroom facilities and access to a basic kitchen. Accommodation is subject to availability. The cost is €80 per night, including breakfast in the VUB restaurant on weekdays. Guests staying for a full week benefit from a reduced weekly rate of €350.

Booking

A stay at Living Lab can only be booked using a VUB PKC number. A PKC number is an internal VUB financial code used for budget allocation and invoicing.

Payment by cash or card is not possible. The booking must therefore be requested by your VUB department, faculty or supervisor. The accommodation costs will be charged internally to the PKC number provided.

To request a room, your VUB department, faculty or supervisor must first contact Hospitality by email and clearly state the applicable PKC number. After internal approval, a confirmation email will be sent with the booking link and practical check-in information. The reservation is only final after this confirmation.

More information and contact

For more information about availability, eligibility, booking and the applicable conditions, please contact:

- hospitality@vub.be
- Internal information: Living Lab guest accommodation on VUB SharePoint
- Address: VUB Main Campus in Etterbeek

Please note that the SharePoint page can only be accessed with an active VUB account.

BrIAS ACCOMMODATION

The Brussels Institute for Advanced Studies, or BrIAS, is an initiative co-founded by VUB and ULB. BrIAS is located at Boulevard Général Jacques 210 in Ixelles, within walking distance of the VUB Main Campus. Accommodation is subject to availability.

Booking

To request accommodation, you must provide an invitation letter signed by your VUB supervisor (a VUB academic staff member). Please visit the internal information webpage to download the required template. Once completed, send the template to

accommodation@brias.be. Subject to apartment availability, BRIAS will then arrange your stay. The minimum stay is 7 nights.

More information and contact

For more information about availability, eligibility, booking and the applicable conditions, please contact:

- accommodation@brias.be
- Internal information: BrIAS accommodation webpage
- Address: Boulevard Général Jacques 210, 1050 Ixelles

OTHER ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

The options listed below are not facilitated or managed by VUB. They may be suitable for a temporary or mid-term stay, depending on the provider and availability.

VUB does not act as an intermediary and cannot guarantee availability, prices, booking conditions or the quality of the accommodation. Always check the applicable conditions carefully before making a reservation or payment.

HOUSING ANYWHERE

HousingAnywhere is an external online rental platform through which tenants can search for and book accommodation.

The platform can be used to explore furnished rooms, studios and apartments before or after arriving in Belgium. Always carefully review the listing, rental conditions, cancellation policy, additional costs and payment arrangements before confirming a booking.

HousingAnywhere is not managed or facilitated by VUB.

HOTELS AND HOSTELS

Hotels and hostels may be suitable for a short stay immediately after your arrival. You can search for accommodation through platforms such as:

- Booking.com
- Trivago
- Tripadvisor
- Hostelworld
- HI Flanders
- Airbnb

These platforms and accommodations are not managed or facilitated by VUB.

Please note that hotels, hostels and similar short-stay accommodations may not allow official address registration. Verify this with the accommodation provider and the municipality before booking.

LONG TERM ACCOMODATION FOR VUB STAFF

If you decide to search for long-term accommodation after arriving in Belgium, visiting properties in person can help you assess their condition, explore the neighbourhood and determine whether they meet your needs.

Before your arrival, you can already explore different neighbourhoods, compare rental prices and prepare a list of properties you would like to visit. You may also choose to arrange your long-term accommodation entirely before moving to Belgium.

For general information about finding accommodation and renting a property in Brussels, **consult the housing information provided by the Commissioner Brussels Europe & International**. This includes information about rental agreements, rental deposits, inventories and indexation.

BEFORE SIGNING A RENTAL AGREEMENT

Before signing a rental agreement, make sure you understand:

- the monthly rent and any additional charges;
- which utilities are included;
- the amount and payment method of the rental deposit;
- the duration and termination conditions of the agreement;
- whether an inventory and condition report will be prepared;
- whether official address registration is permitted;
- whether the accommodation is furnished or unfurnished;
- the energy performance of the property.
- Read the complete rental agreement carefully before signing or making any payment.

TIPS TO AVOID SCAMS WHEN LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATION

When looking for accommodation, proceed carefully, especially when arranging a rental from abroad.

- Be cautious if a rental price appears unusually low.
- Verify the identity and contact details of the landlord or agency.
- Check the exact address and request recent photographs of the property.
- Whenever possible, visit the property before signing a rental agreement.
- Carefully read the rental agreement and all applicable conditions.
- Check which costs are included in the rent and which must be paid separately.
- Do not transfer money before verifying the property, landlord and rental conditions.
- Be cautious if someone pressures you to make an immediate payment.
- Keep written records of all communication, agreements and payments.
- Make sure official address registration is permitted if this is required for your residence procedure.

PRIVATE MARKET OPTIONS

Once you are familiar with the main points to consider, you can start exploring the private rental market. Online real estate platforms provide listings for rooms, studios, apartments and houses in Brussels and the surrounding municipalities.

Possible platforms include:

- Immoweb properties for rent
- Zimmo
- RentMore
- Spotahome
- Rentola
- Immovlan

- Nestpick

These are external platforms and are not managed or facilitated by VUB. VUB cannot verify individual listings, landlords, agencies or rental conditions.

2. STAYING IN BELGIUM

A. ARRIVING IN BELGIUM

As the capital of the European Union and Belgium, Brussels is well-served by public transport. Most visitors will arrive by plane at one of two airports that serve the city: Brussels Airport (Zaventem) or Charleroi Airport (also known as Brussels South Airport). Getting from the airport to your accommodation is easy.

ARRIVING AT BRUSSELS AIRPORT (ZAVENTEM)

Brussels' main airport is very well connected to the city. It's located just 10km from the city centre. Taking the train from the airport takes around 17 minutes to the reach city centre. The price for the ticket is around 10 EUR. You can also take a bus, which is a cheaper alternative, but it will take around 30-40 minutes before you arrive in the city centre. You could also opt to take a taxi. This will cost you around €50. This is also handy if you have a lot of luggage.

ARRIVING AT CHARLEROI AIRPORT (BRUSSELS SOUTH)

Charleroi Airport is not in Brussels; it is about 45km away. If you decide to get to Brussels by taxi, expect a fare of €100 or more. The best way to get to Brussels would be by bus. There is a shuttle bus that runs every 30 minutes from 3.30 AM onwards. Prices vary, so buying a ticket online is a good idea.

ARRIVING BY TRAIN

There are roughly 16 trains a day that go to and from major cities such as Paris and Amsterdam. The Eurostar train network connects Brussels with e.g. Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, and France. All international trains will terminate or stop in Gare du Midi (South Station). This is the biggest transit hub in Brussels.

ARRIVING BY CAR

Generally, all motorways in Belgium are toll-free. Motorway infrastructure is particularly good and well managed. The address of the university is Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels or Boulevard de la Plaine 2, 1050 Bruxelles (= French).

B. TOWNHALL REGISTRATION

Once you have arrived in Belgium, you must register with the municipality (town hall) of your place of residence as soon as possible after your arrival.

PRIMARY RESIDENCE

Your primary residence is the place where you normally and effectively live. It is the address where you spend most of your time and where your personal and family life is centred.

A household may consist of family members, partners, friends or other persons sharing the same residence.

DETERMINATION OF THE PRIMARY RESIDENCE

The determination of your primary residence is based on a factual assessment of where you actually live. Municipalities may take several elements into account, such as:

- The place where you return after work
- The place where your family members reside
- The place where your children attend school
- Utility consumption (e.g. electricity, gas and water)
- Other factual elements demonstrating where you effectively reside

The intention to establish your main residence at an address is not sufficient in itself. You must actually live there.

To verify your residence, the municipality will normally arrange a residence check. In most cases, a local police officer will visit the declared address to confirm that you effectively reside there.

Important: Please ensure that your name is clearly visible on the mailbox and doorbell.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Please note: the registration procedure differs depending on your nationality and residence status.

You are staying in Belgium for less than three months (< 3 months):

Non-EEA nationals

If you are staying in Belgium for less than three months, you may need to declare your arrival at the local municipality. Requirements may vary depending on the municipality.

You may be asked to provide:

- A valid passport
- Passport photographs (if required by the municipality)

EEA nationals

EEA nationals are generally not required to register or declare their arrival if they stay in Belgium for less than three months.

You are staying in Belgium for more than three months (> 3 months):

EEA nationals

(EU citizens, as well as citizens of Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland)

If you intend to stay in Belgium for more than three months, you must register with the municipality where you reside within three months of your arrival in Belgium. We strongly recommend starting the procedure as soon as possible after arrival.

You will need to make an appointment with the municipality responsible for your place of residence. Please note that the Brussels-Capital Region consists of 19 different municipalities, each with its own town hall.

Following your registration request, the local police will normally carry out a residence check to verify your address.

You may be asked to provide:

- A valid passport or national identity card
- Proof of residence in Belgium (e.g. rental agreement)
- Proof of employment or professional activity in Belgium (e.g. employment contract, hosting agreement or researcher agreement)
- Proof of health insurance coverage
- Any additional documents requested by the municipality

Requirements may vary depending on the municipality and your specific residence status.

Non-EEA nationals

If you entered Belgium on the basis of a D visa, a Single Permit, a researcher permit or another long-stay residence procedure, your immigration documents may indicate that you should register with the municipality shortly after your arrival in Belgium.

Important: Only start the registration procedure once you have secured accommodation where you can officially register your address. Temporary accommodation such as a hotel, B&B or a short stay with friends may not allow official address registration.

If you arrived in Belgium on the basis of a Single Permit or another residence authorisation linked to employment or research activities, please bring all immigration documents received from the Belgian authorities.

You may be asked to provide:

- A valid passport
- Your Belgian D visa (if applicable)
- Your Single Permit approval documents, annexes or other immigration documents received from the Belgian authorities (if applicable)
- Proof of residence in Belgium (e.g. rental agreement)
- Passport photographs (if required by the municipality)
- Proof of employment, hosting agreement or researcher status at VUB
- Proof of health insurance coverage
- Any additional documents requested by the municipality

Requirements may vary depending on your residence status and the municipality involved.

Following your registration request, the local police will normally carry out a residence check to verify your address. Please ensure that your name is clearly visible on the mailbox and doorbell.

Once the registration procedure has been completed and your residence has been officially confirmed, the municipality will issue your Belgian residence card.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please consult the website of the Commissioner for Europe and International Affairs regarding residence formalities for EU and non-EU nationals.

https://www.commissioner.brussels/i-am-an-expat/residence-formalities-non-eu/more-than-90-days/

C. HEALTHCARE AND INSURANCES

HEALTH INSURANCE

Anyone staying in Belgium long term must have adequate health insurance coverage. The appropriate type of coverage depends on your personal situation and status in Belgium.

EEA citizens

EEA citizens may be covered in Belgium through the public health insurance system of their home country, provided that they hold a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Reimbursement conditions depend on the rules of the home-country insurer.

Staff members and grant holders

If you are employed by VUB or receive a scholarship through VUB and are subject to the Belgian social security system, you should join a recognised Belgian health insurance fund ("mutuality" / "ziekenfonds") after arrival. This gives you access to reimbursements under the Belgian compulsory healthcare system. You are free to choose the fund that best suits your needs.

Membership of a "mutualité" entitles you to a partial refund of medical, dental or psychological care costs, hospital care, surgical operations, maternity costs, and prescribed medicines. The amount reimbursed is based on a precise scale for each service provided. Some mutual insurance associations have their own polyclinics where virtually all of the patient's costs are refunded.

There are different health insurance funds. Via this webpage you will find more information.

Insurance plans of some non-EEA countries may be sufficient to cover the medical expenses in Belgium, based on bilateral agreement. More information can be found here.

Unpaid researchers and visiting profiles

Unpaid researchers and visiting profiles are generally not employed or paid by VUB and may therefore not be subject to the Belgian social security system. In that situation, joining a Belgian health insurance fund may involve different affiliation conditions or costs.

Depending on their personal situation, they may consider a comprehensive international private health insurance policy that provides adequate healthcare coverage in Belgium and meets the applicable residence or immigration requirements. Before purchasing insurance, they should verify the coverage, exclusions, duration and geographical scope of the policy.

COLLECTIVE HEALTH INSURANCE

VUB employees and grant holders are automatically covered by VUB's collective healthcare insurance from their first working day. This complementary insurance does not replace the compulsory Belgian health insurance or another required basic health insurance policy.

You do not have to do anything. This insurance, usually called 'hospitalisation insurance', covers the following:

- hospitalisation costs
- costs linked to outpatient treatment of serious illnesses (UZ Brussel and VUB services)
- outpatient concerns (UZ Brussel and VUB services) up to a certain amount

This insurance is cost-free for staff members themselves. It is possible for family members to pay to join (via TEO, our HR system). It does not exempt you from joining the standard Health Insurance.

REPATRIATION INSURANCE

The mutuality will cover the cost of medical expenses in Belgium (for ca. 60-70%) but will not cover repatriation costs in the event of illness or accident. You may therefore wish to take out private repatriation insurance in your home country.

OTHER (OPTIONAL) INSURANCES

There are other optional insurances, for example:

- House insurance
- Family and personal liability insurance
- Car insurance

More information can be found here.

D.BANKING

International staff with a long stay in Belgium are advised to open a Belgian or IBAN format/SEPA zone bank account. Some of the large banks also offer an expat service that allows you to open the account online before you move to Belgium. You will then need to inform the bank once your residence permit has been issued.

You are free to choose any bank of your choice to open an account. Belgium has been moving towards becoming a cashless society and, as a result, has one of the most modern and efficient financial frameworks in the world.

Whether you're staying a few months or moving there permanently, one of the first things you'll need is a Belgian bank account. Having a bank account in Belgium will make your live easier in order to pay rent and utilities, your phone contract, gym membership, receive your salary.... A Belgian bank account may also facilitate your application for a mortgage in Belgium.

Traditional (Belgian) bank account

Opening a Belgian bank account is pretty straightforward. To do that you must be:

- 18 or older, be able to verify your identity (national ID card or passport)
- address in Belgium (utility bill, rental contract, document from the commune).

Each bank has its process for opening a new account. One might require you to visit a bank in person and the other will let you submit everything online. As said, some of the large banks also offer an expat service that allows you to open the account online before you move to Belgium. You will then need to inform the bank once your residence permit has been issued. A standard Belgian bank account is set up for deposits, withdrawals, and online banking.

Banking for expats

Due to the large expat presence in Belgium, you'll find many banks with international capabilities and English-speaking services. The largest banks in Belgium are Belfius, BNP Paribas, ING Bank and KBC Bank (known as CBC in French).

The following banks offer an expat desk in Brussels:

- ING's services to expats
- BNP Paribas Fortis - Expats
- KBC - Expats in Brussels

They generally offer an optional comprehensive service to expats. This service (which involves an annual charge) includes a current account, debit card, credit card and transfer forms. It also includes advantageous financial and insurance packages geared towards the expat resident in Belgium.

Alongside these major banks, which have several hundred branches across the country, there are also numerous independent banking networks, private banks and online banks.

Online banking for expats

Some prefer online banking to traditional banking. Online banks usually require less administrative information in comparison to traditional banks.

A list of most common banks openings accounts for students:

- Wise
- Revolut
- Bunq
- Monese

Using a bankaccount

As soon as your account is open you can withdraw money and make payments. Payments in Belgium are generally made by electronic debit card or credit card. The most common debit card in Belgium is known as the "Mister Cash/Bancontact card". It is a chip card that has a four-digit PIN code. The use of cheques is now almost obsolete in Belgium.

- Make sure your bank has a user-friendly app or an online banking method that lets you receive and transfer funds quickly and easily
- Check the rate of charges for a current account, as these can vary between banks.

E. TAXES

Whether you are taxed on your personal income in Belgium depends on your personal situation. Evidently you will only pay taxes on your personal income to the Belgian State if

you are on a Belgian payroll. The amount of taxes you pay will depend on the level of your income and is calculated in percentages per installment.

For **residents**, this tax applies to all worldwide sources of income including: salary and employment benefits, interest from savings and investments, rental income. Indeed, regarding the agreement to avoid double taxation existing between Belgium and your country of origin, you will probably be exempt from taxation in Belgium on your foreign (non-Belgian) income. However, your other taxable income earned or received in Belgium will be taxed at the rate as if all of your income (both Belgian and foreign) was taxable in Belgium. (This is the so-called "exonération avec réserve de progressivité" or "vrijstelling met progressievoorbehoud"). Note that **non-residents** only pay income tax on anything they earn from Belgium.

ANNUAL TAX FORM

Once registered at the municipality and regardless of your status, you will receive the Belgian annual tax form every year during the month of April, regarding the Personal Income Tax. **Every year, every resident - temporary or permanent – receives their tax declaration form**. The Belgian tax year runs from 1 January until 31 December, and you file tax on the income earned in that year the following summer.

If you want to read more information on taxes: click here

F. TRANSPORTATION

From the city centre to the outskirts of Brussels, public transport has you covered. An efficient network of trams, metros and buses ensures that you can get anywhere in a short period of time and with ease.

The main organisation of public transport in Brussels is **STIB/MIVB.**

BRUPASS 10 journeys

- Fare: € 18,20
- No age limit
- Valid on the entire STIB-MIVB network, except from Brussels Airport with line 12, the TEC and De Lijn bus networks within the Brussels-Capital Region and the SNCB-NMBS railway network, 2nd class, within the Brussels-Capital Region

STIB-MIVB 75 JOURNEYS

- Fare: € 123,00
- Valid on the whole STIB-MIVB network (except departing from Brussels Airport)
- Valid for 18 months after purchase and valid for 90 days from the first validation
- No age limit

! Public transport runs from roughly 5 am to midnight. During the weekend, night buses run every

30 minutes from midnight to 3 am on special routes.

! An overview of transport lines for STIB/MIVB can be found here

! An overview of the railway network of SNCB is available here

FLOYA

Floya – Your mobility in BXL mode is an app that provides you an overview of all the transportation options nearby to optimize your routes.

CYCLING

An alternative to public transport is cycling. Brussels is a very bike-friendly city that is equipped with many bike lanes. The city offers bikes that can be rented at several locations: (https://www.villo.be/en/)

E-SCOOTERS and E-BIKES

In Brussels, lots of electric scooters and bikes are available for people to share. They're an easy and cheap way to get around the city, costing about €5 for half an hour. You can find electric bikes and scooters from companies like Lime, Dott, Poppy, Tier, Voi, Bird, Bolt, and Pony.

NIGHT TAXI COLLECTO

From 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM, you can book a shared night taxi called Collecto, operating seven days a week. The fare for a trip is ca. €6, and the taxi can pick you up at one of the 220 designated points. To book Collecto, download their app and ensure you request a ride at least 30 minutes before your planned departure. Payment can be made in cash or through the app.

3. LEAVING BELGIUM

If you intend to leave Belgium, you will need to take certain practical and administrative steps, such as closing your bank account and informing the municipal authorities of your departure.

DE-REGISTRATION AT THE TOWNHALL

The de-registration process applies to non-Belgian nationals with a valid Belgian residence card who intend to leave the country permanently. This process effectively de-registers you from the population registry thereby invalidating your residence card. You should return your residence permit to the townhall prior to departure to receive a 'Model 8 form' confirming that you have de-registered. The customs may ask to provide this document when you leave Belgium. If you do not return your residence permit to the town hall prior to departure, you need to write to the townhall (enclosing a copy of your residence permit) and ask to be deregistered. Make sure that you inform the townhall of your new address and your permanent address in your home country.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Do not forget to terminate your health insurance affiliation. They need the "model 8 form" (see De-Registration townhall above) to terminate your affiliation. If you have any additional health insurance plans and coverages, please contact the provider to find out the conditions for termination.

HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

Make sure that you give notice of your intention to leave your residence well in time. In Belgium this notice must generally be given by registered letter minimum 3 months before the expected departure date or to the end of the rental contract. It is essential to inform the landlord of your intention to leave the apartment even if you have a 1-year rental contract. If you do not, your contract may be automatically renewed for another year. Please read your contract carefully.

BANK ACCOUNT

Before departure we ask to not close your bank account, because of after payments.

Note that closing a bank account does not just mean bringing your balance to zero. You will have to visit the bank and sign for the closure of your account. Please check all transfers and payments and settle all invoices before closing your account.

II. LIFE IN BELGIUM

1. WELCOME TO BELGIUM

BRIEF HISTORY

Belgium is a European country with a constitutional monarchy that became independent in 1830. Divided into three regions - Brussels, Flanders, and Wallonia - Belgium has a unique cultural mix. Flanders predominantly speaks Dutch, Wallonia French, while Brussels, the bilingual capital, officially recognises both languages. Additionally, a small German-speaking community resides in East Wallonia. With 10 provinces and a population of ca. 11.5 million, Belgium celebrates its national holiday on July 21st, marked by a military parade and various events in the city centre of Brussels.

CULTURE

Belgium boasts notable figures in various fields, including musicians such as Jacques Brel and Stromae, athletes like Kevin De Bruyne, Remco Evenepoel, and Nafi Thiam, and artists like René Magritte, and George Rémi. Belgian cuisine is renowned, featuring moules-frites (mussels and chips) as its national dish, along with world-famous chocolate, waffles and beer.

Belgium also has several cultural attractions, from the futuristic Atomium in Brussels to the charming canals of Bruges. Medieval wonders like Ghent's Gravensteen Castle and architectural gems like the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula in Brussels offer diverse experiences. Nature lovers can explore forests in the Ardennes, while foodies indulge in

Belgian cuisine. With a rich tapestry of heritage and culture, Belgium's attractions promise an unforgettable journey.

BRUSSELS

Brussels is a vibrant capital known for its diversity, hosting the headquarters of the European Union and NATO. While French and Dutch are the main languages, the city is home to people from many different backgrounds. With a lively atmosphere, Brussels offers a wide range of cultural activities, including concerts, theatres, cinemas, exhibitions, museums, and monuments. The city is also surrounded by parks and forests, providing plenty of green spaces to enjoy. Getting around is easy, thanks to well-designed public transport and road networks. Plus, Brussels offers fast and reliable connections to other major cities like Paris, London, Amsterdam, and Frankfurt through high-speed rail networks and good infrastructure.

With more than 86,000 students – that is almost a quarter of all the students in our country – Brussels is the largest student city in Belgium. Brussels is also a world city, where you can blend into the crowd. In brief: you get all the benefits of a university city, plus those of a bustling metropolis.

2. LIFE IN BRUSSELS

We know that a new city and country might be overwhelming at first. We would like to help you find your way around Brussels and underneath we collected some information that may help you get a better grasp of what life in Brussels is like.

BRUSSELS EXPAT HELPDESK

The Brussels expat helpdesk can help you with topics related to your stay in Brussels.

The Expat Welcome Desk has been getting newcomers settled smoothly in Brussels and the Region for more than 30 years. They are trilingual experts who can guide International Brusselers and answer the most pressing questions, from "What are the tricky points in my lease contract? to "Help! I have to pay taxes!" to "How can I find a dentist in my neighbourhood?" No question or concern is too large or too small.

Brussels Law School Consultancy is an initiative to provide legal guidance to students, young entrepreneurs and those seeking justice. The organisation consists of passionate law students who want to be your guide in the legal maze.

BRUSSELS INTEGRATION AGENCY (BON)

The brussels Integration Agency for newcomers (BON) helps newcomers to feel at home in Brussels, including students. They give language introductions, provide individual coaching, help recognise foreign diploma's and provide integration courses. BON established a close connection to VUB resulting in several joint activities taking place throughout the academic year.

SHOPPING

The opening hours of Belgian shops differ from one shop to another. In general, supermarkets are open from Monday to Saturday from 08:30 until 20:00. Clothing shops

are generally open from Monday to Saturday from 09:30 until 18:00 or 19:00. The same working hours are usually applicable to pharmacies and other services.

The main supermarket chains in Belgium are Carrefour, Colruyt, Delhaize, Lidl and Aldi, of which Colruyt, Aldi and Lidl are the cheapest. Some supermarkets, like Delhaize and Carrefour, have smaller sized shops called City Delhaize, Delhaize Shop & Go, Proxy Delhaize and Carrefour Express, which are often open on Sundays.

RELIGION

Belgium is a laic state which means it has no state religion. The constitution (1830) prescribes a strict separation between state and religion but also guarantees the freedom of worship. Belgium has six recognised religions: Roman-Catholic, Islam, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism and Anglican. This doesn't imply other religions are not allowed but that only these six are entitled to government subsidies.

ACTIVITIES DAY/NIGHT IN BRUSSELS

Whether you want to admire Brussels' historic monuments, discover its museums or sample local flavours, there's always something to see or do in the capital of Europe! In our city you can find everything you may need and to better orient yourself in there, we advise you to check out visit.brussels, as it provides an overview of events happening in the city!

To truly get to know our capital, you need to dive into the night! The offer is vast, and ranges from exotic, trendy and alternative to chic, gastronomic, musical, and more.

FOOD

Like many other regions in the world, Brussels has its culinary specialties, starting with its famous waffles. But how many of them do you know? Chocolate, speculoos, Belgian waffles are the famous sweet treats you may find in the local chocolate shops and small pastry shops, and they will not disappoint! Savoury dishes like Belgian chips, vol-au-vent, Flemish stew, mussels and chips (and many more) can also be easily found in the city. Make sure to try as many traditional dishes as possible! Make sure to check the opening hours of the places you visit, as some of them might be open in the morning, close in the afternoon and then open again for the evening. Some of them might only be open in the evening.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE

Throughout the university and across Brussels, recycling is vital. The following rubbish bags are used across Brussels, colour-coded:

- **Blue** bags = plastics, drinking cartons and cans
- White bags = general waste
- **Green** bags = garden waste
- **Yellow** bags = paper and cardboard
- **Orange** bags = food waste (composting)
- Collection point: glass, clothes, oil,…

DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

Many healthcare professionals in Brussels speak English so don't worry in case you need medical assistance. There is a general medical practice affiliated with VUB near campus, all general practitioners there speak English. You can find more info and their contact details here.

You can also opt to visit a different medical practice. The doctoranytime website offers a filter based on the languages you speak, location and other details you deem important when looking for a healthcare professional.

When choosing a doctor, we also encourage you to check if they are considered as **"registered" (in French, 'conventioné')** or not, as it will influence the price you will pay for the appointment. Registered doctors have a set price on their services and with the health insurance that price should be affordable. A lot of General Practitioners (GPs) and dentists are registered, but only a few specialized doctors (dermatologists, ophthalmologists, orthopedists, etc.) are registered. If you need the help of a specialized doctor, we advise to call them first to inform on the price of their services. If you are not sure how reimbursement affiliated with your health insurance works, please reach out to your health insurance provider.

Be mindful that having a health insurance saves you up to 60-100% of costs associated with your healthcare. Furthermore it is compulsory to have a valid health insurance for staying in Belgium (see page 12). You are also covered via the VUB Collective Healt Insurance for certain services.

Non-urgent doctor appointments require an upfront booking. If you are having an emergency, please visit the nearest accident & emergency department of your local hospital.

COMMUNITY HELP SERVICES

CHS operates a 24/7 Helpline in English, for children, adolescents and adults. Calls are anonymous and confidential. The Helpline is staffed by a team of volunteers that is recruited, trained, supervised and supported by the mental health professionals working with CHS.

CHS also operates a Mental Health Services Centre in Brussels, housing an international team of professional therapists who provide support for a comprehensive range of mental health issues. All our therapists speak English and many also work in other languages.

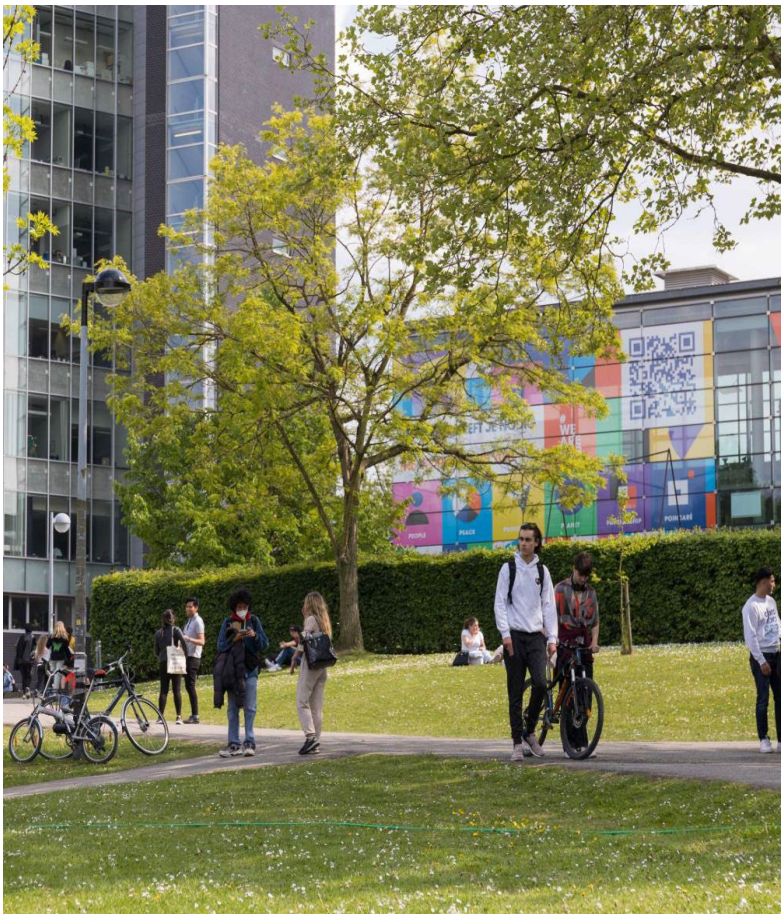
3. WELCOME TO VUB

VUB is a modern university. Though we celebrated 50 years as an independent university in 2019, our roots lay in the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), with which we have been associated for over 185 years since its foundation in 1834. This rich history produces a wealth of experiences, a network of connections and a first-rate education. On and around our campuses, we still find traces of this history every day. We are proud of our past and value our heritage. We are committed to managing the latter with dignity and making it accessible to the public.

Freedom, equality and solidarity: these are the humanistic values of our university. We implement them with a thoroughgoing critical attitude and an open, creative mind. The result: a university where you form your own opinion without a marching order from above.

CAMPUSES

As a Brussels university, most of its campuses are in and around Brussels: The VUB Main Campus in Etterbeek, the VUB Health Campus in Jette, Campus COOVI in Anderlecht, and the VUB Photonics Campus in Gooik. In addition, there are extra classrooms in the heart of Brussels and a campus in Leuven and Diest. Depending on your field of study, you will be going to one of these campuses.



A. PEOPLE AND ORGANISATION

P&O is your partner for all matters related to HR and personnel management at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. We are here to support you and help shape your career successfully.

The HR International team plays a crucial role in recruiting and supporting international staff. We provide assistance throughout the entire process, from recruitment to integration, to ensure that international employees feel welcome and well-guided at VUB.

If you have any questions, please contact M&O_international@vub.be or mens_en_organisatie@vub.be.

B. FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION

Faculty Secretariat Law and Criminology

E-mail: facrc@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 15 77
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building B, 4th floor, room B4.05

Faculty Secretariat Medicine and Pharmacy

E-mail: secretariaat.gf@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 477 41 02
VUB Health Campus Jette
Laarbeeklaan 103
1090 Jette

Faculty Secretariat Psychology and Educational Sciences

E-mail: facpe@vub.be

Faculty Secretariat Engineering

E-mail: secretariaat.ingenieurswetenschappen@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 27 58 // +32 2 629 15 72

Tel: +32 2 629 25 36
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building C, 3rd floor, room C.3.05

VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building K, 2nd floor

Faculty Secretariat Sciences and Bioengineering Sciences

E-mail: facwe@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 12 95
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building F, 4th floor, room 4.F.107

Faculty Secretariat Physical Education and Physiotherapy

E-mail: faclk@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 27 28
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building L, room L2.08

Faculty Secretariat Social Sciences & Solvay Business School

E-mail: faces@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 614 83 83
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 51050 Elsene
3rd floor, room 3.07a

Faculty Secretariat Languages and Humanities

E-mail: faclw@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 39 05
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building C, 5th floor, room 5.C.402

Online overview

C. EMERGENCY CONTACTS AND SAFETY

At VUB the safety of our campuses and the VUB community takes centre stage. We therefore have a number of emergency services and safety procedures for prevention, incidents and emergencies, and general requests for help.

CAMPUS SECURITY

The security guards are responsible for security on campus 24/7. For every incident, they are the first point of contact. If necessary, they immediately contact the emergency services. They can intervene both on the spot (e.g. in a case of aggression, violence, theft, nuisance, unauthorised persons), and after the facts (e.g. burglary, vandalism). They are in the best position to guide emergency services on campus. You can find them on VUB Main Campus in Building X4, entrance 6.

You can call reach them by call **+32 2 629 21 76** or by e-mail **bewaking@vub.be**

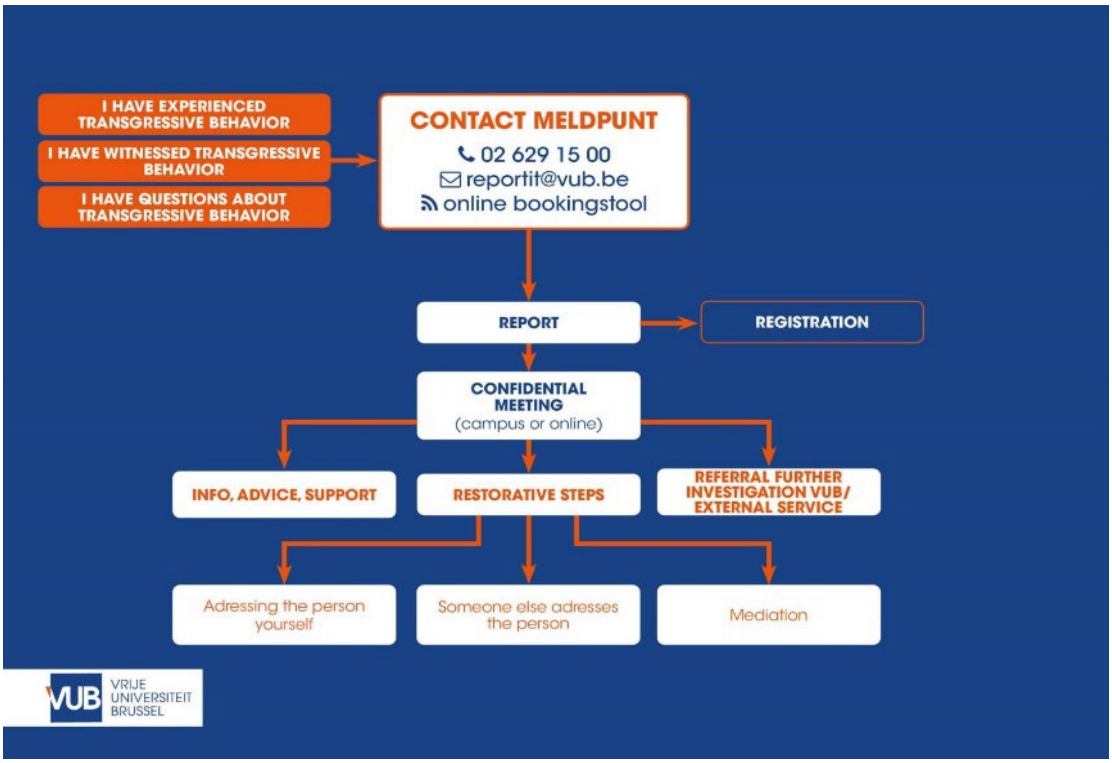
REPORTING CENTRE FOR TRANSGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

There is no place at VUB for inappropriate or transgressive behaviour. Have you experienced some form of inappropriate behaviour? Then rest assured we are there to help you. You Are Not Alone.

You can report unwanted transgressive behaviour discreetly at the reporting centre. Whether you are dealing with verbal or physical violence, bullying, unwanted sexual acts,

intimidation, racism or discrimination, a VUB staff member bound by professional confidentiality and authorised as an independent counsellor will support and inform you about possible further steps.

A report may be a first step towards a solution. You can then decide for yourself whether or not to proceed.



EMERGENCY SERVICES

If you experience or witness a medical emergency, an accident, or an assault, or if you have found a suspicious object, please contact the campus' security by **+32 2 629 21 76** *(VUB Main Campus).*

Below you can find the general emergency numbers available in Belgium, in case you will encounter an emergency off campus:

112: the number to dial in case of emergency, accessible everywhere in Europe	**02 477 32 40**: Burn Care Centre (children)
100: in case of fire, suspect smoke, gas leak or any other danger.	**02 506 47 47**: Civil protection
101: Federal police	**04 250 43 31**: for SOS Nurses – Brussels
105: Belgian Red Cross	**02 513 02 02**: for SOS Doctors
110: Child Focus	**0900 10 500**: for pharmacies on duty
070 245 245: Poison control centre	**107**: for Remote Help Line (listening day and night in anonymity)
02 268 62 00: Burn Care Centre (adults)	**0800 32 123**: Suicide prevention

Brussels University Consultation Center

BRUCC is a centre for psychological counseling, training/education and research. Children and adults can contact us for individual counseling, systemic therapy (couples and families), group training and psychological assessment . BRUCC is located on the VUB main campus. More info on their activities via the BRUCC website.

E. SCHEDULES

We publish an academic calendar for the upcoming year almost 9 months in advance.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

The academic calendar offers an overview of the most important data and periods of the academic year, such as starting and end date, semesters, holidays, examination periods, educational activities and public holidays. You can consult the ongoing (or upcoming) academic calendar on VUB website, just look up *Academic Calendar VUB.*

G. USEFUL CONTACTS

To get information on any facilities or inquiries relating to VUB, contact one of the following departments:

Education and Student Administration

E-mail: studentenadministratie@vub.be
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene

Study Guidance

E-mail: begeleiding@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 23 06
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building F

Social, Legal, and Financial Support

Student Housing

E-mail:
studentenstatuut.studiefinanciering@vub.be
Tel: +32 26 29 23 15
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building X1

E-mail: huisvesting.housing@vub.be
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building X1

Student Information Hub

E-mail: info@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 629 20 10
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene
Building D

International Relations Office

E-mail:
international.relations@vub.be
International Relations Office
Pleinlaan 5
1050 Elsene

VUB Foundation

E-mail: foundation@vub.be
Tel: +32 2 614 88 30
VUB Foundation
Pleinlaan 11
1050 Elsene

People & Organisation (HR Department of VUB)

E-mail:
mens_en_organisatie@vub.be
VUB Main Campus Etterbeek
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Elsene

4. CAMPUS LIFE (ETTERBEEK MAIN CAMPUS)

If you decide to work at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, you can rest assured that everything is in place to give you a few unforgettable years: from great VUB events to the bustling Brussels nightlife that awaits around the corner. What more do you want?

A. CULTURE

Looking to soak up some culture on campus? Explore *Pilar*, the cultural hotspot on the VUB Main Campus. Your appetite for performing arts, music, and exhibitions is sure to be satisfied at this cultural centre and artistic laboratory. Here, the university community works to create a cross-fertilization of art, science, and entrepreneurship, together and for one another. Pilar, the House for Arts & Sciences, with its multifunctional black box and exhibition space, is located in building Y on the VUB Main Campus.

On the campuses, you will also find the VUB choir and orchestra, a fully-fledged sculpture park, and buildings that are true architectural gems.

B. SPORTS

Healthy mind, healthy body, and healthy social life – that's what we aim for at VUB! VUB Sport wants to stimulate everyone (particularly students) to achieve and maintain a good quality of life through regular, lifelong, and responsible exercise and/or sports. This way VUB Sport contributes to a healthy society. We believe that there is a sport for everyone, and VUB Sport will help you find it!

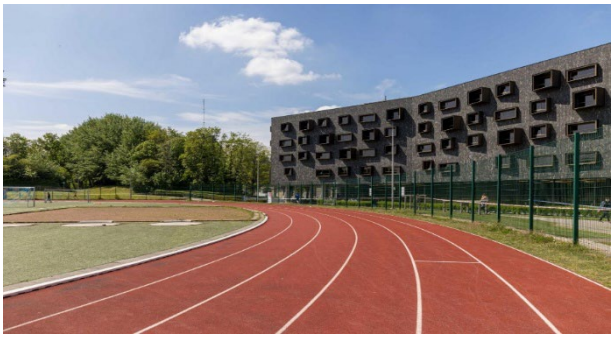
The campus has a big sports complex, it offers more than 10,000m² of indoor and outdoor space for its sports facilities and infrastructure. It has a 25-meter-long swimming pool, a football and rugby pitch, and a Basic-Fit, which is located within the VUB Main Campus.

VUB Sport organises many activities and works closely with other sports providers in the region to provide members with as much choice as possible.

BASIC-FIT

VUB students enjoy a **discount of up to 50%** when purchasing a full-option annual membership at Basic-Fit (Comfort+ formula, which costs ca. €120 annually) on the Etterbeek and Jette campus. Simply buy your membership card in the clubs on one of the two VUB campuses. Once you have your membership card, you can use it in Basic Fit gyms across Europe. They are open 24/7 on both of our big campuses!

SPORTMIX



Sportmix is a package of different sports activities which take place every week in and around the VUB sports complex on the VUB Main Campus. During the academic lecture weeks we offer more than 30 sports sessions for over 20 sports* a week. During the 2019-2020 academic year, for example, students could practice the following sports: aikido, athletics, badminton, basketball, bodymix (aerobics), boxing, fitness gymnastics, European sword fighting, karate, kendo, kickboxing, floorball (indoor hockey), underwater hockey, pilates, rugby, strong HIIT, table tennis, urban dance, football, waterpolo, swimming and zumba. We also offer a number of sports activities during study and exam weeks so that you can keep up your good habits.

D. FOOD

VUB RESTAURANT

Every weekday you can choose from different menus for your lunch in the VUB restaurant at our Main Campus. Besides meat and fish menus, we offer a vegetarian and vegan dish every day. In the canteen you will find sandwiches and snacks. Hot meals are served during lunch, with plenty of options available every day.

VUB CANTEEN

Don't feel like a hot meal? Fancy a sandwich, pastry, coffee or soft drink? Then drop by the canteen during daytime for a quick bite. We are open until late afternoon!

OPINIO

In the heart of the campus, on the esplanade between building D and E, you will find Opinio, a café serving a vast assortment of drinks and snacks. In the summer you will find many people on the terrace enjoying a cool drink or a delicious coffee.

'T COMPLEX

Need to take a break after exercising or keen to meet up with friends? Above the entrance hall of building L, the VUB Sports Complex, you will find 't Complex. The place to be for a bite to eat from noon onwards. The menu features snacks, more hearty dishes and daily suggestions. The view of the swimming pool is a nice little extra.

BAR PILAR

In the brand-new culture tower Pilar, you will find not only a concert hall and an exhibition space, but also Bar Pilar, a cozy campus pub with a terrace where you can enjoy a drink or a bite to eat. "A place for musical discovery, a melting pot where everybody is welcome".

E. LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

One of Belgium's unique features is its multilingual environment. It has three national languages: Dutch, French, and German. VUB offers courses in Dutch and English, so naturally, those are the languages you should learn. French is also a useful language to know, because it is the most spoken language in Brussels, despite Brussels Capital Region being situated in Flanders. Most jobs in Belgium will favour applicants who speak English and one of the three national languages (usually Dutch or French).

VUB LRN

At VUB, we offer optimal support to our students, researchers, and staff. Thus, everyone has the opportunity to develop and follow their own path. VUB LRN has a page on our sharepoint.

ACTO AND CVO SEMPER

ACTO offers a full range, from tailored workshops to individual language support.

Alternatively, using an app such as Duolingo is also a great way to start learning. We understand that learning a new language can be challenging and intimidating, but thanks to Brussels' multilingual environment, you'll get plenty of opportunities to practice!

CVO Semper is another organisation that teaches a wide range of languages. They have flexible class times and teach over 15 000 students.

LANGUAGE TABLES

VUB Main Campus also has Language Tables. During the academic year, Language Tables are organised on certain weekdays in the student restaurant in Etterbeek. This is the perfect time to practise your languages with native speakers and to get to know students who speak other languages. Speakers of different languages meet on different days. As you can see, you will have no problem learning a new language!

Facebook link: https://www.facebook.com/VUBLanguageTables/

F. STUDY FACILITIES

Take advantage of our various study spaces and VUB library.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The University Library offers a wide range of online databases, electronic periodicals and eBooks, and of course a big collection of newspapers, books and periodicals, in both paper and electronic format. The reading rooms of the libraries are also freely accessible and provide a wide range of printed literature, Wi-Fi (access with a VUB account), a range of copying, printing and scanning facilities and a big study space.

CAVA

CAVA is the result of a partnership between the VUB University Archives and the Centre for Secular Humanist Heritage. CAVA collects, stores, showcases and provides access to the archives and scientific heritage of VUB and the archives of the secular humanist community in Flanders and Brussels.

You can consult the equivalent of more than 3km of documents, publications, photographs, oral sources and artefacts. CAVA also organises lectures, exhibitions and guided tours for organisations, schools or individual visitors. Moreover, it acts as a mediator in preserving and promoting intangible heritage, such as stories, songs, rituals and traditions. The university boasts a wealth of such intangible heritage. Two examples are student rituals and the song festival.

III. OUR SOCIALS

You can find VUB on:

- **FACEBOOK**:
- **VUB general (in Dutch & English)** https://www.facebook.com/VUBrussel/
- **VUB International Relations (English):** https://www.facebook.com/VUBInternationalRelations/
- **TWITTER**:https://twitter.com/VUBrussel?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- **YOUTUBE**: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxr4eNyQVz-7Qcf3K7lxp3g
- **INSTAGRAM**: https://www.instagram.com/vubrussel/
- **TIKTOK**: https://www.tiktok.com/@vubrussel