WELCOME
TO THE
EUROPEAN COMMISSION
IN BRUSSELS

DG HR
Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security
Notice

This booklet is intended to facilitate your arrival in Brussels and to help you understand the rules and procedures concerning the establishment of your rights on taking up duty. It is intended solely as an information tool and is not legally binding. The booklet is based on the Staff Regulations of officials of the European Communities and the Conditions of employment of other servants of the European Communities. Only the documents in question are legally binding. In the event of any legal/administrative procedure, the Commission administration and the official concerned must refer to those documents.

A full version of the Staff Regulations can be found at:
http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/docs/toc100_en.pdf
1. WELCOME

Welcome to the European Commission, your new employer.

This booklet will help you through the initial administrative formalities in the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security and give you practical advice on settling in Brussels, making the process of adapting to a new working and social environment as smooth as possible for you and your family.

The Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security is there to provide you with any further information you may need.

You can read more about the Directorate-General on the Europa site;
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/human-resources/index_en.htm
2. BEFORE TAKING UP DUTY

2.1. Identity papers

Belgian law requires all residents to carry identity papers which they may be asked to show at any time, e.g. to open a bank account, request an official service, or to obtain accommodation.

So, while you are waiting to start work at the Commission, we ask you to always carry official proof of your identity (national identity card or passport) when moving about in Belgium.

In Chapter 7 (Special Identity Cards, VAT, Car Registration), you will find a section on registration formalities, in particular concerning 'special identity cards'. Detailed information on how to obtain this card, should you want one, will be given during the formalities of your entry-into-service.

- Always carry your identity papers with you.

2.2. Opening a bank account

Since the Commission will only pay your salary onto a Belgian bank account, you should open a bank account as soon as you arrive in Brussels, even before you actually take up duty. A ‘financial identification form’ as well as a 'legal entities form' has been provided with the invitation for the medical examination or is attached to the letter which you received confirming your employment with the Commission. Please complete this form carefully, sign it, and ask your bank to stamp it or attach a recent bank statement with the details of your account. This should be sent back to the PMO (Paymaster's Office) as soon as possible. This will allow the PMO to validate your bank account for all future payments.

If you have not received these documents, they are available online at:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/execution/ftiers_en.htm ('financial identification form’)

and at:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/info_contract/legal_entities_en.htm ('legal entities form')

When you open an account, you will be asked for your address and identity papers, as well as your letter of recruitment to the European Commission. There are many banks in Brussels with an extensive branch network.

Officials of the European Union who establish their residence in Belgium but keep their tax domicile in their Member state of origin (in accordance with article 13 of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Union), are exempt from withholding tax on savings income in the form of interest payments.
- You must have a bank account in Belgium.
- To open a bank account, you must show your national identity card or passport and your letter of recruitment.

2.3. **Locating Commission buildings**

The Commission’s Directorates-General are housed in some sixty different buildings throughout Brussels.

The map we have provided will help you find where you need to go on your first day, and help you to familiarise yourself quickly with the location of the Commission departments in Brussels.

3. **PREPARING FOR LIFE IN BRUSSELS**

3.1. **The Welcome Office (Integration, Information, Advice)**

The Welcome Office is DG Human Resources Welcome and Information service and part of the unit HR.B.1-Ethics, Rights and Obligations.

It is there to welcome newly recruited members of staff when they take up duty and to provide help and assistance to them and to their families. The Welcome Office organises lots of events throughout the year to facilitate integration. The Call Centre (+32 2-296 66 00) provides a helpline for all the staff regarding advice and information about the Commission and about Brussels.

The Welcome Office:

- provides general administrative information about the Commission (certificates, pensions, illness, leave, etc.) and will orientate more specific questions to the relevant departments.
- provides practical information on accommodation: The Welcome Office service can guide you in your search for accommodation (temporary or longer term). It maintains a housing list of accommodation to rent where the landlords have undertaken to use the standard Commision contract. You can obtain a copy of this by contacting the Welcome Office. It can also give you information and advice before you sign any other lease contract. **You are strongly recommended to contact this service before signing any such document. You can send your contract for checking to the Welcome Office by email at: HR-B1-bureau-accueil@ec.europa.eu.** A staff member will read through your lease contract and suggest the necessary changes. If you request this service, please ensure that the contract is completed with all the necessary information. Practical information on accommodation (internet sites, information about leases) is also available in the booklet 'Welcome to Brussels'.
• provides information on living in Brussels (leisure activities, cultural activities, means of communication, mobility options, schools, crèches, after-school care centres, etc.)

• organises activities to help officials and their families settle in (parties, events for spouses, outings for families etc. All newcomers will be notified by email of all the events organised by the Welcome Office.

**Contact The Welcome Office at:**

Rue Montoyer 34, Mezzanine – MO34 MEZZ

1040 Brussels

Opening hours: 09.00 to 16.00

Telephone: (+32 2 29) 666 00 or e-mail: hr-b1-bureau-accueil@ec.europa.eu

4. **TAKING UP DUTY**

4.1 **Welcome and training for newcomers in Brussels - Module 1 'Welcome'**

The first module of your induction training consists of one day of training and information about the Commission and Brussels and all aspects related to working in a multicultural institution and settling into a new environment.

During this day, you will be given lots of practical information and will take part in training exercises designed to help with your integration.

You will also receive your staff card (with some exceptions) on the morning of your first day and be given an appointment with the ‘Administrative Services Centre’, where you will complete the formalities of your entry into service. The necessary documents are listed in 4.2 below.

During this appointment, members of the temporary and contract staff will sign their contracts. If you are an official, you will not sign a contract; the paper appointing you (‘acte de nomination’) will be sent to the HR assistant in your DG, who will give it to you within a few weeks of your entry into service.

After this initial day of welcome training, you can go to the department to which you have been assigned. You will usually meet someone from the Human Resources department in your Directorate-General, who is responsible for staff matters.

4.2 **Documents to bring when you go to the Administrative Service Centre**

Please bring the following documents and administrative papers to the ‘Paymaster's Office’ (PMO) so that your rights under the Staff Regulations can be established:

**For family allowances:**

• certificate of your spouse's annual taxable income, for the household allowance (if you do not have children);
• a school attendance certificate for each child over 17 and a half, for the dependent child allowance;

• a document confirming the amount of family allowances received from another source;

For the installation and daily subsistence allowances:

• a copy of your accommodation rental contract at your place of employment, as soon as you have it;

• copies of any hotel bills paid since your arrival in Brussels;

• the duly completed financial information sheet for the Belgian bank account, which you should open before starting the administrative round at the Commission;

If you opt for the special identity card for non-Belgian officials (please see 7.1):

• three passport photos (front view, 35 mm x 45 mm, colour against a white background or black and white);

• two photocopies of your passport or national identity card;

• a copy of your marriage/divorce certificate;

For the reimbursement of travel expenses incurred when coming to Brussels to take up duty, please bring with you air tickets, boarding cards, train tickets etc., and the relevant invoice/proof of payment.

5. SOCIAL SECURITY

5.1 Sickness and accident insurance

Officials and members of the temporary and contract staff and, under certain conditions, their dependents, are covered by the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS) under Article 72 of the Staff Regulations (Articles 28 and 95 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants) and the rules governing the JSIS. A contribution to this scheme is deducted from your salary. Staff in active employment is insured against accidents. Medical expenses are reimbursed in accordance with the rules governing the JSIS. You will receive all the relevant information on your arrival.

For more information, see the guide 'Reimbursement of medical expenses' and the booklet 'Welcome to the European Commission – PMO and your entitlements', available at the PMO offices.

5.2 Top-up insurance

Staff covered by the JSIS will be reimbursed within the limits of the rules governing the scheme. If they wish to obtain top-up insurance, they should take out private insurance cover. You can get further information on this at the website of Afiliatys; http://www.afiliatys.eu/index.php?page=
6. OBLIGATIONS OF COMMISSION STAFF UNDER THE STAFF REGULATIONS

When you take up duty with the Commission, you will be asked to sign an acknowledgement that you have received the form relating to the obligations imposed on you by the Staff Regulations.

These obligations and the consequences if you fail to comply with them are set out in the Staff Regulations of Officials and Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities.

The main provisions of Title II (Rights and Obligations) and Title IV (Working Conditions) of the Staff Regulations are summarised below.

6.1. Obligations

6.1.1. General provisions

Staff must carry out their duties and conduct themselves solely with the interests of the Communities in mind.

Staff must abstain from any action and, in particular, any public expression of opinion which may reflect on their position.

Staff must exercise the greatest discretion with regard to all facts and information coming to their knowledge in the course of or in connection with the performance of their duties.

6.1.2. Outside activities

Staff wishing to engage in an outside activity must ask for permission through official channels, as a rule two months before the activity begins.

6.2. Working conditions

6.2.1. General provisions

Staff in active employment must be at the disposal of their institution at all times. They may be transferred in the interests of the service, regardless of nationality, to any place of employment of the institution.

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1 Permanent officials and members of the temporary and contract staff.

2 The Staff Regulations and Conditions of Employment of Other Servants are the reference documents for all matters concerning the rights and obligations of officials and other servants, and constitute a sort of contractual framework. You can ask for a copy when you take up duty from HR DDG.D.1 at the email address: HR-MAIL-D1@ec.europa.eu (only in DE/EN/FR).
6.2.2. **Hours of work**

Commission staff works a 37 ½ hour week. The standard working day is from 08.30 to 13.00 and from 14.15 to 17.30. Flexitime has been available to all Commission staff since 1 April 2007.

6.2.3. **Annual leave**

Except in case of sickness or accident, staff may not be absent without prior permission from their immediate superior. All applications for leave must be submitted beforehand for approval.

Officials and members of the temporary and contract staff are entitled to two days’ leave per working month, giving 24 working days per calendar year, plus additional leave up to a maximum of six days based on age and grade.

Special leave may be granted under exceptional circumstances, on application.

6.2.4. **Part-time working; family leave; parental leave**

The different arrangements for part-time working are: 50, 60, 75, 80 or 90%. Officials and other members of staff may apply to their appointing authority for authorisation to work part-time. Other special arrangements are also available (time credits).

Officials and other members of staff who qualify may also apply for parental leave or family leave.

Management of these working arrangements has been decentralised to the Commission’s Directorates-General and departments. Every Directorate-General/department is therefore the appointing authority for its staff. The contact points are your local GECO (leave administrator) and the Human Resources department of your DG.

7. **WELCOME OFFICE (Special Identity Cards, VAT, Car Registration)**

Articles 12 to 16 of the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities attached to the Treaty of Rome regulate the status of officials and servants of the European Communities on the territory of the Member States. The key provisions relating to Belgium, your country of employment, are summarised below.

The ‘Welcome Office (Special Identity cards, VAT, Car Registration’ section in Unit HR.B.1 can help you with formalities or provide any additional information.

**Officials, other agents and members of their family who enjoy dual nationality, including the nationality of a third country where the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities is not applicable, are strongly advised to seek information from the competent local authorities about their tax liabilities towards that country.**
7.1. Special identity card and registration with local authorities

Under the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities, officials and other servants of the Communities who are not Belgian nationals are not subject to formalities for the registration of aliens. But exemption from these formalities does not constitute exemption from registration as such.

You have the option of:

- applying through the HR.B.1 Ethics, Rights and Obligations, Privileges and Immunities section, for a special identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

- waiving this right and registering personally at your local Commune for a Belgian Identity Card.

Advantages of the special identity card

One major advantage is that you can obtain a special identity card without going in person to the relevant local authority department. Another is that a change of address need not entail applying for a new card, since the special identity card does not have to include your private address. The holder of a special identity card may legitimately continue to use a current driving licence issued by a Member State. Any staff who may be able to benefit from the VAT free purchases scheme (see point 7.2) are obliged to apply for the special identity card.

Disadvantages of the special identity card

The main disadvantage is that the registration procedure in the national Belgian register takes longer than if you apply for a normal Belgian identity card through your commune. We stress, however, that it is completely unnecessary for staff members with Belgian special identity cards to present themselves at the local commune to try and speed up the registration procedure.

There are several stages to be dealt with for holders of a special identity card and as you are not actually registered, but only listed in the local population register, the registration procedure starts all over again when you stop working for the institution. The same applies to sons/daughters of an official who are no longer dependent and who must return their special identity card.

The registration procedure will start again from scratch, without taking into account years of residence in Belgium as the holder of a special identity card.

Auxiliary agents and/or spouses of officials who have worked in Belgium under the Belgian social security system are not entitled to unemployment benefit if they hold a special identity card. In order to receive unemployment benefit, they must first return the special identity card and apply at their local authority of residence for a residence permit as a
European Union national. Unemployment benefit will be paid only from the date of issue of that residence permit, with no possibility of backdating.

A spouse who has a professional activity cannot apply for a special identity card. A spouse who wishes to work in a self-employed capacity must apply at the local authority of residence for a residence permit, since the holder of a special identity card does not qualify for the VAT number needed to set up as a self-employed person.

7.2. Taxes

Salaries, wages and emoluments paid by the Communities are exempt from national taxes. You are, however, required to pay local service taxes, and also property taxes (if you own your home).

Officials of the European Union who establish their residence in Belgium but keep their tax domicile in their Member state of origin (in accordance with Article 13 of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Union) are exempt from withholding tax on savings income in the form of interest payments.

Savings income must be declared in the member state of the tax domicile.

Belgium gives permanent officials, temporary staff and contract staff with at least a one-year contract settling in Belgium when taking up duty at the European Commission in Brussels, the possibility (under certain conditions) of purchasing furniture, necessary personal effects and one car VAT-free. The concession is available for a period of twelve consecutive months running from the time the first order is placed, but only within the first two years after taking up duty. This concession is awarded once only. Further information on this will be given to you when you visit the Welcome Office (Special Identity cards, VAT, Car Registration).

For more information on regulations and procedures, please have a look at the following link:

7.3. Car registration

When you arrive in Belgium, you should register your vehicle as soon as possible.

Cars are registered in accordance with Belgian law. Unit HR.B.1 (Privileges and Immunities section) can help you complete the formalities. To register a car in Belgium, you must:

- have a special identity card or be registered with a Belgian local authority and be listed in the Belgian National Register under the correct address;
- have taken out insurance in Belgium for the car.

The registration card is made out in your name and gives your home address in Belgium (you cannot register a private car at the Commission’s address).
7.4. Driving licence

You may continue to use your national driving licence when you take up residence in another Member State and drive a vehicle purchased in the Member State of normal residence if that driving licence has been issued by a Member State and is still valid. The host Member State may apply its own national provisions to licence-holders as regards the period of validity of the licence, medical checks and tax arrangements, and may enter on the licence any information required for administrative purposes. You may also opt to have your licence replaced by a Belgian driving licence without administrative conditions.

8. TRAINING

The fundamental aim of staff training is to expand and improve individuals’ skills so that every staff member can make the best contribution to achieving the institution’s goals.

The guiding principles are:

a) career-long learning is both a right and a duty for all persons working in the Commission, regardless of their function or place of employment;

b) training is an integral part of human resource policy and serves the interest of the individual as well as the institution.

Responsibility for training is shared between the individual and the institution.

Each year, as part of your Career Development Review, you will create a training map for the following year, which will cover the training courses that you would like to follow and other training needs which may be required by the service.

There is a large variety of training courses available and you will be able to make your choice by consulting the catalogue on the training website Syslog at the following address:

http://www.cc.cec/di/syslog_formation/catalogue/catalogue.cfm

9. THE INTEGRATION OF YOUR FAMILY

9.1 Nurseries (early childhood centres)

There are 4 nurseries run by the European Commission. The function of the Beaulieu, Clovis, Palmerston, Cornet-Leman and Genève nurseries is to welcome the young children of parents who are working for the EU institutions.

Enrolments for the nurseries of children of Commission personnel in Brussels are now done through the Intranet. Applications for enrolment can be made throughout the year using the application KiddyWeb, to which you will get access once you have Intranet.
IMPORTANT NOTICE: Supply of nursery places is currently unable to satisfy the demand. Parents are advised to apply for EC nursery places as early as possible. However, there is no guarantee of a place. It is strongly recommended that parents also apply for a place in one or more local nurseries.

Contact information for the Registration office of the nurseries:

e-mail: crèches-secretariat@ec.europa.eu

Please find more information at the following link:

9.2 Garderies (after-school care centres)

The inter-institutional after-school childcare centres for children aged between 4 and 12 are organised by the European Commission. These facilities are divided between several sites occupied by the European Commission (including Wilson, Beaulieu, Genève) and the four European schools.

The centres are open every afternoon, from the end of the school day onwards, as well as during the majority of school holidays in which parents work: All Saints, Christmas/New Year, Carnival, Ascension or Whitsunday and teacher training days - special holidays.

The outdoor childcare facilities, in a rural setting at the European Inter-institutional Centre in Overijse, cater for children aged between 4 and 14 during the Easter and summer school holidays.

Enrolments for the after-school care centres of children of Commission personnel in Brussels are now done through the Intranet. Applications for enrolment can be made throughout the year using the application KiddyWeb, to which you will get access once you have intranet.

Contact information for the Secretariat of the garderies:

phone no: (+32-2) 29 509 45

e-mail: OIB WILSON GARDERIES or: garderie-secretariat@ec.europa.eu

Please find more information at the following links:


9.3 European Schools in Brussels

There are currently four European Schools in Brussels:

- Brussels I, in Uccle, Avenue du Vert Chasseur 46, B-1180 Brussels, switchboard: (+32-2) 373 86 11, Fax: (+32-2) 375 47 16, www.eeb1.eu

- Brussels II, in Woluwé St. Lambert, Avenue Oscar Jespers 75, B-1200 Brussels, switchboard: (+32-2) 774 22 24, fax: (+32-2) 774 22 43, www.eeb2.be

- Brussels III, in Ixelles, Boulevard du Triomphe 135, 1050 Brussels, switchboard: (+32-2) 629 47 00, fax: (+32-2) 629 47 92, www.eeb3.eu


- Brussels IV in Laeken is due to open officially in September 2012.

The European Schools have adopted an integration programme for pupils with specific educational needs, due to learning, physical, mental or behavioural disabilities. However, schools are not always in a position to cope with all cases. If your child has special needs, please contact the school in order to know what the educational possibilities are. You can also contact the Commission's Social Service at (+32-2) 29 59 098, E-mail: HR-BXL-EMPLOYEE-ASSISTANCE@ec.europa.eu.

The enrolment policy for the European Schools in Brussels is re-examined every year by the Central Enrolment Authority and takes into account the constraints of the school population. The enrolment policies, including the registration forms are available on the intranet site.

For any information concerning the European Schools:

- The European Schools site, where you will find useful documents: www.eursc.eu

- E-mail to the unit responsible for coordinating the Commission’s actions and participation in relation to the European Schools, HR-MAIL-C2@ec.europa.eu

9.4 Integration support group

The Psychosocial interventions sector of the Medical Service in Brussels has set up a support group whose aim it is to support you in optimising your integration into life in Belgium through developing networks and overcoming obstacles, set in a trusting environment.

If you're interested in knowing more about this group, please contact (+32-2) 29 88 000 and ask for Ann Diependaele or Helen Barnes

Email: hr-bxl-employee-assistance@ec.europa.eu
10. EVENTS ORGANISED BY THE WELCOME OFFICE TO FACILITATE YOUR INTEGRATION AND THAT OF YOUR FAMILY

Info Day

The Info Day is a big information fair for newcomers and their families. It's organised at the Berlaymont twice a year between 12.00 and 15.00. It offers a wide range of information with stands run by both internal participants; PMO, training department, the nurseries, the schools and many external participants; the communes, STIB, Friskis&Svettis and many other child- and family friendly organisations.
The aim is to give newcomers information that will help them to settle down, to integrate as well as to make new contacts.
Information and inscription: Newcomers are informed about the event by email, and an article is also posted on the MyIntraComm and in Commission en Direct.

Job Hunting Seminar

JHS is a seminar for partners/spouses of agents (officials and other agents) and is organised 8 times per year. They are presented in French and in English, with about 30 participants per session each time.

The seminar has several aims; the participants should find the necessary tools to look for work in Belgium and at the same time make some useful contacts. The emphasis is on workshops; CV's, interviews etc. The JHS also provides presentations by a temporary work agency as well as legal information on the job market, work contracts etc.

Information and inscription: by email to the newcomers and on the MyIntraComm.

Mid Summer BBQ

The Midsummer BBQ takes place annually in June; with about 500 participants, mainly newcomers and their families. This family-oriented event takes place in an amusement park and is highlighted by a large BBQ for all the participants.

Information and inscription: email to all the newcomers.

The lunch time conferences

The Welcome Office, in cooperation with its legal advisor, gives conferences on themes of general interest.
We have already presented the following information sessions:
- How to fill in the tax declaration
- Family and Belgian law: the divorce
- Information on rental contracts
- Buying and renovating property in Belgium
The conferences are given 4 to 5 times per year, between 12.30 and 15.00 usually at the Guimard building, room 01.

Information and inscription: Information through posters, at MyIntracomm as well as in Commission en direct. No need to sign up.

**Bruxelles Walk Together**

This is a 3-hour guided walking tour of the historical centre of Brussels with professional guides, followed by a drink in a typical Brussels establishment. Get to know other newcomers, bring along your partner.

There are 2 guides provided each time, one speaking French and the other one English.
Information and inscription: Newcomers will get an invitation in the days following the newcomers one day welcome training. They can sign up their partners as well though the walk is less suited for young children.

**Mini-Europe Together**

1-2 times per year the Welcome office organises a visit to the theme park Mini-Europe. This is a family activity; parents with their young children are invited to come along. After the visit to the park, everybody gets together for a snack (tea/coffee and cake) and to get to know each other.

Information and inscription: an email is sent to the newcomers and inscription is obligatory.

**ALL THESE ACTIVITIES ARE FREE OF CHARGE**

Map of buildings occupied by the Commission and the other European institutions: http://www.landmarks-publishing.com/pdfs/mainEUarea.pdf