



Practical guide for newcomers

To read before the welcome session at the entry date.

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1. Welcome Office

What is the Welcome Office?

The Welcome Office helps newcomers when they take up duty and provides help and assistance to them and to their families. It is a service of DG Human Resources and Security, in Unit HR.D.1 "Working conditions and wellbeing".

There is also the sector Expat Administration which deals with "Special Identity Cards, Vehicle registration and VAT".

- **Opening hours:** Monday to Thursday, 8.30 - 16.30 - Friday: 8.30 – 16.00
- **Call Centre:** +32 (0)2 29 66600 (open 9-12 and 14-16)
- **Email:** hr-bxl-welcome-office@ec.europa.eu

Brussels

Brussels is Belgium's political and administrative capital and the administrative capital of Europe.

It is also the capital of the Flemish and French communities. So, in Brussels, Belgium's French and Dutch speakers live side by side with many residents from other European or non-European countries.

The city is also home to the European Union's leading institutions and, consequently, a number of European delegations. All this makes Brussels a multicultural and, increasingly, international city.

Brussels is bilingual (French and Dutch) and is made up of 19 communes, which are very diverse in political, social, cultural, urban planning and financial nature. In Belgium, the commune is the closest level of government to the citizen. Have a look at these two websites:

- [Région de Bruxelles-capitale](#)
- [Be european be .brussels](#)

How to find a place to live in Brussels?

You'll find that it's actually quite easy. The market is not as congested as in other European capital cities.

The Welcome Office maintains and updates **a housing list** with available accommodation in Brussels. You can request it at any time by calling or emailing, and the good thing about this list is that the landlords who advertise on it must use the Commission's standard contract.

Belgian rental contract law is a bit complex. So we strongly advise newcomers to use the **Commission contract** in order to avoid any problem. If your landlord wants to use another contract, then you can send it by email to the Welcome Office. We'll check it for you and make any necessary changes.

- **Email:** hr-bxl-welcome-office@ec.europa.eu

What to do once you have a permanent address?

You will have to apply either for a **Belgian Residence Card** at your commune, or for a **Special Identity Card** at the Expat Administrative Support sector.

Please remember that Belgian law requires all residents to carry their identity papers. You can be asked to show them at any time so don't go out without your national identity card or passport.

Please note that Seconded National Experts cannot apply for a Special Identity Card, they have to register at their commune.

As a newcomer you may be eligible for **VAT exemption on purchases** you make when setting up home in Belgium. To avail of this you have to fulfil certain conditions that are imposed by the Belgian Ministry of Finance.

For information on "Special Identity Cards, Vehicle registration and VAT exemption please find the contact of the [Expat Administrative support sector](#) on the intranet of the European Commission (information not available from outside the Commission).

How to find a nursery for your child?

The Commission runs several early childhood centres to welcome the young children of parents who are working for the EU institutions. However, there is no guarantee of a place for each staff member. So you should apply as soon as possible.

You should contact the "Secrétariat des crèches". If they cannot find you a place in one of the Commission run centres, they can provide contact data for other local nurseries. Please find information about [creches and kindergartens](#) on the intranet of the European Commission.

What are the services offered by the Welcome Office?

The Welcome Office has a lot of services and advice to provide for newcomers.

The Welcome Office also offers a **legal advice service**. Three Belgian lawyers are available. They are members of the Brussels bar and will help you with problems relating to your private and personal life: family law, commercial law, fiscal concerns, taxation, consumer rights, inheritance, relations with Belgian authorities, etc. You should make an appointment at least a week in advance by calling the Welcome Office. This service is very popular. The contact number for making an appointment is **Tel:** 66600.

You may be interested in the **"Brussels Together" walking tour** organised on Sunday afternoons. It is one of the many events organised by the Welcome Office throughout the year to facilitate integration of newcomers and their partners or spouses (free of charge for both). Make sure to sign the participants list at the Welcome session on your first day to be automatically included in all the Welcome Office's email invitations!

Service bikes are available in each DG. It can be a nice and quick way to travel between the different buildings as well, especially when the weather is good.

Depending on where you live, you also have a lot of **options for commuting**: train, tram, metro, bus... The Commission contributes 50% to statutory staff's public transport season ticket. If you use your car you will not be entitled to a contribution for public transport and you will also need to apply for an access card for the car parks.

Please note that the first days at the Commission are slightly different for **Seconded National Experts**. There is a specific section on this document, dealing with those specificities. Be sure to consult it if you are a Seconded National Expert.

Frequently asked questions

What is the process for applying for a Belgian Residence Card at my commune?

Foreigners staying in Belgium for more than three months are classified as 'residents'. As such they must complete various formalities to obtain a residence permit.

The following formalities apply to citizens of EU, Switzerland and EEA (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) as well as their family members.

Certificate of registration application (Appendix 19):

- within a period of 3 months from the date of arrival in Belgium, you must present yourself to the municipal authority in your place of residence;
- the commune will issue an application for a registration named Appendix 19 (valid for 3 months);
- this period of time will allow you to gather all the documents needed to receive the certificate of registration (called Appendix 8): certificate provided by the European or international institution that employs you, together with a birth certificate or marriage certificate (where applicable);
- during this same period, you will be listed in the provisional register and you will be given a national number;
- a control of residence will be made, after which you will be registered in the aliens register.

Certificate of registration (Appendix 8):

- once you have delivered all the documents required by the Appendix 19 within the 3 months, you will receive the Appendix 8;
- this document is available in two formats: paper format (unlimited validity) and electronic format: E Card (5 years validity renewable);
- family members include: spouse or partner, children under 21 years old or in their care, parents/grandparents in their care, spouses of the persons mentioned before.

Why should I or my family members apply for a special identity card at the Expat Administrative Support office?

In Belgium, civil servants working for a European or international organisation have the right to "simplified residence", which amounts to the issue of a "special identity card":

- the dependent members of their family can also take advantage of this system;
- SNEs do not have the right to simplified residence;
- holders of these special cards are not obliged to register in the commune where they live;

- they are, however, included in a separate local authority register and receive a national number (this number does not appear on their special identity card).

Main advantages:

- you can obtain a special identity card without going in person to the relevant local authority department;
- 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;
- holders of a Special identity card (and also the Belgian residence card) may legitimately continue to use a current driving licence issued by a Member State;
- any staff member who, under certain conditions, may be able to benefit from the VAT free purchases scheme is obliged to apply for the special identity card.

Main disadvantages:

- the registration procedure in the national Belgian register takes longer than if you apply for a normal Belgian Residence Card through your commune;
- the registration procedure starts all over again from scratch when you stop working for the institution; i.e. without taking into account years of residence in Belgium as the holder of a special identity card;
- the same applies to sons/daughters of an official who are no longer dependent and who must return their special identity card;
- a spouse who has a professional activity cannot apply for 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 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.

How does VAT exemption work?

Who is it for:

- officials
- temporary agents
- contract agents (contract of one year at least).

What is it for:

- possibility (under certain conditions) of purchasing furniture, necessary personal effects and one car VAT-free.

How does it work:

- 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 Expat Administrative Support (Special Identity Cards, Vehicle Registration and VAT department).

What kind of temporary accommodation can I find in Brussels?

Main types of temporary accommodation available:

- hotels
- bed-and-breakfast
- service apartments
- furnished apartments

A focus on service apartments:

- service apartments are more expensive than furnished accommodation. But they provide hotel-like services (e.g. cleaning and bedding)... and offer a more flexible solution than furnished apartments since there is no lease.

A focus on furnished apartments:

- if you rent a furnished apartment, this includes not only furniture but also kitchen utensils, crockery and blankets
- it does not usually include sheets, bathroom towels or kitchen towels
- ask for an inventory so that you are protected in the event of dispute.

What should I be careful about regarding rental contracts in Brussels?

2 types of leases:

- 9 years
- 3 years or less

The following advice is valid for all leases:

Deposit:

- ✓ most owners will ask you for a deposit
- ✓ this can never exceed 2 months' rent (excluding service charges) and the tenant cannot be obliged to hand over the deposit to the owner
- ✓ it should be placed in a blocked account, opened in the tenant's name, with a bank.

Service charges:

- ✓ service charges may be high. Before signing the lease, ask for recent statements of such charges (e.g. for the preceding year)
- ✓ never sign a clause which says something like "charges include ..."
- ✓ make sure the list of charges is restrictive and exhaustive and that the charges are specified in the lease.

Inventory of the property:

- ✓ to be valid a survey has, for legal purposes, to be detailed and drawn up in the presence of the tenant
- ✓ never agree to a surveyor proposed by the owner. There is no guarantee that he will be objective as he may often have links with the owner
- ✓ the Welcome Office can give you the names of independent surveyors. To be valid, the survey has to be carried out before you move in or within the month in which you move in
- ✓ the property has to be insured.

Estate agents:

- ✓ Never hand money over before you sign a lease
- ✓ Some estate agents will try to get you to sign a rental undertaking: do not!
- ✓ Estate agents receive a commission from the owner, so never agree to pay a deposit! And never forget that the agent is paid by the owner and represents the owner's interests.

What are the specificities of short term leases in Brussels?

About short term leases:

- a lease for three years or less has to be concluded in writing. If it is not, it will automatically run for nine years;
- short-term leases can be renewed only once, in writing, and cannot exceed a total of 3 years. If they are not, they automatically become nine-year leases. Therefore, we would advise you to only sign a short term lease if you are sure that you do not want to renew the initial lease.

Unlike for 9 year leases:

- the owner cannot terminate the lease and must keep to the agreed terms;
- the tenant cannot terminate the lease before the agreed date, unless a rupture clause was negotiated to this effect when the lease was signed. e.g. "*The tenant can terminate the lease at any time by giving three-months' notice and paying compensation equivalent to three, two or one months' rent if he/she leaves within the first, second or third year of the lease*";
- both parties can terminate the lease by mutual agreement at any time, but it is vital that the tenant keeps written proof of the agreement made with the owner to terminate the lease and its conditions;
- the tenant can terminate a nine year lease at any time by giving three-months' notice and paying the owner: three, two or one months' rent if the tenant leaves in the first, second or third year of the lease;
- after the fourth year no compensation has to be paid, but notice of 3 months is always obligatory;
- the owner can terminate a nine year lease under strict conditions and by giving six-months' notice;
- in this case, the tenant can leave the premises with one-month's notice without having to pay any compensation.

What kind of activities does the Welcome Office propose to help with the integration of me and my family?

The **Info Day** is a big information fair for newcomers and their families. It's organised at the Berlaymont once 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, nurseries, schools...) and many external participants (communes, STIB, sports clubs, tourist offices and many other child- and family friendly organisations).

The **Job Hunting Seminar** is a seminar for partners/spouses of agents (officials and other agents) and is organised several times per year. They are presented in English, with about 30 participants per session each time.

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, CVs, interviews, etc.

Lunch time conferences: the Welcome Office, in cooperation with its legal advisor, gives conferences on themes of general interest. e.g. "*How to fill in the tax declaration*", "*Family and Belgian law: the divorce*", "*Information on rental contracts*", "*Buying and renovating property in Belgium*" etc. The conferences are usually between 12.30 and 15.00 and held in the Philippe Le Bon building.

Many other family and newcomer events are organised throughout the year.

What formalities must I take into account to be able to drive my car in Belgium?

Car registration:

- vehicles must be registered within six months of the date of arrival in Belgium or of their drivers' registration with a commune;
- if you are stopped by the police, you may have your vehicle confiscated, be fined or even have to have your vehicle cleared by customs simply because you are entered in the national register but are driving your vehicle with foreign number plates;
- cars are registered in accordance with Belgian law. Unit HR.D.1 (Expat Administrative Support) can help you complete the formalities.

To register a car in Belgium, you must:

- have completed the procedures of the Belgian Customs Office. 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;
- have a certificate of conformity issued for the vehicle by the manufacturer or importer in Belgium;
- all holders of a registration number must pay an initial road tax followed by an annual road tax, the amount of which is calculated according to the horsepower of the vehicle;
- your registration plates remain your property and are transferable if you buy another vehicle;
- when you leave Belgium for good, you must have your registration cancelled and return your plates to the D.I.V (Vehicle registration service).

Driving licence:

- any person over 18 with a valid driving licence can drive in Belgium;
- since 1 October 1998 driving licences issued by Member States of the European Union or the European Economic Area do not have to be exchanged for a Belgian licence. If they are of limited validity they must be exchanged before their date of expiry though;
- we recommend that you present your driving licence to your local town hall which will take a copy, as this will make it simpler in the case of theft or loss.

How can I get a parking access card?

You can obtain a vignette by going in person to rue Montoyer 34, Mez 120, taking your car's registration papers and your service card with you.

Parking spaces are attributed by your new service for your building. You may otherwise only park in non-reserved spaces (first come – first served).

There is no public transport contribution from the Commission for people who use their car to commute.

What can you advise regarding commuting and work-related travel?

Contribution to public transport season ticket:

- eligible staff: all statutory staff working in Brussels (i.e. does not apply to SNEs/ ENDS)
- no parking pass but possibility of getting temporary access cards up to 50 times per year
- eligible season ticket: SNCB, STIB, TEC, De Lijn
- amount of contribution: 50%.

For work-related travel:

- possibility to get a metro or bus ticket free if your travel is for work purposes
- bus lines 21 & 22, run between the main Commission buildings.

Service bicycles:

- ask the duty guard or the building reception and complete the loan form
- bicycles must be returned to the same building, same day
- bus line 12: free trips to Zaventem airport (only for missions).

2. Seconded National Expert (SNE)

What is an SNE?

Also known as ENDS (from the French "*Experts Nationaux Détachés*"), SNEs are civil servants seconded from Member States or EFTA countries, who come to the Commission to work for determined periods, varying from six months to four years.

They have a dual role:

- firstly they bring their specific skills, knowledge and experience of the issues they are used to dealing with to the Commission,
- and secondly they take back to their home administration the knowledge of EU issues which they've acquired during their period of secondment.

The employer of an SNE must continue to pay his/her salary, to maintain his administrative status (permanent official or contract staff member) and to be responsible for all his social rights (particularly social security and pension). Therefore, SNEs are not covered by the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme like other Commission colleagues.

Their years of secondment at the Commission don't give them any EU pension rights.

What are the personal details you need to complete your file as an SNE?

Provide the:

- copy of your passport or identity card
- proof of social security cover: certificate from your insurance scheme, i.e. forms A1/S1 (formerly known as E101)
- legal entity form
- financial identification form (if you choose to keep your national account, please provide a recent bank statement for verification of your IBAN code, bank and account holder);
- if you are entitled to reimbursement (depending on the national administration declaration) of travel cost: ticket, boarding pass, invoice (original), ... please note that the reimbursement is done only at the entry and end of service but not during the secondment period;
- also, this is applicable only for you and not for your family members.

What is a certificate of secondment?

This certificate is the only document that the European Commission provides in order to attest your secondment. It serves primarily for the registration at the "Commune" but equally as a proof for the employer in case of need. This document is to be issued by the SNE sector.

Once you have a permanent address (see the Welcome office section page), you must apply for a Belgian ID Card. We suggest you contact your Permanent Representation to check if they can assist you in this procedure.

Do I have a health insurance?

Please note that registration to the Belgian Health Insurance is not mandatory (except for UK SNEs). But you should also know that membership of a "mutuelle" entitles you to a partial refund of medical and dental costs, hospital care, surgical operations, maternity costs, and prescribed medicines, ...

From day one of your secondment, you are covered by a private insurance company via the Commission against accidents. This accident cover applies only to you and not to your family members.

What allowances are granted to SNEs?

Most SNEs are entitled, throughout their period of secondment, to a daily and a monthly subsistence allowance (calculated depending on place of origin which in case of SNEs is the place of the national administration).

Cost-free SNEs do not receive such allowances from the Commission. They are entitled however to the reimbursement of mission expenses, if applicable.

These allowances are intended to cover your living expenses in the place of secondment on a flat-rate basis. They shall under no circumstances be considered as a salary paid by the Commission.

By receiving monthly allowances, SNEs are not entitled to removal costs reimbursement.

Who can I contact if I need help?

Before you leave, remember that in case of questions or problems, you should first contact your local HR person and then the SNE sector of DG HR.

You should also know the existence of the Liaison Committee of National Expert on Secondment (CLENAD), a forum of information made by and for SNEs.

The Expat Welcome Desk (created by the City of Brussels) offers multilingual administrative and practical assistance to people who settle in the Brussels Region to work with European or international organisations.

Contact information:

- SNE / END sector of DG HR **email:** HR-END@ec.europa.eu
- Liaison Committee of National Expert on Secondment (CLENAD)
- Brussels-Europe Liaison Office

Frequently asked questions

How and why should I get an A1/S1 form?

A major reform of European social security law entered into force in May 2010. This reform abolished E101 forms and replaced them with more simplified ones.

However, some national authorities are still working with E101 forms for a transitional period.

A1/S1 forms:

- the A1 form confirms to the authorities in host EEA Member States that contributions continue to be paid in the home State and prevent a demand from the host State for Social Security contributions to their scheme;
- the S1 form is obtained by the employer on behalf of the employee from the home Social Security authorities prior to taking up post and is valid throughout the period of secondment.

What are the daily subsistence and monthly subsistence allowances?

An SNE shall be entitled, throughout the period of secondment, to a daily subsistence allowance (138.15 € in Brussels) and also a monthly subsistence allowance (see table below).

Distance between place of origin and place of secondment (km) - Amount in €:

❖	0-150= 0
❖	150= 88,80
❖	300= 157.86
❖	500= 256.55
❖	800= 414.42
❖	1300= 651.23
❖	2000= 779.52

Here are the main rules:

- these subsistence allowances shall be granted under the same conditions as the expatriation allowance for officials (see Article 4 of Annex VII to the Staff Regulations);
- in the case of cost-free SNEs, an exchange of letters between DG HR and the Permanent Representation of the Member State concerned stipulates that these allowances will not be paid;
- these allowances are intended to cover SNEs' living expenses in the place of secondment on a flat-rate basis and shall in no circumstances be construed as remuneration paid by the Commission.

Subsistence allowances shall be payable for every day of the week, including during periods of mission, annual or special leave and holidays granted by the Commission.

3. Paymasters Office: Salaries and Administration of Individual Rights (PMO.1)

Note this section is not for SNEs:

- during the Welcome session, you will receive a PMO folder to prepare for your compulsory individual appointment with the PMO;
- a staff member's basic salary is determined by the grade and step fixed by DG HR. However, it is just a starting point to determine your net remuneration;
- your individual rights, which depend on your personal situation, will also have a direct impact on your salary;
- the main purpose of those individual appointments is to enable PMO.1 to assess staff members' personal situations and collect all the necessary documents in order to fix their individual rights;
- you will have to provide two forms to PMO.7, that you received with your letter of recruitment:
 - a "financial identification" form, from which you must open a Belgian bank account for the Commission to be able to pay salary,
 - a "legal entity" form, with which you must provide a copy of your passport or identity card.

Note: **Commission's staff members** (the Commission in Brussels, Luxembourg or Ispra, Agencies, Representations such as Paris, Rome, Stockholm, ...) do not need to have their bank account in the country in which they work.

If necessary, try to open a bank account as soon as you arrive in Brussels, even before you actually take up duty.

PMO.7 contact information: Commission staff and European External Action Service (EEAS) staff

- **email:** PMO-FICHER-TIERS@ec.europa.eu

Financial entitlements

Staff members may qualify for:

- family allowances (household allowance, child allowance, school allowance) Expatriation allowance or foreign residence allowance, and
- other rights based on your place of recruitment/place of origin:
 - daily subsistence allowance
 - installation allowance
 - reimbursement of removal expenses
 - payment of travel expenses upon entry into service.

Note:

- all salaries paid by the European Institutions are subject to a Community tax which is paid back to into the European Union's budget;
- this tax is levied progressively at a rate of between 8% and 45% percent of the taxable portion of your salary;
- you can reach all service of PMO via the PMO Contact application;
- direct link to contact the PMO officer responsible for your salary on Sysper;
- you can learn more about Sysper, which is the Commission's HR management application, in the "Main Information Tools" training module.

How is my net salary calculated?

Net remuneration = Basic salary +

- household allowance
- allowance for a dependent child or person treated as such
- pre-school allowance
- education allowance
- + other allowances
- expatriation/ foreign residence allowance
- allowances associated with working conditions
- + reimbursement of certain expenses
- travel expenses on taking up duty
- removal expenses on taking up duty
- installation allowance on taking up duty
- daily allowance on taking up duty prior to removal relocation
- taxes
- community tax
- special levy
- social security contributions
- pension
- sickness insurance
- accident insurance
- unemployment (only for temporary and contract agents)
- "+/- sundry items

e.g. weightings, salary restraints, attachments/ expenses relating to community crèches and after-school centres, ...

How does place of recruitment/ place of origin impact on my individual rights?

Place of recruitment

The payment of installation allowance, daily allowance, travel costs and the reimbursement of removal expenses will depend of your place of recruitment.

Place of origin

The place of origin is used to fix various financial entitlements such as annual travel expenses, travelling time, travel costs and removal expenses on termination of service.

Am I entitled to family allowances?

Household allowance? A fixed amount (revised annually) + 2% of basic salary.

The household allowance is granted to staff who have one or more dependent children and to staff who are married but who have no children, provided the pre-tax income of the spouse/ recognised partner does not exceed a specified annual ceiling.

Dependent child allowance? A fixed amount (revised annually) per month and per dependent child:

- this allowance is granted automatically for children under the age of 18 with no income ;
- for children between 18 and 26 who are receiving educational or vocational training, a declaration needs to be filed in sysper with supporting documents;
- other persons whose maintenance involves heavy expenditure can exceptionally be treated as dependent children on the condition that national legislation imposes a maintenance obligation in respect of such persons. The appointing authority will take a reasoned decision on the basis of documentary evidence.

Pre-school allowance? A fixed amount (revised annually) per month and for each child under the age of 5 or not yet in regular attendance at a primary school (until the child reaches the age of 8).

Education allowance? From the first year at primary school, staff members may receive reimbursement of the registration fees and transport costs they have incurred up to a maximum monthly amount (revised annually) for each dependent child. A declaration needs to be filed in sysper with supporting documents.

This allowance ceases when the conditions giving such entitlement are no longer met and not later than the end of the month in which the child reaches the age of 26.

Am I entitled to the expatriation allowance or foreign allowance?

Expatriation allowance:

- it represents 16% of basic salary
- it is granted to staff who:

- are not and have never been nationals of the State in whose territory the place they are employed is situated and who, during the five years ending six months before they took up duty, did not habitually reside or work within that territory;
- are or have been nationals of the State in whose territory the place they are employed is situated but who, during the ten years ending at the date of their taking up duty habitually resided outside the European territory of the State for reasons other than the performance of duties in the service of a State or of an international organisation.

Foreign residence allowance:

- it represents 4% of basic salary
- it is granted to staff who are not and have never been nationals of the State in whose territory the place they are employed is situated but who do not meet the conditions for entitlement to the expatriation allowance.

Am I entitled to the reimbursement of certain expenses?

When? On taking up duty, on transfer and on leaving.

For whom? Staff, their spouses and the dependants actually living in their household.

Reimbursement of expenses linked to removal of furniture and personal effects?

- staff with contracts of twelve months or more are entitled to reimbursement of the expenses incurred in respect of removal of furniture and personal effects including the cost of insurance against ordinary risks (breakages, theft, fire up to the limit of an estimate approved in advance;
- on taking up duty: removal must be from the place of recruitment to the place of employment;
- on transfer: removal must be done between the places of assignment;
- on leaving: removal must be done from the place of assignment to the place of origin;
- the costs of a removal done before the entry into service date will not be reimbursed

Am I entitled to an installation allowance?

Newly established **officials**:

- an installation allowance equivalent to one month's basic salary is granted to newly established officials who provided proof that they had to change their place of residence to be near their place of employment pursuant to Article 20 of the Staff Regulations;
- the allowance is equivalent to 2 months of basic salary for those entitled to household allowance, upon evidence that the family joined the agent at the place of assignment.

Temporary or contract agents, if the foreseeable period of service is:

- less than 1 year:
 - the staff member does not qualify for installation allowance;
- 1 year or more, but less than 2 years:
 - 1/3 of monthly basic salary, or 1/3 of 2 basic salaries if the staff member is entitled to household allowance and the family comes too;

- 2 years or more, but less than 3 years:
 - 2/3 of monthly basic of basic salary, or 2/3 of 2 basic salaries if the staff member is entitled to household allowance and the family comes too;
- 3 years or more:
 - one monthly basic salary, or 2 if the staff member is entitled to household allowance and the family comes too.

Am I entitled to a daily subsistence allowance?

For whom: staff who provide proof that they have to change their place of residence to be near their place of employment pursuant to Article 20 of the Staff Regulations and can prove expenses linked to this new residence.

This daily subsistence allowance is not paid beyond the date of actual removal!

The amount of this allowance and the period for which it is granted depend on administrative status and family circumstances, as detailed below.

Maximum period for which granted:

Am I entitled to household allowance? **YES**

- probationary official: Probation period plus one month
- temporary or contract agent with contract of more than 12 months: Probation period plus one month
- temporary or contract agent with contract of less than 12 months: Duration of contract (maximum 12 months)

Am I entitled to household allowance? **NO**

- probationary official: 120 days
- temporary or contract agent with contract of more than 12 months: 120 days
- temporary or contract agent with contract of less than 12 months: Duration of contract (maximum 12 months)

What supporting documents should I provide PMO.1 with?

Supporting documents to be provided:

- **family allowances:**
 - a copy of the salary statement or the most recent income tax certificate of your spouse (in case of household allowance for married couples with no children)
 - a school attendance certificate for each child aged 18 to 26 and following a course of study or professional training
 - a document confirming the amount of any family allowances received from another source
- **reimbursement of travel expenses:**
 - the relevant evidence that the family travelled + the registration with the local authorities
 - the special identity cards requests
 - the certificates of school attendance for the children

- **installation allowance:**
 - a copy of your rental contract at the place of assignment and the proof of payment by bank statement of the rent (do not forget to register your rental contract)
- **daily subsistence allowance:**
 - a copy of your rental contract at the place of assignment and the proof of payment by bank statement of the rent (do not forget to register your rental contract)
 - copies of all accommodation invoiced costs since your arrival at your place of assignment

How to contact PMO?

Please note that the links may only be accessible once you have your Commission Intranet access .

- PMO.1: via the application [PMO-Contact](#)
- PMO.7: Commission staff and EEAS email: PMO-FICHIER-TIERS@ec.europa.eu
- Working conditions: find information on the intranet of the European Commission (information not available from outside the Commission) about:
 - **entry into service:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)
 - **financial rights:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)
 - **staff pay slip:** [English version](#) – [French version](#) **Note:** the management of your payslip is based on your staff number
 - **family allowances:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)
- financial forms: if you did not receive them, together with your recruitment letter, use the forms (information not available from outside the Commission):
 English version: [financial identification](#) – [Financial data](#)
 French version: [Signalétique financier](#) – [Entité légale](#)

4. Sickness and accident insurance (PMO.3)

Find information on the intranet of the European Commission (information not available from outside the Commission) about the **sickness and accident insurance (JSIS):** [English version](#) – [French version](#)

5. EU Pensions and Unemployment Allowance (PMO.4)

Note this section is not for SNEs.

How does the EU pension scheme work?

Just like for sickness and accident insurance, pension contribution represents a fixed percentage of staff members' basic salary.

Each year of service gives you a right to a percentage of pension rights, up to a maximum ceiling of 70%, calculated on your last basic salary.

A normal, a minimum (early retirement), and a maximum (incentive) retirement age are fixed.

As a staff member you are entitled to a retirement pension provided if you have completed 10 years of active service or reached pensionable age.

These basic rules apply to officials, temporary agents and contract agents alike.

Please note that there are some specificities linked to the temporary and contract agent statuses.

Frequently asked questions

How much could be the maximum amount of my pension?

Each year of service within an EU Institution gives a right to a percentage of pension rights, up to a maximum ceiling of 70% (calculated on the last basic salary).

A normal, a minimum (early retirement), and a maximum (incentive) retirement age are fixed.

You are entitled to a retirement pension provided if you have completed 10 years of active service or reached pensionable age.

There is an option for temporary and contract agents:

- as a temporary agent, you may request the Institution to maintain your pension rights in your country of origin (no time limit);
- for contract agents there are a few specificities:
 - contract agents whose contract is for less than one year, may request the Institution to effect all social contributions in the EU member state where they have last been covered, for a maximum period of six months. Social contributions mean sickness cover, pension and unemployment scheme,
 - contract agents must have completed a minimum of 3 years and 1 day of actual service in order to be entitled to family allowances and to remain affiliated to the EU sickness scheme once they are on retirement.

If I choose to effect all my social contributions in the country where I have last been covered, for the first six month, will it have an impact on my EU unemployment allowance?

Yes it will. In that case, your EU unemployment allowance will be shortened.

Note: all staff members also have rights in case of invalidity (invalidity allowance) or death (survivor's/orphan's pension).

What will happen if I am unemployed after my current contract with the Institution?

You should know that both contract agents and temporary agents' basic salary is subject to unemployment contribution.

Therefore EU unemployment allowances are foreseen and they are complementary to national allowances.

What happens to my rights if I leave the EU Institutions before pensionable age?

As a general rule, if you leave the institution before pensionable age and before having worked 10 years within the EU institutions, your pension rights must be transferred OUT from the Community scheme to another pension scheme.

Note that EU staff member who has completed less than 1 year of service, can opt for:

- a severance grant instead, which represents the reimbursement of his pension contributions. (severance grant worth three times the amount of the pension contributions withheld from the basic salary).

Any sums paid into a national pension scheme will be deducted from the grant.

The agent is eligible for the grant only if he has not previously transferred his pension rights to the EU institutions scheme;

- for a transfer of the actuarial equivalent of his pension rights acquired in the EU institutions' scheme to another pension scheme he is compulsory contributing to due to his new professional activities;
- if the EU staff member has completed between 1 and 10 years of service:
 - he is entitled to transfer the actuarial equivalent of his pension rights acquired in the EU institutions' scheme to another pension scheme.

How should I make my request?

The necessary forms are accessible via My Intracomm or via PMO CONTACT online.

The request must be sent to PMO.4.

How do I maintain pension rights in my country of origin?

If you wish to keep your previous pension scheme, you must enter in contact with PMO.1 within 10 days.

Otherwise you will automatically be affiliated to the EU pension scheme!

What if I want to keep my previous pension scheme?

A contract agent, with a contract of less than one year, can request the Institution to effect all his/her social contributions in the EU member state where he/she has last been covered, for a maximum period of 6 months. If the agent is covered outside Luxembourg and Brussel, it is up to him/her to take all the steps. Afterwards he has to ask the employers' part to be reimbursed from PMO.

For Temporary agents, on the contrary, there is no time limit to maintain their rights at their previous pension scheme.

By social contributions it means: sickness cover, pension and unemployment scheme. This choice can have an impact to your other EU allowances/rights (Unemployment & Pension rights).

What EU unemployment allowances am I potentially entitled to?

Only applies to temporary and contract agents.

In case of unemployment after your contract with the EU Institution, and provided you have completed at least 6 months of uninterrupted service, unemployment allowances are foreseen.

How does it work?

To be entitled to the payment of unemployment allowance, you must be unemployed following termination of your service and registered as seeking employment with the competent national authorities.

EU unemployment allowance is paid on a complementary basis (to top up national unemployment benefit).

The maximum duration equals 1/3 of the working period, with a maximum of 36 months.

Termination of service must not be due to resignation or cancellation of your contract for disciplinary reasons.

How much will I get?

The allowance is calculated on basis of your last basic salary and decreases over time.

How should I make my request?

The necessary forms are accessible on My Intracomm. The request must be sent to PMO.4.

What are my rights in the event of invalidity?

Officials, temporary and contract agents who are recognised as being incapable of performing the duties corresponding to a post in their function group by the Invalidity Committee are entitled to an invalidity allowance.

This invalidity represents 70% of their last basic salary.

What are the conditions?

Such entitlement is subject to review for as long as the official, temporary or contract agent is aged less than normal pensionable age. The Invalidity Committee can indeed decide to reinstate said staff member.

Payment of an invalidity allowance cannot be combined with retirement pension. Therefore payment of the allowance ceases when the staff member decides to take retirement (or at the maximum pensionable age at the latest).

What are the rights of my family in the event of death?

Survivor's pension: under certain conditions, the widow/widower (and in some cases divorced spouse) of an official, or a temporary or contract agent, is entitled to a survivor's pension.

Orphan's pension: the dependent children of an official, or a temporary or contract agent, are entitled to an orphan's pension on his or her death.

What can you tell me about the procedure for transferring pension rights in? What is this?

If you already worked before taking up duties in an EU Institution you had already acquired some pension rights under your national scheme. You have the right to transfer those pension rights (linked to professional activity acquired prior to entry into service within the EU Institutions).

But only a sum of money will be transferred IN, not periods of work!

When should I make my request?

You should make your request to transfer your pension rights:

- before you have completed 10 years and 6 months' worth of contributions to the EU pension scheme;
- within six months after reinstatement of the staff member following a period of leave on personal grounds – CCP (if the deadline of 10 years and 6 months is passed);
- and until 6 months after your normal retirement age, variable according to the date of entry into the European Institution (if the deadline of 10 years and 6 months is not passed).

Important: the date at which the request is made determines the parameters of the calculation: age, basic salary, exchange rate, ...

How should I make my request?

If you have access via SYSPER. If not, via the human resources of your institution or agency.

The request must be sent to PMO.4, who will then take contact with the pension scheme(s) involved.

It is never too early to start thinking about your pension!

You should note the deadlines for transferring pension rights from other schemes.

How to contact PMO.4?

Phone: + 32 (0)2 2997777

Website: [PMO-contact](#)

All the details of the Community pension scheme can be found on the intranet of the European Commission (information not available from outside the Commission):

- **End of service: rights and allowances:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)
- **Pension transfer request:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)

- **Leaving before pensionable age:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)
- **Unemployment allowance:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)
- **In the event of death:** [English version](#) – [French version](#)

6. Security at the Commission

Security Directorate, which is part of DG Human Resources & Security (HR) ensures that the Commission's personnel, information, buildings and other assets are adequately protected against threats to their security.

To help the Security Directorate, the Commission also has a network of **Local Security Officers (LSOs)** and **Local Informatics Security Officers (LISOs)**, which are located in each Directorate General, Service, Cabinet or Representation.

A list of all LSOs and LISOs can be found on the Security Directorate's website. Find information about [Security at work](#) on the intranet of the European Commission (information not available from outside the Commission).

It is important to remember that security is everyone's responsibility.

In case of an **emergency in Brussels:**

- **phone:** 22222
- or +32 (0)2 29 22222 if you dial from outside Commission buildings

In case of an **emergency in Luxembourg phone:** 32233 or 12

Service cards

Your Service Card should always be worn visibly in the Commission and other EU institutions as it proves your right to access the buildings.

However, you should always remove your Service Card from view when leaving the Commission or other European institutions. It's best not to draw attention to the fact that you are working for the EU. Unfortunately, you could become an easy target for mugging or pickpockets.

And for those who are going to use their car to come to work, make sure your parking vignette is visible on the windscreen of your car when using the Commission car parks and show your Service Card when entering. But, of course, do not forget to remove it when leaving.

If you lose your Service Card, you should report it immediately by calling 22222 (32233 in Luxembourg).

Protection of information

Brussels hosts one of the largest intelligence communities in the world?

Intelligence-gathering actors are interested in you, your work and your knowledge!

Any sensitive or classified information you are dealing with could be of great interest to intelligence-gathering actors as it could provide them with exclusive insights and valuable foreknowledge.

Never think that you are not important enough: anyone with potential access to information could be a target!

Discuss or send sensitive or classified information only to persons who have a real need to know this information in order to carry out their job and/or are the holder of a PSC (Personnel Security Clearance).

Keep in mind that the email system is vulnerable. As such you should not send sensitive or classified information via open email. For sensitive documents you should install and use the Secure Email System (SECEM) on your computer.

Please note that for classified information there are strict procedures in place including the use of the RUE system for all classified information at that level of RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED.

IT Security

The Security Directorate works together with DG DIGIT to protect our information systems from outside attacks, particularly via the Internet. Firewalls and anti-virus already in place block more than 10 million attacks per day!

You must also take responsibility and follow the security guidelines by using passwords and secure systems when necessary.

Remember as well that your passwords are personal and should never be given to anyone else!

Make sure to lock your screens when leaving the office to prevent unauthorised persons from looking at your computer.

Vigilance is a key protective measure which can help reduce risk as no security system is 100% guaranteed:

- we urge you, as personnel of the European Commission, whether at work or at home, to be attentive to your surroundings. So, if you notice some strange behaviour or anything suspicious, please report it to the relevant authorities as soon as possible;
- if you notice suspicious activities on or very near Commission property, you should report it immediately to the Security Directorate by calling 22222 (32233 in Luxembourg);
- but, if you observe suspicious activities away from Commission property, you should report it to the appropriate local authorities on 112 (113 in Luxembourg);
- please visit the Security Directorate's website regularly as it provides advice and guidance as well as contact points and links to information for every aspect of security. And remember Security is everyone's responsibility!

Frequently asked questions

Why do I need a service card and what information it contains?

The service card contains your:

- picture
- first name
- surname
- status:
 - F– Official
 - T– Temporary Agent
 - CA– Contract Agent
 - END– Seconded National Expert
- personal staff number
- validity date.

Your Service Card = your access card. It proves your right to access Commission or other EU institution buildings. It contains an electronic chip which allows you access to various Commission buildings. There is no actual information on the card itself. Contact your local security officer if you need to access restricted or secured areas.

How can I report the loss or theft of my Service Card?

1. During office hours:

- report immediately any loss or theft of your access pass or parking vignette to HR.DS Service Cards Office
- **Brussels** - email: EC-SECURITY-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu - phone: +32 (0)229 56654
- **Luxembourg** - email: EC-SECURITY-CARTES-DE-SERVICE-LUXEMBOURG@ec.europa.eu - phone: +352 4301 32687

Outside office hours:

- HR.DS Duty Office (24/7)
- **Brussels** - email: EC-SECURITY-EMERGENCIES@ec.europa.eu – phone: +32 (0)229 22222
- **Luxembourg** - email: EC-SECURITY-PROTECTION-LUXEMBOURG@ec.europa.eu - +352 4301 32233

2. Declare the loss or theft of an access pass and/or parking vignette in your SysPer file.

3. Afterwards, go to the Service Cards Office to obtain a new access pass or parking vignette.

What rules should I follow when I have external visitors at my DG?

Here are the main rules to follow:

- encode your visitor into the e-Pass application before they arrive on site
- collect your visitor from the reception
- ensure they wear their visitor access pass visible throughout their entire stay on site
- ensure they are escorted throughout their entire stay on site
- escort them back to the reception and ensure they place their visitor access pass in the return box

- regarding access cards for family members, you should refer to the Security Directorate website for more information!

What advice can you give me to help me ensure my personal security?

Theft:

- protect your private property from petty theft on Commission premises
- never leave your handbag, wallet or mobile phone unattended, even in your office
- there is a special investigation section active in prevention of thefts and intrusions. It can investigate when necessary – always report any theft of Commission or private property.

Violence:

- if you find yourself in a difficult situation the Commission has a legal duty to protect you
- if the situation gets out of control, use your common sense and stay cool. If the situation becomes violent, report it to the Security Directorate on 22222 as soon as possible.

Newcomers in Brussels and Luxembourg:

- find a home near your friends, in an area where you feel secure
- consider giving a copy of your apartment keys (e.g. friend, colleague...)
- inform the office if/when absent due to sickness or last minute leave.

Help is at hand if you need it in Brussels/Luxembourg:

- **Social team** - phone: 88000/33948
- **Medical service** - phone: 62524/32588
- **Welcome Office** - phone: 66600/33000
- **Duty office** - phone: 22222/32233

What information can I disclose?

Refrain from unauthorised disclosure of information! Article 17 of the staff regulations state that staff must refrain from unauthorised disclosure of information received in the line of duty, unless that information has already been made public or is accessible to the public. This concerns any kind of information, classified or not.

Communication of information to the public:

- there are guidelines as to what information should be given to the public and when;
- check to be sure before giving information in any form outside the Commission.

The Commission has a system of classification for its most sensitive information :

- the lowest classification is "RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED". For this, no security authorisation is required and any employee with a statutory link with the European Commission may handle such classified documents under the principle of "need to know";
- some positions in the Commission will require a specific authorisation to handle classified information at "CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL" level or higher. So, you will need to submit to a vetting process to obtain such a clearance;
- for more information please contact your Local Security Officer (LSO).