

# GMS Flash Alert

## Immigration Edition

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# Belgium - Mandatory Integration Programme for Brussels Region As of 1 June 2022

Settling in a new country also entails new obligations. One of these obligations is the mandatory integration programme applicable in the 19 communes of the Brussels Region which came into effect as of 1 June 2022.<sup>1</sup> The obligation to integrate applies to individuals with a non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationality between the ages of 18 and 65 years old and who have a residence permit valid for more than three months.

The purpose of this integration programme is to oblige newcomers to get better acquainted with Brussels society and culture, learn the language, therefore take French or Dutch language classes, and learn about practical/every-day-life matters (e.g., how the health-care system operates, etc.).

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## WHY THIS MATTERS

Mandatory integration is a programme whereby the individual, living in one of the 19 communes of the Brussels Region enrolls (this is compulsory) within six months after receiving a Belgian residence permit (valid for more than three months). The programme must be completed within 18 months after enrolment. Failure to respect these deadlines will result in an administrative penalty.

Although not applicable to individuals coming to Belgium within the framework of economic migration (i.e., Belgian work permit holders, Single Permit holders), this new obligation might have an impact on the family members joining the worker in Belgium.

Companies may wish to take this into account and inform their employees accordingly.

## Principles

Certain newcomers registering for the first time in one of the 19 communes of the Brussels Region, need to demonstrate within a certain timeframe that they have completed the mandatory integration programme.

The integration policy is based on the following principles:

- 1 Equality
- 2 Respect
- 3 Migration
- 4 Anti-discrimination
- 5 Active citizenship
- 6 Empowerment
- 7 Acquisition of French or Dutch language skills.

Through an individualised plan, the integration programme aims to guide newcomers such that they increase their self-reliance and participation at the economic, educational, social, and cultural levels.

## Who?

The integration obligation applies to certain newcomers in one of the 19 communes of the Brussels Region who simultaneously fulfil the following three conditions:

- The newcomer is registered in the national register for the first time and obtains a Belgian residence permit valid for more than three months;
- The newcomer is older than 18 years and younger than 65 years at the moment of first registration;
- The newcomer has been legally residing in Belgium for less than three years.

## Exempted from Mandatory Integration

Certain groups of foreign nationals are exempted from this integration obligation due to the nature of their residency rights. The obligation concerns the following groups:

- EU+ citizens and their family members: All nationalities within the European Economic Area. U.K. nationals are also exempt if they are the beneficiary of the Withdrawal Agreement (being in possession of an "M card").
- Individuals (and their family members) who have a non-renewable, maximum one-year residency right (e.g., au pairs);
- Individuals who obtained a long-term residency in an EU member state<sup>2</sup> and have fulfilled the integration conditions;
- Individuals who have temporary protection status (e.g., refugees from Ukraine);
- Individuals who have a right of residency based on work/studies/education/training (e.g., single permit holders).

The last exemptions are those not related to one's residency right and would concern individuals in one of the below situations:

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- If an integration certificate was already obtained in Belgium;
- If an integration programme was already pursued in another region in Belgium;
- If a degree (primary/secondary or higher education) was obtained in Belgium;
- In case of severe illness or any mental/physical handicap which makes it impossible to pursue the programme.

## Exemption of Family Members in View of Economic Migration?

As mentioned earlier on, non-EEA citizens who are coming to Belgium to perform professional activities (e.g., single permit holders) are exempted from mandatory integration.

Their joining family members (e.g., spouse) are not exempted from this mandatory integration. Once the registration at one of the 19 Brussels communes has been finalised, and a Belgian residence permit has been obtained, the family members (unless it concerns children younger than 18) will need to take the required actions within six months to enrol in the integration programme.

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### KPMG NOTE

Any questions or concerns regarding any third-country nationals wanting to work or currently working in Belgium should be directed to your qualified professional services contact or a member of the team (see “Contact Us” section) with the KPMG International member firm in Belgium.

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### FOOTNOTES:

1 See the statute governing the programme (Dutch and French) at: [Ordonnantie van 11 mei 2017 betreffende het inburgeringstraject voor de nieuwkomers / Ordonnance du 11 mai 2017 concernant le parcours d'accueil des primo-arrivants](#) .

2 Only applicable in the following countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, or Romania.

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## Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional\* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Belgium:



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*\* Please note that KPMG LLP (U.S.) does not offer immigration services or labour law services. However, KPMG Law LLP in Canada can assist clients with U.S. immigration matters.*

**The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in Belgium.**

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