

2 NOVEMBER: REINFORCED CONTAINMENT

Covid-19 updates

The Expat Welcome Desk informs expats in Brussels about the latest measures taken in Belgium to limit the spread of Covid-19.

1. Stop the spread of Covid-19

- Wear a face mask is again compulsory in all public places (except when exercising outdoors and biking);
- Respect the hygiene rules;
- Take your activities outside;
- Think about vulnerable people;
- Keep your distance (1.5 meters);
- Limit your close contacts;
- Follow the rules on gatherings.

2. Social contacts

2.1 Social bubble of 1 person (until 13.12.2020)

- Every member of a family has the right to have one close contact;
- With whom citizens have proximity and closely related contact;
- Always the same person;
- Children under 12 do not count;
- Keeping a distance of 1.5 meters is not mandatory;
- Wearing a mask is not mandatory.

2.2 Private gatherings at home

- Families may invite only 1 close contact to their home at a time
- Exception for people who live alone: in addition to their close contact, they may invite one other person, but not at the same time
- Always the same people;
- Children under 12 do not count;
- Keeping a distance of 1.5 meters is not mandatory;
- Wearing a mask is not mandatory.

2.3 Non-organised outdoor gatherings

- Maximum 4 people;
- Exception: family bubble (same roof);
- Respect the distance of 1.5 meters;
- Excluding children younger than 12 from restrictions.

3. Leisure

Closure of cultural venues (museums, exhibitions halls, etc.). Exception for groups of children up to the age of 12, within the framework of school and extra-curricular activities part of compulsory education.

Closure of recreational facilities including amusement parks, cinemas, betting agencies, casinos, wellness centres, reception and party rooms; indoor playgrounds, etc.

Closure of non-essential shops but possibility of pick-ups and home deliveries of pre-ordered goods. To ensure fair competition rules, supermarkets and markets (< 200 people) limit their offer to essential items.

Closure of holiday centres and campsites.

Closure of non-medical professions (hairdressers, make-up artists, wellness and massage centres, beauty salons, etc.).

Remain open:

- **Essential shops:** food shops, shops selling hygiene and care products, pet food shops, pharmacies, newsagents and bookshops, telecommunications shops, do-it-yourself shops, flower and plant shops....
- **Garages and bike shops** now only carry out repairs
- **Hotels and B&Bs** remain open but their restaurants are closed. Meals should be delivered to hotel room

Essential shops in Brussels Region (stricter measures apply than at the federal level):

- Only 1 person is allowed to do the shopping for a maximum of 30 minutes (eventually accompanied by (a) minor(s) from the same household)
- Only disabled people are allowed to be accompanied by another adult
- All shops have to close at 8pm

Small markets & fairs = OK

- But no consumption of food nor beverages is authorised;
- No flea/Christmas markets are authorised.

Restaurants remain CLOSED but take-away service is authorised until 10 pm

Coffee shops, cafeterias, bars are CLOSED

Night clubs are CLOSED

Curfew

- Prohibition to be on the public highway between 10 pm and 6 am in the Brussels Region;
- Except for essential and non-deferrable travel (medical reasons, business trips and commuting between home and work).

4. Cults

- **Prohibition of religious services and ceremonies** with the exception of funeral ceremonies, but only in the presence of a maximum of 15 people, with a distance of 1.5 metres between each person and without the possibility of the body being exposed;
- **Religious weddings are allowed**, but only in the presence of the spouses, their witnesses and the minister;
- **The same goes for religious ceremonies which are recorded for the purpose of broadcasting** by all available channels and which take place only in the presence of a maximum of 10 persons, including the persons responsible for the recording, with a distance of 1.5 metres between each person, and provided that the place of worship remains closed to the public during the recording;
- **Civil marriages are allowed**, but only in the presence of the spouses, their witnesses and the registrar.

5. Working

Teleworking becomes the rule:

- For functions where that is possible;
- With respect for the continuity of the management of companies and organisations, services and activities.

For more information concerning **foreign diplomatic missions and international organisations established in Brussels**, please see on the following link: <https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/protocol/covid-19>

6. Sports

- **Closure of sports halls** (including swimming pools, ice skating rinks, fitness halls and gyms, etc.) except for activities for children under 12 years of age ;
- **Ban on all amateur sports competitions**; training is only allowed for children under 12 years of age.

- Training courses are also allowed for children under 12 years of age.

7. Schools

- **Schools have extended their half-term holiday until 15 November;**
- **For secondary education:** students in the second and third levels will follow face-to-face teaching at a maximum of 50% until 1 December;
- **For higher education:** distance education remains the general rule at least until the end of 2020, except for first-year students who will be able to return to face-to-face teaching from 1 December.

8. Transport

Public transport remains operational:

- Mask is mandatory;
- Drivers not required to wear mask if well-isolated in a cabin.

Taxis/carpooling are allowed to transport customers but:

- Minimum distance of 1.5 meters;
- Number of persons transported varies according to the type of vehicle;
- A household or people from the same bubble can travel in the same car, no social distancing;
- Recommended to regularly ventilate and clean the vehicle.

9. Travelling

- Travel advice regularly updated on : <https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en>
- Always consult the colour map when travelling to another country.

9.1 Complete the Public Health Passenger Locator Form:

- When returning to Belgium (from any zone);
- 48 hours prior to arrival.

Exceptions:

- If you do not travel by plane or boat AND stay in Belgium for less than 48 hours or;
- If you do not travel by plane or boat AND that your stay abroad was less than 48 hours.

More info: <https://travel.info-coronavirus.be/public-health-passenger-locator-form>

9.2 Red zones

- The Belgian authorities strongly discourage travel to this zone;

or

- The authorities of this country prohibit non-essential travel from Belgium;
- When returning: quarantine for 10 days is mandatory (no testing).

Exceptions: see the list for “key workers” below.

9.3 Orange zones

- Code light orange: the country you are travelling to asks for a negative Covid-19 test and/or quarantine;
- Code orange: you must be extra vigilant;
- When returning: quarantine for 10 days is mandatory (no testing).

Exceptions: see the list for “key workers” below.

9.4 Green zones

- No travel restrictions;
- Hygiene and social distancing rules still apply.

9.5 Travelling to Belgium from abroad

- Always possible for Belgians, EU citizens resident from Schengen area/UK/Belgium + relatives /regardless of the country of departure.

- Possible for a resident of a non-EU country IF the country of departure is “approved” on the FPS Foreign Affairs website (https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/travel_to_belgium)
- Not possible for a resident of a non EU country IF the country of departure is not « approved » on the FPS Foreign Affairs website

Exceptions: see the list for “key workers” below.

9.6 Exceptions “essential trips” for key workers or people travelling for compelling reasons

- Health professionals, health researchers;
- Frontier workers travelling for work;
- Diplomats, staff of international organisations and people invited by international organisations whose physical presence is required for the proper functioning of those organisations, military staff, Civil Protection staff, police officials and humanitarian staff, when performing their duties;
- Passengers travelling for compelling family reasons:
 - to provide assistance or care to an elderly person, minor, disabled or vulnerable person;
 - in the context of co-parenting;
 - to a partner who does not live under the same roof;
 - in the context of a funeral or cremation;
 - in the context of a civil or religious marriage;
 - justified by family reunification.
- Third-country nationals travelling for study purposes;
- Pupils, students and trainees travelling as part of their training;
- Journeys abroad in the context of professional activities, including commuting.

IMPORTANT: It is necessary to be able to prove journeys for essential work or compelling reasons by a plausible proof

10. Testing

Interactive map showing all Covid 19 screening centres in the Brussels-Capital Region: <https://coronavirus.brussels/index.php/ou-passer-un-test-a-bruxelles/>

- Obligatory testing for people with symptoms: cough, fever or breathing difficulties/In case you do not have a GP, call 1710.
- No more obligatory testing for people without symptoms or returning from a red zone or people identified as high risk contacts by a person positive with Covid-19 BUT 10 days quarantine
- Centres for (non-reimbursed) private testing: when traveling to a country where testing is mandatory .

11. Quarantine

11.1 Procedure:

When developing symptoms:

- Self-isolate for 7 days and contact a doctor to arrange for a test;
- If the patient tests positive, remain in quarantine for 7 days;
- If the patient tests negative, he may end quarantine after the clinical resolution of symptoms.

Asymptomatic individuals :

- Who had close contact with an infected person should;
- Who return from a red zone.

= mandatory 10 days quarantine.

11.2 Exceptions:

- Key workers or people who have a recognized compelling reason and only to the extent that this activity cannot be postponed;
- For short-stay travel (less than 48 hours) in Belgium or abroad.

11.3 What can you do during a quarantine?

- Quarantine means staying indoors (including garden or terrace) in a single place;
- Avoid all contacts;
- No visits are allowed;
- Teleworking is permitted;
- Use of public transport must be avoided;
- Urgent medical attention;
- Purchase of basic necessities, such as food and medicines, but only if no one else can provide them and by exception.

12. What is the impact of Covid-19 on rental contracts?

12.1 Payment of rent

- Tenant's principal obligation
- Cancellation for « force majeure » not possible
- Case-by-case analysis
- Dialogue with the landlord for a rent deferment or a temporary reduction in the monthly payment.
- If you have the agreement of your landlord, keep a written record
- Without the landlord's agreement, you are in default if you don't pay your rent.

12.2 End of lease procedures

Moving: possible by respecting the distancing rules.

Departure inventory of fixtures: advisable to delegate to an expert.

Visits of the premises when you want to rent or buy a house or a flat are forbidden

More info:

- **All measures taken by the Belgian Government** relating to the coronavirus on the site "The National Crisis Centre (NCCN)": <https://centredecrise.be>
- **Federal public website** in English: <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/news/>
- Information regarding COVID-19 for **foreign diplomatic missions and international organisations established in Belgium** (verbal notes): <https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/protocol/covid-19>
- **A toll-free number: 0800 14 689** accessible from 9 am to 5 pm on working days.
- If you are resident in the Brussels-Capital Region and **you do not have a regular doctor, call 1710**. It is primarily intended for people with cough, cold or fever symptoms, who suspect they are infected with coronavirus. An uninterrupted response is assured (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).