

# REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

## Presentation ✓

Brussels can be considered the world capital of lobbying for local and regional authorities: more than 300 representations of EU regional and local authorities are based in Brussels. They function as regional embassies, although they have no official status. The Brussels-Capital Region has a dedicated policy to support them by issuing a Regional Certificate facilitating their presence in Brussels.

Regional representations have their own structures, which are largely copied from the institutional models in place in their home countries. Although these are informal bodies, they are consultative bodies recognised by the European Union. Some of the regions, such as the German Länder, are powerful entities in Brussels, with imposing office buildings and a large staff.

The formal representation of regional and local authorities takes place through the Committee of the Regions an advisory body set up by the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht to represent subnational, regional and local actors within the EU.

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## TWO MODELS >

The first regional offices were opened in 1984 when both the German Länder and the British local authorities realised that it could be useful to represent regional interests in Brussels. The different regional offices have been set up with different aims in mind. The German Länder see their role as a political one; their aim is to represent the German states as distinct political entities. They are powerful bodies operating with a sizeable budget. Regional representations from more centralized countries on the other hand, represent local authorities, which have only a limited amount of political power and budget. Their primary concern is obtaining EU funding, often working in partnership with the private sector.

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## THE REGIONAL CERTIFICATE >

The regional certificate is an official document issued by the Member of the Regional Government in charge of External Relations that the regional representation can use to establish its status towards the Region. The certificate recognises the office as the official representation of a government or other public body on Brussels territory.

Regional and city offices, until now, have no official status, which means that their staff does not enjoy the privileges and immunities of national diplomatic representations. The certificate can help offices to deal with municipal and regional administrations and service providers in general.

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## HOW TO OBTAIN THE REGIONAL CERTIFICATE ? >

New representative offices can send a request to Mr Pascal SMET, Secretary of State for External Relations (37, boulevard du Roi Albert II, 1030 Bruxelles) who is responsible for issuing this certificate every two years to official representations of cities, regions and other public bodies.

The application on official letterhead paper of the public entity should mention the name of the person who is appointed as director of the representation as well as the address, phone number, email address and website. The application should also contain other documents, such as the statutes, a mission statement, a copy of the legal document setting up the representation or, if possible, copies of relevant parliamentary reports.

The Office of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations will examine the application and advise the Secretary of State on the matter. It is also in charge of the update of all certificates every two years as well as of punctual updates on demand.

Contact person:

Karin Impens, Deputy director

kimpens@commissioner.brussels

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