

ANNUAL REPORT

of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe
and International Organisations

2025



A new chapter

These words of preface mark a special moment: the end of my time as Commissioner for the Brussels Regional Government, but, fortunately and above all, the preservation of the wonderful team that has supported me throughout these exciting years.

The team will soon be integrated into Brussels International, the regional administration responsible for external relations, where it will carry out its duties in the areas of both institutional relations and welcoming expats to Brussels. This underlines the importance of the work done by the office of the Brussels Commissioner, both in relation to the international institutions and organisations currently present or due to establish themselves in our Region, and in terms of the numerous benefits their presence brings to our economic development, the prosperity of our Region and employment opportunities for the people of Brussels.

This annual report will be – this time for real... – the last one to which I will contribute, in what has already been a long series! For me, this publication marks not only the conclusion of a year rich in projects and encounters, but also the end of a twelve-year period of an exciting mission, as both a Brussels resident and a European. Twelve years which, I am convinced, have provided reassurance to the international sector and to its institutions.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have made this possible: my talented colleagues, and the various Ministers who have carried the political responsibility for our work. Thank you to our international partners who, little by little, have placed their trust in us and thanks to whom we have helped to establish their presence in Brussels.

Today, Brussels is proud to be a city-region with an international outlook; let's continue our efforts to ensure not only that it remains so, but that it builds on this momentum.

Alain HUTCHINSON

*Brussels Commissioner for Europe
and International Organisations*



Table of Contents

Foreword	2
Our purpose	4
The Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations	5
1 History & missions	5
2 Organisation & Governance	7
3 General guidelines & objectives for the year	9
Key achievements	10
1 Institutional Liaison	10
1.1 Actions & projects	11
1.2 Impact & testimonials	14
2 Expat Welcome Desk	15
2.1 Actions & projects	19
2.2 Impact & testimonials	21
Conclusion	22



European Quarter, image from the webinar "2025: a year of transformation for the European Quarter", 30 January 2025

Our purpose

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN BRUSSELS

Key players

- **38** European Union organisations
- NATO and **8** related agencies and centres
- **25** United Nations offices and agencies
- **32** other intergovernmental organisations
- More than **300** diplomatic missions in Belgium*
- **300** regional and local representations
- Over **900** accredited EU journalists**
- **30** international schools

Employment

International presence accounts for up to 23.2% of regional employment. The five main institutions, agencies and European bodies account for 90% of these jobs.

- More than **60,000** direct jobs in Brussels
- **25,000** lobbyists and representatives of interest groups, NGOs, trade unions and citizens' movements
- Thousands of indirect jobs in Brussels in the hospitality sector, building management, security, the hotel industry, etc.

The population of the Brussels Region

- **1/3** of Brussels residents are foreign nationals
- Among them, **23.2%** are EU nationals

*<https://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/politique/themes-politiques/sous-la-loupe/chiffre-de-fevrier-2025-la-belgique-compte-302-missions-diplomatiques-etrangeres>

**Figures as of 1 January 2026 from the International Press Association



THE BRUSSELS COMMISSIONER FOR EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS (CEIO)

1 History & missions

Since its creation 11 years ago, the CEIO has been working on behalf of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region (GBCR) to carry out day-to-day tasks that are essential to the Brussels-Capital Region's international standing and influence.

A study commissioned by the Brussels Commissioner and carried out by the VUB reveals that the Region's international presence generates 25% of regional GDP and a quarter of jobs in Brussels.

The presence of these organisations and institutions raises important considerations for policymakers and the Brussels authorities: these organisations and their staff must be welcomed with dignity, to strengthen their roots in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), but we must also maximise the resulting benefits for all Brussels residents.



The Federal Government is responsible for signing the treaties and agreements that establish these institutions in Brussels, but managing their presence involves numerous regional responsibilities: urban planning, transport, security, etc.

This complex landscape of factors explains the need for the host region policy led by the CEIO, a mission centred on two key areas: **welcoming expatriate staff from the institutions on the one hand and supporting the institutions themselves on the other.**

Acting as a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for all organisations, administrations and international institutions based in Brussels, the Brussels Commissioner has succeeded in restoring trust in relations between these stakeholders. The institutions feel that their views are heard, understood and better accommodated, whilst the Region can count on good neighbourly relations with stakeholders in the international sector.

Rendering of the future Schuman pedestrian area



A STRATEGIC ROLE: STEERING THE HOST REGION POLICY

- ▶ How can we strengthen the roots of the international organisations and institutions present in the Region?
- ▶ How can we ensure that new organisations are attracted to the region and that existing ones, along with their staff, remain here, whilst maximising the resulting benefits for all Brussels residents?



The CEIO fulfils a unique role in the capital of Europe: it oversees and implements the host region policy on behalf of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region (GBCR).

The host region policy comprises a set of hosting arrangements for supranational and intergovernmental organisations with their headquarters or a representative office in the Brussels-Capital Region, including diplomatic missions and regional and local representative offices.

The CEIO coordinates the respective responsibilities and ensures a coherent and timely response, in line with the challenges faced by both the host Region and the organisations hosted.

More specifically, the Brussels Commissioner's team is responsible for:

1. The continuation of a host region policy that strengthens the Region's role as a host;
2. A single point of contact for all enquiries relating to European institutions and international organisations;
3. Ensuring a warm welcome for the international community through the administrative support and knowledge centre provided by the Expat Welcome Desk;
4. Providing advice and guidance on urban planning, security, mobility, the environment, the development of public spaces, tourism, image and staffing.

The CEIO ensures a cross-cutting and comprehensive approach and greater visibility within Brussels' institutional landscape.

2 Organisation & governance

The role of Commissioner is a political mandate entrusted by the GBCR (Government of the Brussels-Capital Region).

Its office, the Brussels Commissioner, is a non-profit organisation established in 2014 and funded by the Region. **It has a dynamic, multilingual team of six staff members.**

The CEIO acts as a political and administrative intermediary between the Brussels authorities and the European and international organisations (and their staff) based in Brussels.

The CEIO consists of two units:

Institutional Liaison

Expat Welcome Desk

Alain HUTCHINSON
Commissioner



Karin IMPENS
Director

Expat Welcome Desk: knowledge centre



Selma MITRI
Legal Officer in charge of the unit



Isabel RIOJA LAFOREST
Adviser at Head Office



Anaïs JOUZDANI
Legal adviser at the European Parliament

Institutional Liaison Unit

Home



Federica SASDELLI
*Adviser,
Institutional Liaison Unit*



Laurent GILARDENGHI
Receptionist

OUR STRENGTHS AND OUR ADDED VALUE

- ▶ We are here to guide and support decision-making processes;
- ▶ We seek 'win-win' compromises that work for all stakeholders;
- ▶ We ensure coordination between international and Belgian-Brussels decision-makers, representing their respective interests and facilitating bilateral exchanges;
- ▶ We coordinate the actions of Belgian and Brussels stakeholders to ensure that matters progress as quickly as possible and that the positions and suggestions put forward remain consistent;
- ▶ We provide rapid responses and ad hoc support to Brussels, regional, federal and international administrations by sharing our knowledge and expertise;
- ▶ Our expertise and knowledge of the international arena enable Belgian and Brussels stakeholders to implement their policies strategically;
- ▶ We offer a detailed understanding of the challenges and the geopolitical context within which the Region must operate;
- ▶ We provide personalised support tailored to each institution's specific challenges.

UNIQUE EXPERTISE AND KNOW-HOW

- ▶ In-depth understanding of the Belgian, European and international institutional systems;
- ▶ Constant monitoring and analysis of regional and national legislative developments;
- ▶ Acting as a reliable intermediary and high-quality liaison;
- ▶ Expertise in various fields such as urban planning, transport, safety and the environment;
- ▶ Proven experience in project management and facilitating consultation processes;
- ▶ Close ties with political and institutional stakeholders, both in Belgium and within international organisations;
- ▶ A dynamic, multilingual team;
- ▶ A client-focused approach (providing swift and effective feedback) based on the principle of continuous improvement.



AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF PRIVILEGED, STRATEGIC CONTACTS AND A DIRECT LINE TO PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LEADERS OF BOTH REGIONAL AND NATIONAL AFFAIRS, INCLUDING:

- **Federal and regional political authorities:**
Brussels and Belgian ministers and their cabinets, as well as the Brussels Parliament.
- **Local political authorities:**
The mayors and aldermen of the 19 Brussels municipalities.
- **Public administrations and services:**
Public administrations and agencies at federal and regional level, as well as the municipal departments of the 19 Brussels municipalities responsible for urban planning, transport, spatial planning, population and immigration.
- **Federal institutions and coordinating bodies:**
The Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy (CIPS in French), the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs (Protocol Directorate), the FPS Finance and the Immigration Office.
- **International and European institutions:**
Political and administrative officials at the European institutions, the personnel departments of the European institutions, NATO's personnel department, the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, and the UN agencies in Brussels.
- **Diplomatic and territorial representations:**
Embassies, diplomatic missions, and regional and local representations.
- **Regional organisations and socio-economic stakeholders:**
Brussels Economy and Employment, the Tenants' Union, the Regional Tourism Agency (visit.brussels) and the Regional Entrepreneurship Agency (hub.brussels).

3 General guidelines & objectives for the year

The Brussels Commissioner's strategic objectives are set out in the policy letter from its supervising Minister. In the absence of a new government with full powers, the CEIO has therefore continued to work in line with the strategic objectives of the previous legislative term, to provide maximum stability throughout this complicated and uncertain period for the Brussels-Capital Region.

For 2025, the aim was therefore to **continue the work to consolidate Brussels' international presence and promote its role as the capital of Europe**, by focusing on:

- ▶ Strengthening Brussels' role as the capital of the European Union
- ▶ Further developing the host region policy
- ▶ Strengthening Brussels' role as a key hub for international organisations
- ▶ Enhancing the appeal of Brussels' European Quarter
- ▶ Expanding a welcome policy and providing information to expats living in Brussels



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1 Institutional Liaison

Main mission: pursuing an effective host region policy

This desk within the CEIO plays a central role, notably by building a relationship of trust with its counterparts, thereby enabling it to fulfil and strengthen the regional policies for hosting international institutions - for which Belgium as a whole, and the Brussels-Capital Region in particular, is responsible.

To ensure an effective and proactive host region policy, **the Institutional Liaison Unit maintains strong relationships with all levels of decision-making through enhanced cooperation at regional and national level.**

In practical terms, the unit is responsible for:

- ▶ **Facilitating coordination between Belgian federal authorities and the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR)** in the context of implementing the host region policy relating to the establishment of European and international organisations (diplomatic and non-diplomatic) in Brussels;
- ▶ **Organising meetings, gatherings and discussions** aimed at resolving any problems or queries relating to issues of crucial importance to the institutions and administrations based here;
- ▶ **Continuously raising awareness amongst regional and local stakeholders** of the importance of the presence of international organisations in Brussels and the consequent impact of certain procedures and rules that fail to consider the challenges and complexity of the international diplomatic sphere;
- ▶ **Defending the interests** of the Regional Government on the one hand, and of European and international bodies on the other, by putting forward pragmatic proposals that enable all these bodies to achieve their strategic objectives;
- ▶ **Providing recommendations**, contacts and suggestions to unlock sensitive files and facilitate the implementation of the host region policy;
- ▶ **Enhancing the Region's political and diplomatic visibility** amongst its European and international partners.

A flexible and responsive approach, capable of adapting rapidly to changes in the geopolitical context and to the demands of various international, national and regional stakeholders, enables us to provide custom-designed solutions, to foster constructive dialogue and to improve the lives of all individuals and institutions present in the Brussels Region, whether they be the European institutions (with thousands of staff and dozens of buildings), international organisations, embassies and diplomatic missions, or regional and local representations spread across the entire territory of the Region.

The **Institutional Liaison desk** acts as a link between the Brussels public authorities and the European and international institutions based in Brussels, in matters relating to their presence on the territory. It **facilitates cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders with differing interests and needs** and ensures that the various measures and actions are as closely aligned as possible with the stated strategy of promoting a positive image of the Region and consolidating and enhancing our position as a metropolis with an international outlook.

Actions & projects

In 2025, our institutional liaison unit has:

- ▶ **Organised the annual summit between the Government of the BCR (GBCR) and senior representatives of the European institutions.** Objective: to strengthen the implementation of a genuine host region policy;
- ▶ **Supported European institutions and international organisations in carrying out their urban planning and mobility projects** and in the successful implementation of their requests and projects relating to the safety of their buildings;
- ▶ **Coordinated numerous projects in the fields of urban planning, security, transport and the environment, such as:**
 - the redevelopment of the Schuman roundabout and the establishment of a governance framework for the new security perimeter,
 - the redevelopment of the European Parliament's hemicycle building,
 - the redevelopment of the European Quarter;
- ▶ **Played a crucial role in advancing the European Schools dossier, a strategic issue of great importance to the EU institutions**
Our lobbying has, on the one hand, secured an extension of the provisional planning permission for the school in Evere and, on the other hand, committed the Federal Government to, amongst other things, including the school in the Belgian Defense Local Development Plan (PAD Defense) and thereby ensuring its long-term future, as well as resuming meetings of the Schools Task Force;
- ▶ **Supported the development of the European Quarter** by organising the seminar "2025: a year of transformation for the European Quarter"



11th edition of the meeting between the European institutions and the GBCR, House of the Region, 7 November 2025

Political dialogue with the EU

- Organisation of a meeting with the new European Commissioner Piotr Serafin, responsible for public administration and budget



Meeting between Brussels Commissioner Alain Hutchinson and the new European Commissioner for the Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration, Piotr Serafin

European Commissioner Piotr Serafin and Vice-President of the European Parliament Sophie Wilmès at our summit on 7 November 2025



► Follow-up on the agreements reached at the 2023 GBCR summit:

- Establishment of a new platform for cooperation on security (BCR, Federal level, Municipalities, police, EU institutions, etc.), covering various aspects such as the protection of buildings, road traffic, parking, etc. The aim is to strengthen existing measures and take any necessary steps to improve them;
- Continuation of the exploratory mission with a view to establishing hybrid European schools;
- Meeting with the Secretary-General of the European Schools to organise the possible opening and provision of the European Schools' sports facilities for local neighbourhoods;
- Follow-up with the Federal government to clarify the issue of taxation of trainees, and to confirm the timeline for the introduction of the new special identity card;
- Contact with the Communities regarding the European Commission's medical services as a non-accredited placement venue;
- Closely monitoring the redevelopment of the Schuman roundabout and providing regular updates to the institutions on the progress of the works;
- Proactive monitoring of the cycle and pedestrian bridge project, which is currently being assessed by Beliris, and providing regular feedback to the relevant bodies regarding the project's implementation timeline.

Dialogue with other institutions

- ▶ **NATO:** Continued discussions on improving safety around the NATO premises for the benefit of its users;
- ▶ **UN:** Organisation of an information session on cyberbullying for female NATO staff, in collaboration with the Brussels Police;
- ▶ **Ad hoc assistance** in resolving various issues relating to the presence of diplomatic staff in Brussels (e.g. embassies, etc.).

Image of Brussels

- ▶ **Organisation of the second edition of the cultural initiative "The Artists' Parliament" on the Esplanade Solidarnosc** featuring an exhibition by the Danish collective Superflex *'One, Two Three... Swing!'* to mark the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in collaboration with the European Parliament;



Inauguration of the art installation
'One, Two Three... Swing!'



From left to right: the artists and curators, Danish Ambassador Susanne Shine, Vice-President of the European Parliament Sophie Wilmès and Brussels Commissioner Alain Hutchinson.

- ▶ **Participation in the "EQ Connect" networking events, promotion of the European Quarter's brand "EQB" and joint coordination with visit.brussels.**

Environment, Mobility, Urban Planning, Security

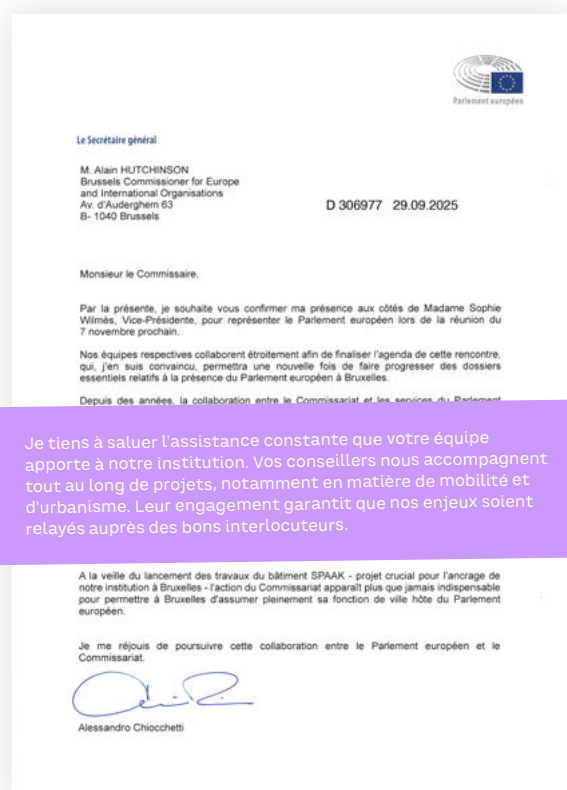
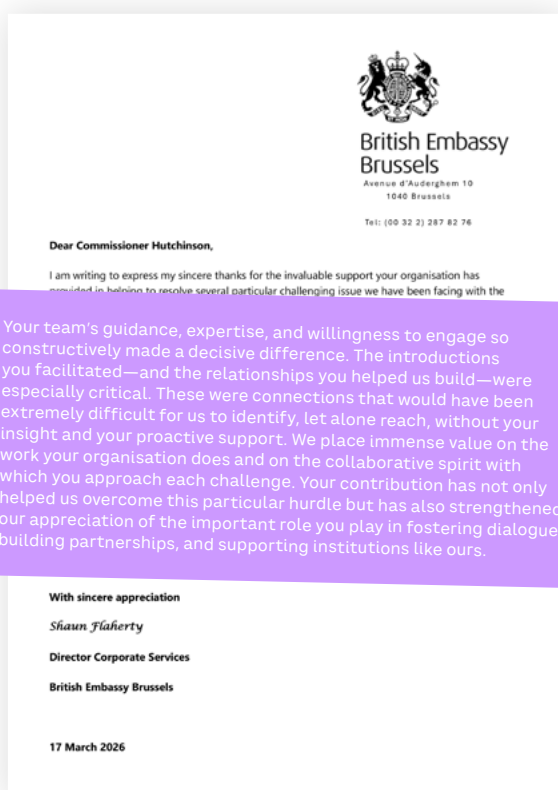
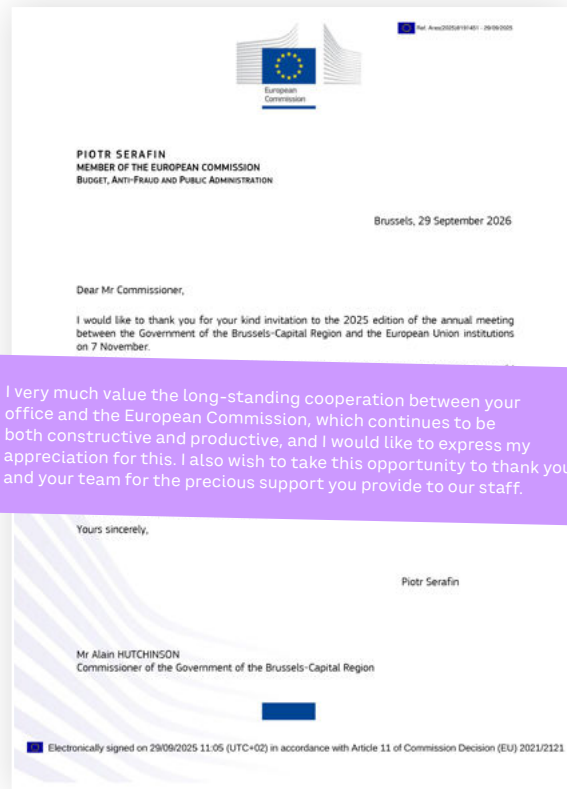
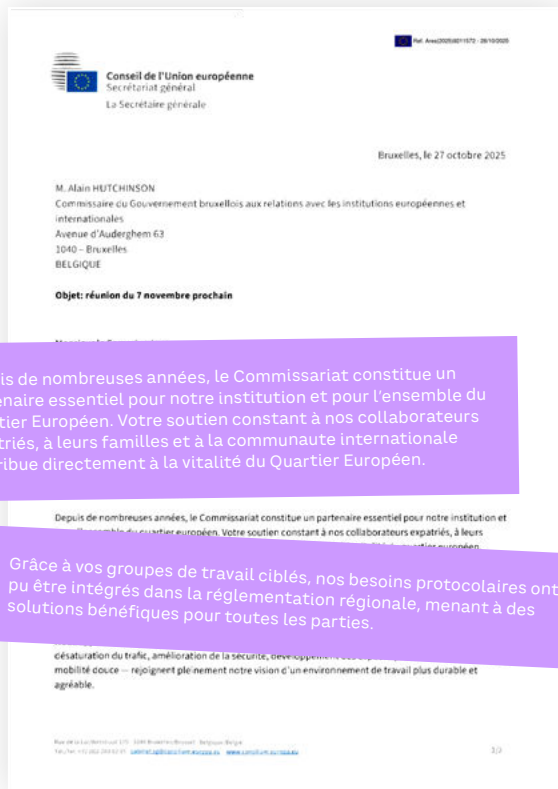
- ▶ Advocacy and meetings to manage the cleanliness of the Solidarnosc Esplanade;
- ▶ Monitoring the 'Interinstitutional Tunnel' project;
- ▶ Monitoring the feasibility study for the cycle and pedestrian bridge;
- ▶ Monitoring of urban projects (5th European School, renovation of the Juste-Lipse, etc.);

Following up on various requests with local authorities, the Region and the Protocol Department of the Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs (installation of cycling infrastructure, relocation of drop-off points for e-bikes and scooters, CD parking spaces, etc.)

Impact & testimonials

The desk's work has helped to reaffirm the CEIO's pivotal role as THE point of contact for international organisations based in Brussels and confirms its value in supporting Belgium's ambition to host further new international organisations.

The Brussels Commissioner has thus established itself as an **essential tool for ensuring that Brussels maintains and benefits from its status as an international metropolis.**



2 Expat Welcome Desk

The Expat Welcome Desk (EWD) plays a full part in the host region policy implemented by the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO).



To make it easier for the international community to settle in Brussels by offering a personalised administrative support service. The aim is to provide our visitors with advice on any practical or legal issues that may arise upon their arrival or during their stay, and to guide them through their administrative procedures (registration with the municipality, marriage, civil partnership, tax returns, etc.).

5 REASONS TO USE OUR SERVICES

1. Free of charge
2. Independent public service
3. Multilingual team
4. One-stop shop
5. Working directly with local, regional and federal authorities



4 WAYS FOR ASSISTING INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTS IN BRUSSELS

- > By phone: [+32 \(0\)2 430 66 00](tel:+3224306600)
- > By email: expat@commissioner.brussels
- > Via our website: www.commissioner.brussels
- > By booking an appointment

Our expertise

- Over 25 years' experience serving the international community in Brussels
- Comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of matters relating to European and international civil servants
- Expertise in the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union
- Close contacts with Belgian authorities and European institutions
- A dynamic, multilingual team

Our target audience

- **Staff of the European institutions:**
Civil servants, parliamentary assistants, seconded national experts, contract staff and trainees.
- **Members of the European Parliament**
- **Staff of international and diplomatic organisations:**
Staff of international organisations, diplomatic staff and staff of regional representations.
- **International professionals:**
Lobbyists, foreign journalists, foreign researchers and postdoctoral researchers.
- **Teachers at European Schools**
- **International public and family members:**
Anyone wishing to settle in Brussels for professional reasons, as well as family members of the above-mentioned individuals.

Some figures

In 2025:

- ▶ **The Expat Welcome Desk's contact list stands at over 7,000 people**
- ▶ **The website has been visited more than 100,000 times**

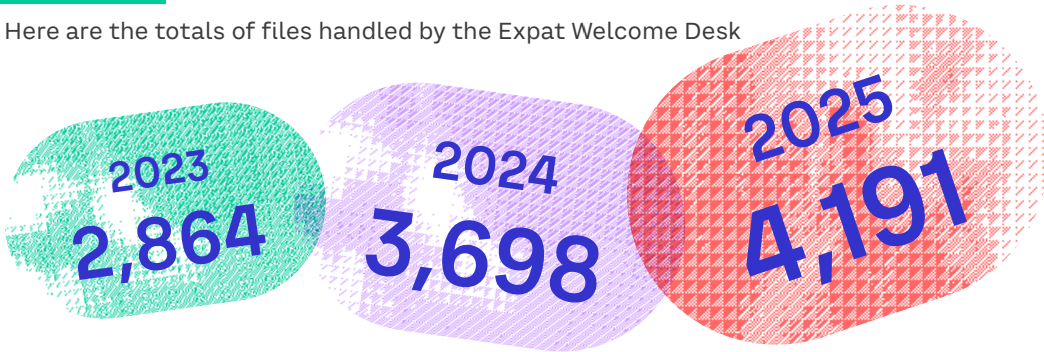
2 offices

- **Head office:** Avenue d'Auderghem 63, 1040 Brussels
- **Branch office at the European Parliament:** ASP – Office 00H160

Our office within the European Parliament positions us as the key point of contact for welcoming and listening to its members: MEPs, civil servants, parliamentary assistants, contract staff, trainees, etc. This close relationship helps to strengthen the ties between the CEIO, the European Parliament (EP) and, more broadly, the international community in Brussels.

Statistics

Here are the totals of files handled by the Expat Welcome Desk



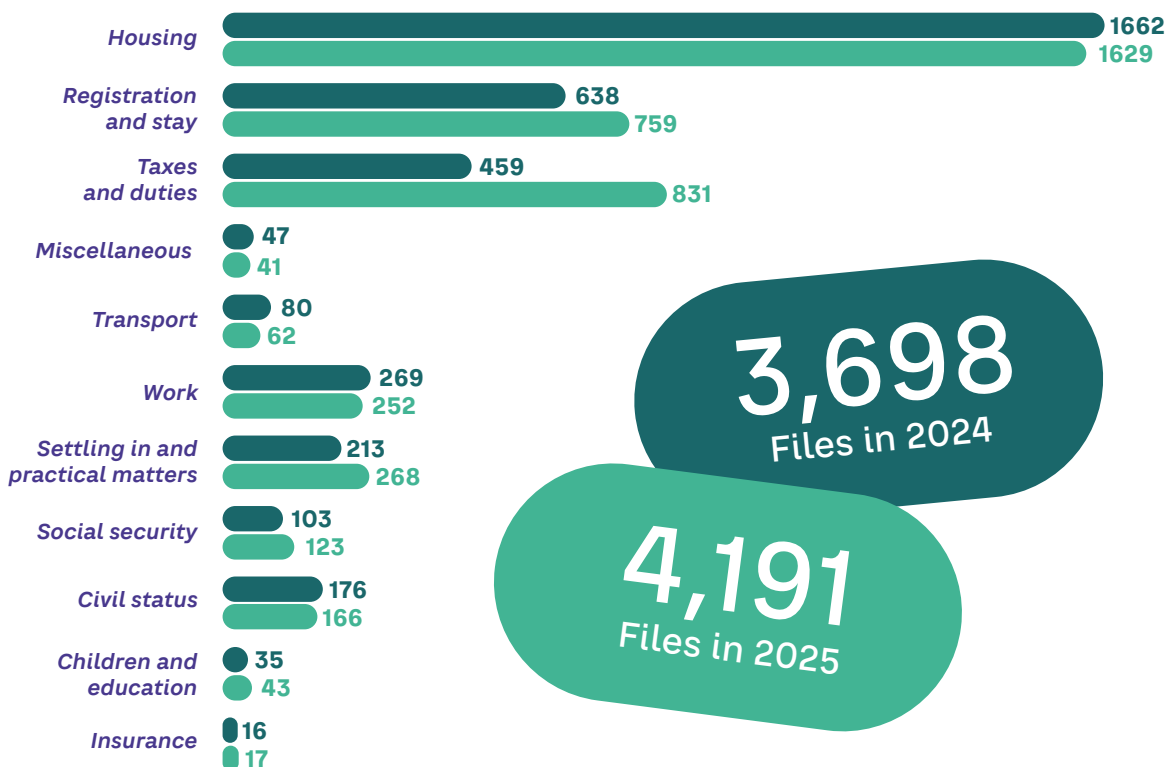
Compared with 2023, when we handled 2,864 cases, we have seen a **46.3% increase** in the number of cases handled by the EWD.

The top three areas of enquiry remain consistent and relate to tenancy agreements, residence permits and, finally, taxes. We note that the 'Taxes and duties' category have increased significantly following changes to the processing of cases this year – a complex issue of great concern to expats.

We have also observed an increase in the 'Registration and Residence' category; this figure has undoubtedly risen due to enquiries regarding the initial registration of European citizens following the legislative change coming into force on 1 September 2025 concerning the submission of a 'complete application', a legal change closely monitored by the Expat Welcome Desk.



In a constantly evolving legislative landscape, the CEIO provides unique expertise and enables the Region to offer personalised support to expats. Each year, these figures highlight the impact of these changes on the international community and reaffirm the need for a service such as that provided by the EWD.





The Expat Welcome Desk team at the 'Welcome Back Day' for the new NATO staff members, 18 September 2025



The Expat Welcome Desk team at the Welcome Village for new members of the EESC on 30 September 2025

Partnerships & synergies

Over the course of 2025, the EWD was contacted by several partners looking to establish long-term collaborations and deliver bespoke presentations for one-off events and specific target groups:

- ▶ **The Irish Embassy:** the EWD gave a presentation in English on the following topics: tenancy agreements, registration with the municipality, access to the health insurance system and taxes.
- ▶ **hub.brussels:** the EWD gave a presentation to a delegation of Indian investors about the professional card and the single permit. We also gave a presentation to overseas delegates and trainee diplomats to introduce our services.
- ▶ **NATO:** We took part in the 'Welcome Back Day' event with a stand to present our services to new NATO officials and their families.
- ▶ **The EESC (European Economic and Social Committee):** we took part in the two-day "New term of office - welcome village" event with a stand to present our services to new members of the EESC.
- ▶ **IHECS:** we took part in an information session for new Erasmus students (in collaboration with visit.brussels).
- ▶ **The PNUD (United Nations Development Programme):** a presentation was given in English by the EWD on the following topics: tenancy agreements, residence permits (short- and long-stay), buying property and taxes.
- ▶ **The European institutions:** organisation of ad hoc meetings and gatherings throughout the year
- ▶ **The 19 municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region:** organising meetings with each of the municipalities, with the aim of:
 - Raise awareness amongst Belgians and Brussels residents of the issues relating to the international presence in Brussels and to the host region policy;
 - Provide practical solutions to the challenges faced by European civil servants;
 - Maintain and strengthen a network of specialists and key contacts, in order to remain at the forefront of administrative developments.

Actions & projects

Seminars

The EWD organises various seminars in English on specific topics aimed at target groups. These seminars are led by specialists whom the EWD calls upon to ensure the topics covered are addressed as effectively as possible. They are held regularly via videoconference (using the Webex platform) to make them accessible to a wider audience. They may also be organised at the CEIO's premises, depending on the topic.

In 2025, the EWD recorded more than **846 participants** across the **eight seminars that were hosted**.

During 2025, we ran the following seminars:

1. **2025: a year of transformation for the European Quarter** 63 participants (30 January 2025)
2. **Buying a property with confidence: the technical and architectural keys to your property project** 140 participants (31 March 2025)
3. **How to bring my family to Belgium** 51 participants (28 April 2025)
4. **Filing your Belgian tax return** 200 participants (20 May 2025)
5. **Lease contracts in Belgium: all you need to know** 80 participants (23 June 2025)
6. **Access to Belgian healthcare** 141 participants (9 September 2025)
7. **How to acquire Belgian citizenship?** 136 participants (14 October 2025)
8. **Expatriate Mortgage & Lending Solutions: What You Need to Know**
35 participants (20 November 2025)



The Seminar on Mortgage Solutions and Loans for Expatriates on 20 November 2025

Information Sessions & Presentations

Each year, the EWD takes part in information sessions aimed at the international community, delivering interactive presentations tailored to each target group.

In 2025, the EWD recorded more than **2,400 participants** across the **30 information sessions** held:

- ▶ Welcome sessions for official trainees from the European institutions (often in collaboration with visit.brussels)
- ▶ Information sessions on 'How to complete a tax return form as a trainee at an EU institution?'
- ▶ Spouses' Day at the European Commission for the spouses of new European civil servants
- ▶ Job-hunting sessions at the European Commission for the spouses of new European civil servants
- ▶ Stand at NATO to mark 'Welcome Back Day' for new staff members
- ▶ Stand at the EESC
- ▶ Presentation for the Irish Embassy
- ▶ Presentation for the UNDP
- ▶ Presentation at hub.brussels for a delegation of Indian investors
- ▶ Presentation at hub.brussels for diplomatic trainees



The welcome session for 'Schuman' trainees at the European Parliament on 3 October 2025

The Expat Welcome Desk team during a presentation for diplomatic trainees at hub.brussels on 3 July 2025



The 'Spouses Day' information session at the European Commission on 22 May 2025

Impact & testimonials

The Expat Welcome Desk plays a key role in supporting expatriates and people moving to Brussels for professional, academic or personal reasons. For those it serves, this service acts as **a central, accessible and reliable point of contact, facilitating administrative, social and professional integration**. By providing clear information, personalised support and guidance towards the relevant services, **the Expat Welcome Desk reduces the difficulties associated with settling in and strengthens the sense of trust and belonging** to the Brussels region.

"Thank you very much for your prompt response. I truly value the time you've dedicated to helping me understand the Belgian housing regulations. Your guidance has been invaluable and a genuine life-saver."

"Thank you so much for your very kind email and for taking the time to share all of these extremely helpful resources and documents with us.

We truly appreciated meeting you this morning, your guidance was incredibly clear, reassuring, and valuable. You made a process that can feel quite complex for non-EU entrepreneurs much more understandable, and we are sincerely grateful for your support.

We will carefully review the official websites you provided, especially regarding the professional card procedure, and we will make sure to complete the French/Dutch version of the form as required.

As you suggested, we have already started reaching out to Hub Brussels, and the February event they are organising will certainly be very valuable for us as we move forward. Thanks to your support and direction, we feel that our transition and establishment in Brussels will be much smoother.

Thank you again for explaining each step so precisely (professional card, enterprise counter registration, and social security affiliation). Your help is truly making a real difference for us at this important stage.

We remain very thankful for your availability and generosity, and we will not hesitate to reach out if we have any further questions."

"I just wanted to get in touch to say thank you. Last October my husband and I met with you for advice regarding him joining me here in Brussels as the spouse of an EU citizen. We had so many doubts and worries at that time.

You contacted the Office des Etrangers and established that we could go ahead with our application. That information was incredibly helpful and I am happy to report that my husband recently received his residence card. :)

Your help was invaluable to this process so I just want to let you know how grateful we are. It might seem like a small thing but it made a big difference in our lives. Thank you."

Conclusion

We close the 2025 annual report on a note of concern regarding the future of this office.

This is even more striking given that, at the same time, the authorities in competing host cities have stepped up their support for their host city policies. This is particularly true of Geneva, where the host policy is under enormous pressure, whilst many United Nations agencies, faced with a severe lack of funds and financial constraints, are taking drastic measures – notably mergers and relocations of offices to other countries – to cut costs.

But The Hague and Strasbourg are also investing heavily. To safeguard its status, France and the local authorities (the City of Strasbourg, Euro Metropole, and the Grand Est region) are signing 'three-year contracts' focused on developing infrastructure, transport, a cultural offer and specific services for MEPs.

The Brussels Region is home to so many European and international organisations that it sometimes seems to take this privileged position – which is the envy of many other cities – somewhat for granted; yet this presence entails a significant responsibility towards the international organisations based within its territory and their diplomatic and international staff.

The host region policy has certainly evolved considerably over the last decade with the creation of our office, but the cost of this policy is in no way comparable to the human and material resources made available in Geneva and Strasbourg.

We can, however, state with pride today that the contacts developed since 2015 with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, as well as with a host of other international partners, are now well established; and that we have ensured there is much greater consistency in our role as a host region in relation to these organisations.

In today's highly globalised diplomatic landscape, the specialist expertise acquired within the CEIO is invaluable.



Alain HUTCHINSON
*Brussels Commissioner for Europe
and International Organisations*

Karin IMPENS
Director

On the initiative of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region:



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