

BRUSSELS SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES/ **GUIDE TO FINDING ACCOMMODATION**

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Dear student,

We have put together the following information to allow you to start your search for accommodation in Brussels. We appreciate the challenges with trying to organise everything required for relocation to a new country, but we are on hand to help with any issues that might arise. Brussels is a hugely international city and welcomes numerous expats and newcomers all the time. This means there is a wealth of support available to help plan your move for example the Brussels Commissioner Office or the staff here at BSIS.

We hope you find the information below helpful and we look forward to meeting you here at BSIS.

Best regards,

The team at BSIS



The Professional Services Team

Accommodation in Brussels

Congratulations on your offer for BSIS. We realise there is a lot to organise, and securing accommodation for your time in Brussels is probably at the top of your priorities. Although we do not have university owned accommodation in Brussels for our students, due to the fluid nature of the housing market here in Brussels, it is fairly simple to secure something. Due to the high number of short term internships and job placements, people are coming and going from the city very regularly. As all students are looking for something slightly different, we post as many different websites as possible.

Our experience is that most students find accommodation within one or two weeks of arrival (and sometimes within even one or two days!) If you have a room for the first couple of nights here then this should give you time to assess the market and find something you are happy with.

The flexibility of the Brussels housing market makes finding accommodation here much easier. As there are many students and people working as stagiair(e)s (interns), there are numerous availabilities from people who are leaving their apartments and looking for others to take over their leases.

Before finding a place of your own:

If you're planning on staying at a hotel, hostel or apartment via Airbnb, while looking for a permanent apartment, we recommend selecting somewhere around BSIS such as Etterbeek or Ixelles commune. If you focus your search for temporary accommodation around "Etterbeek" (for example Petillon or Thieffrey metro stations), Etterbeek station, or Place Jourdan, this will give you a good base to start your search in Brussels. **Use-It** made a map of all the different youth hostels in Brussels, which you can find on their website <http://brussels.use-it.travel/>, under `where to sleep`. **Please do ensure you are careful with using platforms such as Airbnb.** Although scams are rare, you should use common sense and only make payments via the Airbnb secure system. There are a huge range of apartments available on Airbnb, and many that are close to the School.

Current or ex students often offer up their place on couchsurfing, or by advertising in the incoming Facebook group which may provide you with a place to live for the first week or so.

How to find properties

You can do a good deal of searching even before you arrive, but as the housing market moves so quickly, you can do some preliminary research early and leave the serious house hunting until you arrive.

The following websites and Facebook groups are good places to start:

Websites

www.immoweb.be (Good for more long-term rental apartments)

www.xpats.com

<https://www.expatriates.com/classifieds/brussels/housingavailable/>

www.easyroommate.com

www.appartager.com (One of the most widely used for short-term apartment sharing)

www.colocation.com

www.globali.be

www.vlanimmo.be

www.expatica.com

<http://www.allesthuis.be/?mod=kamer&otree=1,51&sel=51&a=l&q=nav>

<http://www.samenhuizen.be/> (look under `zoekertjes`)

<http://speedcoloc.be/>

<http://www.brukot.be/>

<http://www.jannonce.be/immo/cohabitation/louer/>

http://www.find-roommate.net/en/search?search_type=0&query=Brussels

http://erasmusu.com/en/erasmus-brussels/student-housing?ref=flat_acco

https://www.metroroommates.com/city_rentals/brussels_rentals.asp

<http://www.casalacantus.be/en> 19 Student Rooms in Ixelles

Facebook groups

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1527847924095974/?fref=ts> Samenhuizen/co-housing Brussels

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/188519461195986/?fref=ts> Wonen in Brussel

One of the best Facebook groups for securing accommodation is the following:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/195527370457521/?fref=ts> BXL a louer: de bouche a oreille (II)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/624316874256455/?fref=ts> BXL A LOUER: STUDIO/APPART/COMMERCE

Walking through the city

Many students have found it helpful to get oriented upon arrival and then just take a few days walking around and looking for A Louer/Te Huur (For Rent) signs. You may be surprised by how many you find – and often at slightly more affordable prices than the apartments advertised online or through agencies! This is how most students at BSIS find places to live. Normally you can call the landlord and arrange a viewing for the same day. In some cases, you can be moving in the next day! Please note that these signs are put up for apartments and houses, but not so often for single rooms, but this is becoming increasingly popular.

Agencies

If you are limited on time, or prefer to use an external service, an Estate Agent may be useful in Brussels. Some agents will drive you around the city to appointments. The downside of using an Agent is that they can often be more expensive properties and they do

not usually manage student properties. However, if your budget is more flexible, this can be a good option.

Signing a lease

There are two types of lease in Belgium – short-term and long –term lease (9 years lease). Most students will either be looking for a short-term lease, or joining an existing long-term lease in place of an existing tenant. We would recommend trying to obtain a short-term lease as this is more flexible for students. It is worth checking how you end the lease and what penalties there may be for leaving the lease early. In most cases, you can negotiate an early exit with no penalty. The Brussels commissioner office has some excellent resources on what to check before signing a lease <http://www.commissioner.brussels/i-am-an-expat/housing/82-housing/104-signing-a-lease> and we recommend reading through this thoroughly. You will also find further details on deposits, guarantees and inventory. The Brussels Student Survival Guide also goes into further details on student experiences related to accommodation in Brussels:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/brussels/documents/studentsurvivalguide.pdf>.

Domiciliation

Some landlords or former tenants may inform you that you cannot use your new address in Brussels for domiciliation. This means you cannot register at the Commune, therefore we recommend you avoid these kind of places. The landlord would normally only do this if you were a student who had their permanent address elsewhere in Belgium. For most students moving to Brussels for their studies, you should select somewhere that allows domiciliation.

Places to Live in Brussels

Brussels comprises 19 communes, which are all situated inside the Outer Ring road that circles the city. The majority of newcomers, especially English-speakers, settle in a small number of these communes, located in the southern and eastern parts of the city, near international schools and companies e.g. Ixelles, Etterbeek or St-Gilles.

Here's a great interactive map that let's you explore the different communes: <http://www.ilotsacre.be/site/gemeenten19communes.htm>.

The most popular neighbourhoods for BSIS students are the following:

| Postal Code | Neighbourhood Name |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 1050 | Brussels-Louise |
| 1050 | Ixelles |
| 1040 | Etterbeek |
| 1000 | Brussels City |

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| 1060 | St-Gilles |
| 1030 | Schaerbeek |

The communes of Etterbeek and Ixelles are nearest to the School and many students choose to live here. However, most of the communes cover large areas! Areas of Etterbeek and Ixelles can in fact be quite far from the school, plus, there are other communes also very easy to reach, for example areas of Auderghem or Woluwe St Pierre. A little effort in researching transit lines, walking distances and businesses or shopping/dining facilities in an area can have a large impact over the course of your time here in Brussels.

Brussels centre (Ville de Bruxelles) Postcode/Zip 1000

The lively neighbourhoods of Saint-Gery and Sainte-Catherine, the posh Sablon area or the previous working-class Marolles all make a great area to live in if you can't resist a vibrant downtown-atmosphere. Very close to all buses, metros and trams, you can move around very easily and quickly reach the university. (+/- half an hour ride)

You can still be lucky and find a good deal, but young professionals have found their way to the centre over the last few years, which has made the rental price of the area increase. You may also find it is not the most convenient area for the School.

Advantages of the area (as place to live for a BSIS-student):

- Close to the 3 main train stations
- Lots of things to do during the evenings and week-ends: cultural centres (theatres, museums, concert halls) are all within arm's reach, as well as cafes, restaurants,
- Easy access to every other part of the city by public transport

Disadvantages:

- Not that many parks or green areas in the neighbourhood
- Some very touristic spots: not a quiet, calm neighbourhood
- Parking space is scarce

Ixelles/Elsene Postcode/Zip 1050

Ixelles/Elsene is a very large commune with very distinct neighbourhoods: trendy (upper class) Châtelain, the ponds and abbey area leading down to the Bois de la Cambre and Uccle; busy Chaussée d'Ixelles which takes you from the student area around Flagey straight to Matongé and the cemetery area (Cimetière d'Ixelles) with its late-night bars and student population. If you're looking for green space there is the huge Bois de la Cambre that starts at the end of Avenue Louise. Ixelles is extremely popular for students and young professionals and so we would recommend looking in this area if you are unsure where to live in Brussels. Despite the popularity, it is still possible to secure reasonably priced accommodation due to the sheer volume available.

Advantages of the area:

- Close to the School
- Very diverse area: green around Bois de la Cambre, student area around Flagey, expat area around Chatelain
- Lots of cafes and restaurants, shops and a lively lifestyle
- A good range of accommodation options – flatshares, short-term leases, kots, studio apartments and a fast moving housing market.
- A generally affordable range of accommodation as many areas are targeted towards students and interns.

Disadvantages:

- Around Flagey: parking space is scarce
- Well covered by public transport in general but not by metro.
- Not every area of Ixelles is close to one of the main train stations (Avenue Louise, Flagey and Matonge are the closest)

Etterbeek - Postcode/Zip 1040

Etterbeek is the commune that BSIS is located – and you'll find it well located to institutions such as the European Commission. Best known for the area around Parc du Cinquantaire, Etterbeek is a very residential neighbourhood. It is very well covered by public transport facilities including metro, tram and bus. The relatively cheap housing prices and good availability of houses and apartments, mostly in conversions, make Etterbeek quite attractive to BSIS-students.

Advantages:

- Close to the university
- Well covered by public transport
- Many EU institutions
- Quiet, more residential neighbourhood
- Close to the Parc du Cinquantaire

Disadvantages:

- Not every area is very lively, vibrant (mostly residential)

Saint-Gilles/ Sint-Gillis – Postcode/Zip 1060

Saint-Gilles is becoming rapidly popular since it provides a nice combination of homes, cafes, open spaces and cultural centres. It has the same mixture as Ixelles, without the upper-class element, so rental prices are normally a bit lower. It's said that Saint Gilles is 'a favourite among expats who like to live like locals'. Saint-Gilles can be a bit of a commute to School or your internship, therefore it is not such a popular place for BSIS students to live.

Advantages:

- Vibrant but residential

- Close to the Gare du Midi

Disadvantages:

- Well covered by public transport in general, but not by metro.
- Depends on the area of the neighbourhood whether the university is easily reachable

Types of Property

- **Apartments** come in one-room, two-room, three or more room varieties. The number of rooms listed usually refers to the number of bedrooms, rather than the total number of rooms.
- A **flat or studio** is typically one room divided into living and sleeping spaces.
- A **mezzanine** refers to a loft-style space above the living area which serves as a bedroom.
- A **Duplex** is usually a two storey apartment
- **Student Housing** usually refers to one room in a large house shared with other students. There are a few large scale student residence block such as The Link <http://www.thelink.brussels/>.

Costs

Renting in Brussels is still relatively affordable, particularly if you compare it to other European capitals. The average cost of renting varies substantially across the city. Most students are looking for apartment sharing and this is the most cost effective. Students tend to take short-term leases in these apartment shares, or take over the lease from a tenant who is leaving. In terms of costs, average figures are set out below:

Room in a Student House (Kot) (10 bedrooms): €300 - €400 per month

Room in an apartment share with 2/3 others: €350 - €600 per month

Studio apartment: €550 - €750 per month

One bedroom apartment: €750 - €1000 per month

Two bedroom apartment: €1200 - €1800 per month

What these costs include does vary, some will include charges (e.g. electricity, water, council tax) whereas others may be extra – expect to pay an additional €100 per month for these charges. For example, if you live in an apartment block with a lift (elevator) you may have higher charges.

Registering at the Commune/Gemeente

All new inhabitants to Brussels should register at the Commune (this is the town hall in the area of Brussels that you live). Each commune has a town hall for new residents from other countries. For non-EU citizens, you will be asked to visit the commune within eight days of arrival, but to save repeat visits, we would recommend visiting the commune once you have found a permanent place to live. Your first visit to the commune will essentially be reporting to the commune and arranging the next steps. Registering at the commune looks a bit like this:

Step 1: Presenting yourself to the commune and letting them know your address in Brussels. Please take passport/ID on this visit.

Step 2: The commune will arrange for the Police to visit your apartment to check that you are living at the address you said you were. Usually the Police will simply check the name on the doorbell, so please ensure you have placed your name badge there! In some communes, the Police may want to speak to you.

Step 3: The Police will leave an appointment slip in your postbox with a time and date to register at the Commune.

Step 4: Visit the commune at the stipulated time and date. Please see below for all the necessary items required to register.

Step 5: The commune will let you know when your Belgian ID card is ready for collection. For Non-EU passport holders, this will also include a residency permit in the passport.

Commune Websites:

Ixelles/Elsene <http://www.ixelles.irisnet.be/site/index.php>

Etterbeek http://www.etterbeek.be/vos-demarches/je-minstalle-a-etterbeek?set_language=fr

Schaerbeek <http://www.schaerbeek.be/en/administrative-procedures/civil-status-identity-nationality/first-registration-commune/premiere-inscription-non-belges/stay-more-than-three-months-registration-within-commune>

St-Gilles <http://www.stgilles.irisnet.be/fr/s-installer-a-saint-gilles/>

Brussels (1000) <https://www.brussels.be/registration-newly-arrived-foreigner>

What to take when registering at the commune

All communes have their own procedures for registration, but in general, you should ensure you report to the commune as soon as possible as to not delay the process. The guidelines are as follows:

Students from an EU member state

Please bring the following documents with you:

- Valid passport or national identity card
- Certificate of permanent enrolment
- Certificate of undertaking or grant certificate if necessary, or sworn declaration of livelihood (not usually necessary)
- Proof of health insurance (European health insurance card)
- Registered lease contract or the property deed for the accommodation serving as primary residence
- 4 recent passport photos per person (face-on, on a white background, format H 4.5 cm x L 3.5 cm)
- TIMEFRAME: As quickly as possible (minimum: 3 months)

Non-EU students

- Please bring the following documents with you:
- Passport with Visa D
- Certificate of permanent enrolment
- Certificate of undertaking or proof of grant (a copy is valid)
- Registered lease contract or the property deed for the accommodation serving as primary residence
- 4 recent passport photos per person (face-on, on a white background, format H 4.5 cm x L 3.5 cm)
- TIMEFRAME: As quickly as possible (minimum: 3 months)

Useful resources for newcomers to Belgium

Expatica Belgium: https://www.expatica.com/be/visas-and-permits/Study-in-Belgium-Guide-to-student-visas-and-permits_107627.html

Brussels Commissioner office: <http://www.commissioner.brussels/i-am-an-expat>

The Bulletin: <http://www.xpats.com/>

Angloinfo: <https://www.angloinfo.com/belgium>

o Rental Phrases

| English | Français | Nederlands |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Agency | Agence | Agentschap |
| Alarm | Alarme | Alarm |
| American-style kitchen | Cuisine américaine (cuis am) | Amerikaanse keuken |
| Apartment | Appartement (app) | Appartement (app) |
| Attic | Grenier (gren) | Zolder |
| Available | Libre | Vrij/Beschikbaar |
| Basement | Cave | Kelder (keld) |
| Bathroom | Salle de bain (sdb) | Badkamer (badk) |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Bedroom | Chambre à coucher (ch) | Slaapkamer (slpk) |
| Breakfast corner | Coin à déjeuner | Ontbijthoek/eethoek |
| Central Heating | Chauffage central (ch cent / cc) | Centrale verwarming |
| Concierge | Concierge (conc) | Concierge (conc) |
| Dining room | Salle à manger (sam) | Eetkamer (eetk) |
| Elevator | Ascenseur (asc) | Lift |
| Expertise | Etat des lieux | Staat van het huis |
| Extra costs | Charges (char) | Kosten (kost) |
| Extra costs included | Charges incluses / Pas de charges (Ch incl/pdch) | Kosten inbegrepen / Geen kosten (Kost inb/gkost) |
| Façade | Façade (Fac) | Gevel (gev) |
| Farm | Ferme | Hoeve |
| Floor (story) | Etage (ét) | Verdieping (verd) |
| For Rent | A louer (AL) | Te Huur (TH or Te Hr) |
| For Sale | A vendre (AV) | Te koop (TK or Te Kp) |
| For information call | Pour renseignements, appelez | Voor inlichtingen, bel |
| Fully-equipped kitchen | Cuisine super équipée (cuis s éq) | volledig ingerichte keuken (vol. ing. Kkn) |
| Furnished | Meublé (meub) | Bemeubeld(e) (Bemeub) |
| Garage | garage (gar) | garage (gar) |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Garden | Jardin (jard) | Tuin |
| Gasoil | Mazout (maz) | Stookolie/mazout (maz) |
| Ground floor (US first floor) | Rez de chaussée (rdch) | gelijkvloers (rdch) |
| Hall | Hall | Hal/gang |
| House | Maison (mais) | Huis |
| Insurance | Assurance | Verzekering |
| Kitchen | Cuisine (cuis) | Keuken (kkn) |
| Large | Grand(e) (gr) | Groot (grote) (gr) |
| Large House | Villa | Villa |
| Large Town House | Maison de maître | Herenhuis |
| Laundry room | Buanderie (buand) | Wasplaats (waspl) |
| Like new | Etat neuf (neuf) | Nieuwe staat |
| Living room | Salon/Living (sal/liv) | Living |
| Marble | Marbre (marb) | marmer (mar) |
| No animals | Pas d'animaux | Geen huisdieren |
| Non-smokers | Non-fumeurs | niet-rokers |
| Office | Bureau (bur) | Bureel/bureau (bur) |
| Old/Antique | Ancien | Oud/Antiek |
| Open hearth | Feu ouvert (fo) | open haard (oh) |
| Parking spot | parking (pkg) | parking/autostaanplaats (pkg) |

| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Patio | Cour | Koer |
| Peaceful | Calme | Rustig/Kalm |
| Renovated | Rénové(e) (rén) | gerenoveerd (gerenov) |
| Rental Agreement | Bail | Huurcontract |
| Restored | restauré(e) (rest) | Vernieuwd/gerestaureerd/gerenoveerd (vern) |
| Room | Pièce/chambre | Kamer |
| Row House | Maison de ville (rijw) | Rijwoning |
| Security deposit | Garantie/caution (gar) | Waarborg (waarb) |
| Shower room | Salle de douche (sdd) | Stortbad/Douche |
| Single-family house | Maison unifamiliale (mais unif) | Éénggezinswoning |
| Small | Petit(e) (pt) | Klein(e) (kl) |
| Swimming pool | Piscine (pisc) | Zwembad |
| Terrace | Terrasse (terr) | Terras (terr) |
| Tiles | Carrelage (carrel) | Tegels (teg) |
| To visit, call | Visites (followed by tel. number) (Te) | bezichtigen/voor afspraak |
| Toilet | WC | WC |
| Veranda | Véranda | Veranda |