



COMITÉ DE LIAISON DES EXPERTS NATIONAUX DÉTACHÉS  
VERBINDUNGSKOMITEE FÜR NATIONALE EXPERTEN  
LIAISON COMMITTEE OF SECONDED NATIONAL EXPERTS

# CLENAD Welcome Brochure



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## FOREWORD by the CLENAD bureau

*CLENAD is the liaison committee and interest organisation of more than 1100 Seconded National Experts (SNEs) or Experts Nationaux Détachés (ENDs) working in the EU institutions. This first international CLENAD Welcome Brochure was presented at the General Assembly 2012 on 6 December 2012, and is since then also posted on the CLENAD website ([www.clenad.eu](http://www.clenad.eu)).*

*CLENAD promotes the interests of SNEs through national sections representing the SNEs from the different countries. The photo on the cover of this brochure shows some of the members of these sections, represented in the bureau of CLENAD during a meeting in October 2012 to prepare the 2012 General Assembly.*

*Some national sections have a long history, and have over the years developed a professional and sustainable system of support to SNEs after arrival and during their period in the institutions. The EU institutions also include SNEs in the induction programmes to new staff, and will then present useful written information. Yet, one of the consequences of the lack of national sections, or their limited size, is the lack of written information for SNEs from some countries before their arrival, and indeed even for their employers. This may result in a lower number of SNEs than potentially could have been the case and hence a lower geographical spread, less experience in recruiting and working with SNEs and more unsolved problems and challenges for SNEs when arriving.*

*In order to provide more and better information about SNEs, CLENAD decided to produce this leaflet, drawing some universal guidance from our own experience and from different existing national documents<sup>1</sup> - which we do not intend to replace!*

*We are aware that there are huge differences in organisational cultures and traditions among countries sending SNEs, as well as legal differences, and this diversity may also limit the possibilities for general guidance and information.*

*Many SNEs are not working in Brussels. This welcome brochure has however a clear focus on the practical arrangements of working in Brussels, which hosts the highest number of SNEs. The relevance may therefore be limited for SNEs working in Luxembourg<sup>2</sup>, in the European External Action Service offices elsewhere in the world, and for SNEs in the Agencies in other European cities. We aim of course to further develop, within our limited time, the scope of the document over time!*

*The CLENAD bureau welcomes your feedback, preferably via your national section, so that we can continue to update the brochure. As such, it should be considered as a living document, to be updated frequently over time. The CLENAD website will always have the most recent version on display, including a number of more recent FAQ's. After taking up your duty will also have access to our Circa-bc working environment.*

*Finally, we wish you fruitful preparations of your secondment, and a satisfying and rewarding period working in the EU institutions!*

*Bureau of CLENAD, Brussels, 6 December 2012.*

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<sup>1</sup> For example the Italian “*Guida 2012 Manuale pratico per l’esport nazionale distaccato*”, the Norwegian *Tipsheft for Norkse Nasjonale Experter I den Europeiske Union*, April 2011, and the Dutch 2012 *Handleiding voor Gedetacheerde Nationale deskundigen*, Voorjaar 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the Welcome Office of the Commission publishes "Soon in Luxembourg".

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# 1. About CLENAD

CLENAD is the liaison committee and interest organisation of more than 1100 Seconded National Experts (SNEs) or Experts Nationaux Détachés (SNEs) working in the EU institutions - mostly within the European Commission, but also in the Council; the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and Committee of the Regions (CoR). When starting their new duty, SNEs become automatically member of CLENAD.

A growing number of SNEs are also working in the European External Action Service or one of the EU Agencies. In addition to all EU Member States, Candidate Countries and European Economic Area/EFTA countries also send SNEs to EU institutions (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland).

CLENAD's *mission* is to support the general interests of SNEs towards the EU institutions and, where appropriate, also towards their employer in the sending country. CLENAD does also provide assistance and information to SNEs in matters of general concern. Since all SNEs are employed by their respective sending governments, CLENAD does not operate as a union, nor does it have status as such. CLENAD is based on a Constitution to be updated in 2012, but no legal status.

What CLENAD can do to represent and help SNEs depends very much on the voluntary efforts of its members. CLENAD promotes the interests of SNEs through *national sections* representing the SNEs from the different countries. CLENAD encourages the development of these national sections where they do not yet exist.

The national sections are represented, via the own democratic procedures within each section, in the "*Bureau*" of CLENAD. The Bureau will elect, based on the procedure as revised in the 2012 CLENAD constitution, from the national representatives a board to coordinate the support. This board will for example keep contacts with the institutions to defend the interests of SNEs collectively, and will organise regular events and communication tools to promote on-going contact between SNEs. The bureau of CLENAD will also regularly organise a General Assembly for all CLENAD members.

## 2. The role of an END / SNE

### *What is an END/SNE?*

An "END" (Expert National Détaché, or otherwise also known in English as "SNE" – seconded national expert) is an official seconded from their home institution for a limited period (up to four years, although in certain cases as long as six years). The role of the END is outlined in the Commission Decision, C (2006)2033) of 12.10.2008<sup>3</sup>. It lays down all relevant rules on the secondment to the Commission of national experts and national experts in professional training including rules on working hours, holidays, rights, etc.

Although the work SNEs do is akin to that of an "AD" official (*fonctionnaire*) they are bound by certain restrictions. For example, to avoid any conflicts of interest, SNEs are not supposed to represent the Commission to external stakeholders including Member States (practically this means that an END is not supposed to go on mission on his/her own unless there are exceptional circumstances or permission by the DG, to be involved in any financial commitments, or in evaluations for tenders or project proposals, etc.). However, in practice there may be significant differences (see hereafter).

The EU institutions use SNEs for a number of reasons:

- They have a level of expertise and experience which the institution lacks
- They are an additional level of communication between the institution and the Member State
- They are cheaper (around 30%-40%) than a fonctionnaire.

The sending Member States also receive benefits:

- They have a direct contact with the Institution – able to make rapid contact and exchange information when necessary
- They will have staff with direct experience in the EU decision making process, both during secondment as well as after return.

And, of course, the SNEs themselves benefit:

- They improve their specific expertise and knowledge of the EU decision making process
- They develop their professional experiences in a multicultural environment
- They build a network of international contacts
- They develop an EU wide view of their working sphere.

### *What does a SNE do?*

The role of the SNE is to "assist Commission officials or temporary staff. They may not perform middle or senior management duties, even when deputising for their immediate Superior." In a practical sense, this means that the SNE plays a similar role to an AD official, although like in any large organisation this does vary from unit to unit, and DG to DG. On the whole, the Commission

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_service/docs/regime\\_end\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/docs/regime_end_en.pdf)

recognises the expertise of the SNE, and allocates the tasks accordingly. For example, within DG TAXUD and DG EAC there is little difference between the duties of an SNE and the duties of a non-managerial AD official, but in other DGs there seems to be a more strict interpretation of the SNE Statute. Be sure in your job application interview to discover the views of your potential new (head of) unit in this respect, so that you have realistic expectations about working in the EU institution concerned.

#### *How does a SNE get paid?*

An SNE is paid his/her salary from their home administration, and receives a per diem allowance which is paid by the Commission (the amount can vary depending on where your place of origin is – see Article 17 of the Commission Decision – which is not insignificant to know for potential SNEs from Belgium and Luxembourg who want to work in their own capital!). There are however also so called “cost-free SNEs” meaning SNEs for whom the Commission does not pay any of the allowances or cover any of the expenses provided in the SNE Decision, other than those related to the performance of their duties during their secondment<sup>4</sup>.

At the start of the secondment the SNE is issued a lump sum of 75 days, given the initial costs for moving, housing, etc., and after this period the allowances are paid monthly. The SNE is highly recommended, when arriving at their post, to open a local bank account for the payment of this allowance (see hereafter). Pay slips for the allowances are now only electronically available via Sysper 2 (except for cost free SNEs of course).

#### *Language requirements*

The SNE must have a thorough knowledge of one of the Community languages, and a satisfactory knowledge of another Community language to a level sufficient in order to carry out their duties. As the work of the EU Institutions is moving more and more towards being carried out in English, a thorough knowledge of English is especially important. Knowledge of French is also useful, particularly as it makes day-to-day living in Brussels a little easier.

#### *Training and language courses*

Staff members of EU institutions, including SNEs, enjoy a wide selection of quality training and equipment for personal development and language courses, including e-learning material. Please see with your HR Unit.

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<sup>4</sup> Rules on the secondment of SNEs, Article 2 SNE, C (2008) 6866 final 12.11.2008.

## 3. Practical arrangements

### 3.1 Before arrival

There are a number of practical steps which need to be taken before you arrive in Brussels. The first is to find somewhere to live. As the movement of people in and out of Brussels is so high, finding a place to rent is not difficult, and the cost varies – dependent on the surface, number of rooms and of course the location - between € 600 and € 2200 per month. A suggestion would be to go to the neighbourhood you prefer, and wander around. There are also a variety of websites one can look at (see **Annex**). If you have arrived in Brussels and are still looking for accommodation, the Commission small adds (to be found on the Commission intraweb pages) are also a useful source.

Popular areas tend to be Ixelles, Brussels Centre, the EU quarter around Schuman and Etterbeek. French speaking expats have a clear preference for parts south of the centre (Ixelles/Chatelain; Uccle). Families with children may prefer the residential Woluwe communes, Auderghem or the quieter areas to the east of Brussels, in the province of Flemish Brabant (Tervuren, Overijse, Hoeilaart).

#### *Leases*

It is a pity, but leases in Belgium tend to favour the landlord. It is therefore highly recommended, before you sign the lease, that you have it checked by the European Commission Welcome Office (Rue Montoyer 34/Guimard 10, Tel 0032 396 6600) or by the Brussels-Europe Liaison office of the city of Brussels (Avenue D'Auderghem 63, tel. +322-280.0080).

Belgian leases are normally for nine years, and, if you want to break the lease before the end of the first three years, you may have to pay a fine (three months after one year, two after two years, and one after three years). If you think you will be leaving before three years, it would be more prudent to either negotiate a short-term lease, or include a clause allowing you to cancel the lease for professional reasons without penalty. You should also make sure that no additional charges such as for real estate agents are mentioned in your contract.

You will normally have a liability to have insurance, both for fire/theft, and also, if you are in an apartment, for any damage to a neighbouring property due to, for example, a leaky washing machine. The number of attempts to burglary is rather high in Brussels, also – or perhaps even more - in “better” neighbourhoods . It is wise therefore to check carefully the security measures in your apartment and to have a good insurance. All other costs, such as water (Hydrobru), electricity (Electrabel/Sibelga), internet, television, telephone (Belgacom/Telenet etc), are paid by the tenant. You would normally have to arrange this yourself.

It is normal that you pay a rent guarantee – which is paid into a blocked account opened by the tenant in which two months' rent is paid and is something to arrange when you open your bank account. This money is in principle released only if both parties (the landlord and the tenant)

agree. It is however possible to arrange for the bank to guarantee the amount, rather than the tenant being required to pay what can be a substantial amount into the account.

At the beginning and end of a lease, it is normal that a record is taken of the state of the house (an '*état des lieux*'). These are detailed inspections carried out by an expert of every element of the property, and it is from this that a decision is made as to who pays what at the end of the lease for any repairs. The costs of these examinations are shared with the owner, and it is important, if at all possible, that you are present when these inspections are carried out. It is the practice of some landlords to attempt to extract as much money as possible from the tenant at the end of the lease.

### *Moving*

It is important that you make your arrangements in good time for the transportation of your things from your home to your new place of residence. It is important also to remember that, if you are moving furniture, in Brussels most of this is done via a lift outside the property, which will need to be arranged. In addition, the Brussels police will need to be informed so that they can block the parking area outside the new residence. This can be arranged by your moving company, but you should check that they are aware of these procedures in your Commune.

Moving expenses are sometimes paid by your home department (it varies from Member State to Member State or even from department to department). The current END Decision supposes you will not be compensated by your employer – which has to declare this formally – as a basis for a small monthly compensation as component of your overall allowance.

## **3.2 After arrival**

### *Registering with the commune*

It is obligatory to register with your local Commune. This can, however, sometimes be a rather long and time-consuming process, involving various administrative fees, a number of photos, forms to complete etc. At the end of it, you will receive an “E Card”, with a identification number in the Belgian national register, normally valid for a limited period, which you are supposed to carry around with you at all times.

Registering with the commune is normally done at the local town hall, and there are generally special processes for non-Belgians. You should be aware that the approach differs from Commune to Commune. Information can be found on the various commune websites, but an overview can be found on the website of the Bruxelles region<sup>5</sup>. here:

To register you will need:

- Your passport
- Your attestation of secondment
- A copy of your lease
- Three passport photos
- Some cash to cover the administrative fees
- Your form E101

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bruxelles.irisnet.be/fr/region/region\\_de\\_bruxelles-capitale/communes.html](http://www.bruxelles.irisnet.be/fr/region/region_de_bruxelles-capitale/communes.html)

In case you bring children without the other parent you need to show an authorisation in one of the official Belgian languages (FR, NL, DE) to prove that the other parent agrees that the child is living in a foreign country.

After your initial appointment, you will receive a temporary document (certificate of registration application ) and the police will come to your residence to check that you actually live there (remember to put your name on your doorbell); After a while you will be invited a new time to the commune to close your file and order your residence card. Three weeks after this last visit you will receive some specific codes in order to pick up your residence card at the commune

In accordance with the rules (re-)circulated recently (June 2012) by the Belgian authorities<sup>6</sup>, SNEs and their families could be registered before the arrival of the SNE also via their respective Embassies. Once you have registered under the common law via the Commune, this cannot be changed any more. Apart from the special ID card, and avoiding the time-consuming visits to the commune to get a residence permit in Belgium, this has no other clear benefits. Not all Permanent Representations seem to be aware of this possibility, or are, but rather prefer, given the administrative work load for them, that the SNE is taking care for the administrative formalities him or herself. Others play an active role in registering the SNE with the Belgian authorities and take care of all the necessary correspondence. You are recommended to check this with your authorities before going to the commune.

Registration gives you, after a certain period, the right to vote as an expat in the municipal elections, for which you have to register separately the electoral roll of the commune of residence. If registered, you also are obliged to vote and you can be called to assist at the voting bureau.

#### *Open a bank account*

You will be highly recommended to open a bank account before you receive your attestation (essentially a letter confirming your status) from the Commission. Even if this technically speaking is not necessary anymore, given the abolishment (by the EU!) of higher transfer rates for cross-border money transfers, in practice it will have many practical advantages, therefore you should better organise this as soon as you can.

There are a number of banks in Belgium, all of which provide a service for ex-pats. As you will most likely be required, at least in the first few weeks, to visit your branch personally, you should consider whether you want this to be near where you live, or near to your office. Telephone or email your preferred bank to make an appointment, and remember to take with you your passport, and relevant correspondence (letter of appointment) and a copy of your lease.

#### *First day at your institution*

Your first day at the European Commission will be either the 1st or 16th of the month, for other EU institutions different practices exist, and the first day will be taken by an "induction course",

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<sup>6</sup>

[http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/Carte%20identit%C3%A9%20Experts%20nationaux%20d%C3%A9tach%C3%A9s\\_tcm313-165209.pdf](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/Carte%20identit%C3%A9%20Experts%20nationaux%20d%C3%A9tach%C3%A9s_tcm313-165209.pdf)

during which you will be given an information pack which gives a good overview of what you need to arrange the first days. You will normally need to take with you:

- letter of appointment,
- identification,
- proof of social and health insurance (E101 and E106) and
- form that is completed by the bank (with bank account at a bank in Belgium).

Following the welcome session you will be given your "attestation", the proof of working for the EU institution, and the form which you use to collect your service card (magnetic badge) allowing access to the institution buildings. You are expected, the day following the induction course, to present yourself at the DG you are going to work for. Sometimes, especially in larger DGs of the European Commission, an internal induction session may follow subsequently.

#### *Register with a mutualité*

A SNE stays within the social and health insurance system of his/her seconding Member State. The registration to the Belgian health insurance is for SNEs not mandatory, but membership of a mutualité/mutaliteit<sup>7</sup> entitles for a partial refund of medical and dental costs, hospital care, surgical operations, maternity costs, and prescribed medicines. The amount reimbursed is based on a precise scale for each service provided, and you are always expected to pay a personal fee (of around 25%). Some mutual insurance associations have their own polyclinics where virtually all the patient's costs are reimbursed.

If you decide to register with a Belgian mutualité, you have to ask for the so called form E106 from your health insurance in your home country. With this completed form you can go to any mutualité of your choice in order to get a Belgian insurance card, an electronic so-called SIS (*Système d'Information Sociale*) card. Less technologically advanced, you will also receive stickers ('vignettes') which should be attached to the green treatment certificates when you send them to your 'mutualité' for reimbursement. Refunds on prescribed medicines are made at the time of purchase, after presentation of the SIS card to the chemist, who will then deduct a set percentage from the costs.

After prolongation of your secondment it is important to ensure that you receive a new E106 form and that your SIS card has been prolonged by the mutualité.

#### *Finding a doctor*

Doctors (*médecins/artsen*) throughout Belgium are well trained and required to keep up-to-date with the latest medical developments. Nevertheless, you should choose your doctor as carefully you would in your home country. For visiting a specialist, you aren't obliged to register with a GP, but if you incur treatment charges without obtaining a referral from your GP, these may not be reimbursed under some insurance plans, or will be reimbursed at much lower rates. And you'll find that a good GP is invaluable in terms of guiding you through the system and helping you to find the right specialists or treatment facilities.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.socialsecurity.fgov.be](http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be)

Doctors are listed in the Yellow Pages, but you're more likely to find someone who suits you and your family if you ask friends, neighbours and work colleagues for recommendations. Many Belgian doctors speak English or at least understand it. Most Belgian doctors operate alone, without any administrative or nursing staff to handle phone calls or make appointments, which means that they often take phone calls in the middle of a consultation, which can be rather annoying at first.

If you need to see a doctor outside normal surgery hours, at weekends or during holiday periods, your GP will have an answering service or recorded message giving you the name and phone number of the duty doctor (*médecin de garde or de nuit/wachtdienst*).

### *Bringing your family*

#### 1. Registration of family members with the Commune

A procedure of family reunification has to be introduced at the commune. According to the nationality of the END (EU or non EU), the rules are different. The documents needed are usually birth certificates and marriage certificates, the rental contract, prove of sufficient means of support. You should have official translations of your documents into one of the three official languages of Belgium, so French, Dutch or German.

As this matter is quite complex do not hesitate to contact the Brussels-Europe Liaison office (Avenue d'Auderghem 63 in Etterbeek).

#### 2. Registration of family members with *Mutualité*

In case that your partner does not work in Belgium, he/she also usually remains under the social and health care system of the seconding Member State, so also here you need the respective forms E 106 for all your family Members. All family members are usually registered under the same contract. The prolongation works just like the first registration, so your national insurance has to send you a renewed form E 106. The charges for the registering yourself and your family with a Belgian mutualité depend on the company you choose, but are usually around € 120 for the whole family. *SNEs can write an e-mail to HR B2 END, including the name of their children, to get an specific attestation*

#### 3. Subscription of children to the crèche / kindergarten

SNEs officially have a right to register their children for the European crèche. However, there is a significant over-demand for these places, which is why a priority system has been put in place, with SNEs finding themselves at the bottom. You might therefore think about sending your child to a public or private Belgian crèche.

To qualify for a public crèche, both parents have to prove that they work and registry should be done already during pregnancy. There is in any case a big number of private crèches, where finding a place at least from the age of 12 or 18 months should be possible. The usual charge per child visiting a crèche for five full days a week is around €500.

By the time that children are 2.5/3 years old, they proceed to nursery school / école maternelle under the Belgian system.

A local school might be a good choice especially for children at nursery school (2.5-6 years). For this you need the form confirming the kid's registration with the Commune.

Lists of local schools can be found on the websites of the different communes or [www.one.be](http://www.one.be) (FR) or <http://www.kindengezin.be> (NL; but also FR crèches in the so-called "communes à facilité").

#### 4. European Schools

As an SNE you are entitled to register your children at a European School<sup>8</sup> and school fees will be paid by the EU institution you work for. *SNEs can write an e-mail to HR B2 END, including the name of their children, to get an specific attestation*

As most of the four schools are far beyond their capacities the general policy is that all children have to be registered at EEB4. This school is situated in Laeken. The highest grade in 2012 at this still developing school is S3 (grade 8 in some countries, 13-14 year olds). Depending on the grade they do not yet cover all the language sections as the other three schools that are located in Ixelles, Uccle and Woluwe.

Before looking for a place to live you should consider which school your children can go to. Each school has an own parents' organization APEEE that organizes transport by special school buses, canteen lunch, garderie etc. SNEs have to pay for the school bus transport – other than EU officials.

A last choice might be the different international schools and kindergartens, but it has to be borne in mind that their charges are extremely high, so they are usually only an option in case your national government grants you a special allowance for that, which is not very common.

#### *Going to a hospital*

Hospital care is generally very good in Belgium, although practices may differ from those in your home country. In most cases, hospitalisation must be arranged by your GP and there may be a waiting list for certain non-emergency treatments and services, but in general this waiting time is limited. Whichever kind of hospital you go to, you should bring your Belgian identification card or passport as well as your SIS card if you're being treated under the public health system or proof of insurance if you belong to a private health insurance scheme.

Not all Belgian hospitals accept all insurance plans, so check in advance if you can. You'll be asked to pay a deposit when you're admitted, and unless the hospital has an arrangement with your insurance company to bill them directly you'll be asked to settle your bill weekly throughout your hospitalisation.

Please verify with your mutuality in advance, and/or with your national health insurance scheme, to what degree hospital costs are covered, you may have to arrange an additional insurance for 100% reimbursement of hospitalisation costs, which can only start after a 9 months waiting period (which is of course in particular relevant if you expect a baby as some SNEs have experienced).

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<sup>8</sup> Information about European Schools: <http://www.eursec.eu/index.php?l=2>

More information on the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office web-site: <http://www.blbe.be>

### *Household help*

If you decide to employ a "cleaning lady", what are the legal issues? Do you pay social security and should you arrange an insurance? Would 'Service Vouchers' be a good idea? The European Commission offers a useful brochure on these questions. Without listing here all possible providers of household help, we want to mention that in 2004 a system of vouchers/cheques for services was introduced in Belgium to encourage employment for unskilled or low skilled unemployed people and reducing "black" work. Private persons can buy service cheques for € 7,50 each per hour, with a maximum of 500 cheques per year. After deducting of taxes, the private person will pay only € 5,25 per registered hour, but this is not so relevant for us SNEs, paying tax elsewhere. The private company Sodexo is currently implementing the scheme for the Belgian government. There are paper cheques and electronic cheques.

### *Taxes*

SNEs do not have to pay income taxes in Belgium, neither is the cost allowance taxed in Belgium. Whether this is also the case in relation to your sending country, remains to be regulated by that country concerned. Each year you will receive from the Belgian federal government a form for your tax declaration which you should return together with the Commission's attestation confirming that you do not receive any income in Belgium. This will normally not cause any difficulties. Standard letters are widely available. The Belgian federal government is introducing electronic communication and the obligation to submit the annual declaration only if the SPF calculation is incorrect – for first year SNEs the paper communication may still apply when apply for submitting the first declaration.

For partners the situation may be much more complex, and indeed, even for SNEs seconded by a semi-public organisation it may be less simple. Before secondment you should ask for professional advice by your employer and even professional tax consultants with knowledge of expat situations. Belgium has tax treaties with other EU Member States to avoid double income taxes<sup>9</sup>. This is in particular relevant if your partner registers with you in Belgium, but has income in your home country. Even if paying income tax in the home country, he or she may need to pay a certain amount of Belgian tax for the city and the agglomeration, which could still be significant.

SNEs are in any case not relieved from VAT or communal charges (e. g. for waste disposal), and need to pay for this a low tax for "heads of families and singles" (in Brussels € 89,00 "Regional tax" per year).

Whether you are entitled to a tax deduction for school or crèche fees, remains at the regulatory disposal of your sending country. In any case, since Belgians are entitled to such a deduction, schools and crèches annually hand out the relevant documents.

### *Social and cultural life in Brussels*

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<sup>9</sup> <http://ccff02.minfin.fgov.be/KMWeb/document.do?method=view&id=039c0507-1449-4a49-b386-3b6890781db1>

Brussels is a really lively city, with many cultural activities, classical and pop concerts, musea, et cetera. In many metro stations you will find the free Agenda “Out and about in Brussels”. You will find in the annex some useful links as well to find your way in the huge offer.

On Wednesdays there is a nice food market on Place Chatelain in Ixelles, many working for the EU institutions go there after work to have a beer or wine. On Thursday (especially) and Fridays Place Luxembourg is very popular after work (a younger crowd though). On Fridays there is a not so well-known small (bio-)food market with a number of wineries on Place Chasseurs Ardennais, Schaerbeek, only 500 m from Schuman in the direction of Rue Archimède. On Sundays, there is in the EU quarter a food market at Place Jourdan, 250 m from Schuman in the (opposite) direction of Rue Froissard. Last but not least and more outside the EU area, there is a really big market at Gare du Midi on Sunday mornings. Note that most shops are closed rather early and do not open on Sundays.

### *Getting around in Brussels*

Most EU building are easily reachable public transport, e.g. metro stops Schuman, Maelbeek en Merode are near to Commission offices. Also the DGs on the Avenue Beaulieu are close to metro stops (Beaulieu and Demey).

A subscription for the Brussels’ subway net plus busses and trams will cost you around € 490 per year (MIVB-subscription); a subscription including surrounding communities (MTB subscription) around € 550 per year. You can also buy daily tickets and tickets for 10 trips (€ 13) in the machines in metro stations and in the streets. Since recently, an electronic ticket is available (Mobib basic), then 10 trips will cost you then € 11,80.

More information on [www.mivb.be](http://www.mivb.be).

There a number of train lines through Brussels. There is a train station under Schuman Rond Point (entrances under the Commission’s Berlaymont building and Justus Lipsius Council building) which is currently being modernised and extended. Under the European Parliament building in Brussels you will find the Luxembourg station. Weekend trips are cheaper and there are often special offers to other cities.

More information on [www.b-rail.be](http://www.b-rail.be).

*Renting a bike:* many people use a bike to go to work as there usually are a lot of traffic jams especially in the European quarter. The Villo system is quite easy as there are lots of stations with enough bikes all over the city. You need to subscribe and pay a fee. You will receive a card with which you can easily just take a bike and leave it at a station of your convenience. However, sometimes the stations are empty (higher stations) or full (lower stations) – people prefer to drive downwards...

More information here: <http://en.villo.be/>

*Registering a car:* If you reside in Belgium, you are obliged to register your vehicle.

*More information can be found on the Belgian government site:*

[http://www.belgium.be/en/mobility/vehicle\\_registration\\_service/index.jsp](http://www.belgium.be/en/mobility/vehicle_registration_service/index.jsp)

*Renting a car:* If you prefer to leave your car in your home country – or do not have a car at all, but still sometimes need a car you can subscribe to the Cambio car sharing system. It works almost the same way as the bike rental described above.

More information here: <http://www.brussels.be/artdet.cfm/6594>

*Brussels-Europe Liaison Office*

This office set up by the regional authority (Brussels Capital) seeks to give practical assistance to officials and SNEs working in the EU institutions, to resolve any problems they may encounter in Brussels, but particularly in the following areas:

- administrative formalities to settle legally in the Brussels Capital Region;
- help with procedure for setting up home;
- cultural activities.

More information here: [www.blbe.be](http://www.blbe.be)

### 3.3 During your secondment

#### *Keeping contact*

It is important, ideally before your secondment, to have a clear agreement with your employer how you will maintain contact with your sending organisation. Of course, traditions may differ considerably between national administrations in this respect, but it will be in your own interest, and in that of your employer. You could think of some interim reports about the developments of your tasks and organisation, regular visits, etc. It may also be important to ask for a main contact person or “mentor” (for instance your former director or former head of unit), if appropriate. Of course, you need to be well aware of the expectations, or rather limitations, as you will have to respect the interests of the EU institution and should refrain from defending any national interests<sup>10</sup>. Finally, you are entitled for special leave up to 2 days per year to visit your employer (in the Sysper system, under special leave).

#### *Periodic assessments*

The EU institutions are not obliged to assess the function of SNEs in the same way as is the case for *fonctionnaires* (the so-called yearly CDR exercise). But neither will SNEs normally fall under the national procedures in this respect. There is a risk therefore of a gap of information during the secondment, which may influence the return negative. Therefore you are recommended to initiate yourself a dialogue on your performance, and keep a written trace of this. Heads of units will normally reply positively if you ask for an evaluation.

#### *Working hours, flexitime and holidays*

The same rules which apply to officials apply to SNEs<sup>11</sup>, which means that SNEs are entitled on a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 30 ‘normal’ holidays (dependent on the distance between work place and place of origin you are entitled to 1 to 6 additional days). You need to ask for holiday from the head of unit via the Sysper 2 system. More information about this for SNEs working in the Commission can be found in the SNE website on MyIntracomm.

By choosing “flexitime”, and by carefully registering the number of hours you work, you can compensate excessive working hours up to 2 days each month, in agreement with your head of unit. The practices differ however from DG to DG. All extra work (hours) should normally be done with prior consent of the superior and should only be asked for in exceptional circumstances, so it should not be encouraged already upon arrival.

You are also entitled to special days leave in certain occasions (such as wedding, bereavement etc.) and as mentioned above 2 days to visit your employer.

Next to the annual leave days, there are – depending on the year - 15-17 fixed holidays (Christmas until 2 January, Easter, Pentecost, Whitsun and Good Friday, Ascension Day and the Friday thereafter, furthermore 1 May, 9 May, 21 July, 15 August, 1 and 2 November).

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<sup>10</sup> Rules on the secondment of SNEs, Article 6 and 7 SNE Statute, C (2008) 6866 final 12.11.2008.

<sup>11</sup> Rules on the secondment of SNEs, Article 14 (1) SNE Statute C(2008) 6866 final 12.11.2008 .

### *What to do in case of sickness*

In case of sickness, you need to inform your head of unit. In case of illness longer than 3 days, you need to ask your general practitioner for a medical attest which you should send to the medical service of the European Commission (otherwise the sick days will be deducted from your annual leave). The Commission can ask for a medical check-up. When you are regularly ill for short periods (more than 12 days in total) then you should also ask for a medical attest.

If you are ill for a period of more than 3 months, the monthly allowance will be automatically suspended<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Rules on the secondment of SNEs, Article 13, C (2008) 6866 final 12.11.2008.

## 4 When the end of your secondment approaches

### *Extension up to four years*

Most SNEs start with a two year secondment, with the possibility to extend for a further one or two years at the end of the initial two years. It is advisable that, should you want to extend your secondment, you speak to your ministry at least six months in advance. It is also important that you secure, in parallel, the agreement of your head of unit in the Commission or other institution.

In the case of an extension, your DG will send a request to DGHR, who in turn send an official request to your country via its Mission/Permanent Representation. Agreement then comes back via the same route. It is important that you keep track of what is happening, as sometimes this exchange of official letters is temporarily blocked between the various departments.

You will receive a new 'attestation' and the form to collect a new service card before the first day of your new working period.

Of course, there are also cases of an earlier end of the secondment, with the agreement of the employer and Head of Unit, see your HR unit for advice.

### *Extension beyond the four years*

In accordance with the Commission Decision, the secondment can be extended for a further two years following the fourth year, but only in exceptional circumstances. In practice, this means that, if you are working on a particular project and your DG wants to keep you, the DG would be required to write a note to DGHR outlining precisely what your duties are, and why it is necessary to keep you (e.g. a proposal for a Directive you have worked on will be negotiated in the Council). They will then make the decision (although exception is the rule, with an objective burden of proof for your DG, it is becoming more and more likely that DGHR will agree with the requesting DG).

It is of course essential that you seek (at least informal) agreement from your employer before undertaking this process.

### *Returning home*

Returning to your home country and employer in fact starts with the agreements made at the beginning of your secondment (see before). Finding the right job is in all countries a challenge for SNEs, and the recent economic developments and budgetary restraints have certainly not improved the situation. You may experience – and should be prepared for – a relatively long period of uncertainty, and you should be flexible, for example to accept a temporary position or task, as a basis for finding a more acceptable position later.

The Commission will give certificates of your period of secondment, if requested to the END functional mailbox.

Try to become connected to the national vacancies information systems, or have regular contact with the people who have a good overview of vacancies, or are in charge for matching vacancies with people. Despite any formal commitments taken by your employer, you are foremost yourself responsible for your career and for a smooth and rewarding return!

You are recommended to start orientating for your return, if not already before your arrival, then at least preferably one year before the end of your secondment.

*... Or do you want to remain working in the EU institutions?*

Perhaps you want to remain working for the EU institutions after your period as SNE. You could consider a temporarily post (Temporary Agent or Contractual Agent) or compete for a steady job and life-time career as "EU fonctionnaire". Vacancies you will find for example in the EC's intranet site<sup>13</sup>. In that latter case, as well as in the case of Temporary Agent, you will have to complete successfully the concourse. Be aware of the relatively long time required to follow this route, which you should consider of course against the short-term opportunities offered to you by your national employer upon return.

Please note however that on 5 October 2011 the Commission amended recently its decision<sup>14</sup> on the maximum duration for the recourse to non-permanent staff in the Commission services. The main change introduced consists in the possibility either to extend existing contracts or to grant new contracts to non-permanent staff beyond the maximum duration of six years. The new rule fixes that non-permanent staff may render their services through a combination of different types of contracts or engagements only for a maximum duration of six years **counted on a twelve-year period**, without any derogations.

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<sup>13</sup> See also EPSO's website. [http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_service/job/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/job/index_en.htm)

<sup>14</sup> C(2004)1597/6 of 28 April 2004.

## ANNEX: Some practical links and phone numbers<sup>15</sup>

### CLENAD

- Our own website [www.clenad.eu](http://www.clenad.eu) you will find for example:
  - The EC rules on the secondment of SNEs
  - The most recent CLENAD constitution
  - the link to the European Commission's rules on SNEs
  - recent CLENAD newsletters
  - Links to all permanent representations
  - List of all DGs in the European Commission
  - Links to other institutions
  - Whom to contact and how in the European Commission, Commission directory
- After arrival, you may register in our dedicated place on the **CIRCABC system** to have access to all relevant CLENAD documents (including our digital archive). The EU CIRCABC system – short for Communication and Information Resource Centre for Administrations, Businesses and Citizens – is an application used to create "collaborative workspaces" where widespread communities of users can share information and resources over the Internet. Registration will help the CLENAD bureau also to have a better overview of the distribution of SNEs in different EU institutions and agencies and better communication possibilities with the whole SNE community.
- **How do you register into it?**
  - URL to access CLENAD on CIRCABC: <https://circabc.europa.eu/>
  - First action is to choose **Login** on CIRCABC;
  - Second action is to access via **ECAS**:
  - If you do not have a username/password on ECAS then choose "Sign Up" option on ECAS interface.
  - Third action is to **apply for membership** to CLENAD on CIRCABC;
  - The leader of CLENAD on CIRCABC, currently Augusto Firmo (Taxud), will receive a notification and grant access to the requester by e-mail.

### Administrative matters for SNEs including housing

- DG HR – END unit, Rue Montoyer 34, 6th floor, room 19-31 (e-mail: HR B2 END)
- Commission intranet site for SNEs:  
[http://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr\\_admin/en/external\\_staff/nat\\_expert/Pages/index.aspx](http://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr_admin/en/external_staff/nat_expert/Pages/index.aspx)
- Commission website on SNEs: [http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_service/job/sne/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/job/sne/index_en.htm)

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<sup>15</sup> We don't pretend that this is an exhaustive nor a fully up-to-date list!

- European Commission Welcome office / bureau d'accueil in Brussels: Rue Montoyer 34, tel +322-296.6600 (9 - 16.00 h), Housing, checking leasing contracts, information for families, etc.
- European Commission Welcome Office in Luxembourg: DRB A1/001, Drosbach Building, 12, rue Guillaume Kroll, Cloche d'Or, L-1882 – Luxembourg. Tel. 4301 33000.
- Bureau de Liaison Bruxelles-Europe, Avenue d'Auderghem 63, Tel: +322-280.0080 (From Monday until Friday 9.00-17.00 hrs). Administrative affairs for newcomers in Brussels and checking of leasing contracts, etc. [www.blbe.be](http://www.blbe.be) . See also their more humorous publication “Survival Guide for newcomers in Brussels”.

### **Working in the EU institutions in general**

- The website of the European Personnel Selection office : [www.eu-careers.eu](http://www.eu-careers.eu)
- More on Europe, all EU institutions and Agencies: [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)
- Contact with people working and living in Brussels and Luxembourg via Facebook “EU-raconteurs”.

### **Brussels and Belgian government**

- Portal Belgium: official information and services: <http://www.belgium.be/en>
- Bruxelles regional government [www.bruxellois.irisnet.be](http://www.bruxellois.irisnet.be)
- Overview of Brussels' Communes:  
[http://www.bruxelles.irisnet.be/fr/region/region\\_de\\_bruxelles-apitale/communes.html](http://www.bruxelles.irisnet.be/fr/region/region_de_bruxelles-apitale/communes.html)
- Registration of SNEs with special passport, diplomatic or service passport:  
[http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/Carte%20identit%C3%A9%20Experts%20nationaux%20d%C3%A9tach%C3%A9s\\_tcm313-165209.pdf](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/Carte%20identit%C3%A9%20Experts%20nationaux%20d%C3%A9tach%C3%A9s_tcm313-165209.pdf)
- Information from the Belgian federal government [www.belgopocket.be](http://www.belgopocket.be) , clarification of applicable legal and administrative rules (only in Dutch, French and German)
- Overview of bilateral tax treaties of Belgium with other countries:  
<http://ccff02.minfin.fgov.be/KMWeb/document.do?method=view&id=039c0507-1449-4a49-b386-3b6890781db1> and  
<http://ccff02.minfin.fgov.be/KMWeb/document.do?method=view&nav=1&id=ccd81024-79f1-45b5-a238-89b6f0ba449c&disableHighlighting=true#findHighlighted>

### **Housing**

- [www.immoweb.be](http://www.immoweb.be)
- [www.vitrine.be](http://www.vitrine.be)
- [www.immonet.be](http://www.immonet.be)
- [www.vlan.be](http://www.vlan.be)

- [www.homeinbrussels.be](http://www.homeinbrussels.be)

### **Jobs (for partners)**

- ACTIRIS: [www.actiris.be](http://www.actiris.be)
- BULLETIN: [www.xpats.com](http://www.xpats.com)
- EUROPEAN VOICE: [www.europeanvoice.com](http://www.europeanvoice.com)
- EUROJOBS: [www.eurojobs.com](http://www.eurojobs.com)
- JOBAT: [www.jobat.be/nl/](http://www.jobat.be/nl/)
- JOBSCAREER: [www.jobscareer.be](http://www.jobscareer.be)
- JOBSTODAY: [www.jobstoday.be](http://www.jobstoday.be)
- MONSTER: [www.monster.be](http://www.monster.be)
- REFERENCES: [www.references.be](http://www.references.be)
- STEPSTONE: [www.stepstone.be](http://www.stepstone.be)
- VACATURE: [www.vacature.be](http://www.vacature.be)
- VDAB: <http://vdab.be>

### **Transport**

- Metro, tram and bus: [www.mivb.be](http://www.mivb.be)
- Train: [www.b-rail.be](http://www.b-rail.be), [www.thalys.com](http://www.thalys.com), [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)
- Bicycle rental: <http://en.villo.be/>
- Car sharing: <http://www.brussels.be/artdet.cfm/6594>

### **Schools and family life**

- European Schools: <http://www.eursec.eu/index.php?l=2>
- Other interesting websites for schools and family life in Belgium might be [www.bct.be](http://www.bct.be) or [www.xpats.com](http://www.xpats.com)

### **Social security and health care**

- List of “mutuelles”: [www.socialsecurity.fgov.be](http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be)
- List of English-speaking General practitioners by commune [www.mgbru.be](http://www.mgbru.be)
- [www.socialezekerheid.fgov.be](http://www.socialezekerheid.fgov.be) Most of the information is in French and Dutch, but some is available in English, including the brochure. 'Everything you have ever wanted to know about social security' from this site.
- [www.belgopocket.be](http://www.belgopocket.be) (health care in Belgium)

## **Social and cultural life**

- Cultural agenda [www.agendamagazine.be](http://www.agendamagazine.be) (also on Facebook)
- Useful links regarding life in Belgium via EPSO: [http://europa.eu/epso/discover/useful\\_links/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epso/discover/useful_links/index_en.htm)
- Information on what to do 356 days in Brussels and surroundings. See <http://www.quefaire.be>
- <http://www.justlanded.be/english/Belgium> or Luxemburg
- Practical information and tip about settling and living in Brussels: [www.expatsinbrussels.be](http://www.expatsinbrussels.be) also on facebook
- Website of the former Bulletin magazine: [www.xpats.com](http://www.xpats.com)
- “Brussels.Life” has the same objective and publishes an annual booklet, distributed among EU staff via L’union syndicale. See [www.brusselsslife.be](http://www.brusselsslife.be).

## **General useful telephone numbers**

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| • Ambulance  | 100          |
| • Police   | 101          |
| • Fire brigade   | 100          |
| • Ambulance  | 100          |
| • Emergencies (via GSM)  | 112          |
| • Medical assistance (general practitioners 24h)               | 02/479 18 18 |
| • Taxi <a href="http://www.taxis.be">www.taxis.be</a> Brussels | 02/3494949   |
| • Info drugs   | 02/227.52.52 |