Country Guide (IAM)

Belgium

This guide is compiled from the IAM Country Guide for reference only. Customs regulations change frequently; please consult your Seapoe relocation consultant for the latest requirements before shipping.

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Documents

Documents required for importing used household goods, personal effects, and related shipments.

Required Documents

- Passport (copy including signature page)
- Original and 5 copies of a signed, dated, valued inventory, including an "introductory statement" and a "concluding statement" listing household goods and personal vehicles (if applicable), number of shipments, and all electrical items with serial numbers
- Bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Certificate of Residence (original) from the local Belgian town hall (aankomstattest / attestation d'arrivee)
- Documentation proving residence abroad for at least 12 consecutive months (certificate from Belgian consulate at origin, or employer at origin, or employer's branch office in Belgium)
- For company moves: signed and stamped declaration from the employer confirming the transfer is required and that the employee resided outside the EU
- Change of Residence Certificate (for Belgian nationals returning)
- Customs Form 136F and diplomatic statement (for diplomats)
- Bank guarantee (if all documents are not available; refunded within 6 months upon presentation of required paperwork)

Specific Information

Intra-EU moves: If moving from within the EU, no customs declaration is required. Free movement of goods applies within the EU single market.

Pre-arrival import possible: Relief can be granted before the person establishes residence in Belgium. In that case, the person must commit to establishing residence within 6 months. A security deposit is required.

Partial shipments: Used household goods may be imported in several separate shipments, but the declaration of duty-free entry must be completed for all shipments at the time of the first importation.

12-month transfer restriction: After import, goods may not be lent, pledged, rented out, or transferred (whether or not for consideration) without notifying Customs in advance for 12 months. Violation results in revocation of the relief and payment of import duties.

Warranty/guarantee for non-residents: Foreigners without a Certificate of Residence in Belgium must pay a warranty of 10% customs duties + 21% VAT + EUR 500 to cover possible fines. This is refunded upon proof of residency.

Belgian nationals returning within 2 years: Must produce the customs documents issued at the time of export of their household goods and/or vehicle. Without these, a warrant/guarantee must be paid.

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Customs competence: The local head of customs at the import office grants exemption for most goods. For motor vehicles, trailers, motorcycles (over 50cc), motor caravans, pleasure boats, and tourist aircraft, the director of the regional Customs and Excise Centre (for the area of the new residence) is responsible.

Shipper arrival timing: The shipper should arrive in Belgium at least 1-2 weeks before the shipment to obtain the Certificate of Residence from the town hall.

Duties & Taxes

From non-EU countries — Duty-free conditions: Per the FPS Finance (official government source), personal property may be imported free of import duties and VAT if all of the following conditions are met: the person is transferring normal place of residence to the EU (Belgium); they have resided outside the EU for at least 12 consecutive months; the goods have been owned and used for a minimum of 6 months at the former residence before the departure date; the goods are for the person's use and will continue to be used; and the goods are imported within 12 months from the date of establishing residence in Belgium.

Items not eligible for duty exemption: Alcoholic products (except "fond de cave" of less than 30 bottles with a declaration), tobacco products, commercial means of transport, articles for use in a trade or profession (other than portable instruments of applied/liberal arts). New items (less than 6 months old), presents, and souvenirs are subject to duties.

VAT: Standard Belgian VAT is 21%. Exempt for qualifying transfer of residence goods.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs — Strictly prohibited
- Meat, milk, and dairy products from non-EU countries — Prohibited (limited exceptions from Andorra, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and small amounts of specific products from other countries)
- Protected species and products CITES — Ivory, tortoiseshell, coral, reptile skin, Amazonian forest wood, etc.
- Counterfeit goods — Prohibited
- Weapons without permit — Prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-Free Traveller Allowances (from non-EU countries)

Alcohol (persons 17+):

- By air/sea: 1L spirits over 22% OR 2L under 22%, plus 4L still wine, plus 16L beer
- By land: 0.5L spirits over 22% OR 1L under 22%, plus 2L still wine, plus 8L beer (frontier zone/land travellers)

Tobacco (persons 17+):

- By air/sea: 200 cigarettes OR 100 cigarillos OR 50 cigars OR 250g tobacco
- By land: 40 cigarettes OR 20 cigarillos OR 10 cigars OR 50g tobacco

Other goods:

- EUR 430 by air/sea, EUR 300 by land, EUR 150 for under-15s

Restricted Items

- Alcohol within household shipments — "Fond de cave" declaration required for fewer than 30 bottles; larger quantities subject to duties
- Plants and vegetable products PERMIT REQUIRED — Phytosanitary certificate from the Ministry of Agriculture of the origin country required
- Ivory and animal products CITES — Complete list must be obtained from the Belgian

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- consulate before packing
- Electronic/electrical equipment from non-EU countries — May require modifications for Belgian/EU standards
- New items (less than 6 months old) — Subject to duties
- Presents and souvenirs — Subject to duties
- Firearms PERMIT REQUIRED — Strict EU weapons regulations

Consignment Instructions

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences regarding air / sea shipments.

Inventory requirements: Original plus 5 copies, signed, dated, and valued. Must include introductory and concluding statements. Electrical items must include serial numbers.

Certificate of Residence: Must be obtained from the local Belgian town hall upon arrival. The shipper should arrive 1-2 weeks before the shipment. This document is critical for customs clearance.

Signature legalisation: Customs may require proof of the shipper's signature authenticity. It is advisable to have the signature legalised in the country of origin by a local notary. The certificate should be dated at least 30 days but not more than 1 year before entry into Belgium.

Port of entry: Antwerp (one of Europe's largest ports, primary for sea freight). Brussels Airport (Zaventem) for air freight. Liege Airport for cargo. Belgium is also accessible overland from all EU neighbours.

EU member state: Belgium is a founding EU member state, NATO headquarters, and the seat of EU institutions. Goods from other EU countries move freely. Only imports from non-EU countries require customs clearance.

Languages: Belgium has three official languages: Dutch (Flemish), French, and German. Customs documents may need to be in the relevant regional language depending on the customs office location.

Currency: Euro (EUR). Belgium is part of the Eurozone.

Regulatory Updates

- Ongoing: EU customs regulations apply. Belgium follows the Union Customs Code (UCC) and all EU-wide tariff updates.
- 2024-2025: EU digital customs initiatives continue; Belgium uses the PLDA/NCTS electronic customs systems.
- VAT: Stable at 21% for standard rate.

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