

**Belgium**

**Civil Registration**

# COTENT

<b>Title .....</b>	<b>page</b>
<b>Belgium Civil Registers.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Belgian National Identity card .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CSC Develops Digital ID Card for Belgium .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SCM Microsystems Delivers Smart Card .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>About Giesecke &amp; Devrient .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Moving House in Belgium.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Belgium National Civil Registration .....</b>	<b>12</b>

# Belgium Civil Registers

## From FamilySearch Wiki

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

If you know where your ancestors came from in Belgium, you are in for a real treat because civil registration began around 1795-1796 while under French rule. This was also a period of administrative reorganization. Prior to that time, the Parish Registers, which were maintained in duplicates by the priests, served as Civil Registers.

The Parish Registers contain Belgium's Vital Records:

- Births
- Marriages
- Divorces
- Deaths

There are other less-used records, such as marriage banns (or publications) and marriage pieces (annexes). These registers usually contain more information than the Parish Registers do and, although the population registers enable you to see the lives of a family over a 10y-span, these records provide you with additional information about parentage and relationships to witnesses.

The Civil Register can be divided into three periods.

- Pre-1796: Parish Registers
- 1796 to the end of the 19th century: The Old Register
- The New Register: 20th century to the present

The New Registers (end of the 19th and all of the 20th centuries), along with their indexes, are also kept in duplicate copies for each locality. One is kept at the local courthouse, where it can only be accessed with permission of the local burgmaster or the Civil Register clerk. At the end of each year, the other copy is turned over to the court clerk and can be accessed only with written permission, stating just cause.

You can request a photocopy or a literal copy, which must include signatures. It is often necessary to provide exact information (at least approximately), such as name, event's locality, and date. This is necessary because the local clerks do not provide genealogical research.

The Old Registers may not contain as much information as the newer ones. However, some records can be fountains of information, especially marriage records in cases where the spouses' parents are both deceased. In such cases, you will likely find the parents' death information, along with information on the grandparents.

As for the more recent records, the locality keeps one copy and the other copies are turned over to the State Archives (Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels, or Archives de l'État in the provinces). Researchers can access them by writing to:

## **Archives Générales du Royaume**

### **Content**

The Civil Registers contain the official Vital Records:

- Births
- Marriages
- Marriage Banns (i.e., Publications, published twice before the wedding, denote the bride's place of residence, which is where the wedding usually took place)
- Divorces
- Marriage Pieces (Includes whatever records were needed to verify the information given in the marriage certificate; this could include parents' death certificates if they were deceased at the time their child married, and proof of having fulfilled military duty)
- Deaths

A basic knowledge of the local language can help you retrieve very important information, but don't let this keep you from accessing the documents.

Family Search offers downloadable Word lists at:

[http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/frameset\\_rhelps.asp?Page=../research/type/Word\\_List.asp&ActiveTab=Type](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/frameset_rhelps.asp?Page=../research/type/Word_List.asp&ActiveTab=Type)

You could also use an online translator to help you better understand the records.

Samples of translated records can also help you learn to find the documents' key words.  
Document Layout and Indexes

The records are organized in different ways, depending on the time frame and location of the record. The records will be either in Dutch, French, or German. The Parish Registers can also be found in Latin, depending on the area of Belgium in which you are researching.

Some towns record all the events in chronological order, regardless of the type of event. However, the records are numbered according to their type. Other places use a "chapter format" for every year: One chapter for the births, one for the marriages, and one for the deaths.

If the records are not numbered, look for a page number. Be aware that pages are sometimes numbered on one side only (right side). Therefore, they are found in the index as "Recto" (Front) and "Verso" (Back).

Yearly indexes are available in most cases, but sometimes you have to work with ten-year indexes. These will either precede or follow the actual records. Yearly indexes changed over time, especially the Marriage ones. At first the clerk only alphabetized the grooms. In this case it may be necessary to read each entry so as not to miss the bride. Later, however, all spouses are alphabetized in one list, which greatly simplifies research.

If the records are combined, you will find them indexed in categories at the end of the year. These indexes make it much easier to sift through the records, but be mindful of multiple spellings. This is especially important with your emigrant ancestors, whose names were often changed either on purpose or through the emigration process.

The old Parish Registers are of great use to the genealogists. They include:

- Baptism Records - note the sponsors, i.e., godparents and their place of origin
- Marriage Records - note the witnesses
- Deaths or Burials - often disconcertingly sparse in information

Alphabetical indexes by parish are available and could comprise more than one village. All of these records are generally kept at the National Archives (Archives générales du Royaume) for the Brabant Province, and at the State Archives in each of the other Provinces (see list above for addresses). They are sometimes found in City Archives (Brussels, Antwerp, and Mechelen for example).

Depending on the parish, the records go back to the early 18th century, and in some cases, to the 17th and 16th centuries. Although some may not have been available, all of Belgium's Parish registers that are extant have been microfilmed, along with their indexes (Tables). In an effort to preserve the records in Brussels (AGR), using the microfilms is preferred over handling the originals.

Parish records sometimes give minimal information, such as missing parents' names on christening records. In such cases, it is vital to take note of the godparents or sponsors to establish kinship.

Belgian genealogists have created a huge national file that contains all old Parish registers Indexes. This should prove invaluable to all researchers.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has microfilmed and is continuing to microfilm these records for all of Belgium for the Archives Générales du Royaume (AGR) as the privacy laws permit. The microfilms can be viewed at the Archives' facilities or through a Family History Center. Check the Family History Library Catalog at <http://www.familysearch.org> to find the one you need.

### **External Links**

- [http://users.skynet.be/pjansse1/genealogy/BEL-archives/arch\\_ryk.html](http://users.skynet.be/pjansse1/genealogy/BEL-archives/arch_ryk.html)

# Belgian national identity card

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Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)



 The front side of a Belgian identity card

All [Belgians](#) aged 12 and above are issued with an [identity card](#) (*Dutch*: *Identiteitskaart*, *French*: *Carte d'identité*, *German*: *Personalausweis*). Belgians aged 15 and above are required to always carry it with them unless they are within 200 m from their homes. (Foreigners must at all times be able to provide identification, either a [passport](#), or an identity document issued by another EU member state.) Holders who are Belgian citizens are also entitled to use the card for international travel within the [European Union](#) and a number of other [European](#) states, such as [Macedonia](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, [Croatia](#) <sup>[citation needed]</sup>, [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#) <sup>[citation needed]</sup> in lieu of a [Belgian passport](#).

## Contents

- [1 Use within Belgium](#)
- [2 Physical appearance](#)
- [3 See also](#)
- [4 References](#)

## Use within Belgium

Although required to carry the card, Belgians are not required to show their identity cards unless dealing with:

- certain government agencies
- police
- authorised bus and train personnel

## Physical appearance

All fields on the card are bilingual (English in combination with the holder's choice of French, Dutch or German) and the terms Belgium and "Identity Card" in all four languages. The are in credit card format ([ID1](#)) and contain a 3-line machine-readable strip on the back starting with IDBLG. The card holds the following information:<sup>[2]</sup>

- [Photograph](#) of the bearer's face
- Names of the holder (Surname and first two given names, initials of further given names)
- Date and place of birth
- Sex
- Nationality: Belg (Belgian)
- ID card number, 12 digits in the form xxx-xxxxxxx-yy. The check-number yy is the [remainder](#) of the division of xxxxxxxxxx by 97.
- Validity period (normally 5 years)
- Signature
- Identification number of the National Register (each individual is issued unique number for administration purposes) This number consists of 11 digits of the form yy.mm.dd-xxx.xx where yy-mm-dd is the birthdate of the person.
- Place of issue

If the holder wishes, the following info will also be mentioned on the card:

- Marital status

Before 2005, the ID did not contain a [chip](#), and the address of the holder was printed on the card. Currently, this is written only on the chip.

The ID card may be used as a form of identification when travelling within the EU. For most countries outside the EU, Belgian citizens require a passport.<sup>[3]</sup>

## See also

- [Belgian passport](#)
- [Passport](#)
- [Mass surveillance](#)
- [document details on PRADO](#)

# . CSC Develops Digital ID Card for Belgium

Belgium's 10 million citizens now use a digital eID card to file taxes, open bank accounts and make purchases on the Internet through the card's unique ability to digitally authenticate identity.

CSC designed eID to electronically read and validate identity data, authenticate data remotely, and provide a digital signature for electronic documents. The cardholder's identity and photo can be verified when inserted into a card reader. Data stored in the card's chip is protected by a government-generated digital signature, which allows the card to be read and verified without human intervention.



### **Collaborating and achieving buy-in**

During a 2001 feasibility study, CSC consulted with Belgian government municipalities, police, Social Security organizations and software suppliers to achieve buy-in and balance functionality, security and cost for the government. CSC helped the government select the suppliers of the cards and certification services; designed the specifications of how the eID cards would work; and worked with the card producers to design the chip functionalities, supporting software, tests and production data exchange environment.

As part of a 2003 pilot, the government distributed to citizens, companies and administrations in 11 municipalities a software solution that integrates eID authentication and identity data validation into any application. Full deployment of the cards for the entire country began in 2004 and will be completed by 2009.

### **Global opportunities**

The drive to modernize ID documents varies depending on the needs of the country, but countless uses of eID cards are possible, including the preservation of homeland security, immigration and anti-terrorist control and even elections. Belgium's primary concern was e-government, but the successful adoption of the card is snowballing into commercial applications.

Belgium's private sector is integrating the eID card into various business environments, including the banking sector. The eID card will serve as the authentication token for all e-banking applications and point-of-sale terminals are being adapted to accept eID cards. Post offices are being outfitted with readers to verify residences of recipients receiving registered mail. Integrating industry-specific data into the eID card could make it usable for physical security; Web site/portal access; e-procurement; healthcare transactions; e-invoicing; or as a student, municipal or healthcare card.

Belgium's digital ID card received a 2005 Award for Technical Excellence, CSC's top honor for innovation sponsored by the Leading Edge Forum, which provides technology thought leadership for CSC.

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## **SCM Microsystems Delivers Smart Card Readers for Belgium's National e-ID Program**

**FREMONT, Calif., Oct. 26 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/**—SCM Microsystems, Inc. (Nasdaq: SCMM; Prime Standard: SMY) today announced it has delivered smart card readers to international technology group Giesecke & Devrient (G&D) for use in Belgium's National e-ID program.

Belgium is becoming the first European country to standardize the electronic identity card. By the end of 2009, every Belgian citizen will be required to own an electronic ID card. To meet this requirement, close to ten million cards will be issued to the country's citizens over the next three to five years.

G&D specified SCM's Secure Trusted Readers, which will be installed at all Belgium municipalities for use with National e-ID smart cards. Secure Trusted Readers are dedicated to applications requiring high levels of security, such as the security needed for Belgium's e-ID program.

"We chose SCM as our exclusive supplier of smart card readers because their products deliver the high performance needed for the e-ID program," said Jan Van Eenoo, sales director of G&D Belgium. "SCM smart card readers provide highly secure access to sensitive, personal data such as that contained on Belgium's e-ID."

The Secure Trusted Reader is a programmable device that includes a smart card reader, a display and a secure PIN (Personal Identification Number) pad. It features embedded 1024 bit public key cryptographic functions for stronger authentication and a tamper evident design.

The Secure Trusted Reader is based on SCM's proven STC II microcontroller and proprietary interface that brings a common set of advanced reader functions including flexible communications, compatibility with SCM's highly successful SmartOS™ middleware and on-board flash memory that works with the cryptographic capabilities to provide seamless and secure firmware upgrades in the field. Secure Trusted Readers are fully tested and compliant with all smart cards on the market, Microsoft Windows and all relevant industry standards.

"The fact that Giesecke & Devrient selected SCM smart card readers for this groundbreaking project is a strong testimony to the security, user friendliness and reliability of our products," said Robert Schneider, chief executive officer of SCM Microsystems.

The e-ID cards, valid for five years, will contain an embedded microchip storing the holder's personal data, including date of birth, family tree, civil status, current and past addresses and military situation. The chip will also contain a digital certificate that will allow remote access authentication. With the card, users can access e-government applications, attaching an electronic signature to certify the authenticity of data transmitted when needed. These digital signatures will have the same legal value as hand written signatures. In addition, private companies such as banks expect to develop services that will leverage the electronic ID card. Initially the card will not contain biometric data, but this can be included at a later stage if deemed necessary.

### **About Giesecke & Devrient:**

Giesecke & Devrient (G&D) is a technology leader in the supply of smart cards, systems and solutions for telecommunications, electronic payment transactions, transportation, health, ID, loyalty and multimedia applications as well as Internet security (PKI). G&D is also a leading provider of banknotes and securities as well as currency processing equipment. The Giesecke & Devrient Group, headquartered in Munich / Germany, operates subsidiaries and joint ventures all over the world. G&D employs around 6,800 people world-wide and generates an annual revenue in excess of 1.05 Billion Euro. For more information, visit <http://www.gi-de.com>.

### **About SCM Microsystems**

SCM Microsystems is a leading supplier of solutions that open the Digital World by enabling people to securely access digital content and services. The company develops, markets and sells its smart card reader technology for network and physical access and conditional access modules for secure digital TV decryption to OEM customers in the government, financial, enterprise and broadcasting markets worldwide. Global headquarters are in Fremont, California, with European headquarters in Ismaning, Germany. For additional information, visit the SCM Microsystems web site at <http://www.scmmicro.com>.

## **Moving House in Belgium**

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Moving house generally requires endless planning and preparation; here are some specifics to remember when doing it in Belgium.

### **Contacting the Local Municipality**

When moving house in Belgium, the change of address must be declared at the local municipality's administration building (*gemeentebestuur/administration communale*) of the **new address** within **eight working days** of moving. This serves to update a person's dossier and, if necessary, transfer it from the former commune of residence to the new one.

The declaration should be done in person (people who cannot go to the administration building may notify the administration in writing, giving reasons for doing so). For a household of more than one person, one person may make the declaration for everyone as long as they are over 18 years of age.

In order to verify that the move is real, a police officer will visit to check that the person's name is on the door of the new address within eight working days of the declaration (this is standard practice). If the check is positive the municipality will invite the person concerned to update or replace their residence card, which also serves as their identity card. They will also inform the municipality for the old address of the change.

If the change is not accepted an appeal can be made to the Population department of the **Federal Service for the Interior**.

**Note:** This declaration is compulsory – people who do not make it can be fined.

### **Rubbish collections**

These are on different days for different parts of the municipalities. The municipality for the new address will have a list of the collection days at its administration office or on its website.

### **Local licences**

Municipalities can also set their own rules for dog licences, satellite dish aerials and taxes for various kinds of business activity. People moving to a new municipality should check if new regulations apply to them at its administration office or on its website.

### **Forwarding Post**

Mail can be forwarded for four months, on request (there is a charge). Mail can also be re-directed to an address outside of Belgium for four months at a further cost. The forwarding period can be extended for an extra fee (prices differ for businesses and private individuals).

Application for mail forwarding should be done a few weeks before the move using a form available from the **Post Office** or online. Proof of identity and details of the new address are required when presenting the completed form at the Post Office.

To download a form from the Post Office's (De Post/La Poste) website: [Click here](#)

The Post Office offers a moving assistance service, **DoMyMove**, for the same charge as simple mail-forwarding. The service can take care of the following:

- Cancelling electricity, gas, water and cable contracts at the old address and signing up the same services at the new address
- Redirecting mail
- Communicating the new address to banks, insurance companies, Internet companies and more

To register for the service, fill out a form available from a local post office. It is recommended to fill out the form a few weeks before moving home. However it is possible to make use of this service up to 14 days following the move.

- For comprehensive information from De Post/La Poste: [Click here](#)

## ***Utilities***

### **Gas and electricity**

### **Water**

### **Telephone, Television and Internet**

### **Car Registration**

### **Insurance**

### **Banks**

### **Tax**

### **Social Security and Health Insurance Funds**

### **Schools and Crèches**

### **Doctors**

### **Moving and Rented Property**

### **Shared houses and apartment buildings**

# Belgium National Civil Registration

(BIRTH, MARRIAGE, DEATHS)

## Birth

Births must be registered within 15 days in the municipality where the child was born by the father, mother or both. The following documents must be produced: the birth certificate, the marriage certificate and identity cards of the parents. In some communities, births can be registered at the maternity unit.

## Marriage

In Belgium two people may **marry** once they reach the age of 18. This can take place in the municipality where one of the intended spouses is registered at the time the marriage is announced.

The future spouses must make a marriage declaration to the civil status officer in the municipality where at least one of the future spouses is registered. The documents to be attached to it are: an authentic copy of the birth certificates, proof of identity, proof of registration on the population register and proof of nationality.

A church marriage can only be consecrated after the civil marriage.

One important point to note: the law of 13/2/2003 made it possible for two persons of the same sex to be married.

There are two forms of divorce in Belgium: divorce for irreconcilable differences, and **divorce** by mutual consent. Divorce is pronounced by the courts. Persons who cohabit can submit a **declaration of legal cohabitation** to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages of the place of residence. Legal cohabitation ceases to exist if one of the two parties marries or dies, or by mutual consent or by unilateral dissolution by one of the cohabitantes.

## Death

The family or the undertaker (or a friend/neighbour) must notify a death as soon as possible to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the municipality where death occurred, and if necessary also in the municipality where the deceased is to be buried.

One adult witness must be present. In the case of a death in a private dwelling, this must be attested to by two adult witnesses, preferably next of kin or close relations.

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Source: European Union

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A birth record may provide the following information:

- Day and hour of birth
- Name of parents
- Occupation and age of parents
- Names of witnesses to the birth
- Birthplace of the child

A marriage record may provide the following information:



- Names of the couple
- Their birthplace and place of current residence
- Birthdates and ages of the couple
- Names and consent of parents
- Occupations of the couple to be married
- Place of residence and occupations of parents

A death record provides the following information:



- Day and hour of death
- Age or birth date of the deceased
- Birthplace of the deceased
- Full names of the deceased person, as recollected by those who registered the event. In case of the death of a child who has not been registered as born, no name will be given, but the gender of that child will be. If the child was stillborn it will state that, although sometimes this term was applied to children who died shortly after birth.
- Marital status of the deceased and former occupation (when applicable)
- Name of the spouse (when applicable) and may give the date and place of that spouse's death
- Indicates if parents are deceased or gives their residence if they are still living. When they are deceased, it may state where.

- Witnesses may be members of the family