



**Discover the FPS Foreign Affairs,  
Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation**



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# MISSION

## **Supporting Belgium's international policy**

The Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation is the cornerstone of Belgium's international policy. Our FPS sets the broad outlines of Belgian foreign policy and defends our country's positions, both nationally and internationally. Our head office is located in Brussels. In addition, we can rely on a network of diplomatic missions abroad. These so-called "posts" (embassies and consulates) put foreign policy into practice on a daily basis.

## **Defending Belgium's interests**

Our FPS defends our country's interests abroad. Our prosperity and security depend more than ever on what happens elsewhere in the world. As a small country, it is not straightforward to influence the international decision-making process. Our country therefore forges alliances with like-minded countries that have similar positions to ours. It also elects to put maximum effort into international cooperation. Through dialogue and consensus, we defend Belgium's interests within a context of regional, bilateral (state-to-state) and multilateral (multi-state) partnerships.

## **Assisting compatriots abroad**

Assisting and protecting Belgian citizens abroad is a priority. Both the Central Administration in Brussels and our network of diplomatic posts are immediately ready to help in case of a crisis or accident involving Belgian citizens abroad. Our FPS is to compatriots abroad what municipal services are to citizens in Belgium.

## **Building a fair, safe and sustainable world**

Our FPS is committed to global stability, security, justice and prosperity. With our expertise, we have a voice on the international stage. In this way, we help influence the international processes that contribute to development. We defend fundamental values such as democracy, respect for human rights, sustainable development and sustainable growth that benefits all.

### **Mission statement**

Through active diplomacy, the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation promotes the interests of Belgium and its citizens all over the world. We thus contribute to a safe, just and sustainable world, based on shared values, human rights and international rules.

# OUR FPS YESTERDAY AND TODAY



Belgium declares independence in 1830. The accompanying revolutionary events oblige our country to quickly shape political power and work out a state structure. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium is created on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1831. The Central Administration is supported by the first diplomatic posts in London and Paris.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century is dominated by the Industrial Revolution. More and more consulates are established to support our country's exceptional economic activity at the time.

During the two World Wars, the ministry moves abroad: to Le Havre during World War I and to London in 1940-45. During the interwar period, the ministry takes on a number of new tasks: concluding peace treaties, compensating for war damage, protecting archives, etc.

After World War II, Belgium steers its foreign policy into a very different direction. Henceforth, the focus is on promoting peace at the level of the United Nations (UN), the European Entente and regional alliances.

Pre-war diplomacy mainly adopted a bilateral approach, i.e. it maintained mainly state-to-state relations. But after the war, multilateralism gains momentum. Our country needs more and more representation at international organisations such as the European Communities, the UN, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Council of Europe. The first Permanent Representation established by Belgium at an international organisation is the one at the UN in New York.

From the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – now under the name Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation – resolutely aims to anchor its position as a hub for international relations by:

- cooperating constructively with the federated entities (regions and communities);
- strengthening links with civil society;
- internally boosting its coordinating role.

Meanwhile, economic and public diplomacy continues to grow in importance.

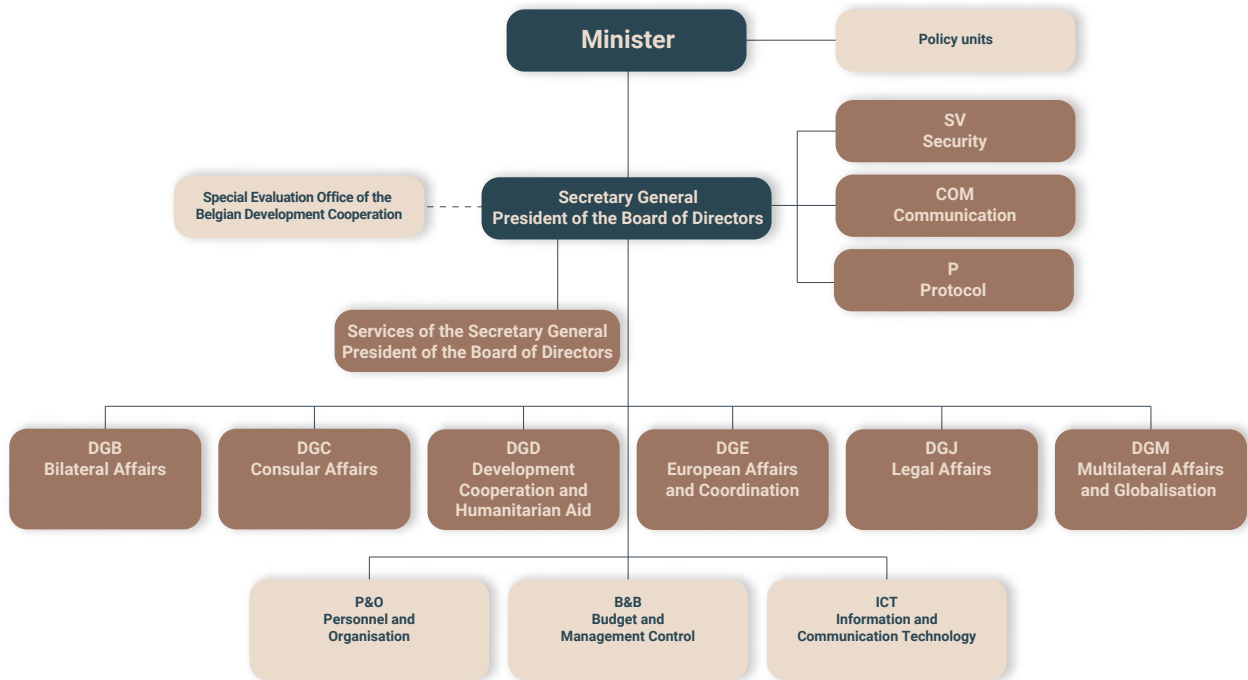
# OUR ORGANISATION

Our FPS falls under the competence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation. The President of the Board of Directors is in charge of day-to-day management. The Board of Directors – the President, six Directors-General, three Staff Directors and representatives of the policy cells – coordinates the various departments, ensures communication between them and monitors policy coherence.

Our organisation has six Directorates-General: DGB, DGC, DGD, DGE, DGJ, DGM and three Staff Directorates: P&O, B&B, ICT (see organisation chart).

A number of services fall directly within the remit of the President. They handle diverse matters, such as providing assistance to compatriots in danger abroad ([Crisis Centre](#)), monitoring foreign diplomatic representatives in Belgium ([Protocol](#)) and funding peace-building projects. In addition, there are [services responsible for internal and external communication](#), inspection of posts, [evaluation of our official development assistance](#) and relations with the regions and communities.

## Organisation chart



# MAIN TASKS

## Multilateral cooperation (DGM)

You cannot build a better world alone. After all, problems do not stop at the border. Consider phenomena such as climate change, terrorism and migration. That's why we work with allies. For instance, Belgium is a founding member of the UN, the Council of Europe, NATO, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and, of course, the European Union (EU). In addition, Belgium is a member of dozens of international institutions and organisations that span diverse themes such as human rights, disarmament, the fight against corruption, the protection of the Antarctic, or international agreements on raw materials such as cocoa. [Belgium thus multilaterally negotiates](#) efficient solutions to cross-border problems.

Belgium has many levels of competence, each with international responsibilities. Nevertheless, we must speak with one voice within international organisations. This is why our FPS coordinates Belgian positions through regular consultations with other federal institutions and the communities and regions.

Our posts at international organisations - the so-called Permanent Representations - defend our country's interests. There too, we ensure unified action with our partners.

In 2019-2020, [our country sat on the UN Security Council for the sixth time as a non-permanent member](#). Our slogan was "forging consensus and building peace." Belgium contributes to peace-keeping operations and participates in the implementation of international sanctions and resolutions adopted by the Security Council to promote international peace and stability. In addition, our country has a seat on the UN General Assembly and is active in specialised UN institutions.

Human rights and international humanitarian law are at the heart of our foreign policy. Bilaterally as well as in regional and international organisations such as [the UN Human Rights Council](#), [the EU](#), [NATO](#) and [the OSCE](#), we raise awareness of [children in armed conflict](#), protection of civilians, and women's rights, among others.

Our foreign policy also includes international economic, financial and scientific cooperation and the fight against financial crime. We participate in decision-making at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and financial institutions such as the World Bank.

Our FPS focuses on various aspects of sustainable development, such as climate, environment and raw materials. The UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are the guiding theme in this respect. The SDGs serve as a call to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people live in peace and prosperity, among other things.



## Bilateral cooperation (DGB)

Our FPS defends Belgian interests in and towards other countries and also contributes to the formulation of those interests in terms of foreign policy. We are also a knowledge centre of the geopolitical situations in the world, serving not only our FPS but also the Belgian authorities in general.

We develop and maintain regular political and diplomatic relations with other countries. In this bilateral context, we promote values such as democracy, welfare, human rights and respect for the dignity of the individual. Our FPS acts as a focal point for joint consultation with all national players involved in our foreign policy.

We also pay close attention to economic interests in close consultation with the regions and the FPS Economy. After all, Belgium is the third most open economy in the world and therefore needs a coordinated foreign trade policy. A broad network and a positive image abroad are indispensable.





## Consular Affairs (DGC)

For compatriots abroad, our FPS fulfils a town hall role:

- civil status;
- nationality;
- passports and identity cards;
- notarial deeds;
- legalisations.

Out of more than 559,516 Belgian citizens abroad, the adult population can vote in the elections. Our FPS is also responsible for this. Finally, we also take care of issuing visas to foreigners who want to visit Belgium or settle in our country. We are making every effort to modernise our services through digital applications (eConsul) and a highly secure passport.

Our posts can provide assistance in some situations involving Belgian citizens, as stipulated by the Law on Consular Support. In particular in the event of death, serious accident, serious crime, worrying disappearance, arrest or detention, extreme emergency, serious consular crisis and international child abduction if the child and/or one of the parents is a Belgian citizen.

## European cooperation (DGE)

The EU's main institutions are housed in Brussels: the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council. As a result of Europe's increasing integration and role at an international level, the EU's mission is gaining in importance. Our FPS defines and represents Belgium's European policy. We liaise with foreign counterparts at European level and with Belgian players such as the regions and communities. Thanks to this permanent consultation, our country speaks with one voice on the international stage. We also raise public awareness of European policies.



## Development cooperation (DGD)

Belgian Development Cooperation groups together all activities related to development cooperation that are co-financed by our FPS, both nationally and internationally. The goal: sustainable human development worldwide. To achieve this, we support local initiatives that:

- promote sustainable and economic growth that benefits all;
- improve the living conditions of people in partner countries;
- eradicate poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

Belgian development policy focuses on human rights, innovation and cooperation with other partners such as NGOs, European and international institutions and the private sector. We are committed globally to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see above).

We also support initiatives that raise Belgians' awareness of the importance of international solidarity.

Our FPS also provides humanitarian aid in case of conflicts and natural disasters. We meet urgent needs to protect lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering and protect human dignity.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

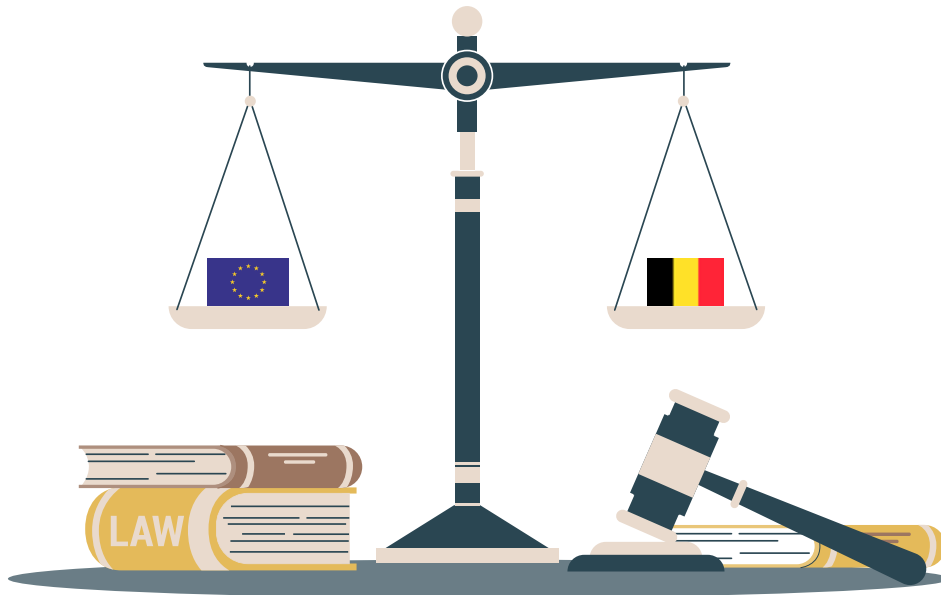


## Legal activities (DGJ)

Our FPS provides general and specific advice for all areas of law related to its field of activity: public international law, European law, consular and diplomatic law, administrative law, labour contract law, etc.

The activities of our FPS are influenced not only by the legal norms of internal Belgian law, but equally by those of international law and the law of other states. We defend Belgian interests before international courts, European Union and European Economic Area jurisdictions, as well as Belgian courts in disputes to which our FPS is a party.

We also play a key role in treaties (ranging from signature and consent, to ratification, entry into force and registration with the United Nations) and collaborate on legislative and regulatory texts.



# EMPLOYEES

Worldwide, our FPS has 3,108 employees. Many of them work at the Central Administration in Brussels. In addition, 1,924 colleagues are active in our posts abroad.

We distinguish an internal and external career. Internal career refers to staff permanently employed at the Central Administration. External career employees represent Belgium in other countries and at international organisations. They change posts every 4 years. After two terms abroad, they return to the Central Administration in Brussels for several years. Our posts also recruit local staff.

## Number of staff at Central Administration in Brussels

External career	243
Internal career	941
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,184</b>

## Staff in posts, including Permanent Representations (PR) in Brussels and abroad

External career	401
Internal career	3
Contract workers hired locally	1,455
Expatriate contract workers	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,924</b>
<b>General total (Central Administration + posts)</b>	<b>3,108</b>

We continuously adjust our human resources policy according to the needs of our FPS. We pay particular attention to diversity, training and well-being at work.

# REPRESENTATIONS ABROAD

The Central Administration is supported by a network of 115 representations (called posts) around the world.

Embassies	87
Consulates-general	15
Consulates	3
Diplomatic offices	1
Belgian office	1
Permanent Representations to international organisations	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>

Each type of post has specific competences:

**Embassies** provide political representation of Belgium to national authorities of another country (head of state, government, etc.). Typically, the embassy is located in the capital of the country where its jurisdiction lies. That jurisdiction can sometimes extend to neighbouring countries in which Belgium has no embassy. Besides a political function, embassies fulfil an economic role and are responsible for development cooperation and consular affairs. Embassies are headed by an ambassador.

In some countries where Belgium has no embassy, our country has a **diplomatic office** working under the supervision of the Belgian embassy in a neighbouring country.

**Consulates-general and consulates** do not have the political role of an embassy. They represent Belgium to local authorities within their jurisdiction. In addition to consular activities (assistance to compatriots, issuance of visas, etc.), consulates-general and consulates defend the economic interests of our country. A consulate-general is located in a major city (different from the capital) while consulates are located in lesser-known cities.

**Permanent Representations** serve as the link between Belgium and international organisations such as the EU, NATO, the UN and the OECD. They are independent of embassies. They represent our country at international organisations and represent Belgian positions.

Finally, Belgium has 304 **honorary consulates** worldwide who have more limited powers. Honorary consuls are often recruited locally, mainly because of the privileged contacts they have with the local community. Consequently, they rarely have Belgian nationality. They usually have their own professional activity and perform the function of honorary consul on a voluntary basis.

# WORKING FOR OUR FPS

Our organisation represents, defends and promotes the interests of Belgium and Belgian citizens abroad. We work not only from Belgium, but also from 115 posts around the world.

## Abroad

An external career official is active in three different policy areas:

- political-economic;
- consular;
- development cooperation.

This variety of tasks offers the chance to build a varied career. In one post, for example, the focus is on multilateral diplomacy, while in another the role of consul is included.

Workingfor.be – the job platform of the federal administration – organises external career exams on a regular basis. Candidates who pass all tests are placed on a reserve list. Afterwards, they are called up in order of ranking for a two-year internship. The first year, they go through various shifts at the Central Administration; the second year, they go to work in a foreign post.

## Central Administration in Brussels

For the internal career (Central Administration in Brussels), besides analysts in international relations and development cooperation, we are also looking for, among others, lawyers familiar with Belgian and international law, IT professionals, communication specialists, office assistants, external ICT staff (e-Gov, consultants), accountants and HR profiles.

We employ both established officials and officials under contract. Contractual employees sign an employment contract of (in)definite duration. Established officials do not sign a contract, but are hired based on the statute for federal employees. After a one-year internship, they can be permanently appointed as civil servants. Both established officials and officials under contract must pass an exam at Workingfor.be.

We regularly hire recent graduates through entry-level job contracts. This is a fixed-term contract that can be extended until the age of 26.

For more information:  
[diplomatie.belgium.be](https://diplomatie.belgium.be) & [Workingfor.be](https://Workingfor.be)



## Internships

We also offer unpaid internships within the framework of degree studies. An internship at our FPS is a unique opportunity to become familiar with the world of diplomacy, foreign trade and development cooperation.

## **Colophon**

### **Editing, coordination and design**

Communications Directorate

### **Responsible publisher**

Theodora Gentzis, President of the Board of Directors

Rue des Petits Carmes 15, 1000 Brussels

### **Legal deposit**

0218/2023/004

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Belgium MFA

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Federal Public Service

**Foreign Affairs,  
Foreign Trade and  
Development Cooperation**

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