



WELCOME
to your new country!

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR THE FIRST STEPS



Center for Migration and Integration

Ostbelgien 

Belgisches
ROTES KREUZ 

FOREWORD ANTONIOS ANTONIADIS

LIVING AND WORKING IN EAST BELGIUM – YOUR NEW HOMELAND!

You have decided to live in one of the nine municipalities of the German-speaking Community. Many things in your new environment are unfamiliar or even unknown to you. Therefore it is quite comprehensible that you have many questions.

Where do I go, when I am sick? Which German courses are available? Who can help me with an application form for a job or an apprenticeship? How can I get a driver license? What leisure and sports facilities are available?

As Minister for Social Affairs of East Belgium it is paramount for me that all newcomers quickly find their way and get the best chances to start their new lives. For that matter, I have tasked Info-Integration – the reference centre for Integration – with elaborating this leaflet containing essential information for your first steps in our society. For this, I would like to seize this opportunity to express my deep gratitude towards the entire team of Info-Integration.

This brochure offers answers for many of your questions and gives useful information for your daily life in East Belgium.

I hope that this leaflet serves as first aid guidance towards a successful integration into our society. Still, you will face many a challenge. But don't you worry: we will not leave you alone! The Integration Pathways and many other measures taken by the Government and the civil society will show you the way!

Antonios Antoniadis
Minister for Family, Health and Social Affairs



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonios Antoniadis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

FOREWORD VÉRONIQUE WETZELAER

„The first step towards a human encounter is to approach each other“

(Ernst Ferstl)

WELCOME IN EAST BELGIUM!

You came a long way until you finally arrived in East Belgium. This brochure contains the basic information to facilitate your first steps here.

But there are also people who will be at your side. Among others the team of Info-Integration will accompany you and provide you with different information.

I hope you will feel very soon at home in our community and make it yours too! We are sincerely looking forward to meet you!

Véronique Wetzelaer

*Director of the Welcome Centre for asylum seekers „Belle-Vue“ and Info-Integration
Belgian Red Cross*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'V Wetzelaer'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends to the right.

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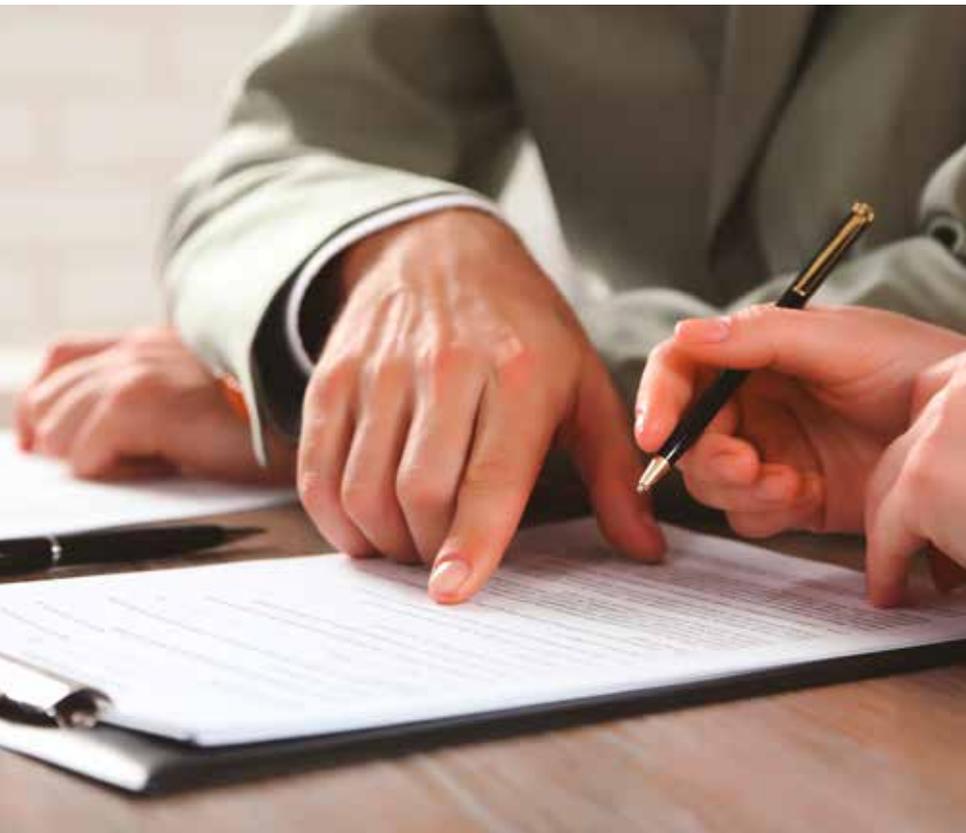
1. REGISTER AT THE TOWN HALL

You must register at the town hall at the latest eight days after moving to your new accommodation. You have to go to the population department and give your new address and your personal data. Important: bring your residence permit.

A few days later, the police will come by to make sure you do live there. (No need to be afraid: the police checks everybody in Belgium.)

Only then will you be registered at the town hall.

What's more: If you want to go abroad for more than 3 months, please get in touch with your municipality administration before you leave and inform the administration about your plans. This way you can avoid problems when you return to Belgium.



2. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH INFO INTEGRATION

Info Integration will take care of your integration programme. The association will assist you with the language course and the integration course and will send you towards people who can assist you in your job search.

Info Integration is a service from the Belgian Red Cross funded by the German speaking community as a reference centre.

That service can also answer your questions about life in the German speaking community (education, health care, hobbies, housing ...).

Info-Integration

Address: Hillstraße 7, 4700 Eupen

Tel.: 087 76 59 71



3. YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB YET?

3.1. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE ÖSHZ

If you don't work yet and you have no or too little income, the Public Centre for Social Action (ÖSHZ) of your municipality can help you.

It can, for instance:

- Provide financial assistance
- Answer your questions about social rights
- Give information about assistance
- In some cases, help you find a job

Feel free to tell the social workers about your situation and your problems.

3.2. JOB SEARCH

If you do not work yet but would like to, you must register as a job seeker at the Employment Office (Arbeitsamt) of the German speaking community:

Sankt Vith Office
Vennbahnstraße 4/2, 4780 Sankt Vith
Phone number: 080 28 00 60
Email: info@adg.be

Eupen Office
Hütte 79, 4700 Eupen
Phone number: 087 63 89 00
Email: info@adg.be

The Employment Office can help you:

- By finding you an employer
- To write your cover letter

The Employment Office also offers professional training and language courses.

It is also recommended that you register in **work agencies (Interim)**. They offer workforce to companies and enable workers to gain experience in various fields and companies. It's usually easier to find a job through these agencies.

You can find vacancies in newspapers (Grenz-Echo, Wochenspiegel, and Kurier-Journal).



Apply for degree equivalence

If you have a degree from your home country, you can apply for an equivalence of said degree. That will enable you to:

- Study or continue your studies in Belgium
- Do a professional training
- Start working

If you want to study at university, it is the Community where the training institution of your choice is located, who delivers your degree equivalence.

For example: if you wish to study in Louvain-la-Neuve or in Liege, it is the French Community that is responsible for your degree equivalence. If you wish to study in Antwerp or in another Flemish town, it is the Flemish Community that is responsible for your degree equivalence.

If you wish to study at the autonomous university of the German speaking community, please contact the Training and Education Organization department of the Ministry of the German speaking community.

Ministry of the German speaking community
Training and Education Organization department
Adress: Gospertstraße 1, 4700 Eupen
Phone number: 087 59 63 00

4. REGISTER FOR A GERMAN COURSE

German is the main language in the German speaking Community. It is therefore important to learn it in order to communicate and find a job. There are different kinds of German courses: during the day or in the evening, intensive or once a week.

Info Integration can give you information about current courses that would best suit your needs.



5. ENROL CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN OR SCHOOL

In Belgium, **school is mandatory from 5 to 18 years old**, no matter the children's nationality or residence permit. It is therefore important for you to enrol in school those of your children who are of age. There is at least one primary school in each municipality and there are secondary schools in Eupen, Kelmis, Sankt Vith and Büllingen.

Children from the age of 3 to 6 can attend a kindergarten. Since the school year 2020-2021, the compulsory schooling has been reduced to 5 years. Consequently, children as young as five have to attend kindergarten regularly (in the morning and afternoon hours). For the children, the kindergarten serves as preparation for school. Therefore, every elementary school also has a kindergarten.

Many communities also have homework schools which are places where children get support for their homework

If your child has learning difficulties, you can contact "**Kaleido**".

Kaleido Ostbelgien

Gospertstraße 44, 4700 Eupen

Phone number: 087 55 46 44

Email: info@kaleido-ostbelgien.be

Feel free to ask any question regarding the education system at Info Integration.



6. REGISTER AT THE SOCIAL SECURITY

In Belgium, you **must have** a health insurance. It is therefore important to register as soon as possible. You can choose between:

- The public health insurance (HKIV)
- Private health insurance
 - Christliche Krankenkasse
 - Freie Krankenkasse
 - Liberale Krankenkasse (no office in East Belgium)
 - Neutrale Krankenkasse
 - Sozialistische Krankenkasse

All insurances offer more or less the same services. Members of the public health insurance do not have to pay extra fees. Private insurances include extra mandatory insurances, which are not included in the basic insurance.

What else do you need to know?

- When you go to the doctor, you have to pay the visit yourself. The doctor will then give you a document that you have to send to your health insurance, which will then reimburse a part or the whole amount.
- When you go to the hospital, you receive an invoice with the amount you have to pay. The rest is paid by the health insurance.
- When you buy medicines at the pharmacy, you need your identity card or your ISI+ card. The patient has to pay part of the cost.
- If you are long-term sick, pregnant or on parental leave, your income will be paid by the health insurance.
- In case of illness or accident, you must contact your health insurance as soon as possible. The same goes for any change in housing or work, for example.
- During weekends and public holidays, some doctors are on duty. Here is where you can find their contact information:
 - *Wochenspiegel* newspaper
 - *Grenz Echo* newspaper, "Notdienste" section
 - www.grenzecho.net
- Consultations are more expensive during weekends. If there is no emergency, it's preferable to see a doctor during the week.
- Home visits (when a physician goes to the patient's house for a consultation) are also more expensive. If possible, it is preferable to go to the doctor's practice.



- The emergency room at the hospital is also open at night and during weekends and bank holidays. However, it is meant for real emergencies only (broken leg, heart condition...).
- You can tell anything to your doctor. Physicians and nurses are bound by medical secrecy. This means that they may not transmit information about the patient without his prior agreement.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions. It's sometimes hard to understand the medical terminology but doctors can use a simplified language when asked to.

7. HOUSING

7.1 HOUSE HUNTING

There are different ways of finding an accommodation on the **private market**:

- **On posters** (zu vermieten/à louer oder zu verkaufen/ à vendre) **directly on the houses or apartments**;
- **In the newspaper**. In the German speaking community, you can find ads in free newspapers like Kurier-Journal or Wochenspiegel. They also have a website;
- **In real-estate agencies** offering private accommodation. Watch out: real-estate brokers always charge brokerage fees.

Low-income people often have difficulty finding an accommodation on the private market.

They have other options.

The following associations can help:

Öffentlicher Wohnungsbau Ostbelgien oder **Tri-Landum** in Kelmis, Lontzen, Raeren and Eupen

ÖWOB in Eupen Maria-Theresia-Straße 10 4700 Eupen Phone number: 087 63 97 60 Opening times: Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	ÖWOB in Kelmis Kahnweg 30 4720 Kelmis Phone number: 087 63 97 60 Opening times: Monday 9 a.m. to noon	Tri-Landum ASBL in Kelmis Kirchplatz 15-17 4720 Kelmis Phone number: 087 63 97 70 Email: info@tri-landum.be
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Öffentlicher Wohnungsbau Eifel and **„Wohnraum für alle“** in Sankt Vith, Burg Reuland, Amel, Bütgenbach and Büllingen

Öffentlicher Wohnungsbau Eifel Mühlenbachstraße 13 4780 Sankt Vith Phone number: 080 22 93 91 Opening times: Tuesday and thursday 9 a.m. to noon	Wohnraum für Alle Bahnhofstraße 11 4780 Sankt Vith Phone number: 080 22 66 83 Opening times: Monday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and Tuesday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
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7.2 SIGNING A CONTRACT WITH AN ENERGY SUPPLIER

In Belgium, there are several electricity and gas suppliers (Electrabel, Luminus, Lampiris, Eon, etc.). If the accommodation you rent has its own meters, you have to sign a contract with an energy supplier.

Important: before moving in, you must register the date and the meter-reading. The Consumer Protection Association can help you choose a supplier. You can find more information on www.mesfournisseurs.be

Important: gas and electricity are expensive in Belgium. You also have to pay for water.

Usually, you pay a certain amount each month. After 12 months, the company checks what you have consumed. If you have consumed more than what you have paid for, you have to pay the difference. This can sometimes be very expensive.

7.3 WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- Carefully read the **entire lease agreement**. If you have questions or doubts, don't hesitate to contact The Consumer Protection Association, ideally before signing the contract. Once it is signed, it is impossible to annul it.
- As a tenant, you do not have to sign for a **home insurance** unless the lease states you have to. However, a home insurance is very important. If a fire breaks out because of an electric appliance or a candle, it can damage the house, the furniture or the nearby houses. The cost can be extremely high. Without insurance, you may get into debt for the rest of your life.
- There are various insurance companies where you can buy such insurance.
- You also have to pay for the television and garbage tax.



8. FINANCE AND INSURANCES

A **bank account** is very useful. It enables you to receive money transfers (salary, social benefit, child benefit). It also enables you to transfer money (for example to the health insurance or to pay your rent). In order to open a bank account, you need your ID or any other valid identification document. The ÖSHZ can help you open a bank account. In each municipality, there are different banks.

In addition to the compulsory health insurance, you can subscribe to other **insurances**, such as:

- Automobile liability insurance for motor vehicles (it is mandatory if you own a car, a motorbike, etc.)
- Personal liability insurance
- Home insurance and household insurance (see explanations in the housing section)

For more information about lease agreements, energy suppliers and insurances, feel free to contact.

9. FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Families with children have a right to **child benefits** (providing they have a legal residence permit).

- Normally, every child has a right to child benefits up to 18 years old
- Children who go to school or university can, in some cases, receive child benefits until they are 25 years old.
- Even if children over 18 years are registered as job seekers, they can in some cases receive child benefits for a specified period

For more information, feel free to contact:

**Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen
Gemeinschaft/Ministry of the German-speaking Community,
Fachbereich Familie und Soziales
Family and Social Affairs Department
Kaperberg 6, 4700 Eupen
Email: Familiendienstleistungen@dgov.be
www.ostbelgienlive.be, section entitled
"Family - Child benefit" (in German: "Familie – Kindergeld")**

Sometimes, parents cannot look after their children because they work, attend a German course or have an appointment with the doctor. Some organizations **take care of children**. For more information, feel free to contact Info Integration or the ÖSHZ.



10. DISABLED AND ELDERLY PEOPLE

The service for an independent life makes sure that everyone in eastern Belgium can have an independent life. It offers information, advice and assistance to those who need it, so that people can live an independent life. The service offers amongst other things:

- Support at home, in a day care centre or in an institution
- Individual assistance to promote mobility at home, when possible
- Support in training, qualification and employment solutions

Service for an independent life

Vennbahnstraße 4/4, 4780 Sankt Vith

Phone number: 080 22 91 11 children, teenagers, adults

Phone number: 087 59 05 90 elderly in the North of eastern Belgium

Phone number: 080 22 91 11 elderly in the South of eastern Belgium

www.selbstbestimmt.be

11. SOCIAL LIFE

In the German speaking community, there are many associations like sports, music or dance clubs where you can meet people.

Some municipalities organize “**social gathering events**” where people can socialize.

Moreover, there are some **intercultural tea rooms for women only**. Women can talk about their daily life, receive information and get to know each other, sharing a cup of coffee or tea.

Municipalities also have some **youth groups**, such as KLJ, the scouts or the Chiro. They organize interesting events for children or teenagers during weekends and school holidays.

Some municipalities propose **sponsors for newcomers**. Sponsors are people who help the newcomer in their daily life. They help with administrative tasks, medical appointments, meetings with teachers or German course.

Low-income people can receive cheap or free food, clothes and furniture from some organizations like food banks, the Red Cross for clothing or the “Vinzenzverein” association. For more information, feel free to contact the ÖSHZ or Info Integration.



12. DRIVING LICENSE

In Belgium, non-EU driving licenses are not valid. Some can be exchanged for a Belgian license at the town hall (licenses from Turkey and Morocco amongst others).

Others cannot be exchanged because they are not recognized in Belgium (for example, licenses from Syria). In this case, you must take your driving exam again, i.e. pass the theory and driving test.

The town hall worker should be able to tell you if you can exchange your driving license or if you have to take the exam again.



13. BUS AND TRAIN

- **Train:** in the German speaking community, there is a station in Eupen. You can get information about train tickets and schedule directly at the station. Remember the opening times of the ticket office. If it is closed, you can buy tickets from the automatic counters or on the train, but the price is higher on the train. To get further information on timetables, visit the website www.belgiantrain.be, where you can also purchase tickets online.
- **Bus:** there are many buses in the German speaking community. You can buy a ticket directly on the bus. You must buy your ticket when you get in the bus. If you don't have a ticket, you may receive a fine. If you often take the bus, you might want to buy a card for several journeys. You can get more information about buses and schedules at a TEC ticket stop. At the link www.infotec.be you can find further useful information on timetables and tariffs. In addition, here you purchase your tickets

North of German speaking community:

Eupen bus station

Herbesthaler Straße, 85, 4700 Eupen

Phone number: 087 74 25 92

Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to noon

South of German speaking community:

Mobi-ESPACE Büllingen

Hauptstrasse (Alte Post, Old Post Office), 4760 Büllingen

Always on the penultimate Tuesday of the month from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

On the website www.infotec.be you can find the current map of Mobi-Espace.

You can also take a **taxi** but keep in mind taxis are very expensive in Belgium. You can find all necessary phone numbers in the phone book or on the Internet.

Some **carpooling** services also exist. In the German speaking community, it is called "Fahr mit". Another more general service is "Bla-Bla-Car". You can find information for both services on the Internet.

Since September 2018, a network of blue ride-on benches has been put into place in the northern part of East Belgium in cooperation with the municipalities.

The principle is quite simple: you sit on the bench, the next benevolent driver stops spontaneously by offering you a lift because there is space enough in the car and he will drive to her/his destination anyway.

The rules are the following:

- Driver and passengers make a voluntary decision
- All rides are free-of-charge
- Passengers are legally co-insured in the car
- Children under the age of 14 cannot be taken along
- Young people from 14 to 18 years can only be taken along with their parents' consent

For further information visit the website www.fahrmit.be



14. WASTE SORTING

In Belgium, waste is sorted and then recycled.

Every municipality usually provides garbage bags and bins to sort paper and cardboard, plastic-metal and cardboard packaging, organic waste (from fruit and vegetables) and household waste. These are regularly collected in front of your house. At the town hall, you can ask for a **waste collection calendar**. You can find all necessary information about the waste collection schedule in it. You can also ask at the town hall where you can buy garbage bags. You can also go to the rubbish tip for other waste. Glass bottles and containers are to be discarded in bottle banks and sorted by colour (white or coloured glass). Toxic or oversized garbage (old electric appliances, cardboard containers, garden organic waste, batteries, oil, toxic paint, mattress, furniture, etc.) must be thrown away at the rubbish tip in your municipality. You can go to the town hall to get the addresses. Some services also collect oversized garbage at home. Ask the town hall for more information.

Important: household waste may not be discarded in public places (public bins for example) or in private places (forest, for example). You may get a fine!

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Social advice:

ÖSHZ in all municipalities

ÖSHZ Amel An de Bareer 13 4770 Amel Phone number: 080 34 81 37	ÖSHZ Büllingen Hauptstraße 12 4760 Büllingen Phone number: 080 64 00 23	ÖSHZ Bütgenbach Zum Brand 40 4750 Weywertz Phone number: 080 44 00 91
ÖSHZ Burg-Reuland Lindenallee 29 4790 Burg-Reuland Phone number: 080 32 90 07	ÖSHZ Eupen Limburgerweg 5 4700 Eupen Phone number: 087 63 89 50	ÖSHZ Kelmis Maxstraße 9-11 4721 Neu Moresnet Tel.: 087 63 99 60
ÖSHZ Lontzen Kirchstraße 36 4710 Lontzen Phone number: 087 89 80 40	ÖSHZ Raeren Burgstraße 42 4730 Raeren Phone number: 087 85 89 51	ÖSHZ St.Vith Wiesenbach 5 4780 St.Vith Phone number: 080 28 20 30

Specialized assistance and services for new comers

Info-Integration

Hillstraße 7

4700 Eupen

Phone number: 087 76 59 71

Social and legal advice about residence permit. General advice for foreigners who wish to live in the German speaking community.

Social gathering in the German speaking community

Patchwork in Sankt Vith Bleichstraße 8 4780 Sankt Vith Phone number: 080 33 04 11	Ephata leisure centre in Eupen Bergkapellstraße 46 4700 Eupen Phone number: 087 56 15 10
Cardijn neighbour association in Eupen Hillstraße 7 4700 Eupen Phone number: 087 74 33 29	Family association in Kelmis Patronagestraße 27A 4720 Kelmis Phone number: 087 78 88 02

Advice about insurances and lease agreements:

Consumer Protection Association

Neustraße 119

B - 4700 Eupen

Phone number: 087 59 18 50

Emergency numbers:

- General emergency number: 112
- Doctors on call and fire department: 100
- Police department: 101
- Poison centre: 070 245 245

DO YOU HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS?

Do you have questions after reading this leaflet? It's normal.

Feel free to contact Info Integration to ask your questions by:

- Phone: 087/76.59.71
- Email: info-integration@roteskreuz.be
- Making an appointment
- Come to the consultation hour (integration path: Tuesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., legal consultation hours: Wednesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

Info Integration will give you free advice. It is funded by the German speaking community Government.

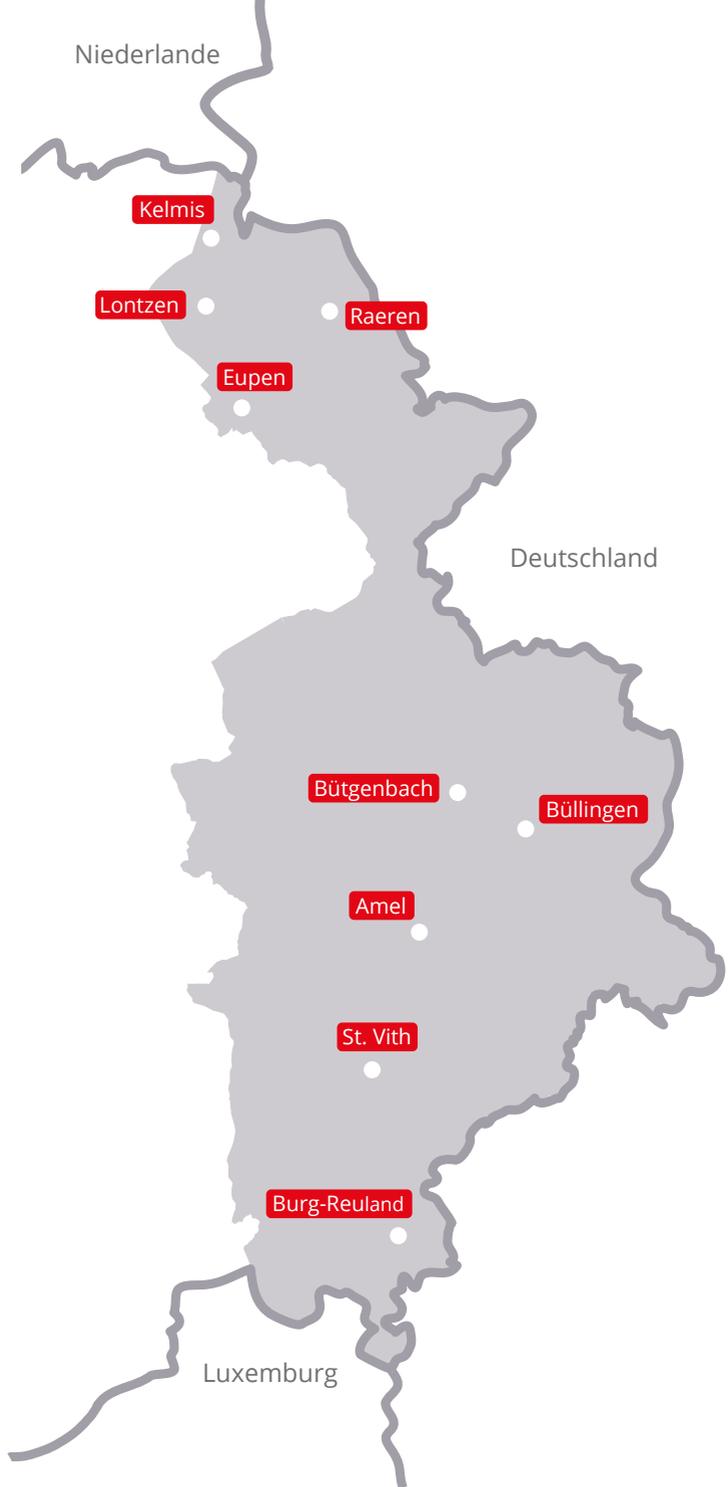
Perhaps you don't know where to get information. In such case, Ingo Integration can send you towards the right people.

The reception centre of Eupen municipality also offers a film for new comers subtitled in various languages.

You can find the film by clicking on this link www.eupen.be/Leben/Lebenssituationen/Video-zum-Erstempfang



We would like to thank everyone who has helped with engagement and expertise to put this booklet together.



contact



Center for Migration and Integration

Info-Integration
Hillstraße 7 · 4700 Eupen
Phone number: 087 76 59 71
Email: info-integration@roteskreuz.be



With the support of:

