

## **THE PROFESSIONAL CARD**

### **What is a professional card?**

It is the **licence** to be held by the individual who :

- does not have the Belgian nationality or the nationality of one of the Member States of the European Economic Area (European Union, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) or who, for some reason, is not exempted from fulfilling this formality
- and who wants to work in Belgium in a self-employed capacity, either as a natural person or as a paid or unpaid representative of a company or association.

### **What is the objective pursued by the professional card legislation?**

This legislation aims to strike a balance between the wishes of foreign nationals who want to exercise a professional activity in Belgium in a self-employed capacity and the economic, social and cultural interests of the country.

### **What criteria are to be met in order to obtain a professional card?**

There are three criteria to satisfy :

- **right of residence** : those not having such right should apply for it as well as for a professional card with a Belgian diplomatic mission or consular post;
- **compliance with regulatory obligations**, in particular with those related to the activity in question;
- **interest of the project** :
  - in terms of **economic usefulness**, i.e. a project responding to an economic need, a need for employment creation, useful investments, economic repercussions on the enterprises located in the territory, developing exportation, innovation or specialisation;
  - in terms of **benefits at the social, cultural, artistic or sporting level**.

### **Where to lodge an application for a professional card ?**

When living abroad, the applicant should lodge his application **with the Belgian diplomatic mission or consular post of his country of residence**;

When living in Belgium and holding a valid registration certificate model A or certificate attesting to entry in the foreigners' register, the applicant should file his application with a "**ondernemingsloket-guichet d'entreprises**" = a **business one-stop shop** recognized by the Belgian authorities.

### **How to lodge an application?**

Applications must be lodged by means of the **applicationform** duly completed, dated and signed. The applicant must supply herewith all documents required (certificate of good behavior,...) as well as the documents which he seems necessary for the examination of his case (motivation letter and description of the project).

### **What does an application for a professional card costs ?**

An application for a professional card costs 140 €. The issue of the professional card costs 90 € multiplied by every year the professional card is valid.

### **What is the procedure for examination of an application for a professional card?**

- **The diplomatic mission or consular post or the municipality** with which the application is filed issues an **opinion** and, within five days of receipt of the application, sends it on to the Economic Licences Service.

- **The examination** is based on the three above-mentioned criteria :

° **right of residence** : the decision on this matter is taken by the **Foreigners' Office**, which is consulted each time the applicant is not authorised to reside in Belgium

° **compliance with regulatory obligations** : the Economic Licences Service controls whether the applicant and/or his company fulfil the essential entry requirements for the planned activity and whether they meet the other status-related obligations.

Taking into account the wide range of situations likely to occur, this aspect of the application requires contacting the Economic Licences Service or a business one-stop shop. At this stage of the procedure, when the applicant (or his company) does not have access to the activity, he always needs to apply to a “**ondernemingsloket-guichet d’entreprises**” = **business one-stop shop** recognized by the Belgian authorities.

*Business one-stop shops are meant to assist future self-employed workers in achieving their objective and to grant them some access to the activity. They also register businesses in the business register, with the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises and give them a business identification number, which will be used in all administrative dealings.*

You can download a list of these business one-stop shops :

[http://economie.fgov.be/nl/ondernemingen/leven\\_onderneming/oprichting/ondernemingsloket/index.jsp#erkende\\_ondernemingsloketten](http://economie.fgov.be/nl/ondernemingen/leven_onderneming/oprichting/ondernemingsloket/index.jsp#erkende_ondernemingsloketten)

° **usefulness of the project** : the Economic Licences Service collects all information necessary for examining whether this criteria is satisfied : detailed description of the project, qualification, practical experience as well as financial standing of the applicant, market research, financial analysis, contacts with commercial partners, draft contract, corporate statutes, draft statutes, ..., in short any piece of information allowing the Service to assess the usefulness of the project in relation to Belgium.

**If the application meets the required criteria**, the Economic Licences Service issues a professional card. **If not**, the Service takes a negative decision and refuses the professional card.

### **How to renew a professional card ?**

To renew your professional card, you must lodge an application with a “**ondernemingsloket-guichet d’entreprises**” = **business one-stop shop** recognized by the Belgian authorities. Applications must be lodged by means of the **application form** duly completed, dated and signed, together with your professional card that you must hand in.

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