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Belgium

Belgium is a federal state divided by language and region. Flanders (north) is Dutch-speaking and operates mainly in Dutch, with its own regional government and institutions. Wallonia (south) is primarily French-speaking, with a small German-speaking community in the east, and functions largely in French. Brussels is officially bilingual (French and Dutch) and has a distinct, complex administrative structure combining regional and community competences. Linguistic rules strongly affect administration, education, employment, and public services, making language choice a practical as well as cultural issue across the country.

Links below are in EN/FR/NL (some DE) unless indicated.

What to do if someone dies

The Royal Federation of Belgian Notaries (Fednot) has general and comprehensive guidance in French and Dutch. It explains the key administrative and legal steps to take after a death in Belgium. It guides families through immediate formalities, the role of the notary, handling bank accounts, inheritance procedures, and practical timelines, offering clear, neutral information for navigating succession and estate matters.

The FPS (Federal Public Service) Finance “Death” page explains tax-related procedures. It covers filing a declaration of estate, paying inheritance tax/estate duties, unblocking the deceased’s bank accounts, selling or donating inherited property, handling estates without heirs, and submitting the deceased person’s final tax return.

Burial and cremation are the only legally recognized forms of disposition in the country (see this belgium.be page and this article (in French) on ecological funerals).

Before you die

https://mijnoudedag.be/ / https://mesvieuxjours.be/ is an accessible and holistic overview to end-of-life planning, touching on many of the points below, including how to discuss the topic.

Fednot provides advice on preparing a will (French and Dutch).

The Federal Public Service elaborates patient rights (French and Dutch); this includes reference to the important step of designating a person of confidence who can make decisions on one’s behalf and consult medical records (French and Dutch). It is also possible to designate power of attorney (Protection extrajudiciaire / Buitengerechtelijke bescherming).

LEIF (Levens Einde Informatie Forum, *End of Life Information Forum*) aims to support a dignified end of life for everyone. The site is principally in Dutch although this page in French lists possible advanced directives. These include options to refuse treatment, anticipate euthanasia, choose funeral arrangements, and specify organ donation. These are normally registered with the local municipality under Belgian law.

Also see

Support for palliative care and other health/social-related initiatives in Brussels: BRUSANO (French and Dutch) and Continuing care asbl (French and Dutch).

Accompanying people who are dying, including supporting home deaths: Pass-Ages (French and Dutch).

Advance care planning overview: https://www.endoflifecare.be/advance-care-planning-in-belgium/ ; Related forms (in French): https://www.pspa.be/

Brussels advance euthanasia declaration information: https://www.brussels.be/euthanasia-advance-declaration; Form for Belgians living abroad – https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/belgians-abroad/euthanasia-declaration

Find bereavement counsellors at https://www.vindeentherapeut.be/ (Dutch), and details about death doulas at https://www.doulasdefindevie.be/ (French)

Publish death announcements at *In Memoriam* (French and Dutch)

Sereni, an undertaker offering personal, custom-made services (French and Dutch)

Related information: See this article in French about wills made in Belgium (first half of 2025), 2024 statistics on euthanasia (in French), and a 2015 article suggesting only 4.4% of people in Belgium had spoken about their wishes about medical treatment at the end of life.

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