

BELGIUM

Continent: Northwestern Europe

[Population](#): 11.6 million

[Life Expectancy \(at Birth\)](#):

[Governance System](#): Federal parliamentary democracy under *Constitutional Monarchy*

Capital: Brussels

[Area](#): 30,280 km²

Major Languages: Dutch, French, German

[GDP \(2021\)](#): 599,879 US\$ million

Select Global Rankings

[Human Development Index](#): 13th

[Fragile States Index – Inverted](#): 20th

[Soft Power 30 rank](#): 18th

[Human Freedom Index](#): 23rd

[World Happiness Ranking](#): 19th

[Good Country Index](#): 7th

Elite Sport System Rankings

[Global Cup Ranking](#): 23rd

[Per Capita Cup Ranking](#): 19th

[Olympic Medals – Summer '20](#): 33rd

[Olympic Medals – Winter '22](#): 20th

Football/World Cup Profile

[FIFA Region](#): UEFA

[FIFA Ranking](#): 2

World Cup Appearances: 13

Best World Cup Performance(s): 3rd Place (2018)

Qualification: UEFA Group E winners

[World Cup Group](#): F

Last World Cup Appearance: 2018

BELGIUM in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (by Aleyna Aygar)

Belgium is one of the smallest countries in Europe, yet it is also one of the most heavily populated states. The country is known as a multilingual plural state, as it has been socially divided into three communities based on language: Flemings, who constitute more than half of the country's population and speak Dutch; Walloons, that make up one-third of Belgium's population and speak French; and a German-speaking population located in the city of Liège. Although members of cultural and linguistic groups continue to reside in the same country, the regional government of Belgium is currently split along both linguistic and geographical lines.

As a result, Belgium's history has been shaped by conflicts, consensus, and compromises reached between its linguistic groups. For instance, constitutional changes enacted between 1967 and 1971 introduced the official division of Dutch and French-speaking groups, their national parliament, and their right to exercise legislative authority in cultural matters in their respective communities. This division created further tension and made it more difficult for Belgium to achieve long-lasting consensus and a stable government.

Besides separate histories, educations, and languages, Flemings and Walloons also have separate political parties within the country. In fact, the Dutch, French, and German sections of the country are given relative autonomy. The high level of differences in the groups' political culture and repeated constitutional reforms are raising [concerns](#) among the international community on whether Belgium is capable of maintaining its unity under one nation. The most recent polling [suggests](#) that 40% of Flemings prefer to break away from Belgium. While most Belgians want to avoid this breakup, there is uncertainty about how the future will progress at the crossroads between nationalism and regionalism.

Since its independence in 1830, the Kingdom of Belgium has had a representative democracy headed by a hereditary constitutional monarch. The country is particularly significant in world politics as it is one of the founding members of the European Union, the eurozone, the World Trade Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In fact, the country's capital, Brussels, is home to the headquarters of both the EU and NATO.

Belgium hosts many international organizations and has stable and favourable relations with its EU neighbours, including France, Netherlands, and Germany. Likewise, the nation also closely works with its NATO allies, such as Canada and the United States, on numerous foreign policy issues. Due to the country's location and foreign policy approach, Belgium is a significant contributor to the economic, political, and social dimensions of globalization.

Why is Belgium considered the heart of Europe?

<https://www.russellbedford.com/latest/insight/belgium-heart-of-europe/>

Read more about the tension between the Flemish and Walloon in Belgium:

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/belgium/articles/an-introduction-to-the-flemish-walloon-divide/>