

The Levels of Authority in Federal Belgium

Federal Belgium is characterised by six levels of authority

» **The European Union**

» **The federal State**

» **The Communities**

» **The Regions**

» **The provinces**

» **The communes**

Each level has its own competences.

As a result of their competences, each level can conduct a policy on the basis of rules imposed on a population in a given territory.

The federal, community and regional levels are parallel, and the provincial and communal levels are subordinate to the preceding ones.

This division, which might appear complicated on first sight, has two objectives:

- The search for greater effectiveness by enlarging the structures.
The competences of the national State have been moved towards the supranational level.
- To bring policy closer to the public by allocating competences to the Communities and Regions.

A legislative and an executive body have been created at each level

Bearing in mind the relative separation of powers, there is a legislative and an executive body at each level.

Given that Belgium is a democratic state consisting of representative institutions, all persons who sit within a legislative body, irrespective of the level, are appointed by elections which are regularly organised.

At each level the executive power is accountable to the elected legislative body for its actions.

The table on the back of this sheet will help you understand this mechanism...

Level of authority	Territory population	Competences	Elections	Legislative Body	Standard	Executive Body
Europe	27 member countries ± 446.800.000 ⁽¹⁾	Common market / Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) / Common foreign and safety policy / Cooperation for justice and internal affairs	5 years	Council of Ministers + European Parliament	Regulation, Directive, Decision, Opinion, ...	Comission + Council of Ministers
Federaal	Belgium 11.584.008 ⁽²⁾	Institutional, economic, financial and social unity, public security	5 years (in principle) Delegation ⁽⁷⁾	House of Representatives Senate	Law	Federal government
Communities	Flemish French ⁽⁴⁾ German-speaking	Culture Use of languages Person-related issues (education, family policy, child protection, ...)	5 years Delegation ⁽⁵⁾ 5 years	Flemish Parliament ⁽⁵⁾ Parliament of the French Community Parliament of the german-speaking Community	Decree Decree Decree	Flemish government ⁽²⁾ Government of the French Community Government of the German-speaking Community
Regions	Flemish Region: 6.698.876 ⁽²⁾ Walloon Region: 3.662.495 ⁽²⁾ Brussels-Capital Region: 1.222.637 ⁽²⁾	Territory-related issues (town and country planning, agriculture, environment, ...)	5 years 5 years 5 years	Flemish Parliament ⁽³⁾ Walloon Parliament Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region ⁽⁶⁾	Decree Decree Ordinance	Flemish government ⁽²⁾ Government of the Walloon Region Government of the Brussels-Capital Region
Provinces	10 provinces	Provincial interest (the network of provincial roads, disaster plans, ...)	6 years	Provincial Council	Regulation Ordinance	Deputation (Flemish Region) "Collège provincial" (Walloon Region)
Communes	581 communes	Communal interest (Public centers for social services, the local police, communal finance, ...)	6 years	Communal Council	Regulation Order	Committee of Mayor + Deputy Mayors

1 ec.europa.eu/eurostat

2 statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/structure-population

3 The competences of the Flemish Region are exercised by the Flemish Community, i.e. the Flemish Parliament and the Flemish government have assumed the community and regional competences.

4 Many competences of the French Community have been transferred to the Walloon Region and to the French Community Commission of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region.

5 The Parliament of the French Community is not directly elected but consists of 75 elected deputies from the Walloon Parliament and 19 French-speaking members from the Parliament of the Region of Brussels-Capital.

6 The language groups (F) + (D) of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region sit under the name of the French Community Commission or the Flemish Community Commission when it concerns community matters involving French-speaking or Dutch-speaking people respectively in Brussels. These commissions can thus be considered as "extensions" of the French and Flemish Communities with regard to the exercise of their competences in the Brussels-Capital Region.

7 Since the Sixth Reform of the State, the Senate is no longer directly elected but its members are appointed by the Parliaments of the federated entities or coopted by the letter.