



**World
Choir
Games**

FLANDERS
2020

**JULY 5-15,
2020**



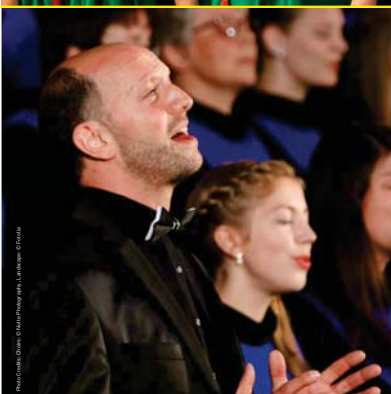
**VISA
HANDBOOK**



AN INTERKULTUR EVENT

Flanders
State of the Art

A **gent:** **KOOR & STEM**



0. INTRODUCTION

Depending on your nationality when travelling to a European country, a visa may be required to enter the Schengen area. This area covers a large number of countries, including Belgium.

There are uniform rules when travelling or staying for a short period of time (up to 90 days in any 180 days period) in the Schengen area.

When staying for a longer period, the rules depend on the country you will visit or where you will be staying. As the World Choir Games will take place from the 5th till the 15th of July 2020, only the short stay-situation is dealt with in this publication (less than 90 days).

1. GENERAL APPLICABLE RULES

A distinction is made according to whether the country of origin of the visitor is a country belonging to the Schengen countries or the European Union, or not (so called "third countries").

THE SCHENGEN AREA / EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES ARE:

1. Austria	17. Latvia
2. Belgium	18. Liechtenstein
3. Bulgaria	19. Lithuania
4. Croatia	20. Luxembourg
5. Cyprus	21. Malta
6. Czech Rep.	22. Netherlands
7. Denmark	23. Norway
8. Estonia	24. Poland
9. Finland	25. Portugal
10. France	26. Romania
11. Germany	27. Slovakia
12. Greece	28. Slovenia
13. Hungary	29. Spain
14. Ireland	30. Sweden
15. Iceland	31. Switzerland
16. Italy	32. UK *

*Situation April 2019 : after Brexit (with or without a deal), the European Commission wishes to exempt British Citizens from having to apply for a visa regarding short-term stay, with the condition of reciprocity from the UK regarding EU citizens wanting to enter British territory.

2. CITIZENS OF A SCHENGEN COUNTRY / EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRY

A citizen of the Schengen Area / European Union has the right to enter Belgium:

- on presentation of a national identity card (= proof of registration in population registers), or
- on presentation of a valid national passport (= a travel document).

Every citizen of the Union has the right to stay in Belgium for a maximum period of 90 days, regardless of the reason for the stay.

3. CITIZENS OF THIRD COUNTRIES

3.1. CITIZENS OF THIRD-COUNTRIES EXEMPT FROM HOLDING A VISA TO ENTER BELGIUM

A citizen of one of these countries has the right to enter Belgium on presentation of a valid national passport (= a travel document).

At the border (or during other controls) those citizens may have to provide additional documentation, for example information on that they have sufficient financial means to cover the stay and the return trip. It is therefore highly recommended that they carry with them copies of the same documents that must be presented on the occasion of visa-application by citizens of third-countries requiring a Schengen-visa (e.g. letters of invitation, travel confirmations, other documents stating the purpose of the stay, see further 3.2.1).

A permanently updated list of third countries whose nationals are exempted from holding a visa when crossing the external borders can be found here

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/apply_for_a_visa/docs/visa_lists_en.pdf

3.2. CITIZENS OF THIRD-COUNTRIES REQUIRING A SCHENGEN VISA TO ENTER BELGIUM

A permanently updated list of third countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external borders can be found here

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/apply_for_a_visa/docs/visa_lists_en.pdf

3.2.1. VISA : APPLICATION PROCESS and REQUESTED DOCUMENTS

How and where should you apply?

In principle you have to apply in the country where you legally reside to the Consulate of Belgium. If Belgium has no Consulate in that country, then you should go to the Consulate of the Schengen partner representing Belgium.

In order to verify which embassy is competent for your country of residence and whether Belgium is represented by a Schengen partner for short stay visa, please go to this website

https://diplomatie.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/competence_representation_visa_eng_20181127.pdf

Addresses and contact information of Belgian Embassies and Consulates can be found here:

http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/embassies_and_consulates/belgian_embassies_and_consulates_abroad

- Some nationalities are subject to a compulsory security clearance by the Schengen partners. Do note that this clearance takes on average 12 days to obtain once the file is sent by the Embassy /Consulate. So apply well in time.
- Some Belgian Consulates or Schengen partners representing Belgium have an electronic appointment system. For obvious reasons it is wise to check well in advance whether an appointment has to be made.
- Some Belgian Consulates or Schengen partners representing Belgium are working with external service providers for lodging the visa applications. It is wise to check well in advance whether this is the case.

What do you need to provide when applying a visa ?

1. **A valid passport** with at least two empty pages. In addition, the passport should have been issued within the last 10 years.

The passport must be valid for at least 3 months beyond the date on which you intend to leave the Schengen territory.

2. **The visa application form completed and signed** by the applicant (visa application form for a child under 18 must be signed by his/her both parents or guardian)

3. **A recent identity photograph** according to ICAO standards.

4. **You will have to allow your fingerprints (10 fingerprints) to be taken** when you submit your application.

5. **Adequate and valid travel medical insurance** covering any expenses which might arise in connection with repatriation for medical reasons, urgent medical attention and/or emergency hospital treatment or death, during the stay on the territory of the Member States. The minimum cover should be of 30.000 EUR. This insurance must be valid for the entire Schengen area and throughout the duration of the stay.

6. **An official invitation letter to the event** from the World Choir Games specifying who will cover your cost of travel, lodging, food, ...

7. **Evidence of your accommodation** during your stay in Belgium (hotel)

8. **A notarized parental authorization** to travel to Belgium, signed by both parents / guardians for minors travelling alone.

9. **If you intend to spend more days in Belgium** than covered by the invitation letter from World Choir Games you will have to provide supporting documents in relation to accommodation and sufficient means of subsistence during this period.

10. Documents proving **sufficient means of subsistence** during the stay in Belgium

11. Information allowing to judge your **intention to leave the Schengen area** before the visa expires (e.g. family, labour contract or property in homecountry).

SPECIAL CONDITIONS MAY BE APPLICABLE IN SOME COUNTRIES, SO IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED TO VERIFY IN ADVANCE THE WEBSITE OF YOUR SPECIFIC VISA-PROVIDER (embassy, consulate, external service provider) !!

When should you lodge an application?

Applications have to be lodged no more than 3 months before the start of the intended visit (**i.e. no earlier than than 05.04.2020 - 15.04.2020 !**), but at least 15 days before the start date of travel to Belgium.

Check the respective websites and apply for a visa as soon as possible. It is advisable to start collecting the necessary documents well in advance. Do not wait until the last moment to lodge your application!

Contact the consulate or the external service provider well in advance to make an appointment for lodging an application. Make sure to be present on the date and time of your appointment.

**START LODGING APPLICATION WELL ENOUGH IN ADVANCE!!
THIS WILL AVOID LOTS OF PROBLEMS!**

How long does it take to receive a decision in your visa application ?

As a general rule, a decision is taken by the consulate within 15 days.

This period may, in individual cases, be extended up to 30 days and exceptionally, 60 days, if a more detailed examination of your application and/or additional documents are required.

3.2.2. VALIDITY OF THE VISA

As with all visas, visas for Belgium are only valid for a certain period of time. The authorized stay and validity is indicated on the visa sticker.

3.2.3. VISA FEE

A visa fee of 60€ has to be paid. Normally, this fee shall be waived for participants aged 25 years or less. If the local Schengen consulate is cooperating with an external service provider (ESP) you will be charged a service fee. This cannot be more than 30 Euros.

A decision on refusal and the reasons on which it is based shall be notified to the applicant. Applicants who have been refused a visa shall have the right to appeal. Appeals shall be conducted against the Member State that has taken the final decision on the application and in accordance with the national law of that Member State. Member States shall provide applicants with information regarding the procedure to be followed in the event of an appeal. Unfortunately, neither the visa fee nor the service fee will be reimbursed in case of refusal.

3.2.4. ON THE DAY OF TRAVEL AND DURING THE JOURNEY IN BELGIUM

The short-stay visa does not automatically entitle you to enter the Schengen area. At border (or during other controls) you may have to show the visa but also provide additional documentation, for example information on that you have sufficient means to cover the stay and the return trip. It is therefore recommended that you carry with you copies of the documents which you presented when applying for the visa (e.g. letters of invitation, travel confirmations, other documents stating the purpose of your stay).

Don't forget to keep track of the number of days that you are entitled to stay (mentioned on the visa).