

2018: Electronic medical prescriptions for medicines in Belgium



In spring 2018 (date to be confirmed by the Belgian authorities), electronic prescriptions for medicines, which have been gradually introduced in Belgium since the beginning of 2017, will become the rule.

What does this involve?

Instead of writing out a medical prescription on paper, the doctor will enter the prescribed medicines in a computer system shared with pharmacists. In the first phase of the new system you will receive a paper copy containing a barcode. You present this barcode to the dispensing pharmacy. The paper copy will be phased out gradually. At that point, to access the electronic prescription the pharmacist will simply read your national registration number, encoded in the chip of your identity document.

As yet, not all types of identity document available in Belgium contain the chip necessary for the new system. Paper prescriptions will therefore be obtainable until everyone has the chip card.

In practice:

- **You have a Belgian identity card.** You are ready to use the new system. So are your children if they have either the ISI+ card (under 12s) or the Kids-ID card (12 and over).
- **You have a 'foreign national' identity card** (type A, B, C, D, E, E+, F, F+, H). The chip in these cards also contains your national registration number. You are ready to use the new system.
- **You have a 'special' identity card.** This card does not (yet) contain a chip and is therefore incompatible with the new electronic prescription system. Until the cards or the system are adapted, you will simply continue with paper prescriptions as before. Negotiations are ongoing between DG HR and the competent Belgian authorities, and you will be informed in due course of any related developments.

NB: you can also choose to return your 'special' ID card and register directly at your local commune/gemeente to obtain a 'foreign national' card. Full details about this procedure are available on the Staff Matters portal at the following address: <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/staff/EN/admin/identity-papers/Pages/special-card.aspx>

- **Don't (yet) have one of the cards referred to above?** No problem – you will simply receive a paper prescription, as before.

November 2017: the Belgian departments responsible for this new scheme have confirmed that the system in place sometimes blocks access for patients who are not covered by INAMI. This issue is expected to be resolved shortly.

Supporting documents

There is no change in relation to the supporting documents to enclose with your reimbursement requests. The name of the prescribing doctor will continue to be shown as before on receipts/invoices from the pharmacy.

 See also the INAMI website: www.inami.fgov.be/

The EU Login account makes it easier for you to access information



Do you have a mobile phone? Do you have a PC/tablet and an email address? Then if you don't yet have an EU Login account, it's easy to create one!

An EU Login account allows you to find all information online and to access:

- My Intracomm (the Commission's intranet site) and the **'Retirees' portal** which makes it easier for you to navigate the site
- PMO Contact (for questions about the PMO)
- JSIS online (to manage your situation regarding sickness insurance)

To create an EU Login account, simply follow the instructions in the user manual which you will find on the AIACE website: <http://aiace-europa.eu/> - Click on 'Services' > 'JSIS online' > 'How to create an EU Login account'.

Tax exemption certificate



In accordance with Article 12 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union, officials and other servants are exempt from national taxes on salaries, wages and emoluments paid by the Union.

The PMO automatically sends the tax exemption certificate to retirees each year. It will be sent out in early 2018.

Pensions Unit: postal mail address



To avoid any possible errors with the distribution of postal mail, PMO reminds you to address mail correctly to the Pensions Unit, which is often confused with the unit responsible for sickness insurance.

All mail items for the Pensions Unit should be addressed to: **PMO.4 - Pensions- MERO - B - 1049 Bruxelles**

Please put your pension number on all documents sent by mail in order to facilitate and speed up the processing of correspondence.

Correction coefficients



Pension rights acquired before 1 May 2004 are adjusted according to **correction coefficients**, which vary from one Member State to another (the minimum correction coefficient is 100). In order for you to qualify for the correction coefficient, your country of residence must be your place of origin or your last place of employment. The part of your rights subject to the correction coefficient is indicated in your pension entitlement notice.

This correction coefficient is applied to offset differences in living conditions at a given location compared to Brussels and Luxembourg. It ensures the general principle of equal treatment, i.e. equality of purchasing power between all staff of the EU institutions.

The new correction coefficients valid since 1 July 2017 were sent to you in late December 2017.

Change of IBAN code in United Kingdom



In the last months of 2017 several UK bank accounts have been affected by a change in a part of their IBAN code (BIC/SORT CODE); in principle, account holders have been informed accordingly by their banks. As this change has an impact on pension payments, the Pensions Unit invites all pensioners to be vigilant in case of a change of their BIC/SORT CODE and, if this is the case, to communicate it immediately to the pension handler (the name is indicated on the salary slip). The major bank affected so far is HSBC, but others can follow.

i Your file manager whose name is in the top left-hand corner of your pension slip.

Further information on the process "called ring-fencing" : via Google "ring fencing bank" or via this link <https://tinyurl.com/y8vwqfcb>

Same-sex marriage, household allowance and survivor's pension



The **household allowance** is granted to staff members or retirees who are registered as stable non-marital partners, provided that the couple does not have access to legal marriage. Only same-sex couples can be in a situation of not having access to legal marriage. Access to marriage is assessed on the basis of the legislation applicable to the couple in accordance with their nationality or place of residence.

This situation may change if the applicable national legislation or the situation of the couple or of a member of the couple changes, for example the place of residence.

This information was published in **Administrative Notice** No 37-14 of 16 October 2014 (Conclusion of the Heads of Administration No 263/14).

In 2017, three Member States changed their legislation and opened marriage to same-sex couples:

- Finland: Act of 1 March 2017
- Germany: Act of 20 July 2017
- Malta: Law to amend the Marriage Act, which came into force on 1 September 2017.

In these three Member States, same-sex couples had previously been able to register as partnerships. The laws opening marriage to same-sex couples allow such couples to convert the partnership into marriage:

- *Finland: Parterna i ett partnerskap som har registrerats i Finland kan omvandla sitt partnerskap till äktenskap genom att lämna in en gemensam anmälan om detta till magistraten.*
- *Germany: Eine Lebenspartnerschaft wird in eine Ehe umgewandelt, wenn zwei Lebenspartnerinnen oder Lebenspartner gegenseitig persönlich und bei gleichzeitiger Anwesenheit erklären, miteinander eine Ehe auf Lebenszeit führen zu wollen.*
- *Malta: Partners in a civil union contracted prior to the coming into force of the Marriage Act and other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2017 and in accordance with the provisions of this Act, may, within five years from the coming into force of the Marriage Act and other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2017, convert their civil union into marriage.*

In order to continue to benefit from the household allowance without interruption, couples who had registered as a partnership under Finnish, German or Maltese law will be able to convert these partnerships into marriage within **six months**. This short period runs from the point at which the couple fulfils all the conditions set by the legislation of a Member State authorising the couple to marry. By way of exception, this period can be extended at the request of the staff member if the administrative formalities for marriage cannot be completed within six months.

Couples who do not make this change will no longer maintain their entitlement to the household allowance. In such cases, the entitlement to the household allowance will cease on the last day of the month from which the couple fulfilled all the conditions set by the legislation authorising the couple to marry, i.e. on the first day of the month following the entry into force of the new legislation.

The conditions for granting of the **survivor's pension** apply by analogy to granting of the household allowance.

i **PMO CONTACT ONLINE** : <https://ec.europa.eu/pmo/contact/>

PMO CONTACT : + 32 (2) 29 97777 (Monday to Friday from 9h30 to 12h30)

Your file manager, whose name appears at the top-left of your pension statement.

Financial adviser available in Brussels



Retired staff who are finding it particularly hard to manage their finances (debt accumulation/ over-indebtedness, threat of eviction, etc.) can consult our free budget advice service at the Commission in Brussels. Our professional adviser can examine your personal situation based on your household budget and offer you advice and guidance.

In Belgium, the adviser is authorised, where appropriate, to submit an application for collective

debt settlement to the Labour Court.

If you live outside Belgium, consultations are also possible by telephone (video call) or by email. This service is available in French and English.

i For information or to request an appointment: HR-BXL-AIDE-PENSIONNES@ec.europa.eu

☎ + 32 (0)2 295 90 98.

2018 , the European Year of Cultural Heritage



The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. The slogan for the year is : Our heritage, where the past meets the future.

The year will see a series of initiatives and events across Europe to enable people to become closer to and more involved with their cultural heritage. Cultural heritage comes in many shapes and forms :

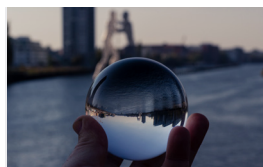
- tangible: buildings, monuments, clothing, artwork, books, historic towns
- intangible: practices, expressions, skills, language and oral traditions, traditional craftsmanship
- natural : landscapes, flora and fauna
- digital : resources that were created in digital form (digital art or animation) or that have been digitalised as a way to preserve them (text, images, video, records).

The European year in your country

Events big and small are taking place all around Europe. Visit the website of the year in your country to find out what is happening near you.

i <https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about>

An attractive tool for comparing capital cities



'My capital in a bubble' is a fun way to compare your capital city with other European capitals. This Eurostat app allows you to compare figures covering 30 different indicators from the capitals of the Member States, EFTA countries and Turkey. When switching between indicators, the transparent bubbles representing countries move around the screen in accordance with their value.

The indicators are grouped according to the following topics:

- Living in cities: financial situation of households, housing, integration of foreigners
- Economy and labour market: per capita GDP, unemployment rates, employment rates
- Quality of life: health care, quality of education, administrative services, cultural facilities
- Smart and green cities: public transport, ozone concentrations, noise levels
- Urban demography: birth rates, mortality rates, old-age dependency ratio

Some indicators provide additional information as well as data from previous years.

A simple and fun tool for learning more about the differences between capital cities.

i Eurostat : <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/civil-servants-remuneration/publications>

Cataract surgery



Will you soon be undergoing cataract surgery? JSIS will reimburse the associated surgery costs under certain conditions.

Cataracts are a degenerative disease of the eye and more particularly of the crystalline lens. As it ages, the lens becomes opaque, leading to decreased visual acuity, misty vision, a change in colour perception, light halos and glare. Cataracts usually begin from the age of 60 and surgery is currently the only available form of treatment.

The procedure involves removal of the cloudy crystalline lens and implantation of an artificial one to restore optimal vision.

Does your particular case require prior authorisation (PA)?

Age is the sole applicable criterion. If you are 60 or older, you do not have to request prior authorisation. If you are under 60, prior authorisation is required.

TYPE OF SURGERY	PATIENT < 60 YEARS	PATIENT, 60 YEARS AND OVER	REIMBURSEMENT
removal of crystalline lens + implantation of a mono- or multi-focal lens Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE)	✓ PA required	✓ no PA	Surgery (category B2) Reimbursed at 85 % Ceiling: EUR 2 600 per eye
removal of lens + implantation of lens using the Iris Claw technique (lens placed in front of the crystalline lens)	✓ PA required	✓ no PA	Surgery (category B1) Reimbursed at 85 % Ceiling: EUR 2 000 per eye
removal of lens + implantation of a Light Adjustable Lens (LAL)	✓ non reimbursable ⁽¹⁾	✓ non reimbursable ⁽¹⁾	EUR 0

⁽¹⁾ The Medical Council has issued an unfavourable opinion on the reimbursement of cataract surgery with implantation of an LAL lens (unknown long-term consequences and no scientific validation to date – CM 11/12/2014).

What does the reimbursement cover?

The reimbursement provided for here relates to the surgery only: the fees of the surgeon, the assistant(s) and the anaesthetist. These procedures are usually performed on an outpatient basis. If you require a stay in hospital, additional reimbursement is provided for other possible costs (stay, medication, etc.).

In some countries, parity coefficients are applied to the rate of reimbursement of capped benefits, resulting in a higher reimbursement.

Why is prior authorisation necessary if the patient is under 60?

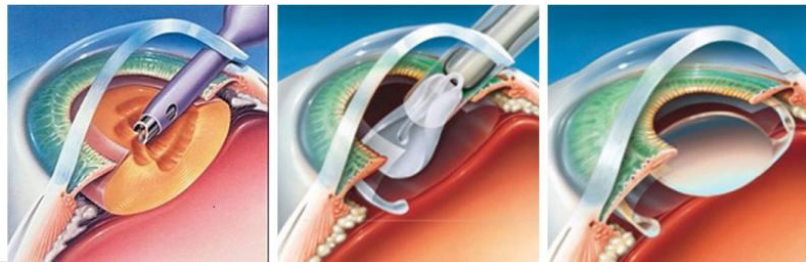
To distinguish between a functional surgical procedure to replace the opaque lens and 'comfort' surgery for a patient who no longer wishes to wear glasses or contact lenses. In the latter case, the implanted lens replaces a healthy lens and the procedure is reimbursable only under certain conditions.

What to do in the event of a secondary cataract?

Secondary cataracts are a possible complication of cataract surgery. The natural posterior capsule of the crystalline lens on which the implant rests becomes opaque and again causes visual disturbances.

This problem is corrected by YAG laser. In this instance, prior authorisation is not needed as such action is assimilated to a category A1 surgical procedure ^(*).

^(*) see 'Surgery and categories of interventions' and 'Parity coefficient' links at the bottom of the page.



How to request prior authorisation

Log in to our JSIS online application using your EU Login password.

In the **'Create a request'** menu, click on **'Medical authorisation'**, fill in the boxes and follow the on-screen instructions. In the **'Hospitalisation and surgery'** menu, click on **'Corrective or restorative plastic surgery'**.

Next, download the reasoned medical prescription (+ dioptre) and/or medical report. In the 'Comments' box, indicate that cataract surgery is involved. Then follow the on-screen instructions.

How to obtain reimbursement of medical expenses relating to surgery?

Simply complete a claim for reimbursement and attach the paid invoice.

You can submit your claim for reimbursement online or use the traditional paper-based method.

i WANT TO KNOW MORE?

• Surgery and categories of operation:

Retirees portal : <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/retired/> > **Sickness insurance** > **JSIS A to Z** > **Medical care** > **Hospitalisation and surgery**

• Parity coefficient:

Retirees portal : <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/retired/> > **Sickness insurance** > **Parity coefficient**

• Claim for reimbursement of medical expenses to be completed online or printed

Retirees portal : <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/retired/> > **Sickness insurance** > **Forms for reimbursement**

Commission-AIACE: a decade of partnership



The International Association of Former Officials of the European Union (AIACE) is made up of central bodies and national sections in 15 countries. It makes a number of services and information available to any retired official requesting them. It maintains and fosters friendly ties between retired officials themselves and between them and officials and staff in service. It contributes to the study of issues relating to European integration and helping to heighten public awareness of these issues.

On 29 February 2008, an agreement was signed between the Commission and the International Association of Former Officials of the European Union (AIACE). This Partnership Agreement notably provides for:

- AIACE's participation in official staff representative committees addressing the interests of retired officials
- contacts and the broadest possible representation of the interests of former officials within Community institutions
- better information for retirees and facilities to cater for administrative formalities (helpdesk)
- representation of the interests of former officials within national authorities through the Association's national branches
- the provision by the Commission of logistical and financial support to achieve the objectives and facilitate the operation of the Association
- implementation of a joint programme of specific welfare actions in relation to all retired officials without distinction
- granting, by the Commission, of annual financial assistance for the implementation of welfare actions.

Three or four times a year, AIACE International publishes its VOX magazine: each retiree receives a copy of VOX, which has a print-run of 25 000 copies. This provides information, analytical articles and news about general issues, the lives of retired officials and AIACE branches, society, European integration and administrative notices. The Commission (particularly DG HR and the PMO) regularly publishes specific news updates for retired officials in VOX.

As it does each year, AIACE will be staging its traditional conference in May in one of the Member States. This year's gathering will be held in Valencia (Spain) from 22 to 26 May.

Visit the website to find out more about AIACE's actions, its timetable of events, each of its VOX publications and the 2018 conference.

i **SITE AIACE** : <http://aiace-europa.eu/>

Looking for a colleague or a former colleague?



If you have access to My Intracomm, you can search for the current posting of a former colleague via:

<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/Pages/who-is-who.aspx>

If you wish to access the organisation charts of Commission departments, visit the Europa website at:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en

then click on **'Departments (Directorates-General) and services'**, followed by **'Search for a member of staff'**.

You can find a **list** of Commission staff retiring each month in the Retirees section of My Intracomm.

This is also where to find the **'In memoriam'** site, an area reserved for the names of colleagues from the Commission and the EEAS (European External Action Service) who have died while in service and those of retired staff from all the institutions who have passed away during the year.

Brussels, two spaces at the disposal of retired staff

Social Welfare Office – Avenue de Tervueren



Sickness insurance duty office:

- open to all affiliated members
- no appointment necessary
- matters of principle regarding JSIS
- follow-up to pending individual claims
- photocopier available
- mailbox for submitting documents to the JSIS.

The duty office cannot help in filling out requests for medical reimbursements.

For questions regarding your pension: contact your file manager (top left, on your pension slip) to arrange an appointment at this Social Welfare Centre.

i **Bâtiment MERO**
41, avenue de Tervueren (ground floor)
1040 Bruxelles.

NEW opening times : Monday to Friday, 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

'Espace Seniors' – Avenue des Nerviens



Information point:

- 4 computers at your disposal
- access to the 'MyIntracomm' intranet
- secure internet access
- printer
- administrative documents
- scanner (for JSIS refund applications)
- 'flat screen' displaying the latest administrative information
- mailbox in which to place internal mail items.

Copy room:

- high-performance photocopier
- shredder available.

A comfortable and user-friendly lounge area.

i **Bâtiment N-105**
105, avenue des Nerviens – 00/41
1040 Bruxelles.

Open Monday to Friday, 8.30 a.m. to 5.45 p.m.

Open access. Show your 'Pensioner' badge at the reception desk.