



Brussels attracts more and more international NGOs

The Presence of the EU Institutions is not the only reason...



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Brussels has become the city of reference for any international organisation that wants to be at the heart of the decision centre in Europe.

The Regional United Nations Information Centre (RUNIC) opened in Brussels in January of 2004. This new centre replaces nine UN Information centres that were previously based in other European cities.

In the second quarter of this year, a further seven international Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) also set up representative offices in Brussels. These included The European Centre of International Economy, the European Association for Consumer Representation in Standardisation, The European Forum for Good Clinical Practice, as well as many others.

"A survey conducted in 2003 by the Union of International Associations (UIA) showed that Brussels has the highest concentration world wide of international associations, either public or private," says Ghislaine de Coninck, the general secretary of the Federation of International Associations in Belgium (FAIB).

The FAIB is a non-profit making, non political association that was established in 1949 on the initiative of the UIA. Its three main purposes are to promote and defend the interests of their members; ensure and facilitate their member's activities by creating joint study groups, arranging administrative facilities with meeting rooms, equipment, etc; and establish international contacts, notably with international federations abroad. Furthermore, the FAIB is able to provide legal information and advice to help new members set up in Belgium. They can help on legal matters, tax issues, social issues and anything else to make the process of establishing a representative office easier. A recent survey

conducted by the FAIB showed that International associations prefer Brussels for three major reasons:

1. Its central and privileged geographic location;
2. The fact that it is a decisionmaking centre, as the capital is the headquarters of the European Institutions and other major international organizations;
3. Its unique and favourable legal environment. "The legal status for the creation of a non profit-making Association in Belgium is unique and has several advantages over other locations," says de Coninck. "The AISBL legal form, for non profit international associations, offers legal security, flexibility and prestige of status to the entity. In addition it enables the association to benefit from substantial grants and subsidies." "Other aspects are also worth noting, including our welcome policy in Brussels, the good transport infrastructure and the affordability of office space. These are facets of the city that should be taken into account when new associations choose Brussels as their location."

Right next to the FAIB, the House for International Associations (MAI) was established in 1982 by an initiative from the Belgian Government in order to welcome new associations and members of the Federation and offer them all the infrastructure and facilities to develop their core functions at a reasonable price.