

# The European Quarter

Programme Think, Innovate, Develop



## hub.brussels

hub.brussels is the Brussels Business Support Agency.

hub.brussels, has the ambition to turn Brussels into the most attractive ground for your business creation and development.

It offers customised support, free tools, and recognised expertise in boosting your autonomy, facilitating your decision-making, expanding your knowledge, and widening your network. It helps you gain trust and reach excellency. It pushes you to strive in Brussels... and beyond.

Above all, it is the sum of over 300 dedicated, thorough and passionate collaborators bound by the promise of supporting, encouraging, and propelling you and your audacious businesses towards success...

We are hub.brussels, but above all we are right behind you.

### Thanks

The creation of this tool has been made possible by the support and cooperation of the municipal governments of the City of Brussels, Etterbeek and Ixelles.

We must also thank the business owners, experts, residents and various organisations for their time and valuable contributions at every stage of our research project. We would like to thank the Brussels-Capital Region and the teams at hub.brussels who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this project.

This action research project on the European Quarter, the Think Innovate Develop programme, is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and was established in collaboration with eQuama, European Quarter Area Management Association.

---

## Introduction

The Brussels-Capital Region is a polycentric area; a mosaic of districts, each with its own identity. In order to ensure coherent urban development, balance and synergy between the various areas, Atrium.Brussels created prospective district plans (PDPs) for 21 Brussels districts, between 2007 and 2011.

Consisting of an introductory leaflet and an user guide, this future-orientated urban planning and marketing tool is aimed at all stakeholders involved in the revitalisation of the districts. It offers them a coherent and flexible frame of reference to deepen their insight into the future of the district when implementing local projects.

Now, hub.brussels is developing a new, participative local business development methodology, the Think Innovate Develop (TID) programme.

Through the TID programme the Agency intends, on one hand, to provide a key for “reading” the district, providing support and inspiration to creatives, prime contractors and project owners, and assisting local authorities when making strategic decisions. On the other hand, it offers the various stakeholders wishing to play a role in local business development a series of “turnkey” project ideas, integrated into their district and tailored to their target markets.

<sup>1</sup> Through its merger with Impulse.brussels and Brussels Invest & Export, the Regional Business Agency became hub.brussels, the Brussels Business Support Agency.

# Methodology

## A sensitive approach

In order to gain a deep understanding of the area and establish its positioning, a variety of data has been collected to contribute to two research focuses:

### Identity

To study the identity of a district, we must consider two facets: its physical reality, providing objective, visible data, and its personality, providing projective, emotional data.

The aim: to understand the area.

### Behaviour

Behavioural study of a district tends to consider the place as a “brand”.

It focuses on two elements: perception, which includes the emotional relationship between user and district, and the more visible positioning of the district with regards to the user.

The aim: to understand how the district and its users interact.

### **A participative process**

We asked users and stakeholders in the district to contribute their expertise and experience to this action research project. They have actively participated in the study, at both the data collection and analysis stages.

- Visits  
one-off observations and guided tours
- Quantitative and qualitative surveys  
online and on site
- Focus groups  
Customers, business owners and local stakeholders
- Workshops with various stakeholders
- Bibliographical research

### **A tool to assist creation**

This outline is organised into four sections.

- Overview  
A look at the district from above
- Identity  
Site visits
- Positioning  
Meet the user
- Ambition  
Discussion and debate

These can be used as a coherent whole, providing gradual immersion in the area. They can also be consulted individually, depending on the level of information required.

## Overview – The district viewed from above

### Description

The European Quarter occupies an area belonging to three municipalities: the City of Brussels, Etterbeek and Ixelles. The district owes its name to the numerous buildings belonging to the European institutions and other international bodies, which moved there towards the end of the last century.

Indeed, the European identity of the district is crystallised in these architectural symbols. The European Parliament is located between Place du Luxembourg and Leopold Park, and European Commission Building “the Berlaymont” is close to Rue de la Loi et and the Schuman Roundabout.

Other iconic sites within the district include the Jean Monnet Crossing, situated alongside Rue Archimède, Place Jourdan and the more recently redeveloped Place Jean Rey. Businesses are spread out among these various hubs or centres within the district, which combine to create the local identity.

Aside from “European Quarter”, other names for the area generally appear to be linked to Schuman. Other original names make reference to its symbolic identity: Brussels DC or EU District.

This publication also looks at other elements of the European Quarter that influence its identity and the way its is perceived from a retail development perspective.



## History

### **The Maalbeek, swift river, steep valley**

As early as the Middle Ages, many ponds were made along its course to prevent flooding, which also provided food for the fishpond and served as a reservoir for the many mills.

Where a road crossed the river there were small villages whose names still refer to this river today, such as Ixelles (near the Alders), Etterbeek (fast stream), Ten Node (near the large pond). Because of the many windmills, the river was named «Molenbeek or Maalbeek».

### **Between castle and hunting forest**

When the dukes of Brabant also settled in Brussels, they kept their hunting lodge in Tervuren. The road between two castles, the castle on the Coudenberg in Brussels and the hunting lodge in Tervuren became an important route (Chaussée de Wavre and Chaussée Saint-Pierre), the very beginning of an axis of power. Soon many taverns

and breweries settled here, using the many springs nearby such as the Broebeleir. Families of brewers like Delannoy (Ixelles), Hap (Etterbeek) or Aerts (Saint-Josse) were among the notables of these municipalities.

### **The very first enlargement of Brussels: «le Quartier Léopold»**

As early as 1837, the «Committee for the Expansion and Embellishment of Brussels» began to build a new residential district in a checkerboard pattern. The avenues of the Parc de Bruxelles were extended over the boulevards descending to the Maalbeek to the east and beyond. In 1853, this territory was transferred from the municipalities of Saint-Josse and Ixelles to Brussels-City and the Brussels-Léopold district became a reality. The district was only really successful in 1860 when the patent rights (kind of local customs) were abolished and Brussels experienced an enormous urban expansion in a few years time. The district was very much in demand by the nobility and bourgeoisie, who were

building large numbers of first floor houses there. New facilities were built, a station, party halls (e.g. Concert Noble) and parks.

### **Meanwhile on the Plateau**

The old road between Brussels and Tervuren was replaced by the important axis rue de la Loi-chaussée de Tervueren straight to the Africa Museum of Leopold II. This became the axis along which the east of Brussels would develop. Along these prestigious avenues grand buildings were built and many embassies were established.

Around 1870, the new North-East District or quartier des Squares was also developed. The Royal Military School (KMS) was built on the then undeveloped plateau with a large practice square in front of it. Etterbeek, with its many barracks, would retain this military role for a long time. This training area became a Cinquantenaire Park (1880 World Fair and 50 years of Belgian independence).

Around 1912, scientist Armand Solvay invented the construction of a «university science park» in the Leopold Park. Brussels attracted an international audience of businessmen and diplomats. With the arrival of the car, the Chaussée de Wavre (N4) becomes the holiday route from the inhabitants of Brussels to the Ardennes.

#### **An axis of power**

Since the 1950s, the government and private sector have been building many new offices in the Leopold Quarter, where residents are now quickly moving away.

From 1957 the new European administration (then EEC) was provisionally housed in the Charlemagne building along the rue de la Loi. Ten years later, the first building for Europe was built on the site of the old Berlaymont cost school, which soon became the symbol building of the EU.

Rue de la Loi and Rue Belliard have since become city highways to drive in and out respectively.

In 1976, the first part of the metro linking the European Quarter with the city centre was inaugurated. The EU expanded further and offices supplanted the housing... In 1993, Brussels was finally granted the status of capital of the European institutions. The European Parliament is now rising above the Leopold Park. New inspiring plans emerged.

#### **A new face new projects**

Berlaymont, Parliament and the Europa Building are now the symbolic buildings of the European Union, which also attracts demonstrations almost daily. The Region wants to transform Rue de la Loi into a multifunctional street with shops (Christian de Portzamparc's Projet Urbain Loi), housing and offices.

A new direct rail tunnel to the airport is being built. The old car park, which has been vacant for years, will be given a new use as Jean Reyplein and Maalbeektuin.

Today, the district is still in a transition phase. A very heterogeneous neighborhood that radiates its surprising story: art nouveau buildings, art deco style, modernism and new modern architecture just next to each other is typically Brussels eclectic, surprising shops, restaurants from all over Europe and far beyond, almost rural streets, next to bourgeois showcases beautiful parks, inspiring museums,... Green, charming and lively. And all this in the Maalbeek valley.



---

## Maps

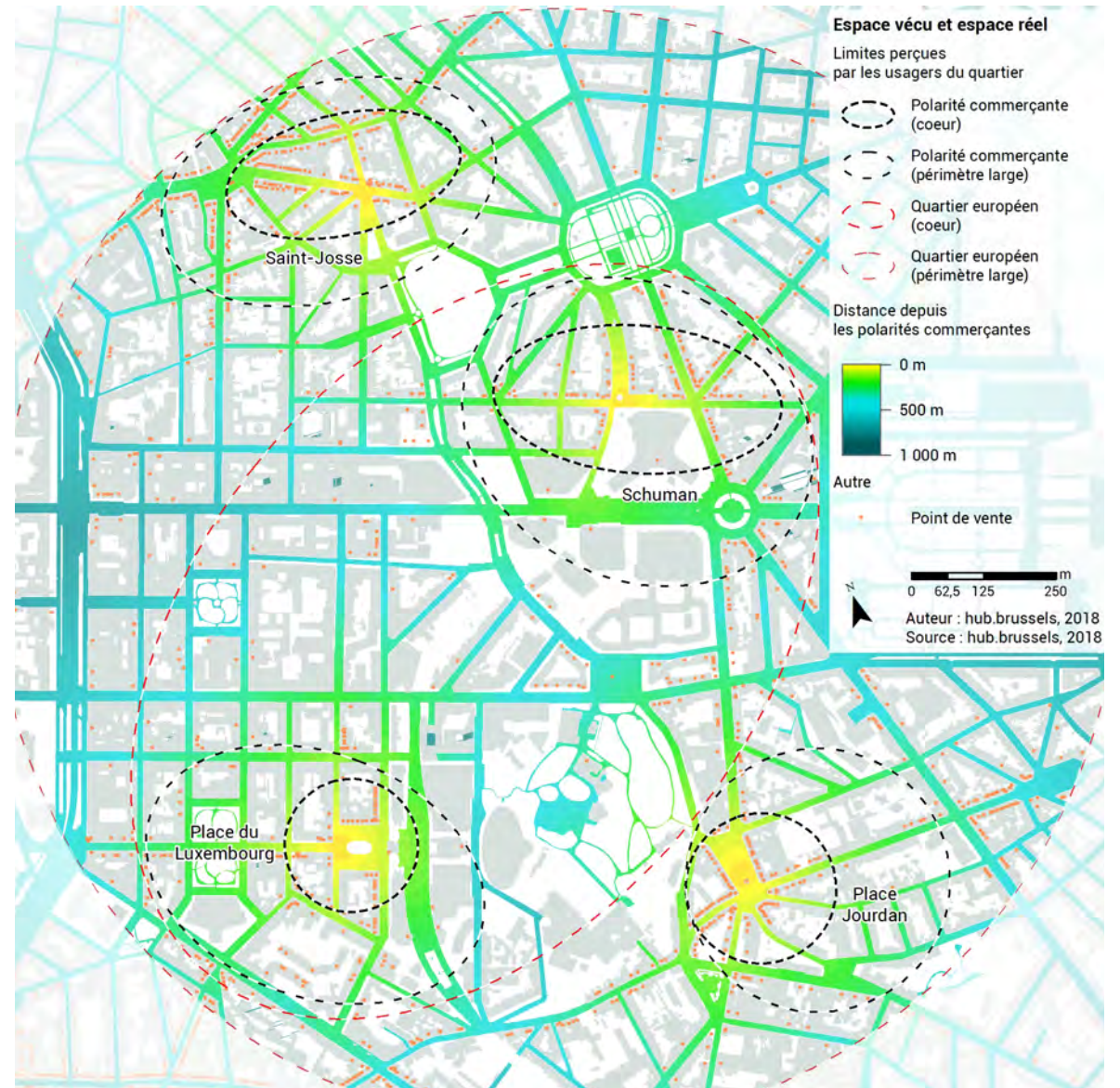
Overall, respondents consider the European Quarter to encompass the Schuman, Jourdan et Luxembourg hubs. The majority of French and Dutch speaking respondents also included Place Jean Rey and Leopold Park. However, they did not unanimously include other centres, such as Meeûs and Frère Orban Squares, Ambiorix Square and Cinquantaire Park.

Analysing the European Quarter as a whole, including Cinquantaire Park and the surrounding area, we calculated that there are a total of 1060 commercial establishments in the area. Of these, hotel, restaurants and cafés are the largest group (358), followed by services (198), leisure and daily products (181).

Commercial offer map  
Diversity of shops and services



Perception map  
Boundaries of the European Quarter  
as seen by its users.



## **Key figures**

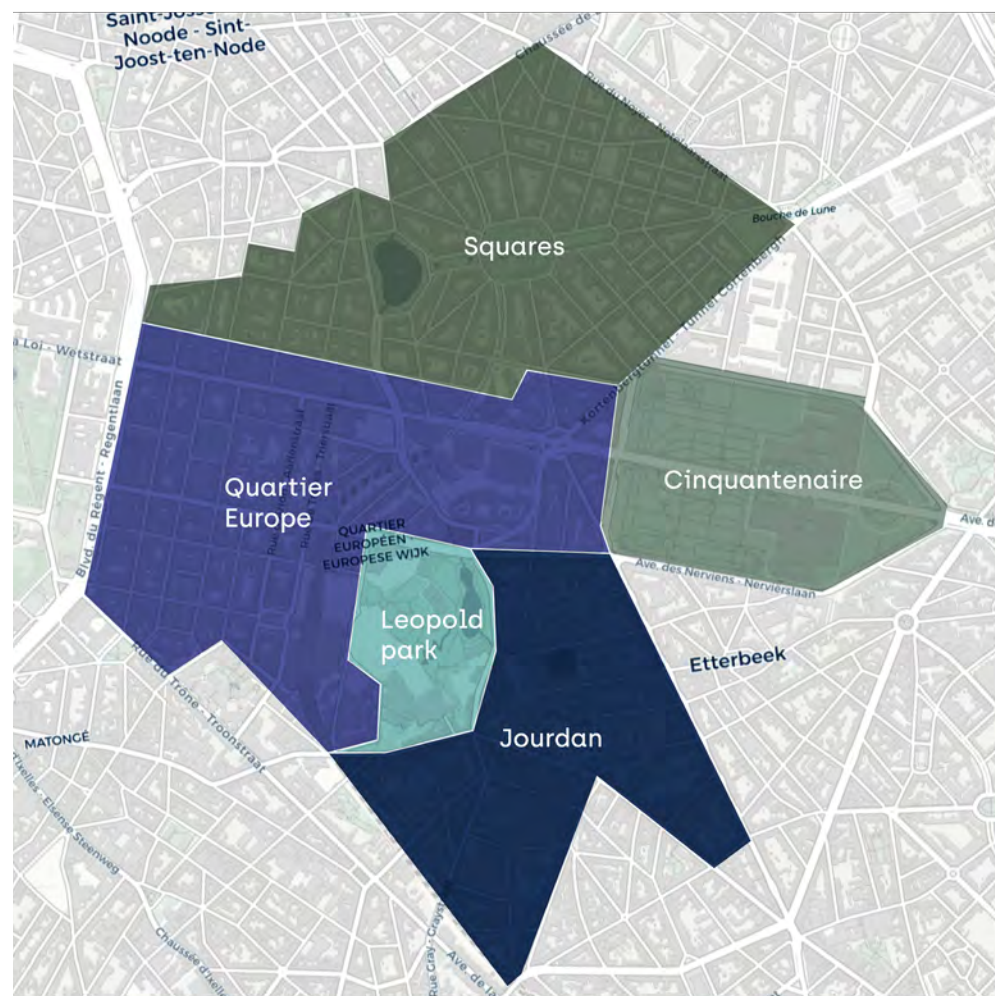
The urban environment



Districts as defined by the Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis  
(Source: BISA district monitoring)  
The European Quarter is unique, as it encompasses several statistical districts, as defined by BISA.

The figures below include the following statistical districts:

- Squares
- Cinquantenaire
- Jourdan
- Leopold Park
- Quartier Europe



*The division of District Monitoring*  
(source: [statistics.brussels](https://statistics.brussels))

**9 160** residents  
per km<sup>2</sup>

The majority of these live in the area surrounding the squares (13,574 residents, 0.79 km<sup>2</sup>) and Place Jourdan (9,123 residents, 0.54 km<sup>2</sup>). A small minority live in the area known as Quartier Europe (2,548 residents, 0.95 km<sup>2</sup>). As for the Léopold and Cinquantenaire Park districts (0.38 et 0.11 km<sup>2</sup> respectively), data was not available, as these districts have too few residents for data to be collected or to reach the threshold value.

**Age 30-44**  
31.51%

The largest age range for in the three districts with high enough populations to be counted (Quartier Europe, Squares and Jourdan). This percentage is also above average for the Brussels-Capital Region (24.21%), and appears to be compensated for by a lower proportion of residents under 18, compared to the regional average.

**58%** of residents of  
the district are foreign  
nationals

compared to a regional average of 35%. Looking more closely at the various nationalities, it becomes clear that the European Quarter lives up to its name: the percentage of residents who are nationals of one of the 28 EU member states (other than Belgium) is twice as high as the average for the whole Brussels-Capital Region.

**1,79** persons  
per household

This is less than the regional average of 2.15. Place Jourdan and the squares contain far more private residences (7,476 and 4,695 private homes respectively) than Quartier Europe (1,556 private residences).

**2,77 km<sup>2</sup>**  
total surface area

**25 392** residents  
[over the five  
statistical districts]

## **3 million** square metres of office space

Over all five districts, although the two park districts have few office spaces. This represents just over 3 km<sup>2</sup> of office space.

The area occupied by offices gives a sense that the presence of European and international institutions and, consequently, other organisations such as human rights associations, is fundamental to the district.

## **100 %** of the population lives close to a public transport stop

The European Quarter benefits from very good public transport access. The SNCB stations Brussels-Luxembourg and Brussels-Schuman complete the offer of public transportation.

## **780 euros** average monthly rent for one bedroom

In the most densely populated areas of the European Quarter, compared to an average of 709 euros throughout the Region.

## **12 %** unemployment in the Quartier Europe statistical district

The figure in this district is better than the regional average of 23%. For entire district, this figure is close to 18%.

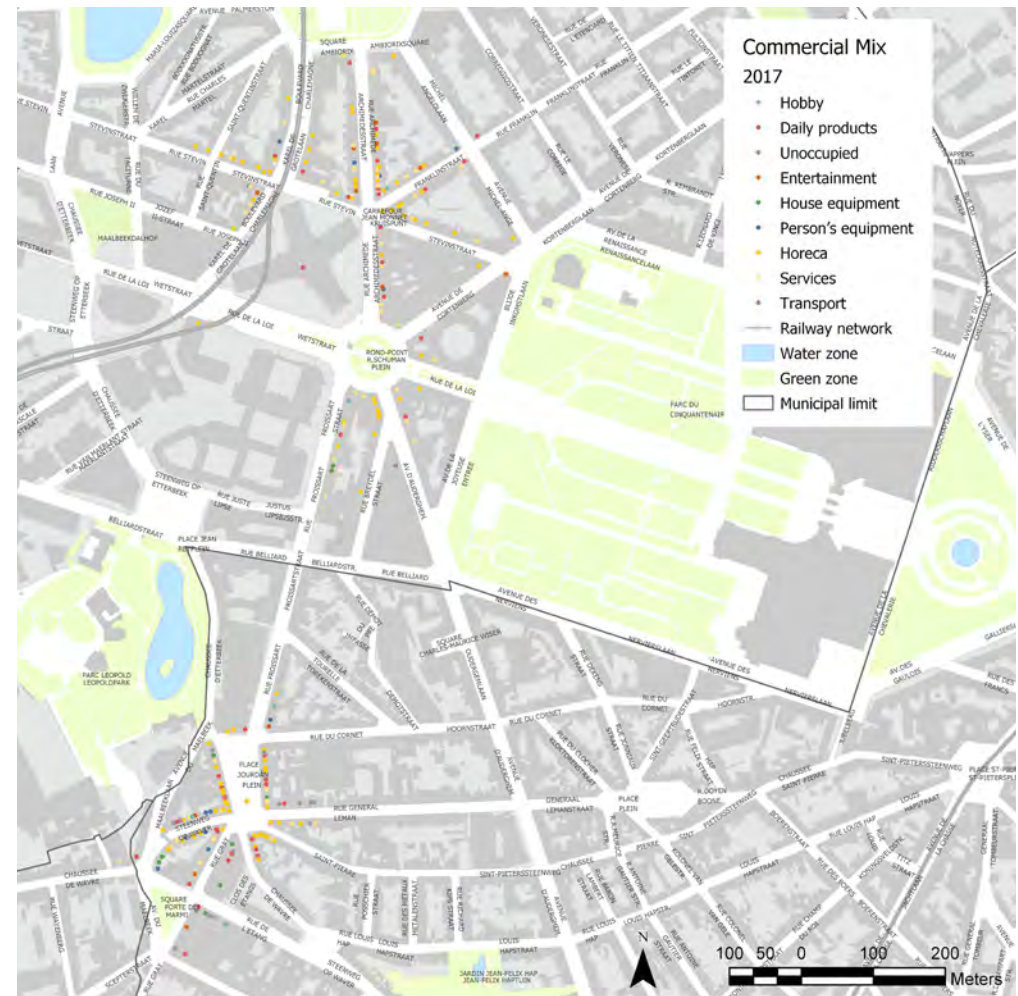


## Business

### Commercial offer of the European Quarter

The Barometer of retail districts, accessible free of charge on the analytics.brussels platform, gives us results for the “European Quarter” and “Jourdan” commercial hubs, referred to as Schuman and Jourdan on the area perception map (page 11). As for Place du Luxembourg, the Barometer does not provide separate data.

Located between place Jourdan and the Schuman roundabout, the smaller Jean Rey commercial area does not constitute a fully fledged hub, but does provide continuity and potential connections between the other forementioned retail hubs.



## 128 businesses in the European Quarter commercial hub

These are concentrated around the central Schuman roundabout and the intersection of Rue Franklin, Rue Archimède and Rue Stevin, the Jean Monnet Crossing. As in the wider district, hotels, restaurants and cafés and services are the main two business categories, followed by everyday retailers.

## 93 businesses in the Jourdan commercial hub

These are concentrated in the square and its immediate surroundings. Hotels, restaurants and cafés are the largest business category, followed by everyday retailers. These are followed by services.

## 4 markets

In addition to the numerous businesses located in and between the commercial hubs, the European Quarter also has four markets. These include afternoon markets, trading from 12:00 to 20:00 on Tuesdays in Place du Luxembourg (sustainable produce and tasting stalls), Wednesdays at Place Jean Rey (quality produce and food trucks), and on Thursdays in the green setting of Jardin du Maelbeek ("Jeudi Jardin", or "Thursday Garden", Market, offering specialist products and tastings). On Sundays, Place Jourdan hosts its morning market from 07:00 to 13:00.

## 3 530 pedestrians

Average number of passersby in Rue Archimède, immediately after the Jean Monnet Crossing. These passersby are particularly heavy on weekdays, reaching a peak at midday on Wednesday.

## 1 794 pedestrians

Average number of passerby in the pedestrianised stretch adjacent to Chaussée de Wavre. Daily analysis reveals a clear peak on Sunday morning, when the Place Jourdan market takes place.

## 5000 pedestrians

Average number of passersby at Place Jourdan.

## 7 306 pedestrians

Average daily footfall in Rue Froissart, just before the intersection with the Schuman Roundabout.

## The users

In May 2018, we interviewed 237 passersby in the shopping streets surrounding the Schuman Roundabout in the European Quarter as part of this study. Among others, responses revealed the following figures:



## 2 million visitors

per year for the most important museums (the Museum Art & History, the Museum of Natural Sciences, the Parliamentarium and the House of European History).

## 40% did not wish to answer a question about their monthly income

11% of passersby earned between 1,500 and 2,000 euros per month, while 11% earned between 3,000 and 4,000 euros per month. The next most common income bands were 2,500 to 3,000 euros (9%) and over 4,000 euros (7%) per month.

## 59% spoke French as their first language

This was followed by English (9%) and Dutch (8%).

## 77% of respondents were aged 25 to 59

## 48% of respondents said they were in the district for work

46% were there to shop and 30% because they lived there. It is worth noting that only two people said they were there for leisure purposes (cinema, theatre, sport, etc.). Similarly, tourism lags in fourth place as a reason for visiting the district.

## 53% travelled to the district on foot

26% took the metro and 18% drove.

## 48% of passersby were private sector employees

15% of passersby were students and 9% of passers-by were public sector workers.

## 55% do their everyday shopping in the area

25% do this shop once a week. 31% of passersby said that they spend between 50 and 100 euros on everyday shopping in the district.

## 34% lived alone

25% lived with a partner and had children, and 25% lived with a partner and had no children.

## Identity – Site visit

L'identité correspond à l'ensemble des éléments visibles qui caractérisent le quartier, dans une confrontation entre les caractéristiques qu'il partage avec d'autres lieux et celles qui le singularisent.

## One area, several districts

Like many districts, the boundaries of the European Quarter are difficult to define. Indeed, the expression “the European Quarters” would be more fitting, as it is actually several interconnected districts. The various centres or hubs have already been marked on the map. To Place Saint-Josse, Schuman Roundabout, Place du Luxembourg and Place Jourdan, we can add other centres in the district and the surrounding area, such as Marie-Louise, Marguerite and Ambiorix Squares (also known as the Squares District), Cinquantenaire park, Place Jean Rey, Leopold park, Place du Trône, the Arts-Loi Crossroads, etc.

Each of these small districts or centres possesses its own identity, or rather its own points of uniqueness, which contribute to the identity of the wider district: multicultural Place Saint-Josse, the buzzing Schuman area, Place du Luxembourg with its sociable terraces, and the boutiques of adjacent Rue Luxembourg, Place Jourdan with its “village” atmosphere, the area surrounding the squares with its rich architectural heritage,

Cinquantenaire Park providing an immense stretch of greenery, and also Place Jean Rey and the adjacent Leopold Park, offering space to unwind.

The presence of the European Community is the common denominator in the district. The combination of these “small European quarters”, each with its own identity, contributes to the profile and reputation of the district, expanding its sphere of influence as a whole.

You may encounter a European Parliament employee in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, while a worker from another NGO lives at square Plasky, Schaerbeek, and a business dinner takes place behind Cinquantenaire park, in one of the restaurants situated at the entrance of avenue de Tervueren.

This characteristic gives the European Quarter a certain permeability: it extends beyond its centre and into the surrounding areas. What’s more, all of these sub-districts contribute to the image of the European Quarter.

*«When I walk around the European Quarter, I like to see people on the terraces of Place Jourdan, then a few metres away, breathe in the greenery of Parc Léopold and end up in front of the minérality of the Parliament. I feel like I’ve been all over town!»*

Jacques, a resident of Place Jourdan.

## Replacing cars with trees?

In terms of mobility, the European Quarter is one of the best served areas in Brussels. However, as is the case throughout Brussels, transport can be a sore point. This situation arises from the fact that the District also acts as an access and transit route for many people. As a result, the two major thoroughfares, Rue Belliard and Rue de la Loi have to absorb considerable volumes of traffic. When we speak of the districts permeability, we are basically referring to East-West routes, while North-South connections still require improvement.

The car occupies a lot of space within the district. In parallel, the European Quarter also has an extensive public transport network, with the Schuman interchange at its centre, connecting trains, metros and buses. Similarly, soft mobility also has its place within the district. There are good pedestrian connections between the district's various centres, and the plazas and squares offer pedestrians space and air.

However, although the accessibility of the district is one of its strong points, road traffic brings with it noise, smell and visual nuisances. Although tranquil havens like the Jardin du Maelbeek are intended to compensate for this, green spaces are generally little known and underused.

Residents, business owners and users regret that car use is excessive, given that the area has excellent public transport connections. The idea of a pedestrianised Place Jourdan however was received negatively by local business owners and residents. Therefore, a reduced car traffic project has been favoured.





*«If there were as many trees as cars  
in the neighborhood, we'd call it the  
European forest! »*

Claude, employee of a European institution

## Let's share a "frite"!

In terms of cultural identity, the district is essentially split between a working class element, on one hand, and a more formal, multicultural element on the other.

The chip shop in place Jourdan perfectly encapsulates the former. Known throughout Brussels and further afield, Friterie Antoine preserves its village character.

At the other end of the spectrum, European Commission "open days", after work "apéro" events in Place du Luxembourg, the nearby museums and the Parliamentarium represent the international side of the district.

In addition, English is often spoken. Around a street corner, in Parliament's offices or in the neighbourhood's hotels, restaurants or cafés, it is not uncommon to hear Shakespeare's language humming. These hotels and restaurants reflect a certain cultural and social mix and welcome residents or young international workers during the day and in the evening.

Outside the Place Jourdan, the village atmosphere is relatively absent. The district does not have a strong family character and the offer for children is limited. However, we meet families on the side of Ambiorix Square, a more residential area that also hosts some playgrounds.

In the field of culture, there is no specific European programming. This one does not appear, nor is it felt as such. In the district, it is the offices and the «administrative» aspect that dominate, and not necessarily the cultural side of Europe or the European identity. Some cultural attractions such as the Espace Senghor (cultural centre of the municipality of Etterbeek) are known outside the European Quarter and attract a Brussels public more than the users of the district themselves.





*« There is so much untapped or secret cultural wealth in the neighbourhood, it's a shame. I would like it to be more recognized for his qualities. »*

Anne-Claire, a resident of the Luxembourg district

## The district of Europeans

The district is a European stronghold. The flags of various member states are visible, and it is home to a multitude of businesses offering specialities from all over Europe, serving an international clientele. Multiple languages are spoken in the street.

But, behind the symbols, the users of the district claim its «human» side. Indeed, if the arrival of the European institutions is considered as an opportunity and a lever for cultural and social economic development, they fear that they will over-standardize these same parameters.

Local residents, workers and consumers dream of a district “of Europeans” in which each identity can blend with the other, each person can enrich himself with his neighbour and each business can offer an adapted and international offer.

While it is difficult to combine with very different ingredients, and the mixing of groups and uses is complex, businesses can play an important role.

As places of meeting and exchange, they can become a space for social and cultural convergence between locals and expatriates, i.e., in the broadest sense, between the Brussels and European communities.





*«Every day, I hear all the languages spoken, I feel like I take a trip around the world every day. »*

Anne, a local shopkeeper

## A contrasting shopping district

Users of the district are very diverse: immigrants, Belgians, expats, etc. Their statuses are also extremely varied: workers, interns or simply residents of the district, all with their own specific needs. However, the places where these very different characters interact with one another are taken over by a certain uniformity.

The businesses lack diversity and are rarely specialist. What's more, the pace of life in the European Quarter is characterised by bustling weekdays and quiet evenings and weekends. Many businesses follow office hours, closing at 16:00 and over the weekend. While the businesses offer a multicultural range of products, suited to the workers, they do not always seem to meet the needs of local residents.

However, looking beyond the visually and conceptually monotonous establishments, the district is also home to some original, high-quality businesses. The markets are also a great success. Less driven by office hours, the area around Rue Archimède, Rue Stevin and Rue Franklin for example has more independent businesses. These small retailers prioritise customer service.

Generally, businesses in this area are evolving to offer higher quality and more services. However, we have noted a need for coordination and for all areas of the district to be represented. The municipalities Etterbeek and City of Brussels are both in favour of a return to local shops.

In addition to residents, one audience has not been considered: tourists. Although they represent potential customers after 17:00, they still only tend to visit the European Institutions.

Similarly, visitor numbers from other municipalities in the Brussels Region could be increased, with hotels clearly targeting a local clientele at the weekend. Once again, businesses can play a role in forging links between tourists and locals.





*« The commercial offer is quite diverse, but you really need to know the area well to find your hidden treasures »*

Valentin, office employee in the European Quarter



## Positioning – Meet the user

### Users of the district

Positioning is a marketing term replacing the notion of “place”. It represents the position a district occupies in the minds of its users.

Users most strongly aligned with what the district has to offer are the core target audience. Actions, projects and developments undertaken in the area to develop its commercial potential must prioritise this user profile.

Persona(s) = Profiles of typical users and business owners.

These fictional characters correspond to the types of users and business owners in the European Quarter. In order to make their profiles more “real”, they are assigned various characteristics.

The European Quarter is home to various commercial hubs, each of which has its own identity. Therefore, it is not easy to paint a picture of the typical business owner. However, several personas have been developed.

---

## The typical business owner

*Stefano, age 40, male, married*

### **Aspects of life that matter to him**

Stefano wants to be free to run his business independently in order to earn a good living. He set up shop in the district five years ago.

### **Anecdote/Personal story**

Stefano runs a small restaurant. The strong points of his business are its fast service and excellent location. Stefano understands the habits and needs of his customers.

### **His business**

Stefano's business offers quality fast food made from fresh ingredients, at lunchtime, close to the European Institutions and numerous other international institutions. It closes in the evening as his potential customers have gone home. The fast service makes the customers, who simply point to what they want to order, rather anonymous.

Stefano adapts his menu to the needs of his clients. His business has an attractive, modern interior, offers a delivery service and a catering service and communicates through social networks.

### **His district**

Potential customers working in the district present a rich, varied and easily-tapped market. Stefano has difficulty ensuring customer loyalty. What's more, the fact that shopping areas are spread throughout the district makes it hard to choose the right location. Mobility in the district is another issue, especially during European summits.

## The typical customer

*Thomas, age 40, male, married*

### **Anecdote/Personal story**

Thomas moved to Brussels for professional reasons (European Commission) He really likes the European Quarter as a place to work. At lunchtime, he is spoilt for choice of places to eat, although he is not really interested in shopping in the district. In the evening, he uses public transport to travel to other areas of the capital, after picking up some groceries in one of the nearby supermarkets.

### **Consumption habits**

Thomas arrives in the district by metro, and does his shopping on foot. His priorities are efficiency and performance. After leaving the office, he sometimes does everyday shopping in the district, or goes for a drink with friends on one of the terraces. However, he mostly eats lunch in the district. He chooses somewhere nearby, serving dishes he likes and offering fast service.

Thanks to his high income, he is not concerned about budget. His main priority is that it is on his way to work.

### **The commercial district**

Thomas appreciates the convenience of the shops in the European Quarter: he knows the local supermarkets and restaurants. He doesn't really miss personal service, as the local grocer in the neighborhood where he lives provides that. However, he would like to see more original shops in the district. Other than meals and everyday shopping, he buys everything else he needs in the area where he lives.

---

## Relationship with the district

### Shared opinions

An online survey of the European Quarter, aimed at its users, received 58 responses, of which 45 were in French, 9 in English and 4 in Dutch. The aim of the survey was to understand the relationship between users and their district.

Of the 58 respondents, 48 had been visiting the district for over five years, and just over half did so every day. 51 of the 58 respondents were aged 25-59.

### *Accessibility*

According to the respondents who gave their opinion on the subject, access to the district by car is very poor: trips made using this mode of transport are viewed as very difficult, due to congestion and a shortage of parking spaces.

In terms of public transport, accessibility is deemed to be very good, but journeys are quite difficult (car traffic and traffic congestion).

Non-motorised transport (bike, walking) is deemed accessible but unpleasant, despite sufficient pedestrian routes in convenient locations and clear pavements. The lack of bike racks was highlighted.

Overall, the panel was moderately satisfied with the accessibility of the district.

### *Culture*

According to the respondents, there is a lack of cultural facilities and events, but those that exist are good quality. Respondents mention significant artistic and architectural heritage, which is not properly showcased.

They also say that there is relatively little archaeological and industrial heritage, and what does exist is not well highlighted. Similarly, according to the respondents, commercial activity is not altogether suited to cultural events. These various factors mean the respondents are generally dissatisfied with cultural offer in the district.

### *Retail*

The majority of respondents consider retail offer to be lacking in volume and variety, but high in quality. With regards to food shops, the respondents are divided on the question of diversity. However, they again highlight quality. In terms of fashion, the respondents agree that there is a lack of variety and that quality leaves something to be desired. The same goes for shops dedicated to hobbies, culture and electronics.

In terms of health, beauty and wellness, respondents again noted a lack of variety, although the existing stores generally offer good quality. Half of all respondents consider the services on offer to lack variety and quality. On the subject of hotels, restaurants and cafés, however, respondents mention quality, emphasising the friendliness and professionalism of business owners.

According to half of all respondents, business opening hours do not meet their needs, while the other half say otherwise. The interiors of businesses are generally considered to be high-quality. Half of those questioned say the number of empty units is quite low, while the other half consider this number to be quite high. Overall, half are generally satisfied with retailers in the district, while the remainder are generally unsatisfied.

### *Town planning*

Respondents are very divided on the subject of the quality and coherence of the built environment (50% say it is poor quality, 50% good quality).

Opinions are also divided on the issue of whether pavements are wide enough. Similarly, the question of maintenance gave rise to two opposing points of view. The majority of respondents agree that street lighting is adequate and high-quality. Street furniture, however, is deemed insufficient. Opinion is also divided on the quality of the latter. Respondents say that the green spaces are pleasant and well laid-out. They refer to a slight deterioration of buildings and street furniture.

Overall, the majority of respondents feel dissatisfied with the district in terms of urbanism.

---

### *Environment*

The majority of respondents believe there is a lack of schools and infrastructure for children. However, those that do exist are considered to be good quality. Overall, facilities for the elderly are deemed insufficient. The same goes for their quality.

Half of all respondents say that healthcare provision is sufficient and high quality, unlike sports facilities. Half of respondents consider the district to be a pleasant place for locals and visitors.

Half of respondents say that the district is suited to tourism. Just over half say that the district is generally clean, while three quarters say that it is generally a safe area where they feel secure. Noise pollution is a major issue in the district: only a quarter of respondents say they are not affected. In general, just over half of respondents say that they are satisfied or very satisfied with quality of life in the district.

### *Identity and image*

Three quarters of respondents think that most Brussels residents do not have a very positive image of the district, but note that those who get to know it are pleasantly surprised. As for the question of whether the district has its own identity, opinions are divided. The majority of respondents think that the district is better than it was. Most of them agree that the terms “originality”, “innovation”, “warm welcome”, “spontaneity”, “friendliness”, “sharing” or “peace” do not really describe the district. On the contrary, half of users freely referred to notions of “multiculturalism”, “tolerance”, “dynamism” and “enthusiasm”. Overall, half of the respondents identify with the district.

## Shared dreams

During a participatory workshop with various stakeholders in the European Quarter, a list of dreams was drawn up. These dreams will form a basis for setting specific strategic targets.

*« I dream of a suitable programme of social and cultural events. »*

*« I dream of a district that's full of life, singing and dancing, lit up in the evening, and completely safe. I dream of festivities that change with the months. »*

**« I dream of more cultural activities and entertainment. »**

*« I dream of more social connections between different users of the district (workers, residents, customers, business owners) through cultural activities. »*

**« I dream of a more refined, European image, that showcases its richness. »**

*« I dream of being able to stroll through the district on evenings and weekends. »*

*« I dream of more art and culture in public spaces; of each diplomatic post, embassy and institution flying the colours for their region or country. »*

**« I dream of tranquility, greenery, family and pedestrian routes. »**



---

*« I dream of more diversity in local businesses. »*

*« I dream of the businesses being more welcoming and multilingual; understanding me and my needs. »*

**« I dream of more street furniture in the squares and streets. »**

**« I dream of getting to know local retailers better. »**

*« I dream of a district that provides a backdrop against which to showcase quality shops and restaurants. »*

*« I dream of better quality, more artisanal, businesses in my district. »*

*« I dream of a genuine mix of businesses, housing and offices. »*

*« I dream of opening hours that suit all users of the district better. »*

**« I dream of new sorts of services provided by original, attractive retailers. »**

*« I dream of shared public space, places on a human scale. »*

*« I dream of greater citizen participation in plans for the district. »*

**« I dream of the stakeholders in this powerful district taking ownership of the public space. »**

*« I dream of supply in the district matching demand. »*

*« I dream of a district that's safe and free from congestion issues- a district where I could meet and get to know residents from the 28 member states. »*

*« I dream of more specialist international businesses. »*

*« I dream of better shared public infrastructure (sports halls, libraries, etc.) »*

---

*« I dream of a district where the streets are filled with unique businesses from all over the world, which showcase the best their country has to offer. »*

*« I dream of a better mix of uses. »*

*« I dream of a peaceful district with a sense of wellbeing, which sets an example through its social and environmental efforts. »*

**« I dream of businesses that connect and work together in order to develop initiatives and promote common interests. I want them to step out of their comfort zone and follow their passion and creativity. »**

*« I dream of more local shops aimed at residents of the European Quarter. »*

*« I dream of improving the image of my district, so its assets are properly appreciated. »*

**« I dream of a district with open space, that encourages non-motorised transport. »**

*« I dream of business owners improving their communication, customer service and sales skills. I dream of better support to help them change with the times. »*

## Subjective map of the district

This subjective map is the graphic outcome of a series of interviews with workers and residents of the European Quarter and the results of various questionnaires. It represents a shared view of the district.



## Ambition – Interviews and debates

### Diagnostic

We have formulated an ambition on the basis of knowledge about the district and its positioning in the minds of users, and by defining its main target audience.

## Strengths



### Retail

#### Passersby

Thanks to the significant flow of pedestrians, on their way to the European and international organisations and institutions, the district has great potential for a range of local businesses to flourish.

#### Hotels, restaurants and cafés

Very diverse, a range of establishments, including cafes, restaurants and hotels, are spread throughout the commercial hubs within the district and cater to all audiences.

#### Quality

Many popular businesses are known for their quality, from the chip shop in Place Jourdan to Filigranes international bookshop.



### Environment

#### Europe in the city

The presence and prestige of Europe at the heart of Brussels give the district a strategic advantage and constitutes a unique selling point.

#### Polycentric

The network of interconnected public spaces in the European Quarter makes it an interesting district, composed of "sub-districts", each with its own identity.

#### Dynamics

This lively district has great potential thanks to its pleasant green spaces and good public transport connections.



### Users

#### Profile

The biggest target group of European Quarter users is well known: workers at the European institutions and international organisations.

#### International

Coming from all over Europe and the rest of the world, and even Brussels and Belgium, district users represent a varied multicultural mix.

#### Buying power

Due to the salaries of European civil servants and tax breaks for expats, users of the district have high buying power.



## Weaknesses



### *Retail*

#### **Office hours**

Businesses operate according to office hours: they close on evenings and weekends, making the district appear dead outside of the working week.

#### **Monotony**

The vast majority of restaurants are uniform and lack creativity. Cafes and restaurants do not sufficiently meet the needs of residents.



### *Environment*

#### **Traffic**

Traffic causes pollution and disrupts the flow of the district.

#### **Fragmentation**

The district lacks connections between the different (commercial) centres and clear signage. What's more, different areas fall under the jurisdiction of different municipal governments.



### *Users*

#### **Rents**

The high rents attract few new residents. As a result, the district lacks life, as it has more office space than housing.

#### **Impersonal**

There is a lack of humanity in the image of the "European ghetto" with its office blocks, European institutions, tailored suits and name badges, giving the district a cold, impersonal feel.

## Threats



*Retail*

### **Prices**

Like residential prices, commercial property prices remain high. The amount of space occupied by offices exacerbates this pressure, making the task of finding suitable commercial property at a good price even more difficult.

### **Eurocentrism**

The focus on Europe as a source of shared identity for the shopping district may prove too restrictive and a section of the public may feel somewhat excluded. Care must be taken to promote an inclusive, mixed identity, rather than an exclusive, uniform one.



*Environment*

### **European Union**

If the European Union were to move or disappear one day, the district would be in danger of losing its identity and face an identity crisis.

### **Safety**

The district is known for its relative safety. However, security questions are always unpredictable, and the European presence brings with it certain risks experienced less by other districts.



*Users*

### **Traffic in transit**

The ever-increasing traffic in the district and surrounding area presents a threat to the district as a whole and, above all, its users, as it has a strong impact on quality of life.

### **Rising rents**

This issue not only affects commercial property but also housing. Constantly rising prices make the European Quarter a less attractive place to live.

## Threats



### *Retail*

#### **Retail dynamics**

The relationship between business owners is well structured and each area of the district is represented. With adequate support, it could generate the buzz required to put the shopping districts on the map.

#### **Local and specialist shops**

Residents of the district are begging for the return of local shops. The arrival of small businesses would fill unoccupied commercial units and plug gaps in the market and on the street.



### *Environment*

#### **A European showcase**

The district can take advantage of its European identity by acting as a European showcase, with multicultural businesses offering expertise from around Europe.

#### **Green connections**

Maelbeek Valley, the parks and other public spaces are assets, but deserve to be better connected to each other as part of a green network with improved signage.

#### **Connections**

Links with neighbouring districts can be forged through a marketing campaign or improved pedestrian signage. The district could also promote these connections to attract residents, customers and visitors.

#### **Responsible governance**

The involvement of multiple authorities necessitates responsible, shared administration, based on collaboration between municipal and regional governments and the European institutions, as well project initiatives.

**Young residents**

The district attracts a young international crowd, and as a result it is in constant movement. By being more family-orientated, the district could also attract/maintain/satisfy more residents.

## Challenges, targets and ideas

Our ambition for the district is centred around three major challenges, which are subdivided into more specific operational targets.

This ambition is illustrated with concrete recommendations to implement.

These ideas are the outcome of a co-creation project involving various local stakeholders.

During this project, business owners, residents, public bodies and academics put forward their 100 ideas for the district.

---

## A readable district:

### **Develop a true local marketing strategy:**

- By projecting an identity that is acknowledged and shared by the whole European Quarter, defining its values, developing communication tools and organising events targeted at all local stakeholders.
- By showcasing the “European” nature of the district, both in the range of businesses and the development of specific events.
- By highlighting the wealth of culture and history in the district.

### **Make the district easy to explore on foot.**

- By facilitating non-motorised and pedestrian mobility, while matching car travel to good effect.
- By improving pedestrian signage and connections between districts.
- By developing “plant-filled spaces” around the district.

## A balanced district

### **Give local, independent businesses renewed impetus**

- By refining local businesses start-up strategies and the development of all major new urban projects, in order to encourage the opening of shops specialising in everyday essentials.
- By tailoring retail provision to its target market and promoting quality and originality in local businesses, while better understanding customer needs.
- By giving independent business owners the tools to take on the big brands in terms of retail design and marketing strategy.

### **Value the human touch**

- By improving the cultural, commercial and spatial offer for families.
- By providing a strategy to forge genuine “social bonds” between various users of the district, particularly business owners and customers.
- By developing vibrant, inclusive projects for residents of the district.



---

## An avant-garde district

### **Organise and unite local stakeholders**

- By fostering discussion, communication and cooperation between the local authorities when drawing up action plans and implementing projects.
- By unifying local retailers associations and developing effective commercial strategies.
- By considering end users through participatory budgets.

### **Offer cutting edge products, services or urban infrastructure, with the aim of becoming a «Smart District»**

- By developing connected, smart, inclusive tools.
- By reducing the environmental and ecological impact of implementing local projects.
- By developing new business models.

### **Update regulations**

- By testing, developing and assessing new concepts.
- By sharing the results and proposing administrative and/or legislative improvements at all levels of government.
- By setting an example and generating ideas.

## 100 ideas for the district

*You can note down your initial thoughts under each idea.*

**1. Organise clown or puppet theatre shows.**

---

---

---

---

**2. Offer subsidies so businesses can improve their lighting.**

---

---

---

---

**3. Offer grants to renovate shopfronts.**

---

---

---

---

**4. Install children's play areas in Léopold Park.**

---

---

---

---

**5. Repair the pavements.**

---

---

---

---

**6. Redevelop Rue de la Loi.**

---

---

---

---

**7. Promote pavement terraces.**

---

---

---

---

**8. Install water fountains.**

---

---

---

---

**9. Create a fitness trail.**

---

---

---

---

**10. Review carpark at the entrance to the district.**

---

---

---

---

**11. Set up shared vegetable gardens.**

---

---

---

---

**12. Create a green wall.**

---

---

---

---

13. Build Pocket Parks (mini parks).

14. Install kinetic pavements to generate electricity for the district.

15. Promote electric buses.

16. Promote travel by hoverboard and skateboard.

17. Organise shuttle transport for local residents.

18. Install bike parking outside businesses/ buildings.

19. Build more bike racks.

20. Create more interesting cycle routes and footpaths.

21. Install soundproofing panels in the street to reduce noise pollution.

22. Make the district more green, add plants.

23. Improve cooperation between public buses and sightseeing buses.

24. Organise short rickshaw rides in the district.

25. Improve Google listings of businesses.

26. Hold acoustic concerts (listening and silence).

27. Organise a day celebrating the districts.

28. Organise activities for children out of school time.

29. Use empty spaces to create places to relax after work.

30. Organise "apéro" events and BBQs.

31. Organise more events in Place Jean-Rey and Léopold Park.

32. Organise Ecotrails.

33. Place a totem in each sub-district.

34. Create an overall identity that runs through all of the sub-districts.

35. Place European key figures in each district.

36. Install parasols on the terraces in the colours of the European flags.

37. Install European flags throughout the district.

38. Create a local "enterprise label" trademark.

39. Develop mobile games for children (like Pokémon Go).

40. Organise cultural activities in public spaces at the weekend.

41. Reopen the theatre in the Résidence Palace.

42. Construct a library box with books in all of the languages spoken in the European Union.

43. Organise inter-district games.

44. Install works of art representing Europe.

45. Organise a theatre festival and events on the theme of Europe.

46. Paint murals on the theme of Europe.

47. Create a guide to local businesses.

48. Advertise local businesses following the "adopt a shop keeper") principle.

49. Create a label encouraging "young enterprise", to support small business owners.

50. Provide a structured system for word of mouth communication between customers and business owners to promote local business.

51. Offer a smart, innovative business listings system to promote the district.

52. Improve the welcome pack for new arrivals.

53. Hear a particular sound as you pass a business- create sensory experiences associated with different shops.

54. Introduce a loyalty system for bikes.

55. Replace company cars with company bikes.

56. Paint arrows on the ground stating the number of minutes on foot and by bike (like London).

57. Limit the speed of cars.

58. Install noise meters to measure decibels.

59. Limit buses/the speed of cars.

60. Improve the welcome pack for new arrivals.

61. Distribute earplugs.

62. Organise a silent happening, organise a very loud happening.

63. Install noise prevention signage.

64. Organise "meet the artist" sessions.

65. Offer original commercial services.

66. Diversify the range of services on offer.

67. Open toy shops.

68. Create an inter-district loyalty card.

69. Use the ground floors of offices to create cultural pop-up stores.

70. Change opening hours to meet the real needs of residents.

71. Offer a larger range of prices.

72. Invent a local currency.

73. Install baffles in the street playing birdsong.

74. Create a signposted walking route, allowing you to discover the district.

75. Create urban itineraries: tour of the district inspired by comics or an exhibition, tour of the mills, history of the district, artists and sculptures in the district, "secret places", app-based, rural routes, fitness.

76. Organise tours of the district and offer guided visits to the businesses.

77. Publicise cycling regulations.

78. Open shops on Sunday.

79. Control commercial rents.

80. Limiter speeds in the area to 30km/h.

81. Ban single person flats.

82. Make housing more affordable.

83. Create a ground plan of the district.

84. Yoga classes.

85. Choose district ambassadors to communicate between the various stakeholders.

86. Maintain local retailers associations.

87. Organise "retail business" coaching sessions.

88. Hold more events in the shop.

89. Organise a pub crawl.

90. Place a focus on marketing.

91. A more selective Property Management Service.

92. Construct flexible green spaces.

93. Tax empty premises.

94. Devise a commercial cohousing system.

95. The Property Management Services should have a more stringent selection process for businesses opening.

96. Elect a public delegate.

97. Train and inform business owners on sensory marketing.

98. Choose a business owner to act as an ambassador of the local residents for communication purposes.

99. Conduct "soft" monitoring of the district (impressions, ideas, wishes, needs), with citizens participating via an app or on the street.

100. Create an identity that celebrates the contrasts of the European Quarter.









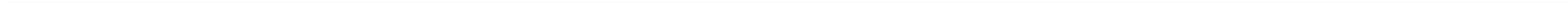


---

## Actions

The action idea sheets attached to this document aim to provide local stakeholders with inspiration for potential projects. They are by no means binding, and are provided as an example.

The budgets are simply estimates. These projects were prototyped by local stakeholders during a co-creation workshop. These posters are working tools that can be used when developing your project.





---

**The Brussels Business Support Agency**

Limited company under public law with social goal

hub.brussels

Chaussée de Charleroi 110

1060 Brussels

Belgium

CBE number : 0678.485.603

## Authors

**Fran Verwimp**

Local Partnerships Coordinator for the European  
Quarter  
hub.brussels

**Jessica Rolot**

Project Manager  
hub.brussels

**Léopoldine Landié**

Innovation Manager  
hub.brussels

Brussels is a mosaic.

A composition of different districts,  
each with its own identity.

Of this identity, hub.brussels has decided  
to get the essential core out of it.

The Think Innovate Develop (TID) programme  
proposes for each district  
coherent and appropriate territorial development.

This methodology for retail development  
Is an invitation to re-appropriate the European Quarter.

But above all to present the neighbourhood of tomorrow  
together.