Het Rijksarchief in België

Zoeken naar personen

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Search persons

http://search.arch.be

I. Available information

Which information can be found via the search engine 'search persons'?

The search engine 'search persons' gives you access to the body of work that numerous volunteers have carried out over the years. Thousands of archive pages were systematically analysed. There is a short description of the document (content, dates, geographical information) and all names mentioned in the document are listed. If available, additional information is also indicated: date and place of birth, etc.

The sub-menu 'projects' provides an overview of the different projects currently running, their collaborators, contents and last updates, etc.

We remind you that you can input information in the search engine's database too, by filling in the corresponding registration form and sending it to digita@arch.be. If you are a regular visitor you can also transmit the information via an archivist or the head of the reading room.

Which documents were analysed?

The vast majority of the information available via this search engine result from analyses of genealogical documents: church registers and civil status registers. The search engine also gives access to analyses of other types of documents: notarial deeds, building applications, appointments, etc.

In the sub-menu 'projects', all documents currently being analysed are listed per project.

If you are interested in analysing a particular type of document systematically you can contact the State Archives repository in which the documents in question are preserved in order to start an analysis project.

Which regions, which municipalities?

Via our search engine you can find information related to all Belgian municipalities and – if mentioned in the analysed documents – foreign municipalities as well. The amount of available data varies significantly among the different regions and depends on the information put at our disposal.
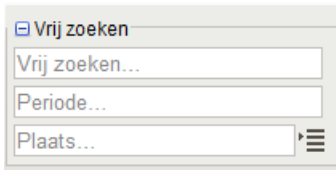
If you know of databases that could be integrated in our search system, you can inform the administrators of these databases that their content can be published via our search engine 'search persons'.

Volume

Currently, 11.5 million documents have been analysed and some 35 million names were introduced in the database.

II. How to search?

Free search

When entering a search word in the field 'Vrij zoeken', the search engine looks up the word in the entire database. For instance, if you type in the term 'brewer', the search will yield documents in which persons with the name 'Brewer' are mentioned as well as records speaking of the profession of 'brewer' or notarial deeds containing the term 'brewer' in their description.

You can further narrow down the search results by specifying a time period. The dates you introduce in the 'Periode' field apply to all dates of the documents: the date of the document itself and the dates of birth or death contained in the document.

You can enter a municipality name in the 'Plaats' field. Again, this search word can be the municipality where the document was issued or a municipality to which the document refers, or the place of birth or death of a searched person to which the document refers.

Advanced search for 'persons'

Given the huge volume of information available, it is recommended to carry out a more detailed search.
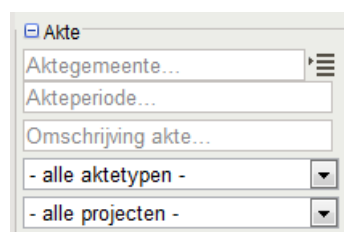
If you search a person with the family name 'Brewer', you are advised to type it in the field 'Achternaam'. You can further narrow down your search request by introducing the first name as well, the profession ('Beroep') and the role the person played with regard to a record.

You can limit a search on the basis of a period or a place, but as this type of information is not always included in the records, you can also choose to search for analyses without a date ("zoek ook zonder datum").

Finally, you can also search for documents related to two persons at the same time. Simply enter the name of the second person in the fields under 'Tweede persoon'.

Advanced search for 'records'

You can also narrow down the search results based on the type of record. If you are only looking for death certificates you can specify this criteria in the additional search criteria. You can also carry out a search based on the date of a record. In the field ''Omschrijving akte' you can enter search words that must be contained in the description of the records.

'Exact' – 'Sounds like'
When selecting 'exact', your search query only bears on the exact spelling of the search word you entered. The option 'klinkt als' enables you to extend the search to homonymous variations of your search word, i.e. words that sound the same but are written differently (for example: 'Right' and 'Wright'). Be aware however, that this 'fuzzy logic' is language-sensitive and may not always yield the expected results.

Place names
For a more efficient search, a list of place names in various languages and with different spelling variations is provided. By clicking on next to the 'gemeentenaam' field, you can select a municipality from this list.
If you choose 'Brussel' for instance, the search engine looks up documents mentioning 'Brussel' as well as those containing 'Bruxelles'. You can also select a merged municipality from the list, in which case the search is also carried out on the municipalities that existed before the merger. For example: when selecting 'Brugge (Bruges)' the search is also carried out on Zeebrugge, Assebroek, Dudzele, and the other former municipalities that formed the new municipality of Bruges. The database will progressively be extended to also contain spelling variations of place names.
The list also contains country names. There is no list with all foreign municipalities that can be found in the database. Foreign municipalities are marked and the list will be expanded in the future.

Time period
You can limit your search query to a particular time period, by entering either a date (21-07-1831), a year (1831) or a period of time (04-06-1831-21-07-1831 or 1933-1945).
If you enter a time period in the 'free search' section, all date references of the documents will be searched. If you enter a period for the first person, you must indicate if you wish to search for a date of birth or death. The search field 'record period' only bears on the record itself.

Roles
Each person mentioned in the document or record is assigned with a 'role'. In a marriage certificate you will find the names of the bride and the groom. Depending on the information fed to the database you may also find the names of the parents of the bride and groom, the witnesses, legitimate children, and former spouses. The roles depend on the type of document of course.

Further searching the search results
The search screen remains visible on the left side of the screen. You can further narrow down your search criteria by entering additional search words.

III.How to interpret the results?

Search queries aimed at the information of a record

When carrying out a search query aimed at the data of the records, you obtain information about the project, the type of record, the date of the record and the municipality. Click on the magnifying glass to read all information about the record in question.

Clicking on the name of the project allows you to read the comments on this project (volume of analysed documents, number of participating persons, state of progress, etc.). You can see the details of a particular record by clicking on the magnifying glass.

Search queries aimed at information about a person

The result of a search query aimed at the information about a person is a list containing the type of record, the name of the person in question, his or her role in the document, the municipality and the date.

When clicking on the record, you can read comments about the type of document. If you click on the magnifying glass, you see a screen with detailed information about the document in question.

You can sort information by clicking on the title of the column: For instance, if you click on 'date', you sort the documents by date (i.e. chronologically).
You can also always further improve your search query by adding or removing search criteria.

Detail screen

The detail screen shows the information about the document or record and below all data about persons related to the document.

Interpretation about reading data: what does 01-01-1800 (1800) mean?

In some cases we do not have the full date because the date is unreadable or because the data is not available. Some volunteer projects are based on 'indexes' that only contain the year. To make the data searchable by date, the earliest possible date is included.

For example 1-1-1800 if it is a deed from 1800 or 1-10-1800 if it is a deed from October 1800. The part of the date on which there is certainty is shown in brackets, for example (1800) or (10-1800).

IV. How to consult the original document?

Today, only a limited number of digitized documents are linked to thorough analyses. At this moment the link to the original act is not available.

The collection of church registers has been fully digitized. Please note down the name of the parish, the record type and the date in order to consult documents.

For the civil status registers, the collection of digital images is not yet complete. You must (temporarily) consult the microfilms for certain municipalities. For these documents you also need to note down the name of the municipality, the type of record and the date in order to find back the document you are looking for. All the registers of the province of Walloon Brabant are already available in digital format however.

For all other documents, the section 'Opmerkingen' contains indications about where they are stored: You have to consult the documents in the reading room of the indicated State Archives repository. Indeed, the majority of analyses are based on the original documents, for which no digital copy exists.

On the home page of our search website https://search.arch.be, you can directly search for images (scans) of the civil status registers and church registers via the links "Overview of civil status registers" (https://search.arch.be/en/themas/tips/516-civil-status-registers-en) and "Overview of church registers" (https://search.arch.be/en/themas/tips/507-church-registers-en). You can then search by province, district, municipality, type of record and date. Attention: Only records older than 100 years are available online. Not all registers have been digitized yet. You must be logged in to your account (user name + password) in order to view the scans.