

International Encyclopaedia of Laws

Constitutional Law - Outline

The Author

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

Preface

General Introduction

§1. An outline of belgian constitutional history

§2. Characteristics of the belgian state

- I. Rechtsstaat, constitutionalism and the rule of law
- II. The separation of powers
- III. National sovereignty
- IV. A constitutional monarchy
- V. From a unitary decentralized state to a federal state

§3. State territory

§4. Population and demographics

Part I. Sources of Constitutional Law

Chapter 1. Treaties

§1. The treaty-making power

§2. Hierarchy

Chapter 2. The constitution

§1. Characteristics

§2. Amending the constitution

- I. Outline
 - A. A three-stage procedure
 - B. Difficulties with the procedure
- II. Provisions entrenched beyond amendment
- III. Consolidating the constitution

§3. Hierarchy

Chapter 3. Legislation

§1. Types of legislation

- I. Ordinary statutes
- II. Special majority acts
- III. Wartime decrees
- IV. Community and region acts

§2. Hierarchy

Chapter 4. Case law

Chapter 5. Unwritten law

§1. Conventions

- I. General
- II. Hierarchy

§2. General principles of law

- I. General
- II. Hierarchy

Chapter 6. Administrative regulations and orders

§1. Classification

- I. The federal level
 - A. Royal decrees
 - B. Ministerial decrees and decrees of the state secretaries
- II. The level of communities and regions
 - A. Regulations and orders
 - B. Ministerial decrees
- III. The level of subordinate (local) authorities
 - A. Provincial and municipal regulations and orders
 - B. The regulations and orders of the brussels conurbation and of the brussels community commissions

§2. Hierarchy

Chapter 7. Codification, interpretation and publication

§1. Codification

§2. Interpretation

§3. Publication

Part II. Form of government**Chapter 1. General**

§1. Introduction

§2. 'pouvoirs de fait': political parties, lobbies and interest groups

§3. Miscellaneous

- I. Referendum
- II. Delegation of powers

Chapter 2. Head of state

§1. Designation

§2. Legal status

- I. Inviolability and unaccountability
- II. Inability of the king to act alone
- III. The king has no personal power

Chapter 3. The legislature

§1. The organ of state

- I. A complex bicameral parliamentary system
 - A. Introduction
 - B. Rationales for the federal bicameral system
- II. Categorization of the members of parliament
 - A. Categorization of the members of parliament by legislative assembly
 1. 40 directly elected senators
 2. 21 community senators
 3. 10 co-opted senators
 4. 3 senators as of right
 - B. Categorization of the members of parliament by language group
- III. Electoral system
 - A. The party and electoral system: general introduction
 - B. Candidates
 - C. Voters
 - D. The principles of the election process

§2. Legal status

- I. Mandate of the member of parliament

- A. Representative character of a mandate
 - B. Duration of a mandate
 - II. Incompatibilities, immunities and privileges
 - A. Incompatibilities
 - B. Immunities
 - 1. Parliamentary freedom of speech
 - 2. Immunity from prosecution
 - C. Privileges
- §3. Powers
- I. Legislation
 - II. Supervision of and control over the executive
 - A. The right of interpellation
 - B. The right to ask questions
 - C. The right to hold an enquiry
 - D. Techniques of financial supervision
- §4. The workings of parliament
- I. Parliamentary proceedings: legislative proceedings
 - II. Quorum and majority
 - III. Royal assent, promulgation and publication of acts
 - IV. The 'alarm-bell procedure'
- §5. Miscellaneous
- I. Delegation of legislative power
 - II. Legislation having retroactive effect
- Chapter 4. The executive**
- §1. The organ of state
- I. The traditional way of forming a government
 - II. Composition and organization of the government
 - A. Cabinet: cabinet in council – privy council
 - B. Secretaries of state
- §2. Legal status
- §3. Powers
- I. The executive has only enumerated powers
 - II. Regulatory powers
 - A. Royal regulations and orders necessary for the implementation of laws
 - B. 'autonomous' regulatory powers
 - C. Regulatory powers of ministers and secretaries of state
 - III. National defence and foreign affairs
 - A. National defence
 - B. Foreign affairs
 - C. Treaty-making powers
 - IV. Powers regarding parliament
 - V. Powers regarding the judiciary
 - VI. Other powers
- §4. The cabinet
- §5. Miscellaneous
- I. The prerogatives of the administration
 - II. 'restricted transitional powers'
- Chapter 5. The judiciary**
- §1. Organization of the judiciary
- I. General introduction

- A. Belgium's dual judicial organization: distinguishing between the ordinary and the administrative courts
 - B. Subdivisions within the courts of ordinary jurisdiction
 - C. The court of cassation
 - II. Constitutional and legal status of the members of the judiciary; judicial independence
 - A. The independence of the judiciary
 - 1. Life appointment
 - 2. Financial independence from the executive
 - 3. Conflicts of interest
 - 4. Limited applicability
 - B. Limited interference by the executive with the functions of the judiciary
 - 1. Functions of an executive nature
 - 2. Functions of a judicial nature
 - III. Judicial proceedings
 - IV. State liability for the torts of judges or of members of the public prosecutor's office
- §2. Judicial review
- I. Judicial review in Belgian constitutional law
 - A. The meaning of judicial review
 - B. Judicial review of legislation in Belgian constitutional history
 - 1. The principle of the 'inviolability of the law'
 - 2. The principle undermined
 - II. The constitutional court
 - A. Jurisdiction
 - 1. The substance of review
 - 2. Proceedings before the court
 - B. Composition of the court
 - C. Organization and operation
 - D. Critical assessment

Chapter 6. Independent advisory or supervisory bodies at the legislative and executive levels

§1. The council of state

- I. Historical background
- II. The legislation division of the council of state

§2. The office of the auditor general

- I. General
- II. Powers

Part III. The state and its subdivisions

Chapter 1. The structure of the state: a federal state sui generis

Chapter 2. An outline of the federated entities: communities and regions

§1. The concept of a double set of federated entities

§2. General principles regarding the institutional framework

§3. General principles regarding the distribution of powers

- I. Basic principles
 - A. The powers of the communities and the regions are 'entrenched'
 - B. The legislative power of the communities and the regions
 - C. The enumerated character of the communities' and regions' powers
 - D. An allocation of powers based upon mutual exclusiveness
 - E. The principle of 'vertical authority' or the separation of government levels
 - F. Communities and regions also having implied powers

- G. A general limitation on the powers of the communities and the regions: the concept of an economic and monetary union
 - H. Complementary powers of the communities and the regions
 - 1. Scientific research
 - 2. Administrative supervision
 - 3. Creation of an infrastructure, of decentralized services, establishments and enterprises and acquisition of equity holdings
 - 4. Creation of government departments
 - 5. The transfer of movables and immovables
 - 6. Penalties for failure to comply with region and community acts
 - II. The powers of the communities in particular
 - A. The powers of the communities *ratione materiae*
 - 1. Cultural matters
 - 2. Education
 - 3. Person-related matters
 - 4. Use of languages
 - 5. Co-operation between the communities
 - 6. International co-operation
 - B. The powers of the communities *ratione loci*
 - III. The powers of the regions in particular
 - A. The powers of the regions *ratione materiae*
 - B. The powers of the regions *ratione loci*
- §4. Co-operation between the federation and the federated entities and the prevention and settlement of conflicts
- I. Co-operation between the federation and the federated entities
 - A. General
 - B. The principles of Belgian co-operative federalism
 - III. The prevention and settlement of conflicts
 - A. Conflicts of interest
 - 1. The concept
 - 2. Preventing and settling conflicts of interest
 - B. Conflicts over jurisdiction
 - 1. The concept of conflicts over jurisdiction
 - 2. Preventing conflicts over jurisdiction
 - 3. Settling conflicts over jurisdiction
- §5. The financial position and relation between the federation and the federated entities
- §6. The internal structure of the federated entities
- I. General
 - II. The community and region parliaments
 - A. The composition of the parliaments
 - B. Workings of the region and community parliaments
 - III. The governments
 - A. Composition of the governments
 - B. The workings of the governments
 - IV. The relationship between the parliament and the government
- §7. Brussels institutions
- I. The federal level: characterized by provisions aimed at protecting the minority
 - II. Brussels institutions: protection of the minority parallel safeguards at the federal level
 - A. General
 - B. The Brussels-capital region

1. Powers
2. Internal structure
3. Other functions of the brussels institutions

§8. Conclusions

Chapter 3. Decentralized authorities

§1. Territorial decentralization

- I. General
 - A. Historical outline of the evolution of the local government level
 - B. Constitutional principles regarding local government
 1. 'Territorial decentralization'
 2. Territorial decentralization constitutionally enshrined
- II. The decentralized authorities
 - A. The provinces
 1. Introduction
 - B. Provincial jurisdiction *ratione materiae*
 - C. Provincial institutions
 1. The provincial council
 2. The provincial executive
 3. The provincial governor
- III. The municipalities
 - A. Introduction
 - B. Municipal jurisdiction *ratione materiae*
 - C. Municipal institutions
 1. The municipal council
 2. The municipal executive
 3. The mayor
 4. Special arrangements

§2. Functional decentralization

Part IV. Citizenship and the administration of justice

Chapter 1. Belgian citizenship

§1. Constitutional provisions concerning citizenship

§2. The belgian nationality act

- I. Obtaining belgian nationality
 - A. Attribution of belgian nationality
 - B. Acquisition of belgian nationality
- II. Loss of belgian nationality

Chapter 2. Fundamental rights and liberties

§1. General

- I. Definition
- II. Sources
- III. Historical outline
- IV. General rules
 - A. Those entitled to rights and liberties
 - B. Conditions for restrictions on rights and liberties
 - C. Remedies for violations of rights and liberties under the belgian constitution
 - D. Remedies for violations of rights and liberties under international conventions
 - E. Rules having precedence when differences between domestic and international provisions exist
- V. Equality

- A. Freedom and equality
- B. Protection of equality and non-discrimination in Belgium

§2. Civil and political rights

- I. Sources
- II. Individual integrity, liberty and security
 - A. The right to life and individual integrity
 - B. The right to liberty and security of person
- III. Intellectual freedoms
 - A. Freedom of expression
 - B. Freedom of education
 - C. Freedom of assembly and of association
 - D. The right to address petitions
- IV. The right to respect for private and family life
 - A. The right to respect for private life
 - B. The right to respect of family life
 - C. The rights of the child
- V. Due process rights
 - A. Introduction
 - B. Scope of the guarantees
 - C. Substance of the guarantees
- VI. Peaceful enjoyment of possessions

§3. Social, economic and cultural rights

Chapter 3. Constitutional safeguards for specific groups and minorities

§1. Language groups

- I. Checks and balances
- II. Territorial autonomy
- III. Official languages legislation
 - A. Introduction
 - B. The use of languages in administrative matters
 - C. Official languages before the courts
 - D. Official languages in legislative matters
 - E. Official languages in the armed forces
 - F. Official languages in education
 - G. Official languages in employment and commerce
- IV. International protection of language groups

§2. Ideological minorities

- V. 'Pillarization'
- VI. Constitutional provisions and their statutory implementation

§3. Non-discrimination, gender equality and the elimination of racism

- I. Anti-discrimination
 - A. Grounds of discrimination
 - B. Prohibited behaviour
 - C. Scope of application
 - D. Justifications
 - E. Remedies and procedures
- II. Gender equality
- III. Elimination of racism and discrimination based on race

Chapter 4. Judicial control of administrative action

§1. Preventive legal protections

§2. Judicial review

- I. Introduction
- II. Grounds for judicial review
- III. Procedure and relief available
 - A. Defence of illegality
 - B. Claims for damages
 - 1. Tort claims against the state, public servants
 - 2. Actions for nuisance
 - 3. Awards of special damages by the council of state
 - 4. Enforceability of judgments against administrative authorities
 - C. Annulment appeals and appeals for stays of execution
- IV. Other remedies

Chapter 5. Rights and status of foreigners

§1. Constitutional rights and protections

- I. Equal protection
- II. Restrictions

§2. Immigration and naturalization of foreigners

- I. Immigration and deportation
 - A. Entry to belgian territory
 - B. Exclusion from belgian territory
- II. Extradition
- III. Substantive and procedural rights in exclusion and extradition cases
 - A. The immigration and asylum act
 - B. Human rights conventions

Part V. Specific issues 269

Chapter 1. War, treaty and foreign affairs powers

§1. National defence and the police services

§2. Foreign relations and the impact of restructuring the state

- I. Introduction
- II. The treaty-making power
 - A. General principles
 - B. Treaties and 'mixed jurisdiction'
 - C. The co-operation agreement of 8 march 1994
 - 1. Negotiating and concluding mixed jurisdiction treaties
 - 2. Approving and ratifying mixed jurisdiction treaties
 - 3. Implementing and terminating mixed jurisdiction treaties
 - D. Mechanisms ensuring the coherence of foreign policy
- III. Diplomatic representation and representation in international and supranational organizations
 - A. Diplomatic representation of belgium
 - B. Representation of belgium in international and supranational organizations
 - 1. The european union
 - 2. Other organizations
- IV. Proceedings before international and supranational tribunals; substitution mechanism
- V. Parliamentary involvement in developing european law

Chapter 2. Taxing and spending power

§1. The federal state

- I. Taxing power
 - A. Constitutional principles
 - 1. The principle of legality

2. The principle of annual terms
 3. The principle of equality
 - II. Spending power
 - A. The principle of legality
 - B. The principle of annual terms
 - C. The principle of universality
 - D. The principle of non-transferability
 - E. The public nature of the budget and its accounts
 - §2. The communities and the regions
 - I. Autonomous or general taxing power
 - A. Main features
 - B. Restrictions
 - C. Other conditions
 - II. Additional taxing powers: regional taxes
 - III. Transfers from federal tax revenue
 - IV. Non-fiscal revenues
 - V. Loans
 - VI. Solidarity mechanisms
 - VII. Tax administration
 - VIII. Spending powers
 - §3. The decentralized authorities
- Chapter 3.** Emergency laws
- Chapter 4.** The constitutional relationship between church and state
- §1. Introduction
 - §2. Freedom of religion
 - §3. Official recognition of a religion and its effects

Selected bibliography

Index