# Genealogical sources







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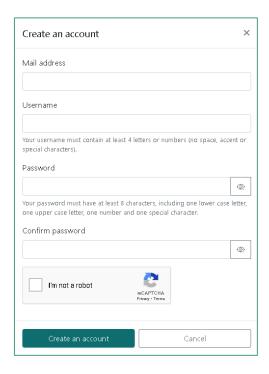
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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

#### A. Access to the website

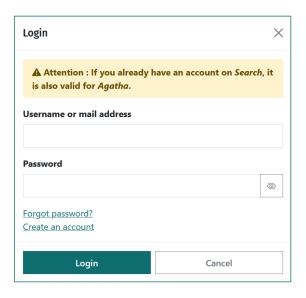
#### Registration

Registration is free but mandatory to access digital archives. You can register by clicking on 'Login' on the homepage and then on 'Create an account'.



Enter your mail address and choose a unique identifier which must contain at least four letters or numbers and a password containing at least eight characters with at least one lower case letter, one upper case letter, one number and one distinctive character. Activate your account by clicking on the link in the confirmation mail you received.

**Please note**: If you already have an account for the old search engine <a href="https://search.arch.be/">https://search.arch.be/</a>, you do not need to create a new account. You can enter your username and password in the 'Login' section.



However, if you create a new account, it will also be valid on <a href="https://search.arch.be/">https://search.arch.be/</a> with your login only (and not your mail address).

**N.B.**: When <a href="https://search.arch.be/">https://search.arch.be/</a> is completely deactivated, you will be able to connect only with your mail address, and not your login anymore.

After registration you can consult and save digital records that are relevant to your interests.

#### Languages

The website interface is available in French, Dutch, German, and English.

**Please note**: The digital records themselves are provided in their original language and have not been translated.

#### B. How to get started?

If you are new to genealogical research, we recommend you read the introduction **How to get started?** to guide you in your first steps.

For further information about the type of records contained in church registers and civil status registers, you can also refer to the **How to get started?** webpage.

Please also consult our FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) for further information on how to use our search engine. In case any difficulty cannot be resolved, you can use our **contact form** to reach out to us.

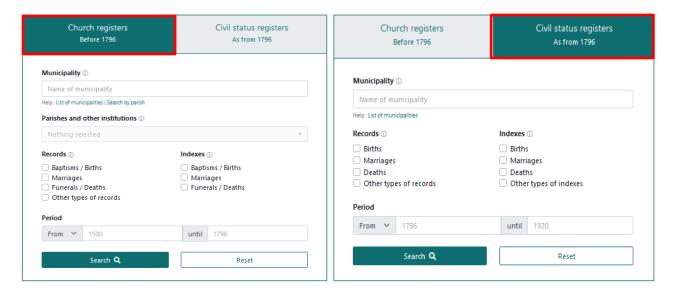
#### II. HOW TO PROCEED

## A. Carrying out research

#### 1. Choice between church registers and civil status registers

There are two tabs on the 'Search' page: 'Parish registers (before 1796)' and 'Civil status registers (as from 1796)'. Choose one of the tabs to start your research.

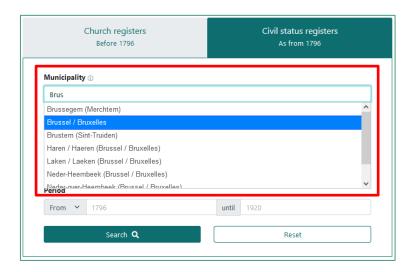
It is currently not possible to carry out research about a given municipality in both church registers and civil status registers simultaneously.



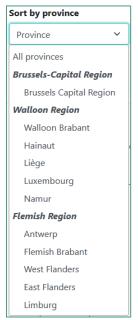
#### 2. Municipality

Reference municipalities are those prior to the fusion of municipalities that took place in 1977. As from this year, the number of municipalities was reduced from 2,359 to 589. Because currently accessible civil status registers date from the time prior to 1977, old municipal names must be used. For example: Marche-lez-Écaussinnes (today: Écaussinnes).

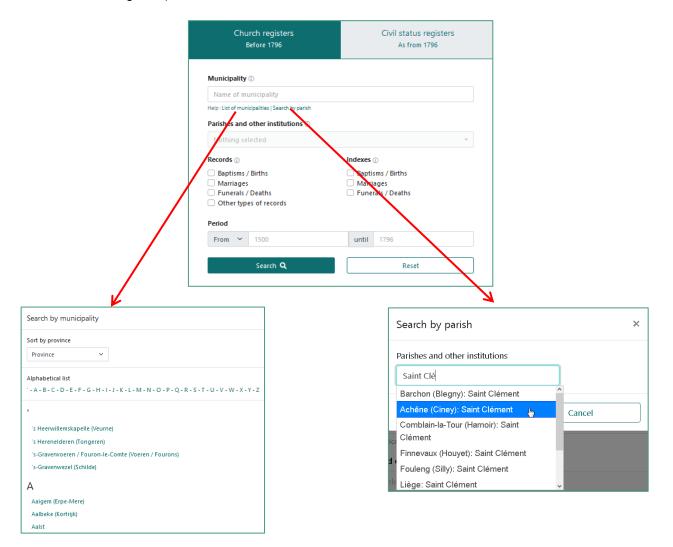
Choose the name of a municipality from the drop-down menu:



- If in doubt about a name, you may want to consult one of these tools:
  - 'List of municipalities': a complete list of all municipalities (prior to the fusion of 1977) with the option to sort by province.

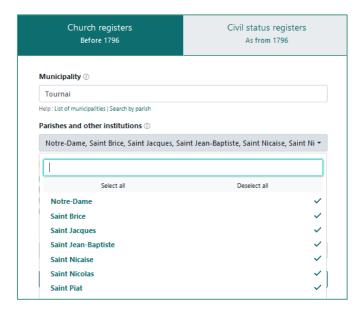


- 'Search by parish': name of the patron saint associated with a parish (only for church registers)

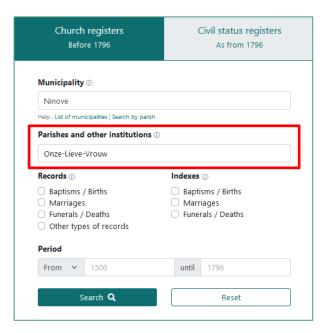


#### 3. Parishes and other institutions

In case a municipality has several parishes (as, for example, in Tournai, as shown below), a drop-down menu shows all relevant parishes. You can select and deselect all parishes at once or one by one.



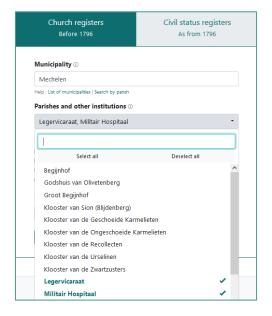
If a municipality has only one parish, it is automatically selected. You cannot modify this selection.



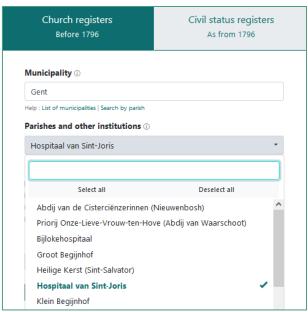
**Please note**: For some municipalities that were merged before 1977, the index contains the records of both parishes. For example, this is the case of the municipality of Veltem-Beisem, which was composed of two different parishes during the Old Regime. In such cases, the indexes bear on both parishes.



**Please note**: Institutions other than parishes may be indicated in some cases. For instance, military chaplains were active in a number of cities, such as Mechelen.

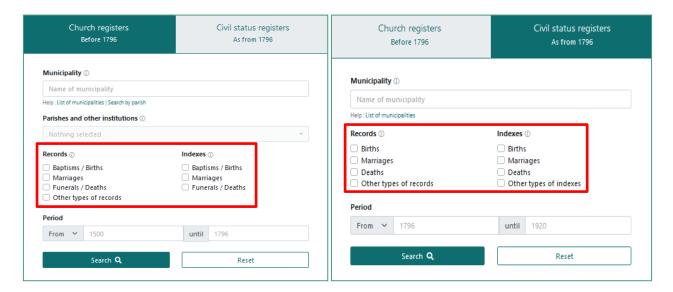


For other institutions, such as hospitals or some abbeys, there is only one type of records (for example, Sint-Joris Hospital in Ghent).

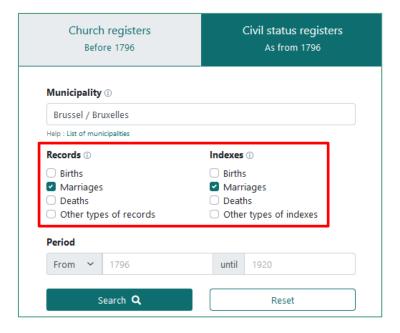


#### 4. Records and Indexes

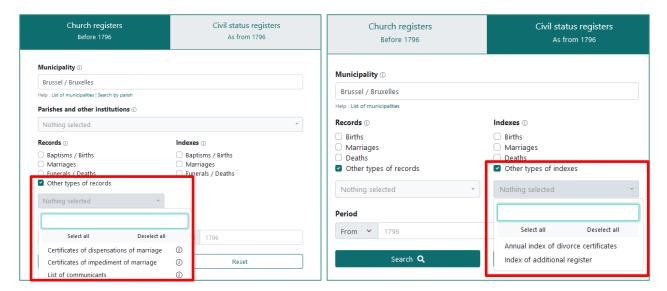
For the church registers, *Baptisms / Births*, *Marriages*, *Funerals / Deaths* and for the civil status registers, *Births*, *Marriages*, *Deaths*, you must select the type(s) of record(s) or the index(es) in which you are interested.



For example, if you are only interested in *Marriages*, you should check only the corresponding box. You can choose to search for records, indexes, or both.

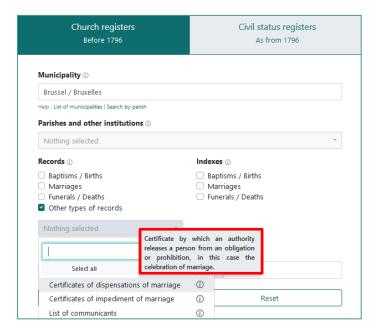


### • Other types of records



For more information on the other types of records and indexes, you can consult the **Guide to genealogical research**.

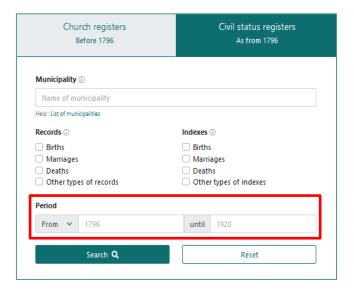
When the symbol (i) is next to a document type, you can hover over it to read its definition.



**Please note**: These records have not been digitised for all parishes and municipalities. To find out if a particular type of record exists for a specific municipality, you can use the **contact form**.

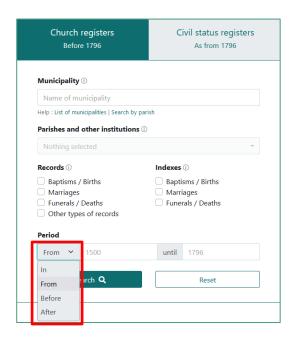
#### 5. Search period

You can search by default for records pertaining to the whole period covered by parish registers (1580-1796) or for the period covered by civil registers (1796-1920). The date range is shown by default.



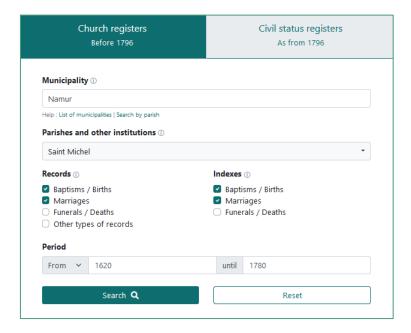
If you click on the arrow next to 'From', you will be able to choose the following options:

- In: to search for the exact date of a record
- From / until: to search for a record over a given period
- Before: to search for a record before a specific date
- After: to search for a record after a specific date



#### Click on 'Search' once you have filled in all fields.

In the screenshot below, we are searching for baptism and marriage indexes and records of the parish of Saint Michael in Namur for the period 1620-1780:



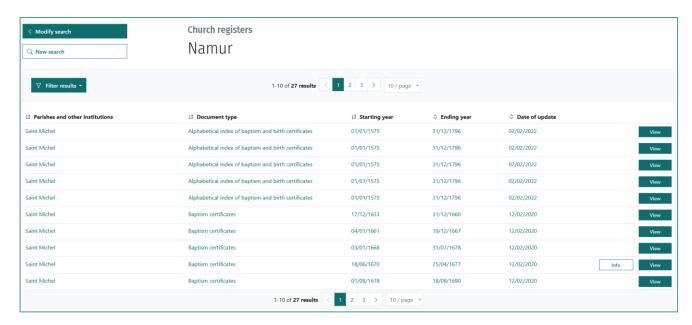
#### **B.** Overview of results

#### 1. List of results

The search results are listed in the following order:

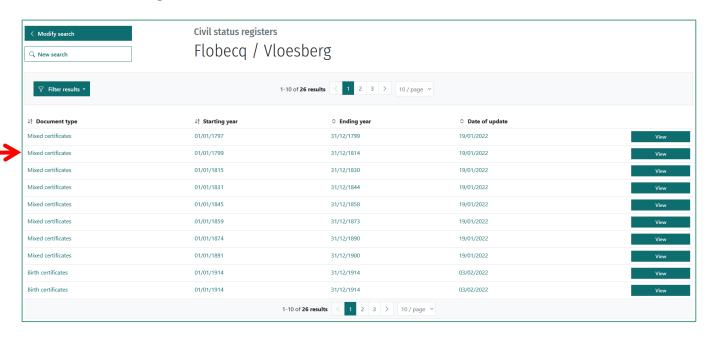
- By parish name (if several parishes are selected)
- By type of document:
  - Birth / Baptism
  - Marriage
  - o Death / Funeral
  - Other types of records or indexes
- In chronological order

Depending on the availability and digitisation status of registers, there may be more or less search results per record type and period.



#### a) Particular cases

Civil status registers: records

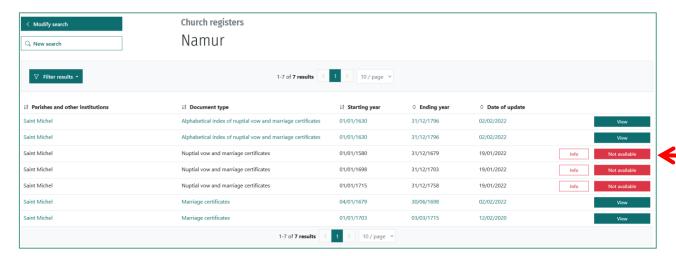


Search result may indicate 'Mixed certificates' as a type of record. There are two explanations:

- When registering the records of a small municipality, the same register was used for births, marriages, and deaths, which were recorded together;
- Births, marriages, and deaths in a given municipality are listed in the same yearly register: first births, then marriages and finally deaths, with an index after each type of record.

#### Church registers: missing registers

In the list of search results, some lines in the 'Church registers' section can be marked as 'Not available', which means that these registers are missing for the period concerned. The reason a register is missing, if known, can be seen by hovering the cursor over the button *Info*.



The main reasons why church registers may be missing include:

- There is no trace of any registration prior to the date concerned or thereafter;
- The registers were destroyed in during a particular year, by war, fire, or a natural disaster;
- A parish did not have baptism, matrimonial or burial rights;
- A parish used to be under the jurisdiction of another parish (which is then indicated);

- There are deficiencies in originals and microfilms for undocumented reason;
- The original or the microfilm has not yet been digitised;
- The registers in question are still in the hands of the parish or municipality and have not yet been transferred to the State Archives.

#### b) Available data

#### · Church registers

The complete collection of church registers conserved at the State Archives is digitised, although some registers have not yet been transferred to the State Archives and are still conserved elsewhere. A campaign to identify these registers was launched with the aim to digitise them.

#### Civil status registers

For most municipalities, records, and indexes until 1920 are available.

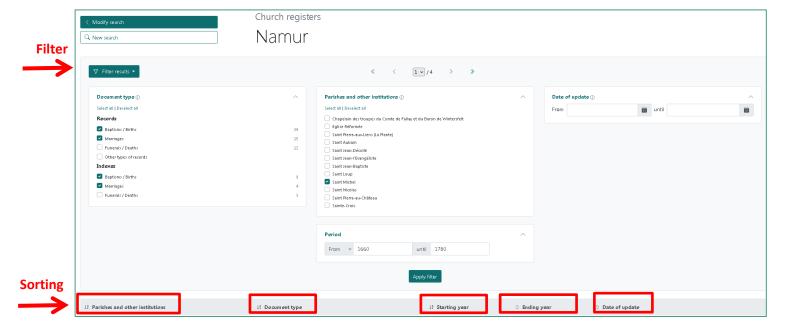
The law of 21 December 2018 (published in the Belgian Official Journal of 31 December 2018) modified the rules governing the publicity of civil status registers:

- Death and marriage certificates (indexes included) become public after 50 and 75 years respectively;
- For birth certificates (indexes included), the 100-year term remains applicable.

Marriage certificates older than 75 years and death certificates older than 50 years can, for the time being, only be consulted at municipal administrations, under the same conditions as for certificates older than one hundred years. Consultation at the State Archives is currently not yet possible. The transfer of the registers from the period 1919-1969 has begun, but it is a long-term operation (packaging, cleaning, and disinfecting, and transporting). This is also the reason digitisation in cooperation with *FamilySearch* has yet to start. Using the filter 'Date of update' gives you an overview of the progress of the digitisation of registers.

#### 2. Narrowing down search results

This option allows you to narrow down search results without having to enter a new search query.



#### a) Sorting search results

In the search results window, a number of sorting options are available:

- Parishes and other institutions: alphabetical order (from A to Z or from Z to A)
- Type of document: alphabetical order (from A to Z or from Z to A);
- Starting year: ascending or descending order
- Ending year: ascending or descending order
- Date of update: sort by date of last update (addition or modification of register descriptions)

**Please note**: To sort the search results of several columns, hold the Shift key and click on the arrows next to the column name.

#### b) Filter results

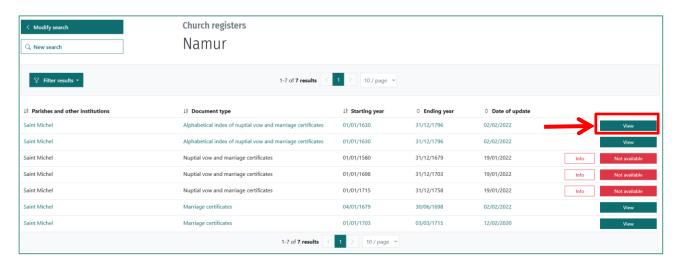
In the results display window, several filter features are available:

- 'Type of records Indexes + Records': Add or modify record types. The number of available registers is indicated next to every type of records.
- Date: Extend or shorten the period.
- Parishes and other institutions: Select or deselect all parishes at once.
- Date of update: Sort registers by date of online release (addition or modification of register descriptions).

Once filters are set, click on 'Apply Filter' to view the filtered search results. You can then close the filter options by clicking on 'Apply Filter' again.

## C. Viewing registers

To view registers, click on the 'View' button of the register of your choice.



If you are not connected, the following message appears:



The viewer is launched after you have logged in.

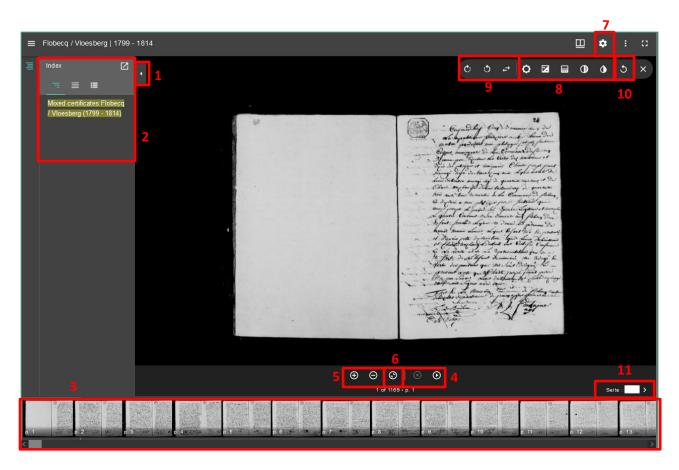
In the panel on the left (2), you can browse the descriptions of the selected register. This table of contents can also be minimised (1) to have a better view of the records. The left panel (2) also allows you to see which part of the register you are currently consulting or to click through to another part.

At the bottom of the viewer, you can see an overview of the digitised pages (3). There, you can click on a page thumbnail to consult it. The register can also be browsed using the buttons 'Previous item' and 'Next item' (4). It is also possible to go directly to a specific page by typing the page number in the appropriate field and clicking enter or the arrow (7). The page can be enlarged or reduced with the buttons 'Zoom in' and 'Zoom out' (5). By clicking on 'Reset zoom' (6) you will see the initial size again.

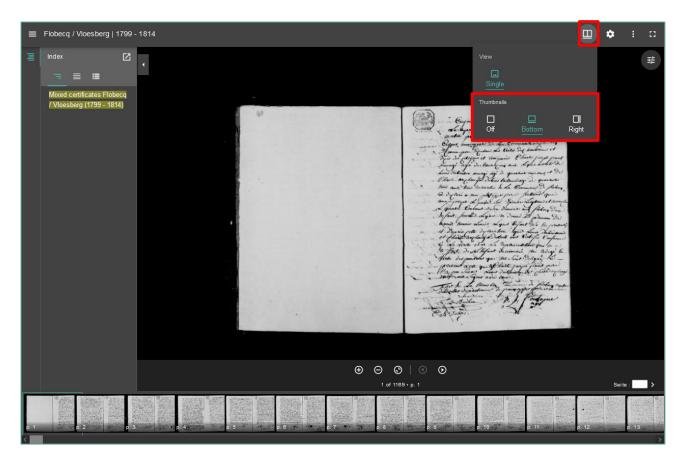
**Please note**: with the software in use, it is not yet possible to lock the zoom from one page to another. We will implement this functionality as soon as it is available.

The brightness, contrast, saturation, and colour levels of the images can be adjusted (8). In addition, the page can be rotated or mirrored (9). These operations can also be undone (10).

If the language of the viewer is not correct, you can click on the 'Settings' button to change it (12).



It is also possible to disable the thumbnails (small image per page), which by default appear at the bottom of the viewer or place them on the right.

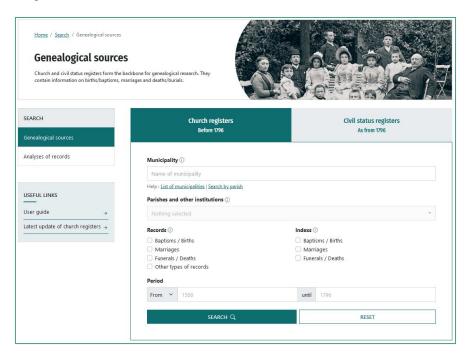


It is also possible to save (download) a page and to print it afterwards. However, downloads are limited to one hundred per day.

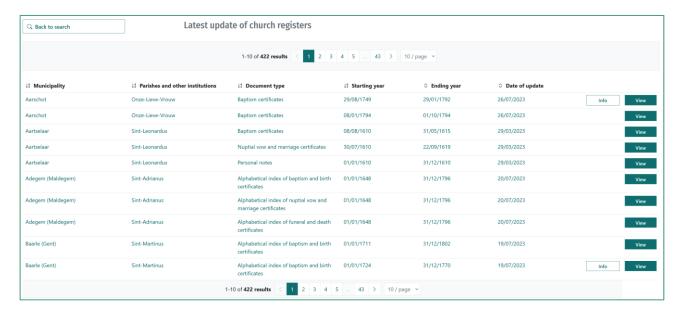


#### D. Useful links

The *Useful Links* menu allows you to consult this user manual as well as the latest updates of parish registers and civil registers.



This list allows you to check which new descriptions were added to the search engine during the last update. All columns can be sorted alphabetically or chronologically. You can also view these new descriptions by clicking on the corresponding button.



By clicking on the Back to search button, the search menu screen reappears.

## E. Report error in a description

If you have found an error in the description (for example, an incorrect starting year or an unscanned page) while searching digitised parish or civil registers, you can report it using the **contact form**. Try to be as clear and complete as possible when reporting an error (for instance, by including links to relevant images or pages). For example: 'Error in the description of the baptisms of the parish of Saint Martin in Ghent for the

period 1761-1774. This should be 1760-1774.' It is also possible to send images or text files along with your error report. Be sure not to forget the URL to the relevant web page!

