



BOS! Belgium Outdoor Shack

ACTIVATOR GUIDE



How to Conduct a Valid TOTA Activation in Belgium

Towers On The Air – Belgium (ONR) Activator Guide

ACTIVATION ZONE

max. 200 m from the tower

MINIMUM QSOS

13 HF / 3 VHF

REFERENCE FORMAT

ONR-xxxx

Choose an official ONR tower → go to the tower → set up your station within 200 metres → make valid QSOs → upload your log.

TOTA – Towers On The Air is an international amateur radio program in which radio amateurs activate and work lookout towers and other official observation towers. Belgium has been part of the international TOTA program since 1 July 2026. Belgian towers use the **ONR** prefix. The Belgian TOTA coordinator is **ON3UA**.

1 Choose an Official TOTA Tower

Not every lookout tower in Belgium is automatically a TOTA reference — it must first be included in the official TOTA database. A suitable tower is, among other things: a permanent, man-made structure intended to provide views of the surrounding landscape, permanently, seasonally or occasionally accessible to the public. Communication towers, radio masts and water towers without a viewing function are generally not considered TOTA towers.

Check before departure: official ONR reference, tower name, location, accessibility, official TOTA database, any local restrictions. Always use the official reference.

2 Check the 200-Metre Rule

This is the most important rule for a TOTA activator: transmit from the lookout tower or from a location no more than 200 metres from the tower. You do not necessarily have to stand directly on top of the tower.

Example — Activating ONR-0123.

- 85 metres from the tower →  within the 200-metre activation zone.
- 350 metres from the tower →  outside the TOTA activation zone.

3 Check Your Location with GPS

Use a smartphone, BOS! Maps and/or TOTA map, GPS, or mapping software to check the distance between your position and the official tower location.

 **Tip:** If you are unsure about the distance, choose a position closer to the tower. A photograph showing the tower, your station and the surrounding area is useful documentation.

4 Make Sure You Have Legal Access

The TOTA rules define where an activation can take place, but they do not automatically give you access rights. Take into account: private property, opening hours, nature reserves, access roads, parking regulations, local regulations. You cannot simply enter a restricted area because the tower has a TOTA reference.

5 Prepare Your Portable Station

TOTA is ideally suited to portable amateur radio. Bring: transceiver, antenna, battery, coax, headset, logging (tablet/laptop/paper), smartphone, backup logbook, antenna equipment.

Check before departure: battery charged, antenna tested, coax checked, logging software working, UTC correctly configured, ONR reference entered.

6 Announce Your Activation

Strongly recommended — a spot makes it much easier for hunters to find you.

Field	Example
Callsign	ON3XXX/P

Field	Example
Reference	ONR-0123
Tower	[name]
Date	28 September 2026
Start	08:00 UTC
Bands	40m / 20m / 2m
Modes	SSB / FM / CW

Use the BOS! Agenda and the TOTA Agenda to announce your activation. TOTA supports activation information and self-spotting; the TOTA community also uses available spotting channels.

7 Go to the Tower

1. Find a safe location.
2. Check your distance from the official TOTA reference.
3. Make sure you are within 200 metres.
4. Set up your antenna.
5. Connect your transceiver and power supply.
6. Start logging.

8 Start Your TOTA Activation

"CQ CQ TOTA, CQ TOTA, this is ON3XXX portable, activating ONR-0123."
 "CQ TOTA, CQ TOTA, ON3XXX/P, ONR-0123."

Mention your reference regularly, so the hunter knows exactly which tower they are working.

9 What Should You Exchange During a QSO?

A QSO should include, among other things: callsign, signal report, name, QTH. It is recommended to also exchange the name and reference of the tower.

SSB Example — Activator: "ON4ABC, you are 59. My name is Mario, QTH Liège. You are 59 from TOTA tower ONR-0123." Hunter: "ON3XXX, you are 59. My name is Marc, QTH Antwerp."

10 How Many QSOs Do You Need?

For a Special Activator Diploma, the current minimum requirements are:

Activation	Minimum
HF	13 QSOs
VHF	3 QSOs

11 HF and VHF Separately

TOTA distinguishes between HF and VHF diplomas — the TOTA award system has separate HF and VHF categories. You can activate a tower on 40m SSB and 20m SSB (HF), and also on 2m FM (VHF).

12 Use Different Bands

40m (7 MHz SSB) → 20m (14 MHz SSB) → 2m (145 MHz FM) — this allows you to reach different groups of hunters. Always use only frequencies on which you are authorised to operate and respect the applicable band plan. TOTA allows contacts on all amateur bands and with all modes.

13 Repeaters Are Not Allowed

QSOs made through active terrestrial repeaters do not count — neither 2m nor 70cm via repeater are valid TOTA QSOs. Satellite contacts are permitted.

Example — Working ON4ABC directly on 145.525 MHz FM → ✓ valid. Working ON4ABC through repeater ON0XXX → ✗ not valid for TOTA.

14 Recommended Calling Frequencies

For 2 metres in Belgium: 145.400 MHz is recommended. For HF: 40m – 7.032 / 7.118 MHz. Always use a clear frequency and respect the applicable band plan.

15 Work Other TOTA Activators

One of the most enjoyable aspects of TOTA is Tower-to-Tower: you (ON3XXX/P, ONR-0123) work another activator (ON4YYY/P, ONR-0456). A Tower-to-Tower contact is worth 3 points. Remember to record the other activator's TOTA reference in your log.

16 TOTA Can Be Combined with Other Programs

TOTA explicitly states that activations can be combined with, among others: WWFF, GMA, SOTA, POTA, BOTA, WCA. However, each activation must independently comply with the rules of the relevant program — a TOTA activation does not automatically make a WWFF, BCA or other activation valid.

17 Log Your QSOs Correctly

A TOTA log should contain at least: QSO_DATE, TIME_ON, BAND, MODE, RST_SENT, RST_RCVD, CALL, STATION_CALLSIGN, MY_SIG, MY_SIG_INFO.

Very important: Use `MY_SIG = TOTA` and `MY_SIG_INFO = <your ONR reference>`, for example `MY_SIG_INFO = ONR-0123`.

18 Use UTC

As with other amateur radio awards, use UTC in your log (e.g. 08:34 UTC, not 10:34 Belgian local time). The TOTA ADIF specification expects the QSO time in UTC.

19 Check Your Log Before Uploading

Check: callsigns, date, UTC, band, mode, RST, ONR reference, TOTA information, duplicate QSOs, Tower-to-Tower QSOs. A correct log prevents processing problems.

20 Upload Your Log

After a successful activation, upload the log through the TOTA website; in exceptional cases it may also be sent as an ADIF file. Belgian ONR activators upload their log through **belgiumoutdoorshack.be** — it is then automatically forwarded to the international TOTA database. Make sure your log is correct before uploading it.

21 Check Your BOS! TOTA Statistics

Check: activated ONR towers, number of QSOs, HF statistics, VHF statistics, Tower-to-Tower contacts, your activator points, your award progress. Report problems to the BOS! TOTA administrator.

22 An Important Point About Repeated Activations

A tower may be activated again, but TOTA uses a unique combination of Tower + Activator + Hunter to determine unique contacts (for VHF, the band is also taken into account). You cannot simply have the same QSOs count endlessly as new unique contacts.

23 Club and Special Callsigns

TOTA also supports club and special callsigns. When a club callsign is used, the log should distinguish `STATION_CALLSIGN` (the callsign actually used on the radio) from `OPERATOR` (the operator conducting the activation), e.g. `STATION_CALLSIGN = ON4BOS`, `OPERATOR = ON3XXX`.

24 Respect the Environment

Many TOTA towers are located in nature reserves, parks or tourist areas. Respect nature, be considerate of walkers, set up antennas safely, leave no waste, avoid unnecessary disturbance, do not damage the tower, park only where permitted. As a TOTA activator, you are both a visitor and an ambassador for the program.

25 End Your Activation

"This is ON3XXX/P, ONR-0123, going QRT. Thanks for all the contacts!"

1. Stop logging.
2. Check your log.
3. Take down your antenna.
4. Pack away your equipment.
5. Make sure you have left nothing behind.

The 7 Golden TOTA Rules

- 1 OFFICIAL TOWER — Use an official TOTA/ONR reference.
- 2 200 METRES — Keep your activation within 200 metres of the tower.
- 3 VALID RADIO CONTACT — Make genuine, direct amateur radio contacts.
- 4 NO REPEATERS — Terrestrial repeaters are not permitted for TOTA QSOs.
- 5 HF = 13 — The HF Special Activator qualification requires 13 valid HF QSOs.
- 6 VHF = 3 — The VHF Special Activator qualification requires 3 valid VHF QSOs.
- 7 CORRECT LOG — Use MY_SIG = TOTA and the correct MY_SIG_INFO = ONR-xxxx, then upload your log.

Find an ONR tower → Check the 200 m zone → Set up your portable station → Call CQ TOTA → Make your QSOs → Upload your ADIF log → Check your BOS! statistics.

Since 1 July 2026, Belgian radio amateurs can officially participate as ONR – Belgium within the international TOTA program.

TOTA Activator - Quick Checklist

Before Departure

- ☐ Official ONR reference selected
- ☐ Tower checked in the TOTA database
- ☐ Activation zone checked
- ☐ Maximum 200 metres planned
- ☐ Access checked
- ☐ Battery charged
- ☐ Antenna tested
- ☐ Logging software tested
- ☐ Activation announced

During the Activation

- ☐ Call CQ TOTA
- ☐ Announce the ONR reference
- ☐ Log callsigns correctly
- ☐ Exchange name/QTH
- ☐ Use UTC
- ☐ Record band and mode
- ☐ Do not use repeaters
- ☐ Record Tower-to-Tower QSOs

At the Location

- ☐ Within 200 metres of the tower
- ☐ Safe position selected
- ☐ Station set up
- ☐ Antenna installed
- ☐ SWR checked
- ☐ ONR reference configured
- ☐ Logging started

For a Valid Award Activation

- ☐ HF: minimum 13 valid QSOs
- ☐ VHF: minimum 3 valid QSOs

After the Activation

- ☐ Announce QRT
- ☐ Check the log
- ☐ Export ADIF
- ☐ Upload the log
- ☐ Check BOS! TOTA statistics
- ☐ Report any problems