Belgium's trade relations with the

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Belgian
Foreign Trade Agency

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1 IMPORTANCE OF BELGIUM AND THE OTHER EU COUNTRIES IN TRADE WITH THE UAE

1.1 EXPORTS

Total exports of goods from the European Union (EU-27) to the UAE reached about €51.8 billion in 2025.

Belgium accounted for a share of 7.7% of this, making it the 5th largest EU exporter of goods to the UAE. Germany took first place in EU exports of goods to the UAE with a share of 22.0% and an amount of roughly €11.4 billion. Meanwhile, France and Italy ranked second and third, respectively, each with a share of 18.3%.

While European exports (EU-27) to the UAE rose 16.0% (€+7.1 billion) in 2025, Belgian exports were down marginally by 0.4% (€-16.6 million). As a result, our country's share of EU exports of goods to the UAE decreased in 2025.

German exports of goods to the UAE increased by 17.3% (€+1.7 billion) in 2025 because of the higher values for 'aeroplanes and other aircraft, of an unladen weight exceeding 15,000 kg' and 'line pipe of a kind used for oil or gas pipelines', among others. Meanwhile, exports of goods from France to the UAE were up 51.3% (€+3.2 billion) when compared to 2024, which can be attributed to increased exports of 'aeroplanes and other aircraft, of an unladen weight exceeding 15,000 kg' and 'turbojets of a thrust exceeding 25 kN'. Furthermore, Italy, the third largest EU exporter of goods to the UAE, saw its exports grow by 19.7% (€+1.6 billion), in part as a result of higher values for the subcategories 'non-monetary gold in unwrought forms' and 'turbojets of a thrust exceeding 25 kN'.

TABLE 1: EVOLUTION OF EXPORTS TO THE UAE

In million €		2024	2025	Variation (in %)	Share (in %)
1	**Germany**	9,691.9	11,373.4	17.3	22.0
2	**France**	6,263.6	9,477.4	51.3	18.3
3	**Italy**	7,920.4	9,477.1	19.7	18.3
	…				
5	**Belgium**	4,023.5	4,006.8	-0.4	7.7
	…				
	Total EU-27	**44,608.9**	**51,753.0**	**16.0**	**100.0**

1.2 IMPORTS

Total EU-27 imports of goods from the UAE reached around €9.3 billion in 2025.

Belgium was the 6th largest EU importer of goods from the UAE in 2025 with a share of 7.7%. Germany was not only the number one exporter to the UAE, but also the largest EU importer of goods from this country with a share of 17.9%, which corresponds to an amount of roughly €1.7 billion. Meanwhile, the Netherlands and France took the second and third place in this ranking with shares of 16.6% and 16.2%, respectively.

While European imports (EU-27) from the UAE declined by 17.9% (€-2.0 billion) in 2025, Belgian imports from the same country fell by an even larger rate of 30.5% (€-316.1 million). As a result, Belgium's share of EU imports of goods from the UAE decreased in 2025.

The value of German imports of goods from the UAE increased by 1.7% (€+27.4 million) in 2025. Meanwhile, goods imported by the Netherlands from the UAE were down 17.3% (€-323.2 million) when compared to 2024, which can be attributed to decreased imports of 'crude petroleum oils and crude oils obtained from bituminous minerals', 'aluminium, not alloyed' and 'aluminium alloys'. Furthermore, France, the third largest EU importer of goods from the UAE, saw the value of its imports decline by 32.9% (€-739.1 million) due largely to a lower value for the subcategory 'medium and heavy oils'.

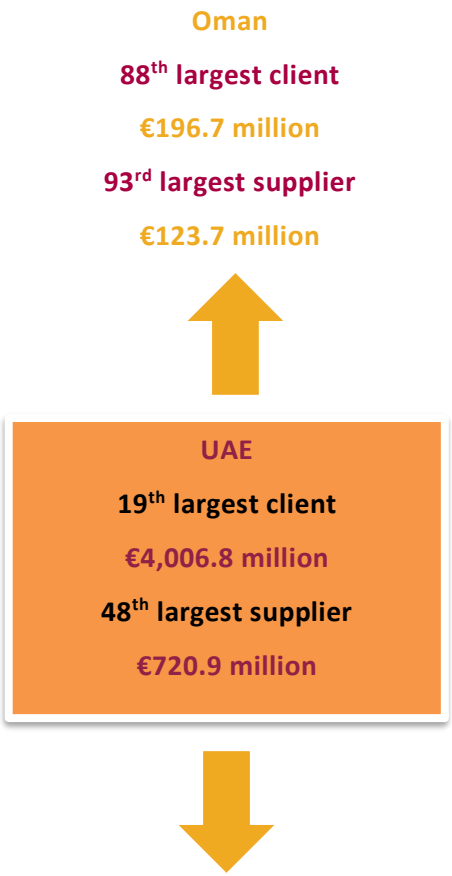
TABLE 2: EVOLUTION OF IMPORTS FROM THE UAE

In million €		2024	2025	Variation (in %)	Share (in %)
1	**Germany**	1,642.8	1,670.1	1.7	17.9
2	**Netherlands**	1,868.3	1,545.1	-17.3	16.6
3	**France**	2,245.1	1,505.9	-32.9	16.2
	…				
6	**Belgium**	1,037.1	720.9	-30.5	7.7
	…				
	Total EU-27	**11,338.1**	**9,310.9**	**-17.9**	**100.0**

2 Importance of the UAE and its neighbouring countries for Belgian foreign trade (2025)

Client → Belgian exports

Supplier → Belgian imports



3 BILATERAL TRADE RELATIONS

3.1 TRADE IN GOODS

In 2025, the UAE ranked **19th** among Belgium's main clients, before India, but after Portugal.

Total Belgian **exports** of goods to the UAE amounted to just over **€4.0 billion** in 2025, which is **0.4%** (€-16.7 million) less than the previous year. In 2025, exports to the UAE represented **0.8%** of the total amount of Belgian goods exported.

The UAE was Belgium's **48th** largest supplier of goods in 2025, ranking after Algeria, but preceding Bangladesh.

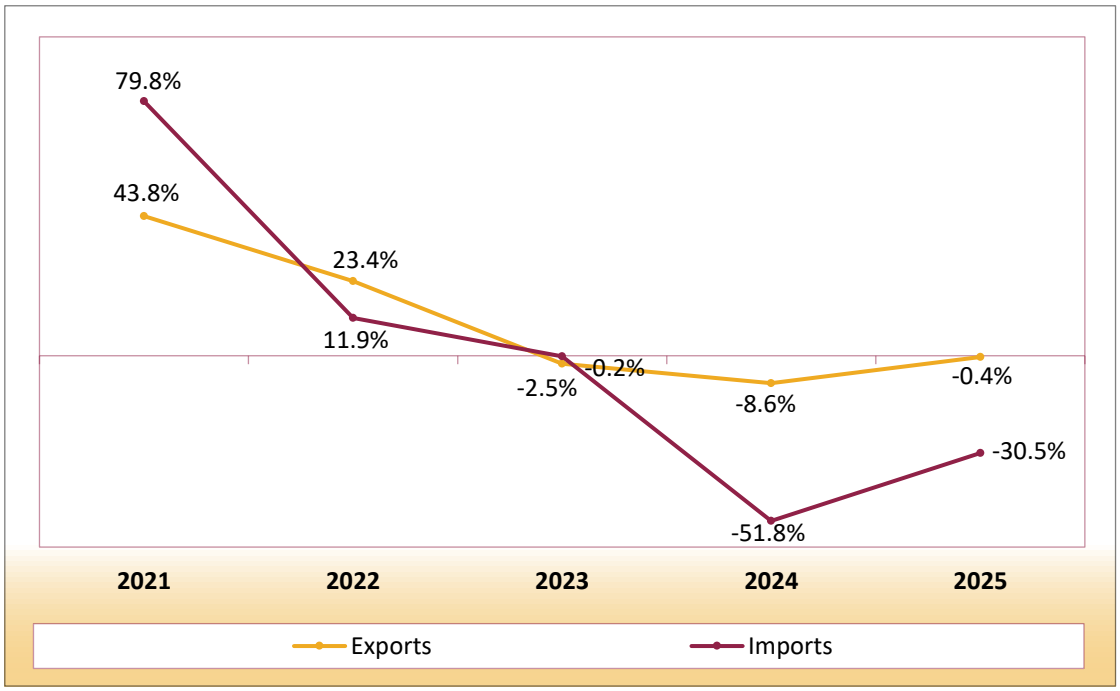
Total Belgian **imports** of goods from the UAE were down **30.5%** (€-316.2 million), amounting to **€720.9 million** in 2025. The UAE accounted for **0.2%** of total Belgian imports of goods.

TABLE 3: EVOLUTION OF BELGIUM'S TRADE IN GOODS WITH THE UAE

In million €	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Exports	3,661.4	4,518.0	4,403.6	4,023.5	4,006.8
Imports	1,927.9	2,157.8	2,152.6	1,037.1	720.9
Trade balance	1,733.5	2,360.2	2,251.0	2,986.4	3,285.9
Exports: variation (in %)	43.8	23.4	-2.5	-8.6	-0.4
Imports: variation (in %)	79.8	11.9	-0.2	-51.8	-30.5

Belgium has traditionally recorded a **trade surplus in goods** with the UAE. The surplus, which amounted to just over €1.7 billion in 2021, grew to around €2.4 billion a year later, as exports outpaced imports in both years. From 2023 to 2025, both exports and imports declined annually. In 2023, exports fell more sharply than imports, reducing the trade surplus to about €2.3 billion. In contrast, in 2024 and 2025, imports declined more than exports, causing the surplus to increase to nearly €3.0 billion in 2024 and then rise further to almost €3.3 billion in 2025 - the highest level in the period under review.

FIGURE 1: VARIATION OF EXPORTS AND IMPORTS (IN %)



After increasing by 43.8% in 2021 - largely due to a surge in exports of precious metals and stones, as well as chemical and pharmaceutical products - growth in total Belgian goods **exports** to the UAE slowed to 23.4% in 2022, with precious metals and stones still acting as the main driver. However, from 2023 to 2025, exports in this category declined each year compared to the previous year, negatively affecting total exports. In 2023, total Belgian exports of goods to the UAE decreased by 2.5%, followed by a further decline of 8.6% in 2024. In 2025, the drop was limited to just 0.4%.

For many years, precious metals and stones constituted the largest category in total Belgian **imports** of goods from the UAE. However, since 2024, imports in this segment have fallen sharply, mainly due to the EU's strict ban on Russian diamonds, shifting global consumer preferences toward cheaper synthetic stones, and the relocation of diamond trading and processing activities from Antwerp to hubs such as Dubai. After increasing by 79.8% in 2021 - largely driven by a surge in imports of precious metals and stones and mineral products - growth in total Belgian goods imports from the UAE slowed to 11.9% in 2022, with precious metals and stones remaining the primary contributor. From 2023 to 2025, however, imports in this category declined each year compared to the previous year, weighing on total imports. In 2023, the decrease in total Belgian imports of goods from the UAE was limited to just 0.2%, before dropping sharply by 51.8% in 2024. In 2025, imports declined by a further 30.5%.

3.1.1 Exports

In 2025, **precious metals and stones** held on to the top position in total Belgian **exports** of goods to the UAE. With a value of about €1.4 billion, this group of products accounted for a share of 33.9% of total exports. This section was mainly composed of 'non-industrial diamonds' and 'non-monetary gold in semi-manufactured forms'.

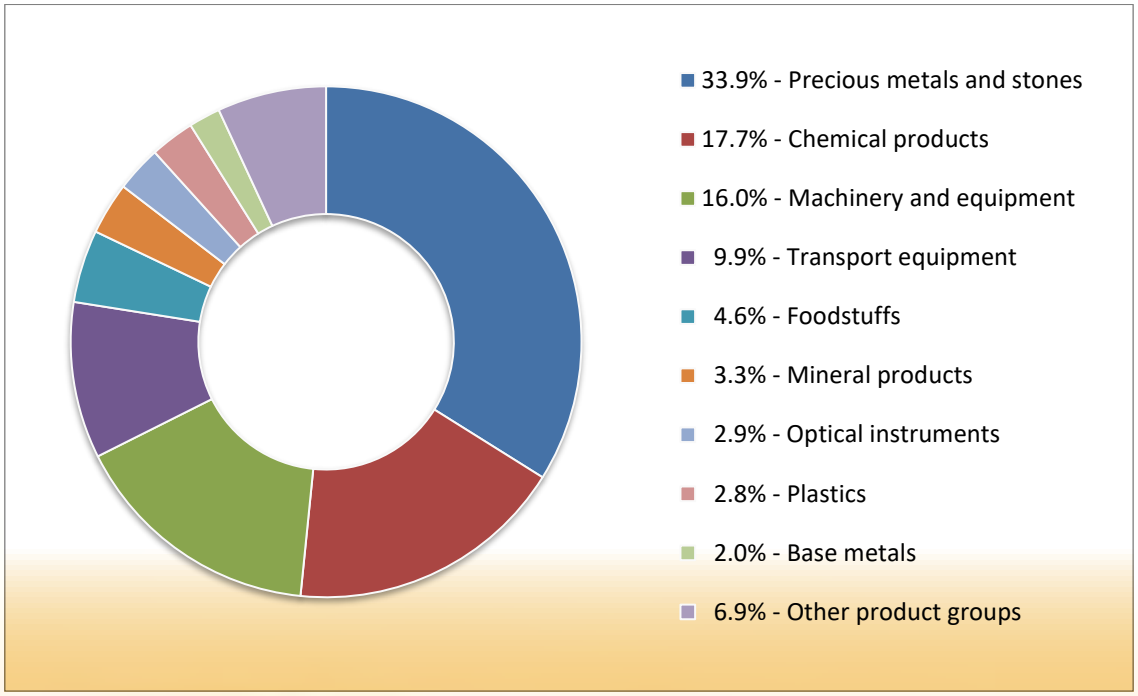
Exports of **chemical and pharmaceutical products** (main subsections: 'medicaments' and 'additives for lubricating oils containing petroleum oils or oils obtained from bituminous minerals') amounted to €711.1 million, corresponding to a share of 17.7% of Belgian exports of goods to the UAE.

machinery and equipment (main subsections: 'automatic circuit breakers' and 'flywheels and pulleys, including pulley blocks') completed the top three of the largest Belgian export sections to the UAE in 2025 with a share of 16.0% and exports totalling €640.0 million.

The eight other product groups that also accounted for a share of more than 1.0% of Belgian exports of goods to the UAE were:

- **transport equipment**: €396.5 million, corresponding to a 9.9% share;
- **foodstuffs**: €182.5 million, corresponding to a 4.6% share;
- **mineral products**: €132.8 million, corresponding to a 3.3% share;
- **optical, precision and medical instruments**: €117.1 million, corresponding to a 2.9% share;
- **plastics**: €112.1 million, corresponding to a 2.8% share;
- **base metals**: €79.0 million, corresponding to a 2.0% share;
- **textiles**: €68.0 million, corresponding to a 1.7% share; and
- **non-classified articles**: €51.8 million, corresponding to a 1.3% share.

Figure 2: Breakdown of Belgian exports to the UAE by principal commodities (in %) — 2025



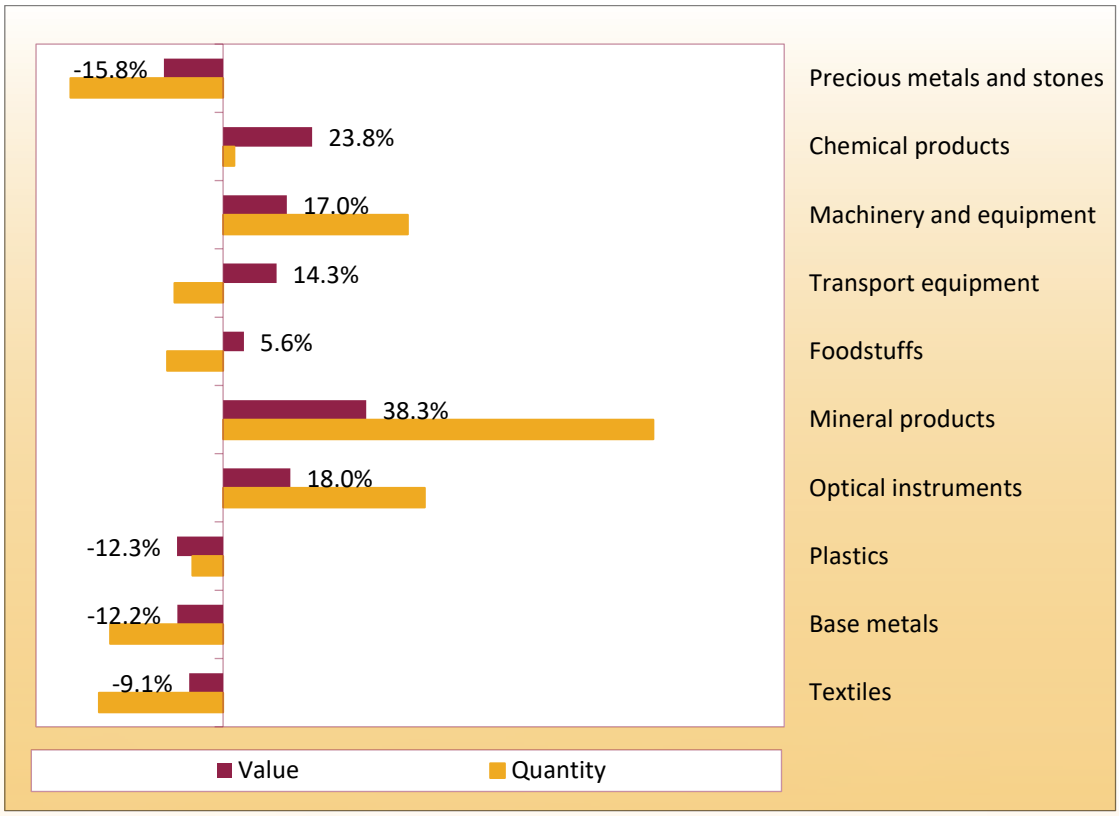
The main reason for the 0.4% decrease of total Belgian exports of goods to the UAE was the lower value for **precious metals and stones**. Exports of this section were down €255.0 million (-15.8%) in 2025, which can largely be attributed to the lower value for 'non-industrial diamonds, unworked or simply sawn, cleaved or bruted'.

The three other sections from the top ten that recorded a decline in exports were **textiles** (-9.1%, or €-6.8 million), **base metals** (-12.2%, or €-11.0 million) and **plastics** (-12.3%, or €-15.7 million). This last section's decrease in exports can partly be attributed to lower values for 'amino-resins, phenolic resins and polyurethanes, in primary forms' and 'new pneumatic tyres, of rubber of a kind used on motor cars (including station wagons and racing cars)'.

In contrast, exports of **mineral products** were up by 38.3% (€+36.8 million) last year, which can be attributed largely to the 'oils and other products of the distillation of high temperature coal tar; similar products in which the weight of the aromatic constituents exceeds that of the non-aromatic constituents' subcategory. The fact that the exported quantity grew at a significantly higher rate than its value indicates that the unit price for this group of products was lower in 2025 than in the previous year.

The other sections from the top ten whose values were up, displayed growth rates ranging from 5.6% for **foodstuffs** to 23.8% for **chemical and pharmaceutical products**. The €136.6 million rise experienced by the latter product group can largely be attributed to higher exports of 'medicaments'.

FIGURE 3: VARIATION OF EXPORTS TO THE UAE BY PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES (IN VALUE AND QUANTITY) — 2025/2024



3.1.2 IMPORTS

In 2025, the **mineral products** category was the largest section of Belgian imports of goods from the UAE with a share of 39.4%. This group of products, composed primarily of 'medium and heavy oils', accounted for a value of €284.0 million.

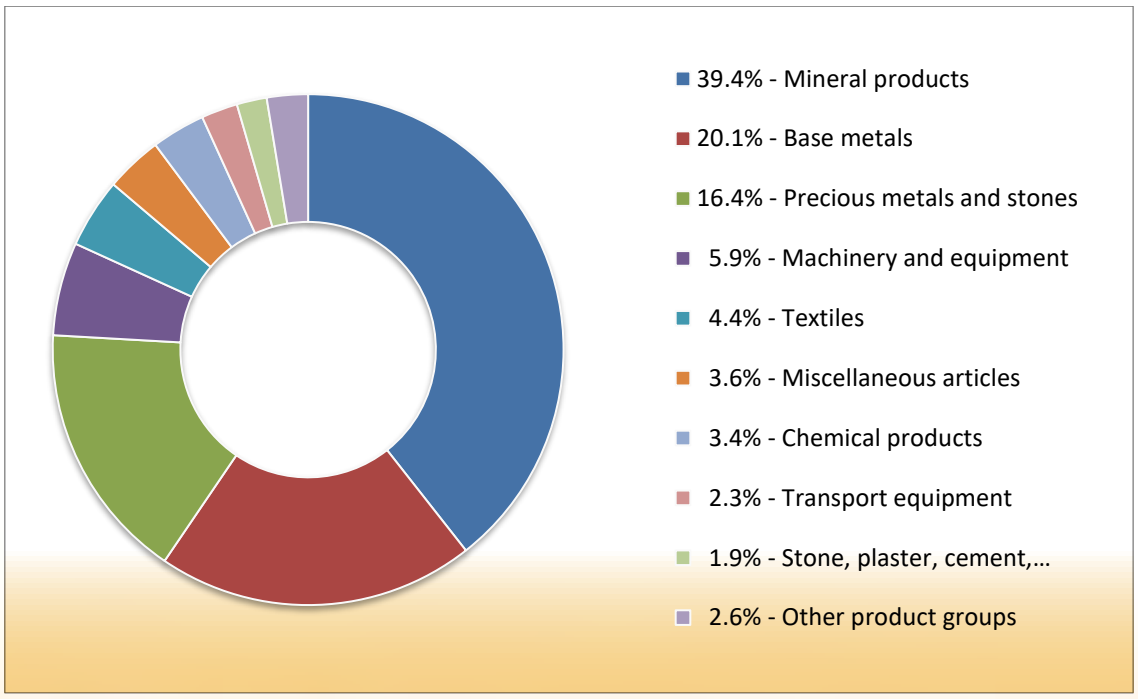
Imports of **base metals** (main subsections: 'flat-rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel' and 'structures and parts of structures (for example, bridges and bridge-sections, lock-gates, towers, lattice masts, roofs, roofing frameworks, doors and windows and their frames and thresholds for doors, shutters, balustrades, pillars and columns), of iron or steel; plates, rods, angles, shapes, sections, tubes and the like, prepared for use in structures, of iron or steel') amounted to €145.2 million, which is equivalent to a share of 20.1%.

Precious metals and stones, composed primarily of 'non-industrial diamonds', completed the top three of largest sections of Belgian imports of goods from the UAE. The value of this group of products amounted to €118.3 million, which corresponds to a share of 16.4%.

The six other product groups that also accounted for a share of more than 1.0% of Belgian imports of goods from the UAE were:

- **machinery and equipment**: €42.4 million, corresponding to a 5.9% share;
- **textiles**: €31.5 million, corresponding to a 4.4% share;
- **miscellaneous manufactured articles**: €25.6 million, corresponding to a 3.6% share;
- **chemical and pharmaceutical products**: €24.5 million, corresponding to a 3.4% share;
- **transport equipment**: €16.3 million, corresponding to a 2.3% share; and
- **stone, plaster, cement,…**: €13.6 million, corresponding to a 1.9% share.

FIGURE 4: BREAKDOWN OF BELGIAN IMPORTS FROM THE UAE BY PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES (IN %) — 2025



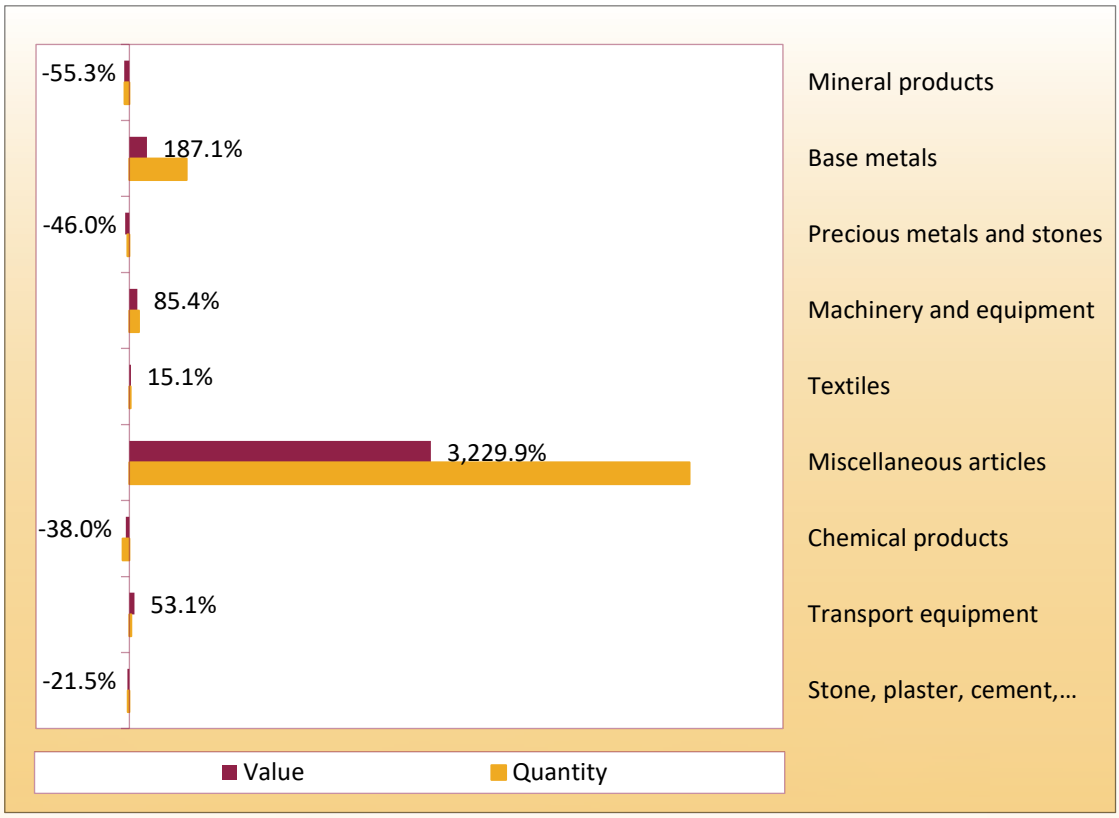
The 30.5% decrease in total Belgian imports of goods from the UAE in 2025 was largely driven by a sharp fall in the **mineral products** category, which dropped by 55.3%. The value of this category was down by €351.4 million, largely due to lower imports of 'medium and heavy oils'.

Stone, plaster, cement,… (-21.5%, or €-3.7 million), **chemical and pharmaceutical products** (-38.0%, or €-15.0 million) and **precious metals and stones** (-46.0%, or €-100.8 million) were the other categories with a share of more than 1.0% of total imports to experience a fall in value. Decreased imports in the latter reflected a lower value in the subsection 'non-industrial diamonds, unworked or simply sawn, cleaved or bruted'.

By contrast, imports of **miscellaneous manufactured articles** grew from only €769,200 in 2024 to €25.6 million in 2025 (+3,229.9%) due largely to higher imports of 'modular prefabricated building units, of steel'. The fact that the imported quantity grew at a significantly higher rate than its value indicates that the unit price for this group of products was lower in 2025 than in the previous year.

The four other product groups with a share of more than 1.0% of which imports grew, displayed increases ranging from 15.1% for **textiles** to 187.1% for **base metals**. The €94.6 million rise in the latter category can partly be attributed to higher import values for 'flat-rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel' and 'structures and parts of structures (for example, bridges and bridge-sections, lock-gates, towers, lattice masts, roofs, roofing frameworks, doors and windows and their frames and thresholds for doors, shutters, balustrades, pillars and columns), of iron or steel; plates, rods, angles, shapes, sections, tubes and the like, prepared for use in structures, of iron or steel'.

FIGURE 5: VARIATION OF IMPORTS FROM THE UAE BY PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES (IN VALUE AND QUANTITY) — 2025/2024



3.2 TRADE IN SERVICES

In 2025, the value of Belgian exports of services to the UAE increased by **1.0%** (€+7.9 million) to **€803.5 million**. As a result, the UAE moved up to the **22nd** place on the list of most important clients of Belgium with a **0.6%** share of total Belgian exports of services, after Romania, but before Portugal.

Belgian imports of services from the UAE represented a value of **€579.3 million** in 2025, a **0.9%** (€-5.4 million) decrease compared to the previous year. The UAE was the **30th** most important supplier of services to Belgium in 2025 with a **0.4%** share of total Belgian imports of services, after Hungary and before Russia.

TABLE 4: EVOLUTION OF BELGIUM'S TRADE IN SERVICES WITH THE UAE

In million €	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Exports	519.9	708.2	676.3	795.6	803.5
Imports	516.4	577.1	619.2	584.7	579.3
Trade balance	3.5	131.1	57.1	210.9	224.2
Exports: variation (in %)	35.8	36.2	-4.5	17.6	1.0
Imports: variation (in %)	34.3	11.7	7.3	-5.6	-0.9

Over the past five years, Belgium's **services trade balance** with the UAE was positive each year, with exports of services to the UAE consistently exceeding imports from 2021 to 2025.

Belgium's services trade surplus with the UAE, which stood at just €3.5 million in 2021, increased to €131.1 million a year later, as exports outperformed imports. However, in 2023, imports continued to grow while exports declined, resulting in the trade surplus falling to €57.1 million. In 2024 and 2025, the situation reversed compared to 2023, with exports rebounding from their 2023 slump while imports declined in both years. As a result, the trade surplus rose to €210.9 million in 2024, before increasing further to €224.2 million in 2025 - the highest level of the period under review.

The services trade balance showed similarities to the goods trade balance from 2021 to 2025, as both remained positive for Belgium throughout the entire period under review.

3.2.1 EXPORTS

In 2025, **transportation services** was the largest section in terms of total Belgian **exports** of services to the UAE with a share of 34.6% and a value of €277.8 million. This category of services is composed of sea transport, air transport, space transport, rail transport, road transport, inland waterway transport and pipeline transport. **Other business services** took 2nd place with 20.8%, while **telecommunications, computer and information services** settled in third place with a share of 20.2%.

The higher value of **other business services** was the main reason why total Belgian services exports to the UAE grew by 1.0% in 2025. Exports in this category increased by 25.0% (€+33.4 million), bringing their value to €167.2 million.

Furthermore, exports of **financial services**, which were good for €40.1 million in 2024, increased by 12.1% in 2025 to €45.0 million. Theses services facilitate international trade by providing the essential credit, liquidity and risk management required for cross-border transactions. They drive global economic activity by offering multi-currency clearing, insurance and trade financing, acting as a crucial enabler for both the export of commercial services and the movement of physical goods.

The rise in exports of the above services groups was slightly more significant than the decrease in the value of the **other remaining services** (-0.4%, or €-452,000) and the three categories from the top five for which exports declined. While the drop in exports of **telecommunications, computer, and information services** was limited to 0.7% (€-1.1 million), the fall in **transportation services** amounted to 2.9% (€-8.2 million). Furthermore, **royalties and licence fees** decreased by 33.0% (€-20.5 million) in value. The latter refers to payments made across borders for the authorized use of intangible proprietary assets, such as patents, trademarks, copyrights and franchises.

TABLE 5: BELGIAN EXPORTS TO THE UAE BY PRINCIPAL SERVICES

In million €	2024	2025	2025/2024 Var. (in %)	2025 Share (in %)
Transportation services	286.1	277.8	-2.9	34.6
Other business services	133.8	167.2	25.0	20.8
Telecommunications, computer and information services	163.7	162.6	-0.7	20.2
Financial services	40.1	45.0	12.1	5.6
Royalties and licence fees	62.2	41.6	-33.0	5.2
Other remaining services	109.7	109.3	-0.4	13.6
Total	**795.6**	**803.5**	**1.0**	**100.0**

3.2.2 IMPORTS

In 2025, **other business services** were the largest section of total Belgian imports of services from the UAE. Their value amounted to €212.2 million, which corresponds to a share of 36.6%. This category of services includes 'merchanting', 'operational leasing services', 'legal services', 'accounting, auditing, bookkeeping and tax consultancy services', 'advertising, market research and public opinion polling' and 'waste treatment and depollution'. **Telecommunications, computer and information services** took 2nd place with 23.5%, while **transportation services** settled in third place with a share of 17.0%.

The lower value for **transportation services** was the main reason why total Belgian imports of services from the UAE fell by 0.9% in 2025. Imports of this section recorded a 21.8% (€-27.4 million) decline. This category includes all services provided by residents of one economy to residents of another economy that involve the transport of persons, the movement of goods (freight), the rental (charter) of vehicles with crew and related support services.

Furthermore, imports of **telecommunications, computer and information services**, which were good for €144.8 million in 2024, fell by 5.9% in 2025 to €136.2 million.

The decline in imports of the above services groups and the **other remaining services** (-42.2%, or €-20.4 million) was more significant than the increases in **travel services** (+7.1%, or €+6.1 million) - reflecting higher spending by Belgian tourists and businesspeople visiting the UAE - **other business services** (+20.0%, or €+35.4 million), and **maintenance and repair services** (+313.2%, or €+9.6 million). The latter includes maintenance and repair work carried out by residents on goods owned by non-residents (and vice versa). Such repairs may be performed at the site of the repairer or elsewhere and include work on ships, aircraft, and other transport equipment.

TABLE 6: BELGIAN IMPORTS FROM THE UAE BY PRINCIPAL SERVICES

In million €	2024	2025	2025/2024 Var. (in %)	2025 Share (in %)
Other business services	176.8	212.2	20.0	36.6
Telecommunications, computer and information services	144.8	136.2	-5.9	23.5
Transportation services	126.1	98.7	-21.8	17.0
Travel services	85.6	91.7	7.1	15.8
Maintenance and repair services	3.1	12.7	313.2	2.2
Other remaining services	48.2	27.8	-42.2	4.8
Total	**584.7**	**579.3**	**-0.9**	**100.0**

4 ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR THE UAE

Economic structure (2025 - estimates)	
GDP	$571.6 billion
GDP growth rate	5.8%
Inflation rate	1.3%
Exports of goods (2024 - FOB)	$439.4 billion
Imports of goods (2024 - FOB)	$444.7 billion
Trade balance (2024)	$-5.3 billion
Population	11.4 million
Unemployment rate	2.2%
Main clients (2024): % of total	
India	9.7
Iraq	7.5
Saudi Arabia	7.5
Main suppliers (2024): % of total	
China	18.9
India	7.4
United States	5.9
Main exports (2024): % of total	
Crude petroleum oils and crude oils obtained from bituminous minerals	18.0
Gold, incl. gold plated with platinum, unwrought or not further worked than semi-manufactured	17.8
Petroleum oils and oils from bituminous minerals (excl. crude)	10.0
Main imports (2024): % of total	
Gold, incl. gold plated with platinum, unwrought or not further worked than semi-manufactured	23.7
Telephone sets, incl. smartphones and other telephones for cellular networks or for other wireless networks	9.5
Motor cars and other motor vehicles principally designed for the transport of <10 persons, incl. station wagons and racing cars	6.3

Sources: IMF + International Trade Centre

5 INDEX OF THE UNIT PRICE FOR IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

The table below gives an overview of the development of the index of the unit price for imports and exports for Belgium (with the world).

This index facilitates an analysis of the general development of the price of goods. This makes it possible to consider the global development of Belgian imports and exports in perspective by determining the part that is caused by price developments (and hence which part is caused by a change in quantity).

The table has to be interpreted as follows:
If a given product had an export value of €100 in the year 2021, then this product had an average value of €122.2 in 2025. The same principle applies to imports. If a particular product had an import value of €100 in 2021, the same product then had an import value of €122.2 in 2025.

TABLE 7: INDEX OF THE UNIT VALUE OF TOTAL BELGIAN EXPORTS AND IMPORTS (2021=100)

	Export	Import
2016	80.3	78.1
2017	84.7	83.8
2018	87.9	88.7
2019	89.9	91.2
2020	89.9	89.0
2021	100.0	100.0
2022	126.9	129.2
2023	119.6	118.6
2024	119.5	120.0
2025	122.2	122.2

6 Sources

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Eurostat, European Commission — http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat

World Trade Organization — www.wto.org

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