ACTIVITY REPORT 2013

belgian
foreign trade agency

MISSION STATEMENT

In accordance with Article 3 of the Cooperation Agreement dated 24 May 2002 agreed between the Federal Government and the Regions, the Agency is responsible for:

.....

→ deciding on and organising trade missions linked to an initiative by one or several of the Regions or at the request of the Federal Government;

.....

→ organising, developing and disseminating information, studies and documentation about external markets to regional services responsible for foreign trade in accordance with Appendix 1;

.....

→ tasks of common interest decided unanimously by the Board.

belgian
foreign trade agency

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Although the forecasts for world trade for 2013 had to be adjusted downwards, the year nevertheless ended on a relatively positive note. The European economy is regaining its lustre, and after a difficult recovery, the countries that were worst affected can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Furthermore, new prospects are opening up with the conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Canada. Once implemented, the agreement could increase bilateral trade in goods and services by 23%, equivalent to approximately EUR 26 billion. This would benefit growth and employment on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

On 21 July 2013, Belgium saw an historic event with the Accession of His Majesty King Philippe. We wish him a prosperous and harmonious reign. The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency has the honour of having His Majesty the King as Honorary President, which demonstrates how much importance he attaches to foreign trade. We welcome the personal commitment of our Monarch and we assure him of our full support.

Before his Accession in July, His Majesty presided over two joint economic missions, one to Thailand in March and one to the United States (Los Angeles and San Francisco) in June. As usual, both missions attracted an impressive number of participants. In the autumn, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid took up the torch of the presidency of the missions as Representative of His Majesty the King. Both the Angola/South Africa trade mission in October and the India mission in November were a great success. The performance of the Princess, who displayed great commitment on behalf of Belgian companies, was widely appreciated.

The organising partners, AWEX (the Wallonia Foreign Trade and Investment Agency), Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade, as well as the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, which work tirelessly to ensure the quality of activities and commercial contacts during missions, undoubtedly welcome the numerous participations, but also the high degree of satisfaction from the business world. In 2013, the missions again saw a record number of participants. 1,033 businesswomen and men - representing 650 companies - took part in the four successive missions. The total number of participants from the private and public sectors comes to 1,309. These figures are close to the record of 2011.

In 2013, the Agency's other services saw their workload increase considerably. The Regulations Department continues to handle around 600 files a year, and the Statistics Department has again extended its sphere of action. The economic studies and the sectoral study on "Belgian advanced materials - Plastics & rubber", as well as the trade opportunities, were disseminated on a large scale to exporters.

The Agency's employees were able to achieve outstanding results in spite of the restrictions, for which I would like to thank them. I also congratulate the General Management for once again displaying the necessary energy and optimism within the team to develop new projects.

ANNEMIE NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK
President of the Board of Directors

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT

In 2013, Belgian foreign trade experienced another year of stabilisation. Exports saw a slight increase in growth, while imports fell slightly. The trade balance therefore remains almost the same. Although the countries of Europe remain our main trading partners, Belgian exporters are still clearly interested in more distant markets, aware as they are of the importance of customer diversification. This interest is reflected in the high number of participants in the joint economic missions.

2013 was a major turning point for the missions. HRH Prince Philippe presided over the first two missions of the year before ascending the throne on 21 July. The Agency's entire team was honoured to have been able to offer its competences at the service of our new Monarch for ten years, and it was not without some regret that we saw the end of this exciting time. The transition was assured by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, who took over the Presidency of the two missions in the second half of the year with enthusiasm.

The countries visited in 2013 (Thailand, the United States, Angola/South Africa and India) had highly diverse market characteristics, but nevertheless met with the same success among our businesswomen and men. The figures for 2012 were greatly exceeded, with a total of 1,033 businesswomen and men signing up for the four missions. These figures are no accident. They indicate the extent to which participants are satisfied with the quality of their contacts - whether political contacts or B2B - but also with seminars or other key activities of the missions. All credit goes to the regional and Federal partners of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, who worked ceaselessly to organise the missions.

The website www.belgianeconomicmission.be, devoted to each specific mission, attracted a large number of visitors and was optimised for smartphones and tablets. It is the perfect tool for keeping participants up to speed with the latest developments of the missions.

The parent site continued its positive growth, with +21% visits in 2013 after making remarkable progress the previous year. The English version of the site, which was launched this year, contributed to this increased growth.

The Statistics Department still has the wind in its sails in terms of specific requests and bilateral memos. The implementation of a new IT system enables statistics subscriptions to be managed more efficiently, which allowed these to be expanded in 2013. The Regulations Department in turn developed an Incoterm application that was launched via the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency's website and which has enjoyed great success among exporters. In addition, there were a further 613 specific questions that were dealt with by the team. Among the trade opportunities that were spread around selectively by the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency in 2013, international projects saw the most growth, with an increase of +150%. At the end of 2013, the Belgian Exporters' Database contained 23,200 companies.

2013 was an eventful year, but the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency displayed the necessary flexibility to meet these new challenges. The financial year also closed with a surplus, signifying the start of a promising future.

FABIENNE L'HOOST
Deputy Director General

MARC BOGAERTS
Director General

STRATEGY & OBJECTIVES FOR 2014

2014 will be a pivotal year, with many challenges at the national level that could have an impact on activities within the Agency. As a consequence of the 6th State Reform, the role of the Regions will be strengthened, in a way as yet to be agreed.

Exceptionally, because of the elections on 25 May 2014, only three princely missions will be organised this year. However, it is still important to safeguard the quality of the organisation that has characterised the joint missions to date thanks to the combined efforts of all organising partners. The dual destinations of each mission this year and the still high number of participants will require a great effort on the part of the Department's employees.

The other challenges for 2014 lie mainly in the area of IT, and in that regard the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency will continue its fruitful collaboration with the FPS Information and Communication Technology. There are several projects in the pipeline, including the implementation of a new management system for the organisation

of the missions. The intention is also to modernise the Belgian Exporters' Database, give more prominence to commercial opportunities and enrich the sources.

As regards communication, the mission websites have already been optimised for use on smartphones and tablets. In addition, a specific app will now be introduced to make it eAsiar to stay in touch with participants.

Parallel to this, the Management will continue its efforts on behalf of good management with a savings policy to absorb the reduction in budgetary allocations. This will allow the Agency to meet any new demands that may arise in the new political landscape after the elections.

INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is a public institution, which is an incorporated body, founded under the Cooperation Agreement of 24 May 2002 agreed between the Federal Government and the Regions (Belgian Official Gazette 20 December 2002).

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is managed by a Board of Directors whose Honorary President is His Majesty the King. The Board consists of sixteen members appointed by the Regional Governments and the Federal Government, providing equal representation of public and private sectors. Each Region appoints a Government Commissioner.

The Agency's Board of Directors held four meetings in 2013.

A Support Committee coordinates the implementation of decisions taken by the Board of Directors. Chaired by the Agency's Director General, it consists of three officials managing regional export institutions (AWEX, Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade) and the Director General responsible for bilateral economic relations for the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The Support Committee held five meetings in 2013.

The Agency's daily management is carried out by a Director General assisted by a Deputy Director General, both appointed by the Board of Directors and belonging to a different linguistic group. Marc Bogaerts is the Director General and Fabienne L'Hoost is the Deputy Director General.

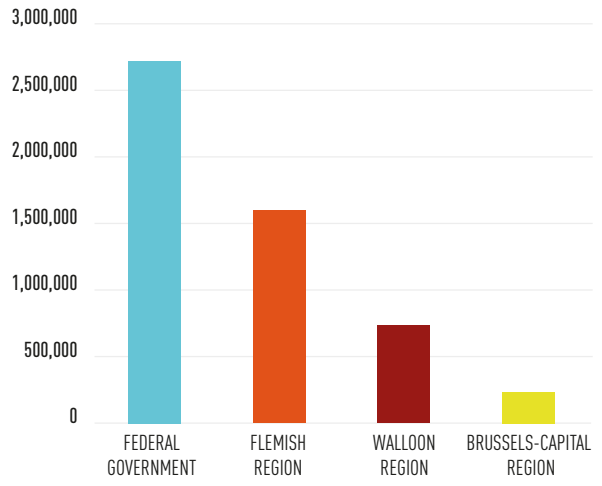
BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS FOR 2013

The Agency is funded by an indexed Federal grant and by contributions from the Regions based on the distribution scale with regard to taxes on natural persons. Revenues for the 2013 budget (approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting held on 05 December 2013) amounted to EUR 5,481,784.00. Federal and Regional allocations represent the greatest part (96.46%) of these revenues.

tab.1 Total Allocations in 2013

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	2.721.000,00
WALLOON REGION	734.000,00
BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION	233.784,00
FLEMISH REGION	1.599.000,00

fig.1 Breakdown of allocations in 2013



STAFF MEMBERS 2013

The Cooperation Agreement stipulates that the number of Agency staff members may not exceed fifty.
On 31 December 2013, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency employed forty members of staff. After deducting the number of part-time and sick employees and those seconded to other institutions, this equates to 36.67 full-time equivalents.

1

THE BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE AGENCY IN 2013

1.1
Joint trade missions

1.2
Information centre

1.3
Studies, statistics and tax certificates

1.4
Regulations and legal questions

1.5
Websites

1.6
Collaboration on third-party initiatives

1.1

JOINT TRADE MISSIONS

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency organises joint trade missions in collaboration with regional authorities that promote exports: the Wallonia Foreign Trade & Investment Agency, Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade. The FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation manages the political aspects and protocol for the programme.

In 2013, no fewer than 1,309 businesswomen and men, officials and journalists took part in four joint economic missions to Thailand, the United States, Angola and South Africa, as well as India. After the record numbers in 2011, this represents the largest participation ever.

The first two missions of the year were successfully presided over by His Royal Highness Prince Philippe before his Accession on 21 July 2013. The official meetings at the highest level and the large number of commercial opportunities contributed to the success of these missions. In her capacity as Representative of His Majesty the King, Princess Astrid took up the torch for the two other missions in 2013. The high number of participants in these missions is evidence of the commitment of HRH Princess Astrid on behalf of the companies.

THAILAND

16 > 22 March 2013

Whereas 54 businesswomen and men took part in the previous economic mission to Thailand in 2001, in March 2013 HRH Prince Philippe travelled to Bangkok at the head of a delegation of 240 participants, including 171 entrepreneurs. The tripling of the number of participants points to the increasing commercial opportunities and the confidence justified by this country over the past decade.

The competent Federal and regional ministers took part at the side of HRH Prince Philippe and HRH Princess Mathilde: Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs; Kris Peeters, Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for the Economy, Foreign Policy, Agricultural and Rural Policy; Jean-Claude Marcourt, Vice President and Minister for the Economy, SMEs, Foreign Trade and New Technologies of the Walloon Government and Minister for Higher Education of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels; and Céline Fremault, Brussels Minister for the Economy, Employment, Scientific Research, Trade, Foreign Trade, Health, Vocational Training for the Self-Employed and the Civil Service, for whom it was a first encounter with a joint economic mission.

In a kingdom such as Thailand, the presence of a Crown Prince throws the doors wide open for making contacts at the highest level. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej granted the Belgian royal couple an audience in the Siriraj hospital, where the King was staying at the time.

In addition, no fewer than nine Thai ministers met with Belgian officials and business leaders. During this trade mission, the Wallonia Foreign Trade & Investment Agency, Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade organised various themed sessions, where the respective competent ministers were in attendance:

- During the session "Thailand at a glance", the macro-economic background and investment opportunities were outlined in the presence of Boonsong Teriyapirom, Minister of Commerce;
- The presentation of the collaboration between AGEAS and Muang Thai Life Assurance was attended by Kittiratt Na-Ranong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. The delegation was able to meet this minister a second time during the session: "Thailand as a regional hub";
- Yukol Limlamthong, Minister of Agriculture, took part in the information session "Agro-food possibilities in Thailand";

- Chadchart Sittipunt, Minister of Transport, was present during the session "Infrastructure & logistics";

- The information session "Healthcare & pharmaceuticals" was attended by Pradit Sintavanarong, Minister of Public Health;

- Finally, Pongsak Ruktapongpisal, Minister of Energy, took part in the information session "Clean technology & renewable energy".

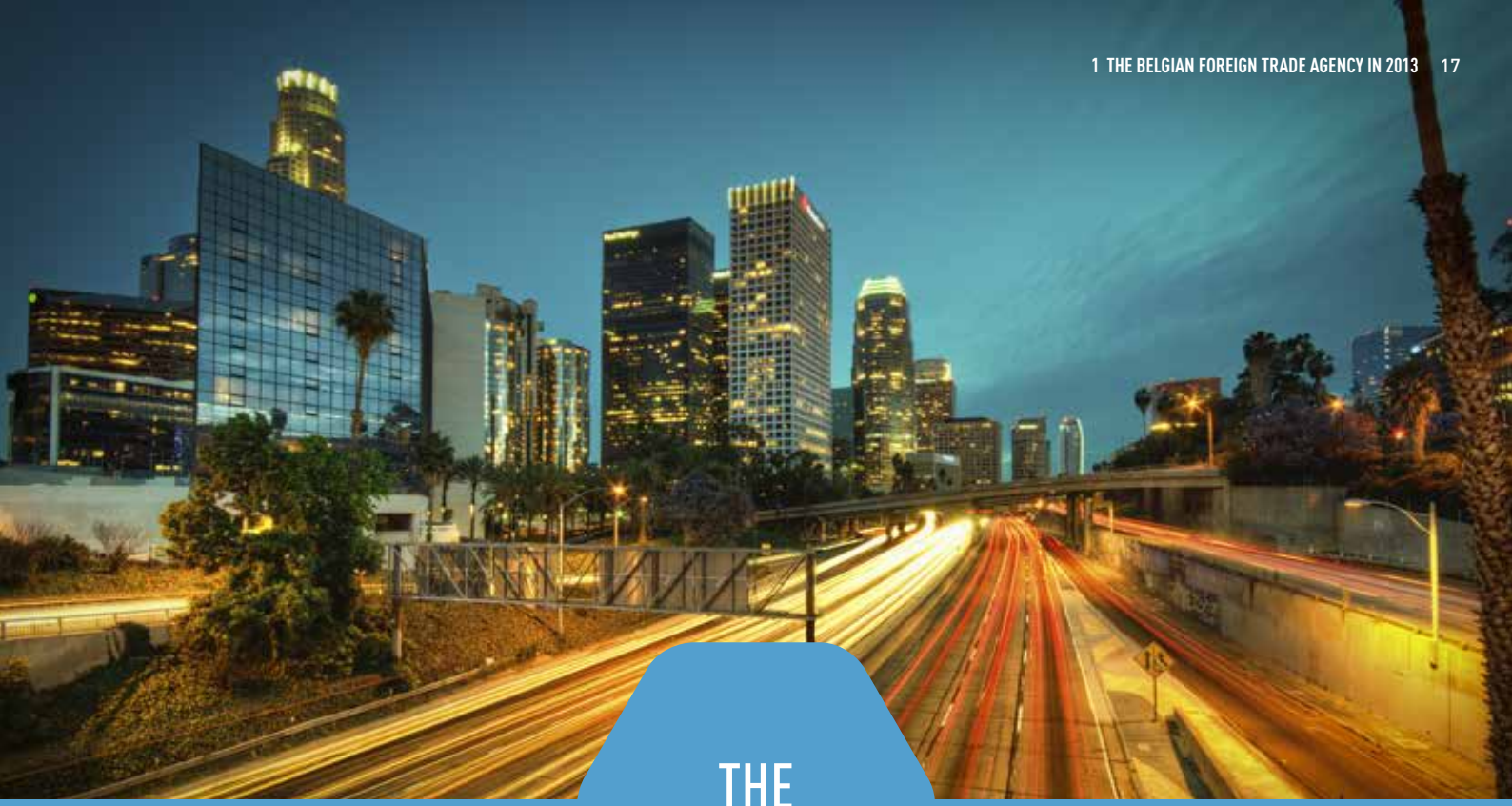
In addition to these meetings, a meeting with Prasert Boonchaisuk, Minister of Industry, and a bilateral discussion between Minister Didier Reynders and his Thai counterpart, Surapong Tovichakchaikul, were also on the agenda.

The majestic "Government House" was adorned with hundreds of Belgian flags, giving it a Belgian flavour when it welcomed the entire delegation for an official reception. This was preceded by an audience with Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand. An exclusive state ball and a concert by Jef Neve in the "Bangkok Arts and Culture Centre" also brought Belgians and Thais together to network even more.

The programme also included two visits outside the capital. A first visit was made to the industrial estate of Map Ta Phut, where several Belgian investments were officially extended in the presence of HRH Prince Philippe. Welcomed by Veerapong Chaiperm, Governor of the Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand (IEAT), and Vichit Chatpaisit, Governor of the Province of Rayong, the IEAT, an agency responsible for managing the various industrial estates in Thailand, was visited. The programme continued with visits to Glow, Katoennatie and Solvay Vinythai.

On the final day of the mission, around thirty Belgians travelled to the province of Petchaburi, where a visit was made to the "sea farming learning centre" accompanied by the governor of the province. Among other things, the delegation learned of the importance of aquaculture to the Thai economy. The aim of this initiative of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit is to improve living conditions among fishing communities.

In 1868, Thailand and Belgium signed the first Friendship and Trade Treaty. Over the past 145 years, intensive diplomatic and economic exchanges have taken place. This latest trade mission certainly further intensified these ties and the flow of trade even more: nine contracts signed between Thai and Belgian companies, the signing of the "Joint Plan of Action between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Kingdom of Belgium" and an increase in the number of flights between Bangkok and Brussels by Thai Airways can only confirm this objective.



THE UNITED STATES

LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO / SILICON VALLEY

2 > 9 June 2013

On Sunday, 2 June, HRH Prince Philippe set off on an economic mission to Los Angeles and San Francisco at the head of an impressive delegation of business-women and men. 394 participants, including no fewer than 325 entrepreneurs and 4 ministers, signed up for this mission.

For the Federal Government, Didier Reynders (2-5 June), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs; Pieter De Crem (5-9 June), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, took each other's place, while the Regions were represented by Jean-Claude Marcourt, Vice President and Minister for the Economy, SMEs, Foreign Trade and New Technologies of the Walloon Government and Minister for Higher Education of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and Céline Fremault, Brussels Minister for the Economy, Employment, Scientific Research, Trade, Foreign Trade, Health, Vocational Training for the Self-Employed and the Civil Service.

California, which represents 13% of the GDP of the United States, mainly attracted companies from the ICT sector. Of the 217 participating companies, 86 are active in this sector. They are particularly concerned with the intensive programme in Silicon Valley. Not surprisingly, the audiovisual sector also had a strong presence in order to highlight the strong points of the Belgian film industry. With a visit to the Walt Disney Company and the organisation of a seminar, "This must be Belgium", at which all the major Hollywood players were in attendance, this initiative appeared to be a success.

In 2012, the export figures for Belgian foods amounted to EUR 345 million. Consequently, our gastronomy was also a feature of this trade mission. With the launch of the campaign "food.be" during the official reception, the Food Industry Federation (FEVIA) wanted to give an extra boost to exports in this sector. But what those present will certainly remember about this evening is the speech given by HRH Prince Philippe, which was met with great enthusiasm by the Belgian and American guests.

Besides the official reception, Belgian participants had the chance to network at a lunch organised in conjunction with the Pacific Council, the organisation par excellence that brings together key business leaders in Los Angeles. Interesting people were also brought together around a single table at a dinner given by the mayor of Los Angeles.

The pharmaceutical sector and life sciences were once again discussed during a visit to AMGEN, which has a joint venture with UCB; the activities in San Diego were organised by Janssen Pharmaceutica and Essenscia, and the life sciences seminar in San Francisco.

More than one third of participating companies were in turn able to make interesting contacts in Silicon Valley with visits to NEA, Google, HP and Cisco.

Even after presenting an extensive briefing to the 50 delegation members, NEA, one of the largest venture capital companies in Silicon Valley, gave a number of Belgian companies the chance to make their pitches in order to attract possible investments.

The visits to HP, Google and Cisco proved to be real high points. Meg Whitman, CEO of HP, took plenty of time to welcome the Belgian delegation. The atmosphere on the Google Campus, with free bicycles and umbrellas in the typical Google colours, was very much enjoyed.

Demonstrations of the very latest technologies were inevitable, and the delegation was treated to "Google Glass" at Google and "Telepresence" at Cisco.

The trade mission ended in a friendly atmosphere with a visit to Stanford University, where a presentation was given on the life and role of Herbert Hoover during the First World War. Finally, officials also met representatives of the Belgian universities, Belgian students and professors working at Stanford under a radiant sun.

With ten contracts signed, considerable and positive press attention and above all satisfied entrepreneurs, this trade mission was a real success.

ANGOLA & SOUTH AFRICA

20 > 26 October 2013

For the first economic mission headed by HRH Princess Astrid, a delegation of 335 participants travelled to Luanda, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town, amid great media interest.

Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs; Kris Peeters, Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for the Economy, Foreign Policy, Agricultural and Rural Policy; and Céline Fremault, Brussels Minister for the Economy, Employment, Scientific Research, Trade, Foreign Trade, Health, Vocational Training for the Self-Employed and the Civil Service, took part in the Angola section. Princess Astrid and Minister Reynders flew on to South Africa, where they were joined by Pieter De Crem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence; Rudy Demotte, Minister-President of the Walloon Region and the Federation Wallonia-Brussels; Ingrid Lieten, Deputy Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Innovation, Public Investment, Media and Poverty Reduction; and Jean-Claude Marcourt, Vice President and Minister for the Economy, SMEs, Foreign Trade and New Technologies of the Walloon Government and Minister for Higher Education of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels.

If it was the Belgians' first experience of an economic mission to Central Africa, it also seemed unusual for the Angolans to receive a delegation of this size. The enthusiasm with which the host country welcomed the delegation members was evident from, among other things, the number of official meetings that were able to take place, despite the brief stay.

Manuel Vicente, Vice President of the Republic, and Fernando Piedade dos Santos, President of the National Assembly of Angola, received the Princess and the Ministers for a meeting. Georges Chikoti, Minister for Foreign Affairs, held an official lunch at which Candido Van Dunem, Minister for Defence, was also present.

Abrao Gourgel, Minister for the Economy, and Rosa Pacavira de Matos, Minister for Trade, attended the activity "Angola at a glance", organised by AWEX, Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade together with the Belgian embassy. The purpose of this session was to outline the macro-economic situation of Angola as well as the investment opportunities for Belgian companies.

Even though the government is making a great effort to develop and promote non-oil-related sectors, the petroleum sector nevertheless remains the engine of the Angolan economy. The Carbon Energy Club brought around twenty Belgian companies and the management of Sonangol, the national oil company, around the table. To shed further light on the Belgian companies' strong points, a "Power dinner energy" was also organised in the presence of José Maria Botelho Vasconcelos, Minister for Petroleum.

After the petroleum industry, diamonds are Angola's most important export product. The AWDC organised a network activity in Luanda with Angolan representatives from the private and public sector at which Francisco Manuel Monteiro Queiroz, Minister for Mines, Geology and Industry, was also present.

During the official delegation's visit to the Paim Hospital, GSK was able to show how it is working closely with the Angolan government in the fight against cervical cancer. That day, around a hundred girls were vaccinated in the presence of a large number of journalists. Given that Angola has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world, these images lent a very human character to the mission. This emphasised that there are contacts and exchanges between both countries in both directions, which was an important message for the Angolans.

In South Africa, the delegation was received for a meeting by Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, followed by an official lunch. A meeting with Helen Zille, Premier of the Western Cape, and Patricia de Lille, Mayor of Cape Town, was also on the agenda.

Here, the main topic of discussion was the academic component, with, among other things, a visit to the Belgium Campus in Pretoria. At this, university students can take an ICT course that was set up and is still headed by the Belgian Enrico Jacobs. In Cape Town, two activities shed light on the collaboration between Belgian and South African educational institutions: a networking dinner "Prospects for closer cooperation between South African and Belgian universities" and the activity "Linking business and academia through innovation and mobility".

In Pretoria, the AWDC organised a seminar and a round table to shed light on the important role of South Africa and Antwerp in the Kimberley Process.

A limited official delegation visited the offices and a hospital of Doctors without Borders in Khayelitsha Township. The Princess and the Ministers present were informed of the initiatives taken as part of the fight against AIDS.

Another visit is that to the icebreaker SA Agulhas II in the port of Cape Town. This took place in the presence of Alain Hubert, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Polar Foundation. After all, South Africa plays a vital role in the preparation of missions to the Princess Elisabeth station in Antarctica. During this activity, the International Polar Foundation, based in Brussels, signed a cooperation agreement with the South African National Antarctic Programme. Fifteen agreements were signed during the mission.

INDIA

22 > 29 November 2013

Traditionally, BRIC countries are always popular destinations, and things were no different for the last economic mission of 2013. The trade mission to India brought HRH Princess Astrid; Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs; Kris Peeters, Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for the Economy, Foreign Policy, Agricultural and Rural Policy; and Céline Fremault, Brussels Minister for the Economy, Employment, Scientific Research, Trade, Foreign Trade, Health, Vocational Training for the Self-Employed and the Civil Service, together with 340 participants, to New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. The mission took place in the same year in which Europalia placed Indian culture in the spotlight.

The official programme began with a networking lunch given by Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce and Industry; a timely opportunity for Belgian officials and CEOs to meet leading Indians. Besides the Minister for Commerce and Industry, the Union Cabinet Minister, New and Renewable Energy, Farooq Abdullah, and G.K. Vasan, Minister of Shipping, met the Belgian delegation in the course of the week. The programme in New Delhi ended with an official dinner, given by Salman Khurshid, Minister for External Affairs.

The most represented sector was the pharmaceutical industry, which no surprise given the enormous potential of the Indian market. This is likely to be in the world's top ten by 2020. GSK, UCB and Mithra had the opportunity to present their activities and projects on the Indian market.

Almost 82% of Belgian exports to India in 2012 consisted of precious stones and precious metals. To underline the importance of this sector, a visit was made to the recently opened "diamond lab" of the HRD in Mumbai, followed by a meeting at the Antwerp Diamond Bank (ADB). Finally, the AWDC brought major Antwerp and Indian diamond dealers around the table to look at how the successful collaboration could be further improved.

India is also facing enormous challenges such as energy and the modernisation of its infrastructure. AWEX, Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade responded to this by organising seminars such as the "Seminar on clean technologies, waste management & renewable energy" in New Delhi, the "Belgium-India clean tech summit 2013" in Mumbai and the "Seminar urban infrastructure & logistics: a Belgian offer for Mumbai". Each of these was organised with an important Indian partner such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

In February 2013, Brussels Invest & Export opened an office in Chennai. Activities were organised in this context to promote Brussels as a tourist destination and a hub to Europe.

The visit to Tata Consultancy Services gave around twenty Belgian companies the chance to present their products and services to one of the largest Indian companies.

During the mission, the new offices of the Consulate-General in Mumbai were also officially inaugurated, and the opening of the Consulate-General in Chennai was also celebrated. In addition, no fewer than thirty-three contracts and cooperation agreements were signed.

Five years ago, the Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai was attacked, resulting in numerous fatalities. The Belgian delegation attended a memorial ceremony organised at the "Gateway of India".

The busy programme also left room for several cultural elements. As part of the official programme, HRH Princess Astrid laid a wreath at one of the most important monuments in New Delhi, the "India Gate", in memory of the Indian soldiers killed fighting for the British army during the First World War. For this occasion, a Belgian floral carpet, created in collaboration with the Floralies of Ghent and officially opened that same day, lay before the India Gate. In Mumbai, on the other hand, the Port of Antwerp organised a unique exhibition of seventeenth century Flemish masterworks, with paintings by Pieter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens in the Prince of Wales Museum.

1.2

INFORMATION CENTRE

In accordance with Article 2 of Appendix 1 to the Cooperation Agreement, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency organises, develops and disseminates documentation about foreign markets to regional organisations responsible for promoting foreign trade.

To carry out this task successfully, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is responsible for managing and upgrading a number of databases.

1.2.1

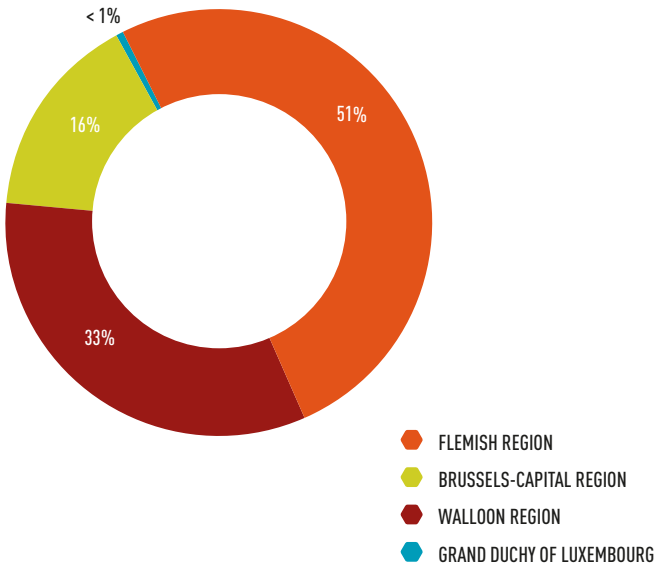
Belgian Exporters' Database

Each company registered in the database of Belgian and Luxembourg exporters is represented by a record that includes the details of that company. These details include general information about the company (contact details, contact persons, staff concerned, etc.) as well as information related to its activities (products/services) and to the export markets and interests of the exporter.

At the end of 2013, the Belgian Exporters' Database included almost 23,200 entries. Over 1,500 new registrations were recorded in the course of the year. The majority of these new registrations were communicated by regional organisations responsible for promoting foreign trade (AWEX, Brussels Invest & Export, and Flanders Investment & Trade).

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency classifies the companies' activities so that they receive the Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and are included on the website.

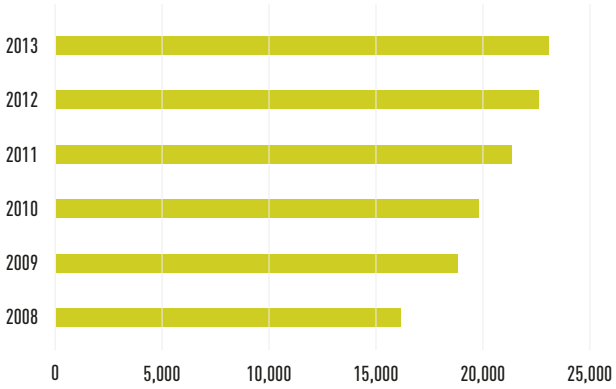
fig.2 Geographical breakdown of the Belgian Exporters' Database in 2013



There are regular exchanges between the various databases (Regions/BFTA) in order to transfer the products/services classified by the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency to the regional organisations' files. This synchronisation ensures that all the firms in the regional databases are included in the Belgian Exporters' Database.

In the course of 2013, almost 800 companies became inactive (cessations of trading, bankruptcies).

fig.3 Belgian Exporters' Database registration evolution, 2008 - 2013



BELGIAN EXPORTERS' DATABASE ON THE WEBSITE

The updated information in the database is available on the Agency's website. Each company or organisation wishing to obtain details of companies or address lists can contact the Department.

1.2.2

Selective Dissemination of Information

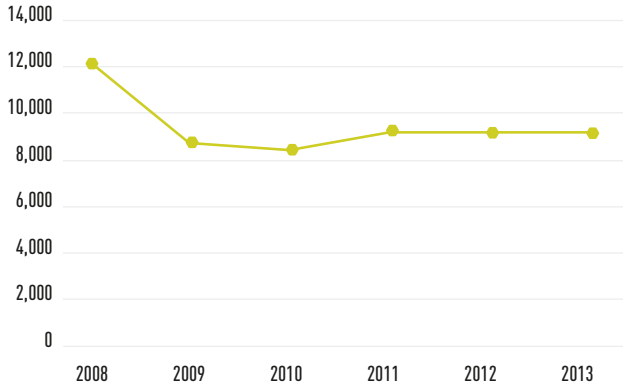
In the context of its task to gather information about foreign markets, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency communicates, on behalf of regional partners, three types of business opportunities to Belgian and Luxembourg companies registered in the Belgian Exporters' Database as well as circulating notices and Trade Flashes.

As previously mentioned, business proposals, tenders and international projects are circulated to companies quickly and using a targeted approach that takes into account the company's profile recorded in the database. This profile not only includes the products/services provided by the company, but also specifies the countries it

exports to and those it is interested in as stated when it registered or when its file was updated in the Belgian Exporters' Database. The notices are not necessarily subject to the combined selection of products/services and country as they may sometimes relate to invitations to economic or trade missions, or to contact days, or to inform companies about a new regulation that enters into force in an export market, or to a market they are interested in.

The Selective Dissemination of Information is provided to companies free of charge and bears the logo of the regional organisation for the promotion of foreign trade. It is sent electronically. In 2013, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency circulated 9,200 SDI announcements.

fig.4 Evolution in business proposal announcements, 2008 - 2013



tab.2 Number of announcements circulated per type of business opportunity, 2011 - 2013

	2011	2012	2013
Business proposals	427	387	300
Tenders	7,430	7,125	6,453
International projects	1,207	1,573	2,355
Notices (including Trade Flashes)	109	114	92

fig.5 Breakdown per type of business opportunity in 2013

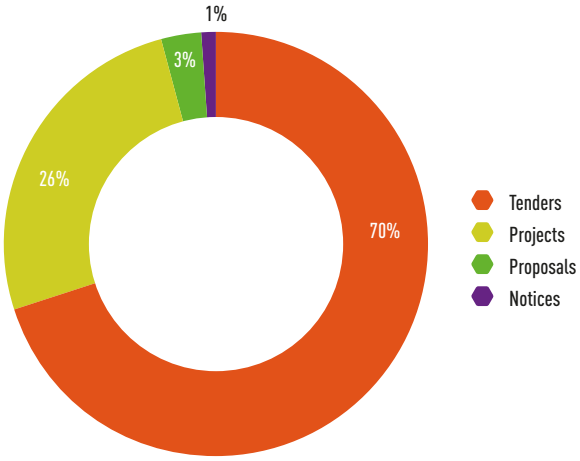


fig.6 Evolution per type of business opportunity, 2008 - 2013

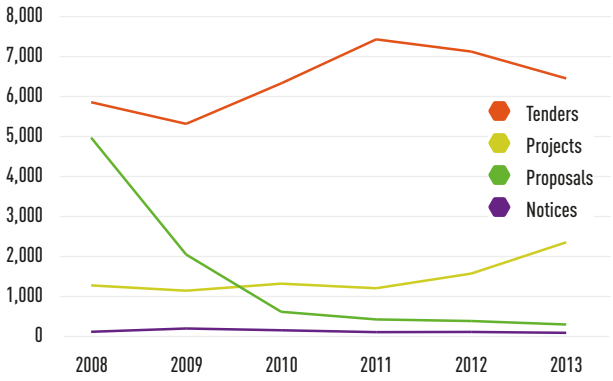
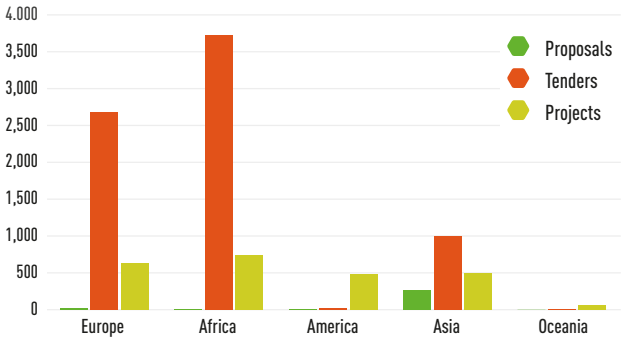


fig.7 Geographical breakdown of business opportunities by continent in 2013



tab.3 Top 10 locations per business opportunity

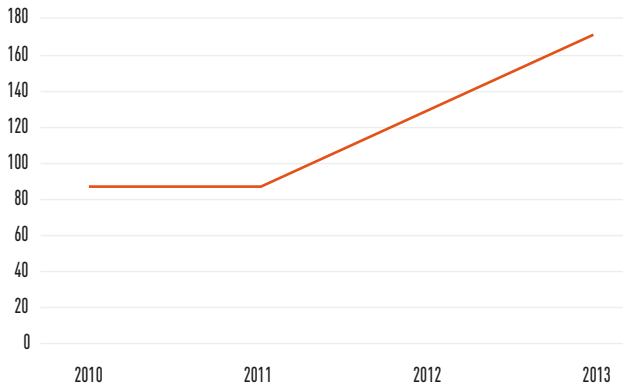
PROPOSAL	TENDER	PROJECT
Pakistan	Algeria	China
Lebanon	Germany	Brazil
Afghanistan	India	Morocco
Turkey	United Kingdom	Nigeria
India	France	Senegal
Hong Kong	Spain	Ghana
Argentina	the Netherlands	Kenya
United Kingdom	China	Guinea
Canada	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	Côte d'Ivoire
Jordan	Italy	Zambia

In 2013, the Tenders Department recorded an increase of almost 40% in companies' order specifications (there was already an increase of 50% in 2012 compared with 2011). The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency offers companies the opportunity to obtain specifications in order to allow them to participate in calls for tender in more distant markets.

To this end, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency contacts the departments in Belgian embassies and consulates or regional economic and commercial attachés responsible for obtaining the documents from official bodies and distributing them to companies.

Upon receipt of the statement of disbursement, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency reimburses the embassies/consulates or the regional economic or commercial attachés and draws up an invoice for the companies in euros. This process ensures that, on the one hand, companies obtain the vital documents they need in time to participate in the tender and, on the other, they do not have to bear the costs of fluctuating exchange rates.

fig.8 Number of order specifications, 2010 - 2013



1.2.3

Trade Flashes

The primary objective of a Trade Flash is to provide fast, concise and targeted information of economic and commercial interest to Belgian and Luxembourg companies listed in the Belgian Exporters' Database.

Trade Flashes are sent to companies by e-mail using Selective Dissemination of Information. All email bears the logo of the regional organisation for the promotion of foreign trade depending on the area in which the company is based. They are communicated in French or Dutch.

In 2013, ten Trade Flashes were circulated. Almost 70% of Trade Flashes circulated concern the launch of infrastructure projects and/or investments and therefore present a clear economic and commercial interest to companies. They involve future projects in sectors such as energy, road-building, airports or railways, etc.

All future calls for bids, tenders or international projects of which the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency becomes aware will be circulated directly by means of Trade Flashes through the system of Selective Dissemination of Information by the Tenders or International Projects Departments.

1.2.4

Information seminars on international projects

Just as they do every year, the eighteen members of the Permanent Representations and organisations responsible for promoting foreign trade organised two sectoral seminars.

Three countries are responsible for organising each seminar while the other countries are responsible for inviting and registering their companies. The aim of these seminars is to bring together representatives of those companies from the European Union that are interested in European international aid programmes.

The first seminar was held on 11 January in the Metropole hotel and was entitled "Transport and infrastructure in the EU external aid programmes". The practical organisation was entrusted to the Danish and Austrian Permanent Representations to the European Union. Ubifrance took care of the logistics.

Within a group of 88 participants, Belgium was represented by 7 companies:

- ALSTOM, Charleroi,
- BCI GLOBAL, Zaventem,
- ERNST & YOUNG, Diegem,
- EUROPA UNION ROAD FEDERATION, Brussels,
- SCHUMAN ASSOCIATES, Brussels,
- SONCOTRA, Poperinge,
- TUC RAIL, Brussels.

There were numerous presentations by members of the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) throughout the morning. The various steps for joining projects of the European Commission were explained in the introduction.

After lunch, the participating companies had the chance to meet each other during bilateral meetings, which they were able to organise themselves in advance via the website www.sectorseminars.eu or through the EIB helpdesk, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Commission.

The second seminar, the practical organisation of which was entrusted to the Permanent Representation to the European Union of France (Ubifrance), the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic, took place on 21 November 2013 in the Bloom Hotel. The theme of this second meeting was "Water supply and waste water treatment in the EU external aid programmes".

The "Guidelines on participation in EU external assistance programmes" were the subject of an initial speech, to give participants the chance to familiarise themselves properly with the methodology of the projects launched by the European Commission. Companies were able to enrich their knowledge of European policy in this area thanks to the presentations by Commission members. The following topics were addressed:

- EuropeAid instruments towards water supply and waste water treatment,
- Water and waste programmes, an instrument for pre-accession (IPA): environment operational programmes in Turkey,
- EU blending mechanisms in the water sector,
- EIB: water supply and waste water opportunities for the private sector,
- EBRD: EBRD's programmes for water supply and waste water treatment Sector,
- Company panel discussion: "Experience in EU funding from the field".

Among the 128 participants, Belgium was represented by 12 companies:

- EURAQUA EUROPE, Waregem,
- HYDROSCAN, Kessel-Lo,
- INDUSS, Antwerp,
- MDF Training & Consultancy, Brussels,
- MUNTERS BELGIUM, Mechelen,
- PRIME WATER, Lommel,
- RIETLAND BVBA/GLOBAL WETLAND, TECHNOLOGY, Minderhout,
- SCHUMAN ASSOCIATES, Brussels,
- STEINZEUG KERAMO, Hasselt,
- TOBCO, Brussels,
- TPF UTILITIES, Brussels,
- VINCI CONSTRUCTION BEAUMONT, Brussels.

This seminar, a true showcase for Belgian know-how, was a great success, as it once again offered our companies the chance to get to know each other better and form consortiums with foreign companies with the aim of winning contracts in the areas of water and water treatment.

1.3

STUDIES, STATISTICS AND TAX CERTIFICATES

1.3.1 Studies

In 2013, five "country" studies were published, in Dutch and French, corresponding to the princely missions carried out during the year. They related to the following countries: Thailand, the United States, South Africa and India. They aim to provide the reader with an overall macro-economic view as well as a list of flourishing export sectors. They also list the key sectors that offer major opportunities for our Belgian export companies. In addition to the participants in the missions, these studies are also attracting considerable interest on the Internalt; this section was viewed more than 4,000 times.

A sectoral publication "Belgian advanced materials - Plastics & rubber" was also produced in collaboration with our Federal and regional partners and the Federations. It analyses the specific characteristics of this sector and gives testimonies from several success stories. It completes the collection by highlighting the competitiveness of Belgian companies in a particular sector.

1.3.2

Statistics

1.3.2.1 MISSION

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is authorised, in accordance with Article 2 of the Appendix to the Cooperation Agreement, to collect, process and disseminate national and international comparative statistics.

1.3.2.2 SOURCES

In 2013, a new IT system was implemented in view of the management of statistics subscriptions. The data are gathered through Eurostat's Comext system. Clients receive an Excel file with an attractive layout: legibility and user-friendliness are therefore two key added values within this new situation. In addition to the existing clients, no fewer than twenty new subscribers signed up.

As regards contacts, the Department undertook two measures to increase its visibility. Chambers of commerce, federations and organisations were contacted to propose services. These measures proved successful.

1.3.2.3 ACTIVITIES

Following an increase in requests of more than 80% last year, 2013 saw a further rise of 6.4%; no fewer than 549 requests were made to the Department.

tab.4 Activity indicators for the Statistics Department, 2012 - 2013

Activity indicator	TOTAL 2012	TOTAL 2013	Change in %
Ad hoc requests	516	549	6.4%
Bilateral reports	223	211	-5.4%
Bilateral trade sheets	174	222	27.6%
Total dispatches	4,740	4,998	5.4%
Ambassador briefings	32	20	-37.5%

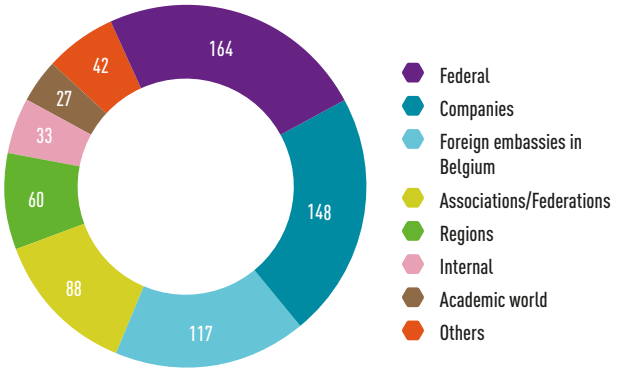
Both dispatches and trade sheets also increased significantly. The drafting of reports is down slightly, as a result of the drop in the number of briefings, whereas 2012 was an exceptional year in this area.

Ad hoc requests

The main clients are the Federal Public Services, followed by companies, foreign embassies in Belgium, organisations and federations as well as the Regions.

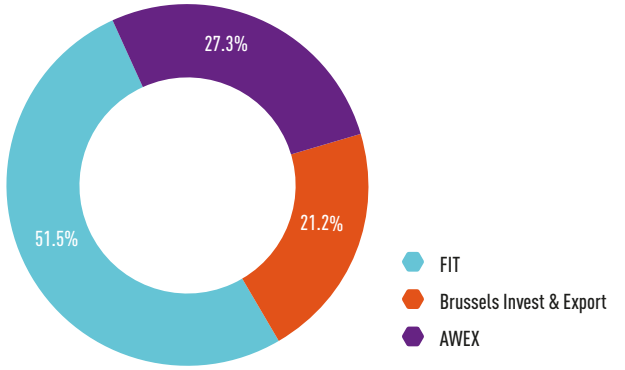
fig.9 Breakdown of clients related to ad hoc requests in 2013

Total number of mailings in 2013 (subscriptions not included)



Most requests come from the Flemish Region. Brussels and Wallonia account for the rest.

fig.10 Breakdown of regional clients related to ad hoc requests in 2013



The Statistics Department also regularly responded to requests from the press.

Bilateral reports and trade sheets

In 2013, the Department compiled 211 reports on bilateral trade relations in French, Dutch and English. These reports provide a highly comprehensive overview of the exchanges of goods and services between Belgium and its various partners.

In 2013, the concept of the evolution of the volume of goods exchanged was introduced. This makes it possible to offset the value evaluation of the flow of goods against fluctuations in the unit price of the goods sold.

These reports are also published on the Agency's website, and remain the most frequently visited pages year after year.

Of these reports, 35 were requested by the Royal Palace for visits by Foreign Heads of State or accreditation ceremonies of new ambassadors.

The following persons or authorities also requested reports:

- the Prime Minister
- the Minister for Foreign Affairs
- the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
- Belgian embassies abroad
- foreign embassies in Belgium
- economic and commercial attachés
- the European Parliament
- Federations and Chambers of Commerce
- journalists
- students.

Bilateral trade sheets are a condensed version of the reports; they provide a concise overview of trade relations between Belgium and a partner. They are available in English and can be downloaded from the Agency's website. As evidence of their utility, 222 trade sheets were generated on request in 2013.

Quarterly brochures, annual brochure and reports

Every quarter, the Agency publishes a brochure containing key data related to Belgian foreign trade. Two versions of this brochure are available: a bilingual Dutch/French version and an English version.

Quarterly reports published in French, Dutch and English portray an accurate picture of the evolution in Belgian imports and exports over 3, 6, 9 or 12 months.

Once a year, the Agency publishes a brochure detailing Belgian foreign trade with all world countries and according to the 22 sections of the Nomenclature.

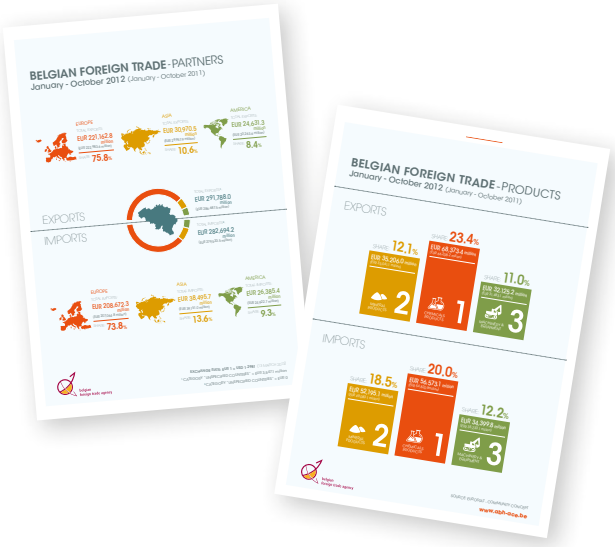
An international report on global trade based on results provided by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is also published in three languages (French, Dutch and English). This report allows one to compare Belgium's commercial performance with that of other countries around the world.

Furthermore, the Statistics Department publishes a list of the main products exported by Belgium and the share of global exports for this product or group of products that this represents. This document includes the different products in descending order of importance for which our country is categorised as a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th class global exporter.

In addition to these activities, the Department published its traditional quarterly reports related to Belgian foreign trade, the "World Trade" publication and the "Belgium's Foreign Trade" publication.

In 2013, at the request of our partners, a new summary trade sheet for continents/products was also published. This is produced monthly and provides an overview of the main partners and products traded.

fig.11 Monthly trade sheet for continents/products



Subscriptions

The number of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency's clients has risen to 393. These clients receive figures at an established frequency rate (monthly, quarterly or annually) that corresponds to a specific demand or to their interest profile.

Each month, all Belgian diplomatic and consular posts are sent the foreign trade results for Belgium with their country or countries of jurisdiction by e-mail. These data are also sent to all economic and commercial attachés of the three Regions.

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency also sends statistical data to certain foreign companies or certain foreign embassies that want more detailed information than that covered by the 22 sections in the Nomenclature.

All these figures are sent in an Excel file electronically.

1.3.3

Tax certificates

Tax exemption for additional staff recruited to perform export activities is a FPS Finance tax support measure (Article 67 of the Belgian Income Tax Code 1992 introduced by means of the Law of 27 October 1997 related to the provisions for tax stimuli for exports and research, Belgian Official Gazette 2 December 1997). It provides for tax exemption on taxable income up to EUR 10,000 (indexed for 2013, income from 2012 at EUR 14,640) in the event of an additional full-time member of staff being recruited in Belgium as an "Export" manager.

Those that are entitled to this exemption include industrial, trading and agricultural companies (whether they are start-ups, SMEs or large enterprises). This exemption does not apply to professionals, employees or any person already performing a remunerated activity.

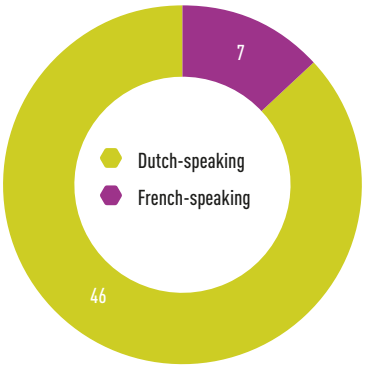
If the newly appointed export manager was already employed full-time by the company, the exemption may still apply as long as the company recruits a new full-time employee within thirty days of the export manager assuming his/her new role.

The award of this exemption is subject in part to the submission of a nominative declaration in view of obtaining exemption for the export manager and also to the obtainment of a certificate issued by the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency.

In 2013, 53 certificates were granted, including 11 new case files and 42 existing ones. Of the companies that benefited, 46 are Dutch-speaking and 7 are French-speaking.

fig.12 Total number of "export manager" tax certificates issued in 2013

fig.13 "Export manager" tax certificates issued in 2013: breakdown of case files according to language



1.4

REGULATIONS AND LEGAL QUESTIONS

Article 2 of Appendix 1 to the Cooperation Agreement stipulates that, with regard to legal and regulatory information and documentation, the Agency is responsible for the following matters:

- exports (Belgian and European regulations),
- sales structures and related contractual obligations,
- product control: health standards and regulations,
- tax obligations (customs and indirect taxes),
- commercial practices,
- sales and distribution,
- exports and imports in Belgium,
- industrial property,
- setting up business abroad,
- payment regulations and commercial litigation.

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency mainly disseminates its information and documentation on the basis of individual queries. In addition to disseminating general information (copies of law texts, import tariffs, names of lawyers, etc.), a clear trend has been emerging for a number of years that is related to the communication of practical advice allowing companies to react quickly.

Most queries relate to:

- Strategic choices: which distribution methods, which customs regime, which delivery terms and conditions, etc. are most appropriate in a certain given situation?
- Verifying or adapting contracts: re-reading contracts, formulating counter-proposals, etc.
- The application of administrative requirements: how to invoice, how to apply VAT, which documents to include, authentication, etc.?
- Assessing the consequences of legal acts: evaluating indemnity due to a client as a result of the termination of a commercial agency, choice of payment terms, the importance of the right of ownership, etc.
- Analysis of disputes: arbitration or tribunal, etc.

Replies are generally made in writing. In rare cases and for practical reasons (limited personnel, limited availability, lack of time) and at the express request of regional partners, face-to-face meetings can be organised with the companies concerned.

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency also disseminates its information in a "preventive" manner, i.e. through publications but also by means of seminars and training. Indeed, the Agency regularly shares its experience during events organised by third parties (see point 1.6 Collaboration on third-party initiatives). In 2013, the Regulations Department participated in some fifty events covering all aspects of international trade.

In 2013, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency also placed an application online for the first time (http://incoterms.abh-ace.be) to help the user make the right choices in organising his/her/its international transactions and to be able to answer frequently asked questions on this

topic automatically. The International Trade Center (the joint Agency of the WTO and UN to promote the capacities of developing countries in international trade) asked if it could integrate this application into its training. Given the success of this application with institutional partners and with companies and visitors to the website, the intention is to develop more such applications.

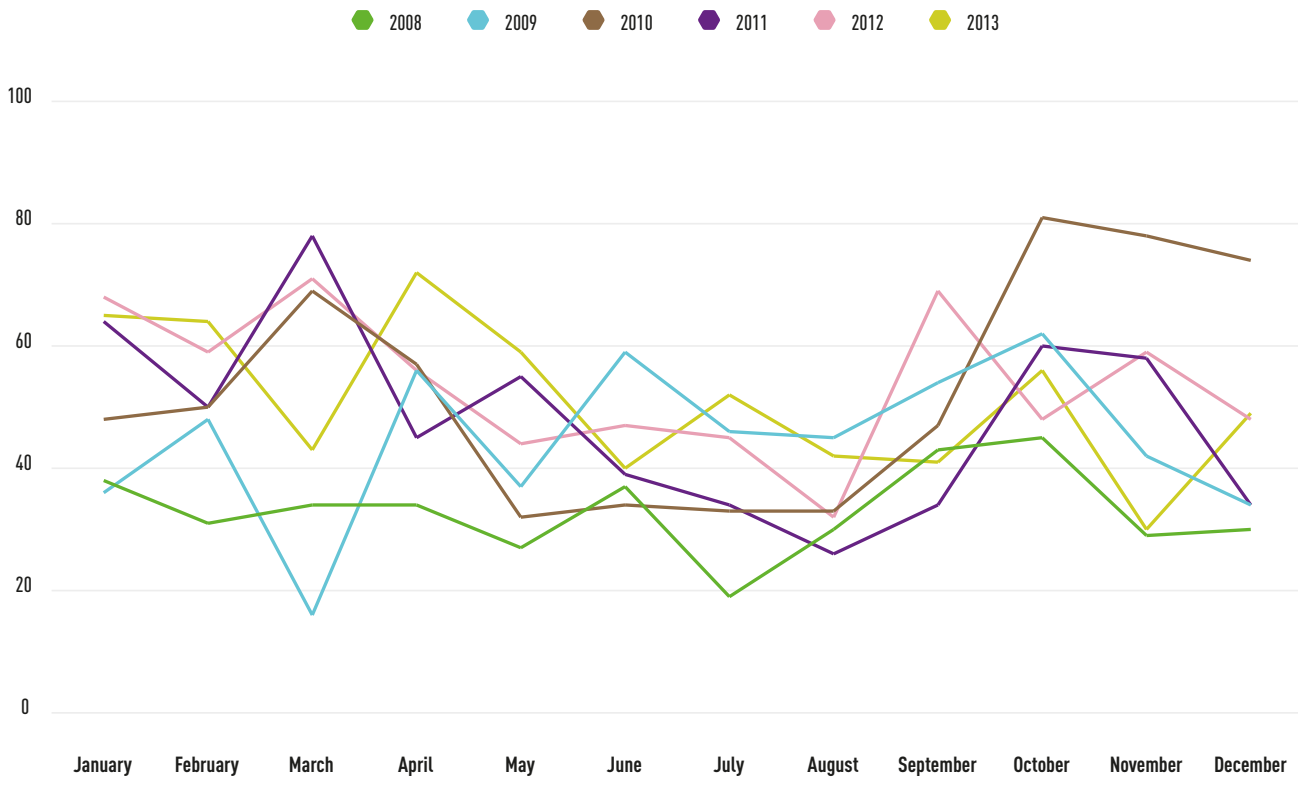
1.4.1

Regulatory case files

In 2013, the Regulations Department opened a total of 613 new case files, bringing the total number of case files processed by the Department since 2006 to 3,957. We have been handling some 600 new case files a year on average for many years.

Telephone requests and questions from visitors not confirmed in writing are not included in this figure.

fig.14 Breakdown of the number of cases processed by the Regulations Department, 2008 - 2013



Since the Regulations Department was created, the distribution of case files according to type has remained relatively stable: litigation cases (completely disappeared in 2013) and internal case files constitute a small percentage while the vast majority (approximately 85%) involve regulatory questions from companies.

The preponderance of questions related to Incoterms (high point in 2010 and 2011) decreased somewhat in 2012 and fell back further in 2013. Nonetheless, this topic remains by far the most common subject of case files submitted to the Regulations Department. The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency's collaboration in the compilation and translation of these international regulations, its collaboration in various seminars, and training sessions on this subject can account for this.

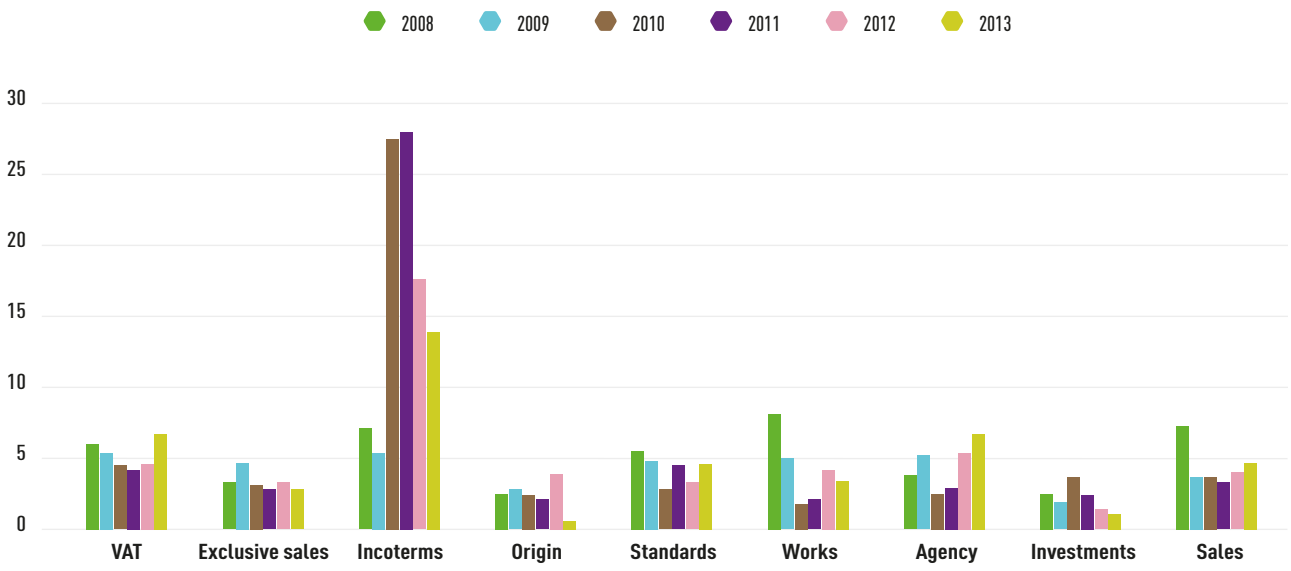
Furthermore, it is noteworthy that interest in the more "regulatory" themes (VAT, customs, documents, standards, etc.), which had been rather limited in recent years, has caught up with a certain number of "contractual" themes (all aspects of distribution and purchases). Here, too, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency's collaboration in seminars and in the development of model contracts appears to play a role.

The more "legal" themes not related to contractual freedom (and therefore to decision-making autonomy), but more related to "documentation on applicable regulations" (investments, intellectual property, etc.) certainly appear to be gaining ground.

The key themes of 2011 (payment methods, documentary credits, exchange regulations, etc.), which had decreased somewhat in 2012, saw a resurgence in popularity in 2013.

In general, the queries submitted remain highly varied, which demands a broad and highly practical knowledge of various aspects of foreign trade to be able to process such queries. However, this does not mean there is not a reasonably clear relationship between the topics the Regulations Department makes public - mainly at seminars and during training sessions - and the queries submitted.

fig.15 Breakdown of regulations case files by subject, 2008 - 2013



1.4.2

Geographical breakdown of questions

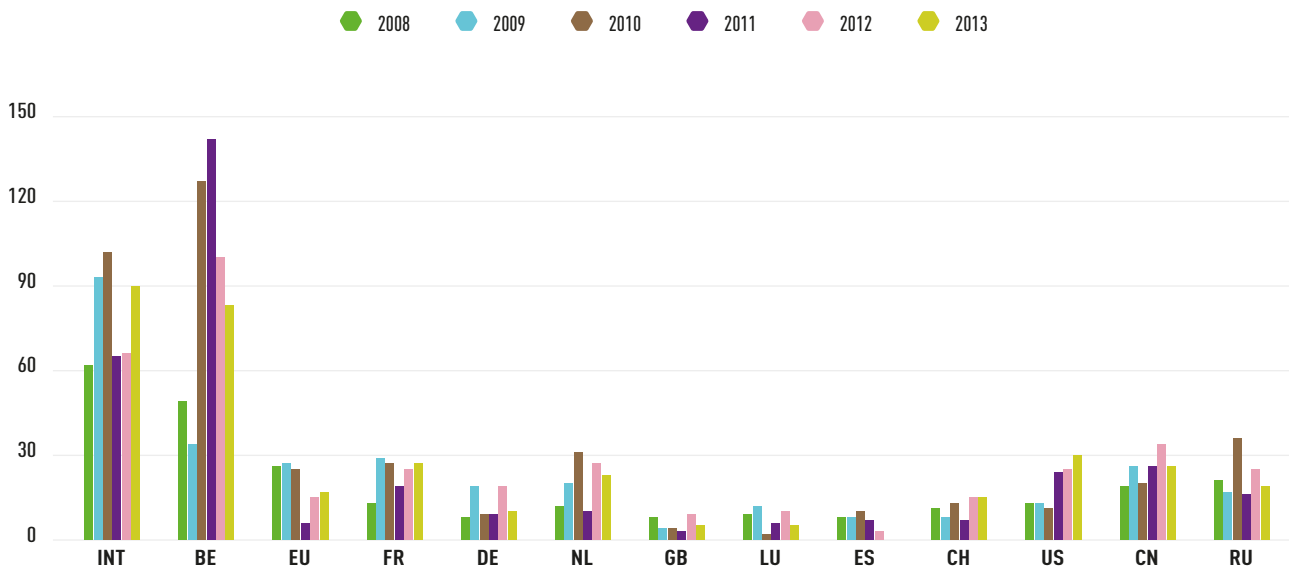
In the past, the geographical breakdown of the files processed remained relatively stable with a traditional and major share of "questions lacking any particular geographical context" (approximately 20%). This pattern was broken for the first time in 2011 and this trend intensified in 2012: fewer than 15% of questions now present no specific geographical context.

Questions related to Belgian regulations still score high, but the most noteworthy fact is that the increase in the number of questions concerning a certain number of large and distant markets (USA, China, Russia) noted in recent years was confirmed (despite some striking absences such as India, Brazil and Indonesia).

Arab countries subject to embargoes continue to score highly ... and the striking decline in the statistics of those European countries badly affected by the euro crisis (Spain, Italy) seems equally long-lasting.

Finally, the trend that countries presenting a high level of "actual trade" raise the all-important questions was confirmed. For other countries, there may be an interest (given the popularity of the missions), but at the moment very few actual transactions generate legal questions.

fig.16 Geographical breakdown of questions, 2008 - 2013



1.5

WEBSITES

1.5.1

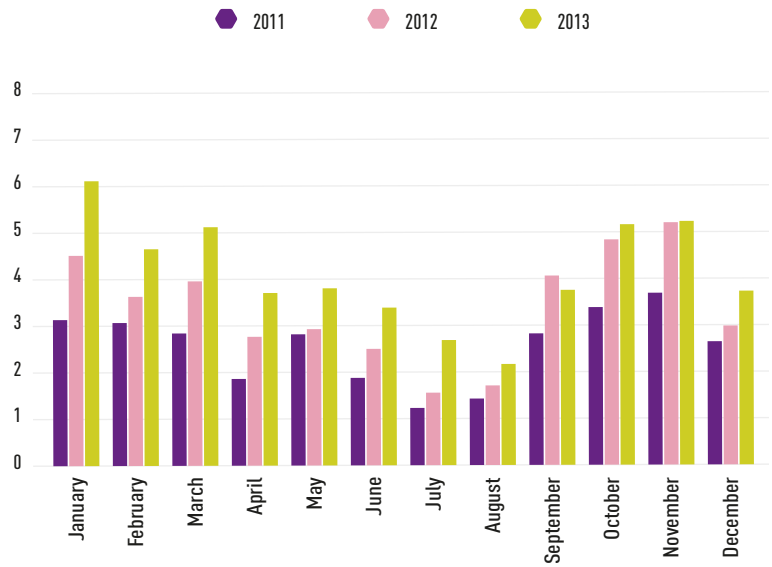
The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency's website

2013 saw a sharp rise in the number of unique visitors to the Agency's website: almost 50,000 people consulted the information placed online. This represents an exceptional increase of over 21% compared with 2012. This increase is all the more remarkable because there had already been sharp rises in the previous two years, of 30% and 32% respectively.

tab.5 Evolution in the number of unique visitors to the website www.abh-ace.be, 2011 - 2013

UNIQUE VISITORS	2011	2012	2013
January	3,137	4,516	6,117
February	3,071	3,632	4,653
March	2,843	3,961	5,123
April	1,863	2,767	3,707
May	2,818	2,928	3,804
June	1,879	2,501	3,386
July	1,230	1,557	2,686
August	1,428	1,709	2,169
September	2,824	4,065	3,757
October	3,385	4,838	5,163
November	3,690	5,203	5,230
December	2,645	2,982	3,729
	30,813	**40,659**	**49,524**

fig.17 Evolution in the number of unique visitors to the website www.abh-ace.be, 2011 - 2013



2013 was a key year for the Agency's website; the English version of the site was launched. The content of this platform differs from that of the Dutch and French website. The English site is in fact aimed at an international public.

fig.18 English version of the website, homepage

A "web responsive" application relating to Incoterms also went online. Hundreds of visitors use this application every month (see point 1.4 Regulations and legal questions).

fig.19 Homepage of the Incoterms application

These two important developments are certainly not alien to the increase in the number of visits recorded.

Finally, we note the confirmation of an emerging trend over the past two years: 10% of visitors are of French nationality and 5% come from the Netherlands. The site is therefore arousing the interest of our colleagues from abroad. There is no doubt that both the English version and the Incoterms application will further boost the international impact of this platform.

1.5.2

www.belgianeconomicmission.be

In 2013, a specific website was also devoted to each economic mission. Following its introduction last year, the website developed into a genuine reference point and communication tool for organisers, participants and other interested visitors in 2013.

In 2013, the site www.belgianeconomicmission.be welcomed 8,876 unique visitors, who visited 78,733 pages. 60% of visits were made from Belgium and 40% from abroad, with the countries visited by the mission at the top of the list, followed by our neighbours.

Approximately 14% of all visits were made using a tablet or smartphone. To accommodate this public even more and increase user-friendliness, the first steps are being taken to develop an app version of the website.

fig.20 Homepage of the website www.belgianeconomicmission.be during the India mission

tab.6 Visitor statistics for the website www.belgianeconomicmission.be in 2013

MISSION	PARTICIPANTS	DATES	VISITS	UNIQUE VISITORS	PAGES VISITED
Thailand	240	04/03 > 05/04	2,744	1,441	12,247
United States	394	16/05 > 21/06	5,114	2,857	20,508
South Africa and Angola	335	07/10 > 04/11	2,588	1,526	13,747
India	340	06/11 > 17/12	4,628	3,215	15,625
Total 2013	**1,309**	**01/01 > 17/12/2013**	**15,826**	**8,876**	**78,733**

1.6

COLLABORATION ON THIRD-PARTY INITIATIVES

The Agency occasionally lends its support to a range of events. In most cases, these are organised by regional departments for the promotion of foreign trade (or in close collaboration with the latter) as well as by the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. During 2013, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency participated in the following events:

- 8 February 2013
  Information session for diplomats organised by the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency
- 23 May 2013
  Seminar "Doing business with South Africa/ Angola", organised by UNIZO (Aalst)
- 29 May 2013
  Seminar "India", organised by AWEX
- 5 June 2013
  Seminar "India", organised by AWEX
- 17 September 2013
  Telephone interview "Belgian Research"
- 6 December 2013
  Presentation *"Les missions princières: comment doper vos exportations et vous assurer les meilleurs contacts à haut niveau ?"* ("Princely missions: how to boost your exports and ensure the best contacts at high level"), organised by Wallonia Export Invest Fair (Liège)

Throughout the year:

- Seminars related to "Incoterms 2010" at international professional organisations and companies
- Presentations about the "International Sales Contract" (for organisations such as UNIZO, Antwerp Management School and the Institute of Transport and Maritime Management Antwerp)
- Koen Vanheusden, Director of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, is also a Professor at the International Business Institute and was a guest lecturer at the VUB - Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies
- The Studies Department provided contributions to various general and bilateral editions of "Made in Belgium"
- The SDI Department was responsible for distributing information from organisations such as Enterprise Flanders, the Cité Internationale Wallonie-Bruxelles, the Chambers of Commerce, etc.

2

BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE IN 2013*

2.1
Exports

2.2
Imports

2.3
Geographical trade balances

*Source: Eurostat - Community concept

2.1 EXPORTS

2.1.1 Geographical evolution of exports

EUROPEAN EXPORTS

Two distinctions are made in the analysis of the evolution of Belgian exports to the other European countries. A distinction is made between the European Union on the one hand and countries outside the European Union on the other. The European Union is then subdivided into:

- countries that are part of the euro area, and
- countries that are not part of the euro area.

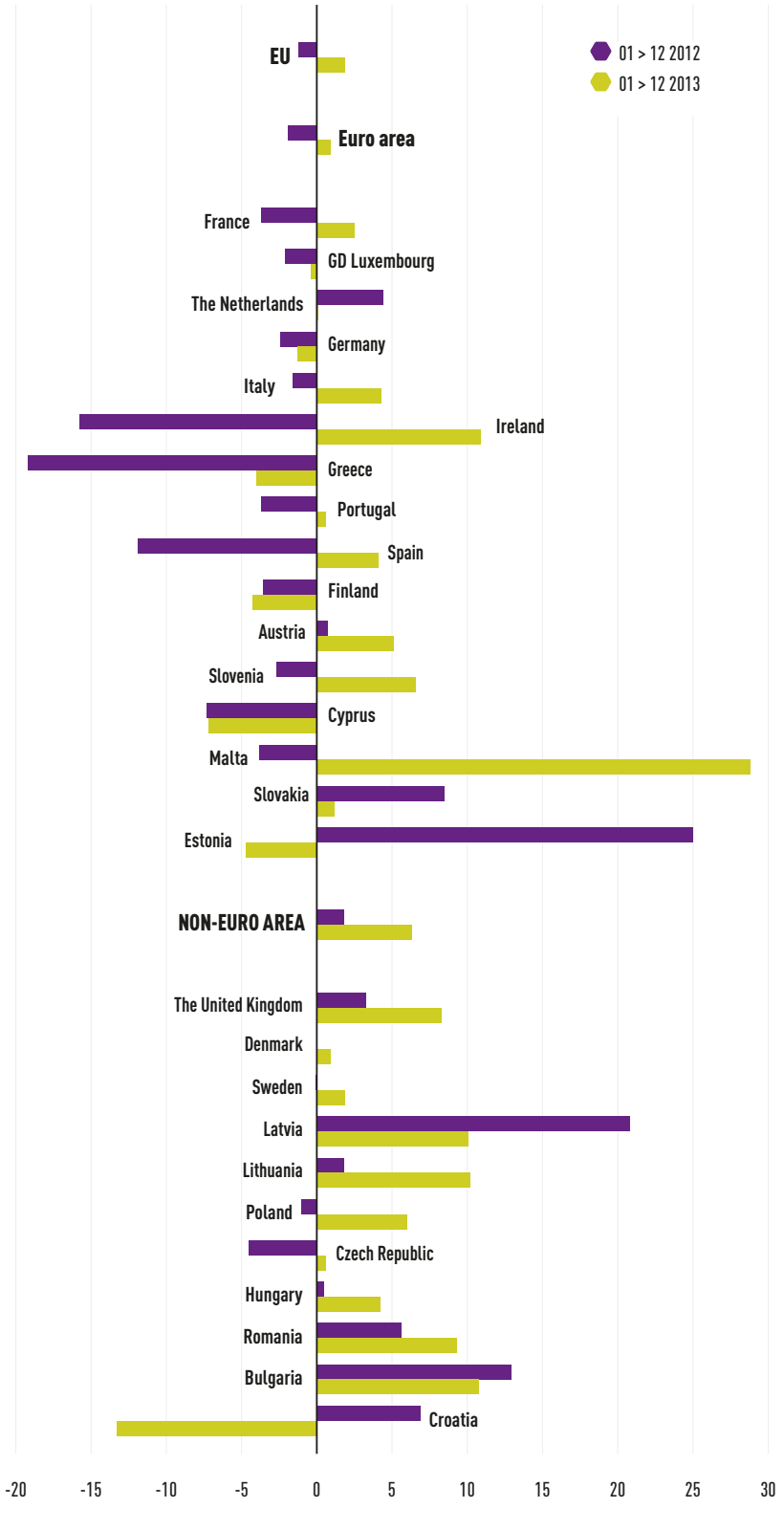
In 2013, Belgian deliveries to the **Member States of the European Union** increased by 1.9%, whereas a year earlier they had fallen by 1.2%.

While Belgian exports of goods to *the countries of the euro area* only rose slightly last year, deliveries to the *countries that do not belong* to the euro area rose sharply. The relevant evolutions were as follows:

- +0.9% in 2013 compared with -1.9% in 2012 for the first group of countries, and
- +6.3% in 2013 compared with +1.8% in 2012 for the second group of countries.

fig.21

Variations in exports to the EU in 2013
(compared with 2012) (in %)



Countries of the euro area

In 2013, the best export performances were achieved in Malta (+28.8%), Ireland (+10.9%), Slovenia (+6.6%) and Austria (+5.1%).

Exports of goods to Greece, where the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis are still being felt, fell further by 4.0% in 2013. Exports to Italy, Spain and Portugal, on the other hand, seem to have climbed out of a negative spiral, since last year increases of 4.3%, 4.1% and 0.6% respectively were recorded.

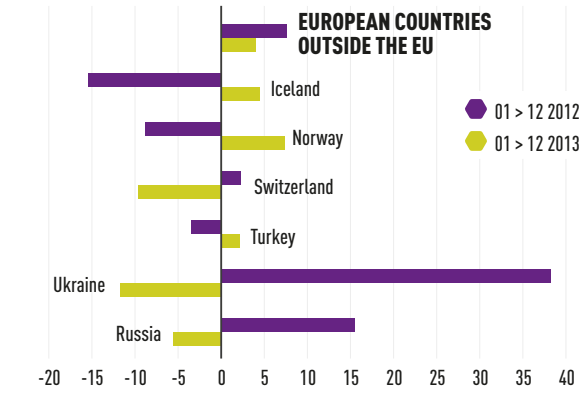
Countries that do not belong to the euro area

Thanks to the good results in, among others, Bulgaria (+10.8%), Lithuania (+10.2%), Latvia (+10.1%), Romania (+9.3%) and the United Kingdom (+8.3%), total Belgian exports to the countries that do not belong to the euro area rose by 6.3% in 2013, unaffected by the decline in exports to Croatia (-13.3%).

Belgian exports to other **European countries outside the European Union** rose by 4.0% in 2013. Nevertheless, there was a significant decrease in sales to both Ukraine and Switzerland. Exports from Belgium to these two countries fell by 11.7% and 9.6% respectively. The decline in the export of goods to Russia (-5.6%) was smaller in terms of percentage.

However, the growth in Belgian exports to, among others, Norway (+7.4%) and Turkey (+2.2%) was able to compensate for these negative results.

fig.22 Variations in exports to European countries outside the EU in 2013 (compared with 2012) (in %)



INTERCONTINENTAL EXPORTS

Developments recorded in intercontinental exports vary considerably. While exports to Africa rose in 2013, those to America, Asia and Oceania fell. This is shown below:

AFRICA
13.2% in 2013
17.7% in 2012

AMERICA
-3.0% in 2013
+16.2% in 2012

ASIA
-0.1% in 2013
+3.3% en 2012

OCEANIA
-0.2% in 2013
+4.2% in 2012

Where **Africa** is concerned, deliveries to, among others, Libya (-5.6%), Egypt (-6.8%), Tunisia (-9.8%), South Africa (-14.3%), Kenya (-17.4%) and Angola (-18.2%) fell. Conversely, there was an increase in exports to, among others, Ghana (+81.1%), Nigeria (+35.6%) and Cameroon (+29.0%).

In **America**, however, Belgian exporters saw exports fall. The 3.0% drop in total exports to this continent in 2013 was mainly due to falling sales to the United States (-11.7%), Mexico (-9.5%), Chile (-1.9%) and Venezuela (-25.3%). The strong performances in Argentina (+119.5%), Cuba (+28.4%), Brazil (+24.7%), Peru (+20.8%), Canada (+18.8%) and Colombia (+7.1%) were unable to alter this.

Exports from Belgium to **Asia** increased in particular in the UAE (+34.7%), Vietnam (+32.1%), Malaysia (+26.9%), Lebanon (+22.7%), Pakistan (+19.3%) and Saudi Arabia (+16.0%). Belgian exports also fell in, among others, Japan (-8.2%), Taiwan (-12.7%), Kuwait (-17.3%), South Korea (-19.4%), Iran (-23.4%), Sri Lanka (-39.7%) and Syria (-46.8%). Despite the fact that Asia remains Belgium's most important market outside Europe, exports to this continent still fell slightly in 2013 (-0.1%).

The general result for **Oceania** was also negative. Total exports to the continent fell by 0.2% in 2013 (compared with +4.2% in 2012). After a 5.9% increase in 2012, sales to Australia fell by 0.6% in 2013. Exports to New Zealand rose by 8.3% during this period.

MARKET SHARE

The **European Union** still represents the largest share of Belgium's customers. From 2012 to 2013, the EU share increased very slightly, from 70.0% to 70.1%. The trend of recent years, which saw a drop in the EU share in favour of emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, was thus somewhat reversed last year.

Euro area countries currently account for 56.7% of Belgian exports, compared with 57.2% in 2012. The share of the **other EU countries** rose from 12.7% to 13.3%.

A few slight variations should be noted for Belgium's four largest customers:

- Germany's share fell from 17.4% to 16.9%,
- France's share remained the same at 15.6%,
- the Netherlands' share fell from 12.5% to 12.3%,
- the United Kingdom's rose from 7.1% to 7.5%.

The share of **European countries outside the European Union** rose from 5.8% in 2012 to 5.9% in 2013.

The share of Belgian exports of goods to the different continents evolved as follows in 2013 compared with a year earlier:

AFRICA
3.7% in 2013
3.3% in 2012

AMERICA
8.0% in 2013
8.4% in 2012

ASIA
10.5% in 2013
10.7% in 2012

OCEANIA
share remained unchanged at 0.6%

fig.23 Share of exports per continent in 2013 (compared with 2012)

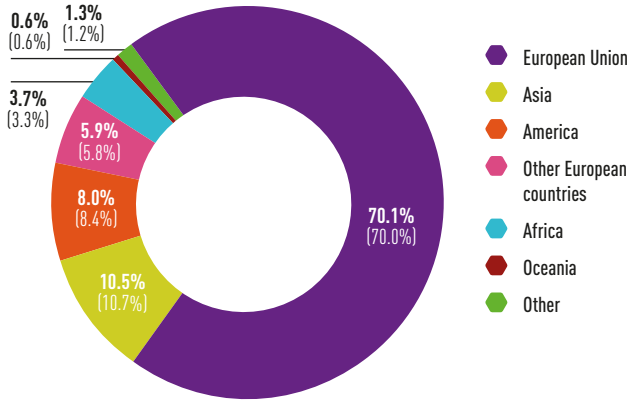
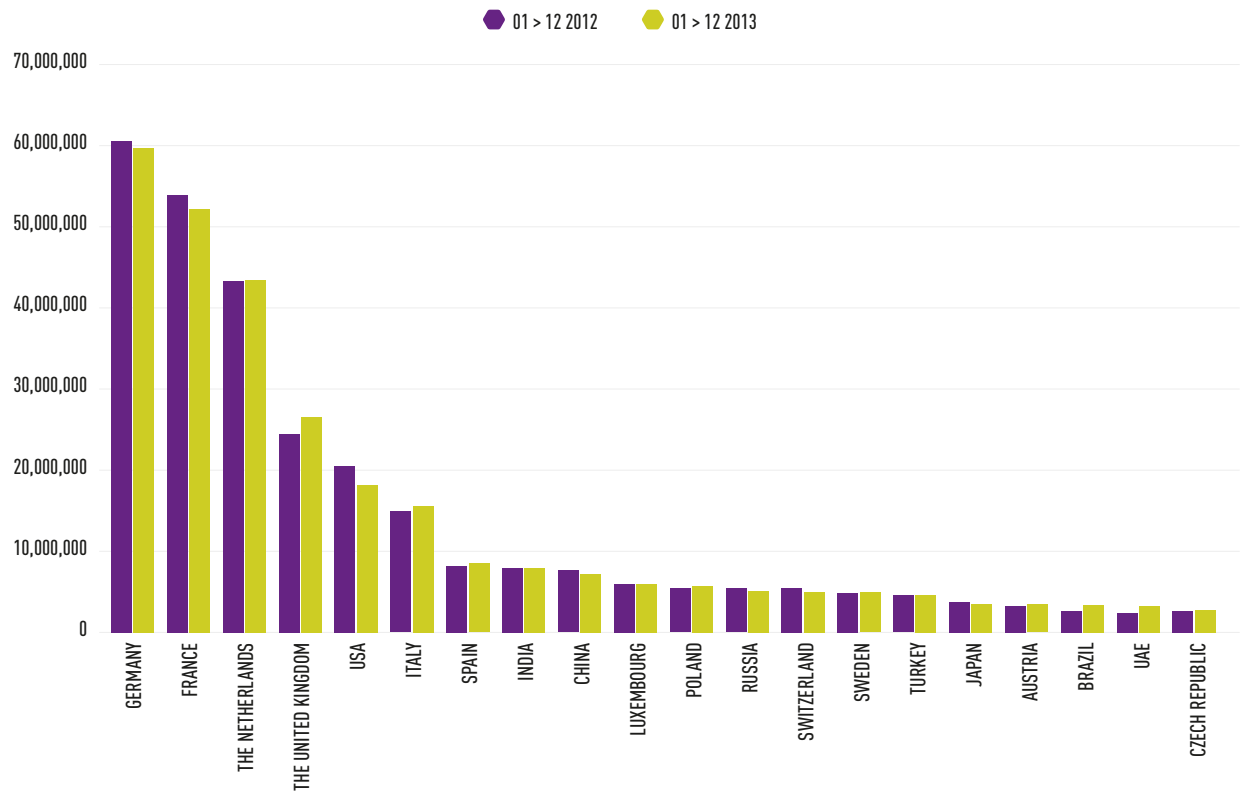


fig.24

Belgium's top 20 customers in 2013 (compared with 2012) (x EUR 1,000)



With EUR 59,744.8 million, **Germany** remained our number one customer in 2013. However, exports were down from EUR 60,542.2 million in 2012, a decrease of 1.3%.

France holds on to second place. In 2013, exports to this country amounted to EUR 55,222.8 million. Compared with the previous year, exports rose by 2.5%, from EUR 53,886.8 million.

Finally, Belgian exports to the **Netherlands** grew from EUR 43,357.6 million in 2012 to EUR 43,413.0 million in 2013.

2.1.2

The sectoral evolution of exports

The **chemical products** section was still responsible for the lion's share of total Belgian exports with 23.4%. Exports for this group of products rose by 1.2% from 2012 to 2013.

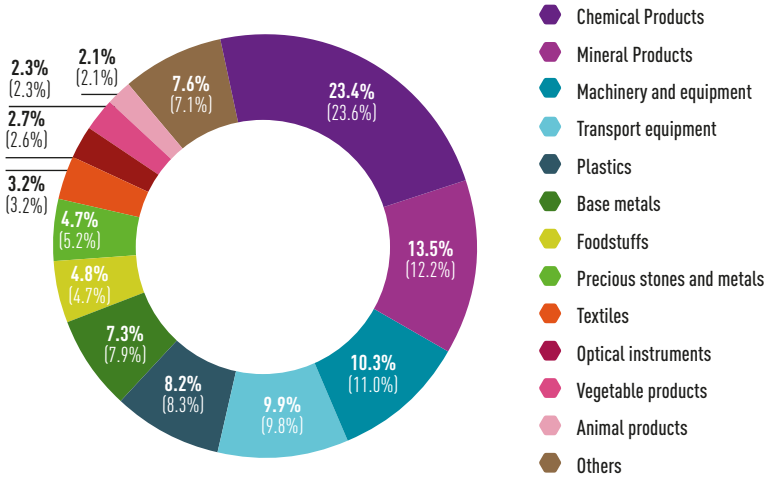
Mineral products take second place, accounting for 13.5% of total Belgian exports, which increased by 13.1% for this product group as opposed to a surge of 8.3% the previous year. The increase in exports of this section can largely be attributed to the sub-shares for "petroleum oils or bituminous minerals" and "petroleum gas and other gaseous hydrocarbons.

Machinery and equipment takes third place with a share of 10.3%, despite a drop in exports of 4.6%.

Transport equipment takes fourth place with a share of 9.9% (+2.7%) of total Belgian exports.

Plastics completed the top five of the most important export products. Thanks to an increase in sales of 0.9%, this group of products still represents a share of 8.2%.

fig.25 Sectoral breakdown of exports in 2013 (compared with 2012)



2.2

IMPORTS

2.2.1

Geographical evolution of imports

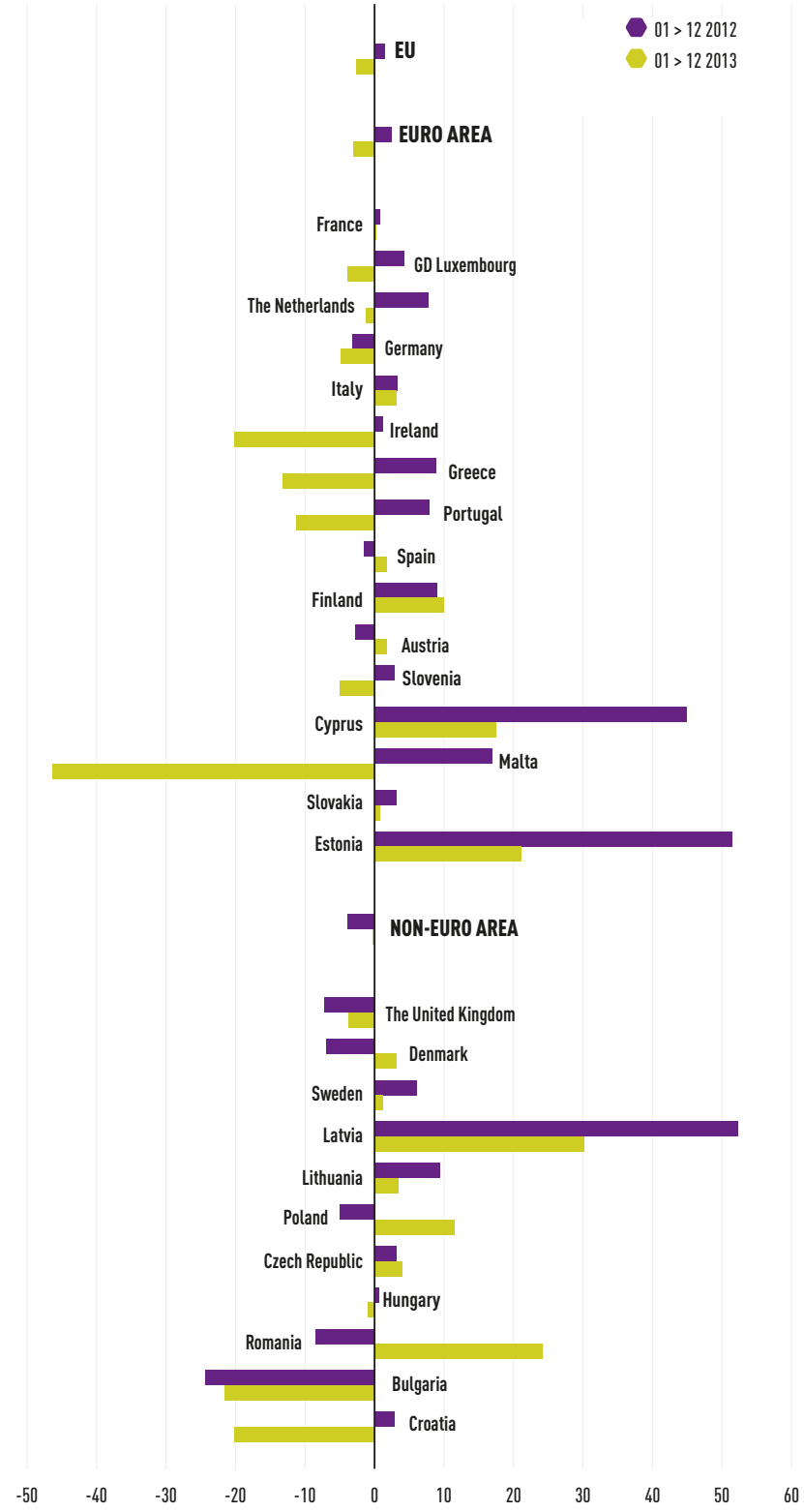
EUROPEAN IMPORTS

Belgian imports from the **European Union** countries fell by 2.6% in 2013, compared with a rise of 1.4% in 2012. Belgium's purchases within the euro area declined by 3.0%. Imports from other EU countries outside the euro area fell by 0.3%, following a drop of 3.9% in 2012.

In the *euro area*, Belgium saw a decrease in imports particularly from Portugal (-11.3%), Greece (-13.2%), Ireland (-20.2%) and Malta (-46.3%). Imports from Estonia (+21.1%), Cyprus (+17.5%), Finland (+10.0%), Italy (+3.1%), Austria (+1.8%), Spain (+1.7%), Slovakia (+0.8%) and France (+0.2%) were up in 2013. Nevertheless, the positive figures were unable to compensate for the negative results.

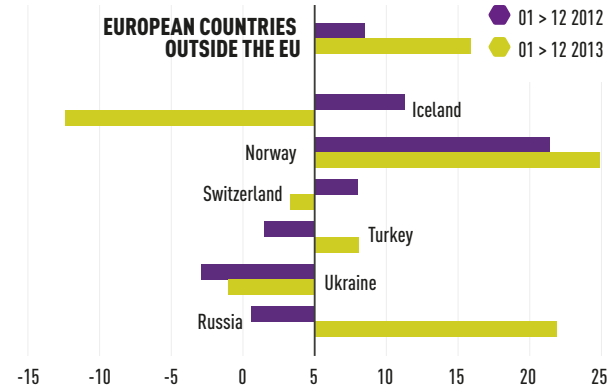
The reason why imports from the *other EU countries outside the euro* area fell by 0.3% in 2013 is primarily a reduction in imports from Hungary (-1.0%), the United Kingdom (-3.7%), Croatia (-20.2%) and Bulgaria (-21.5%).

fig.26 Variations in imports from the EU in 2013 (compared with 2012) (in %)



Imports from **other European countries outside the EU** increased by 10.9% in 2013 due to an increase in imports from Norway (+19.9%), Russia (+16.9%) and Turkey (+3.1%). A decrease in imports from Switzerland (-1.7%), Ukraine (-6.0%) and Iceland (-17.4%) had no effect.

fig.27 Variations in imports from European countries outside the EU in 2013 (compared with 2012) (in %)



INTERCONTINENTAL IMPORTS

Imports from the rest of the world evolved differently from one continent to another. Imports from America rose in 2013, while those from Asia, Africa and Oceania fell.

AFRICA
-6.9% in 2013
+11.5% in 2012

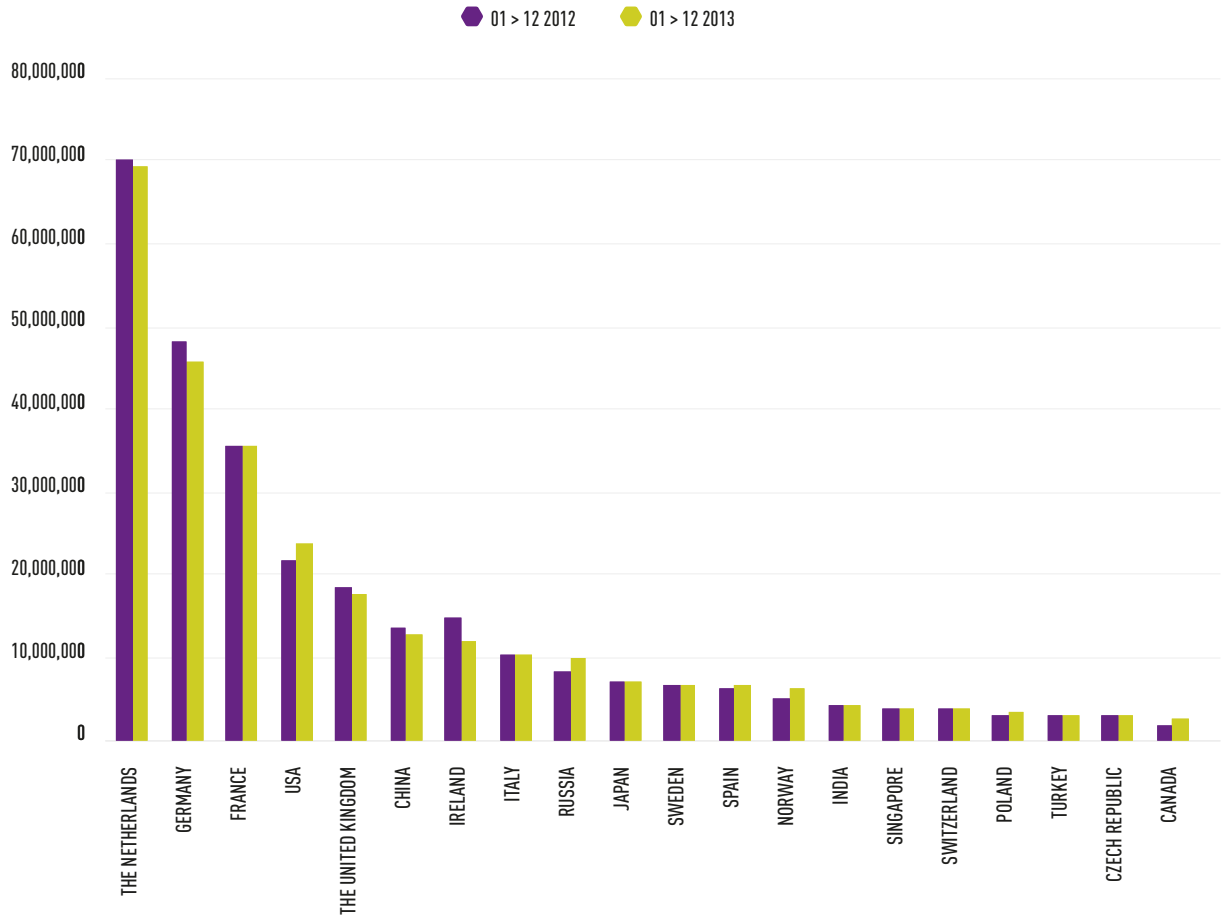
AMERICA
+6.5% in 2013
+5.0% in 2012

ASIA
-0.7% in 2013
-3.1% in 2012

OCEANIA
-16.4% in 2013
+12.2% in 2012

fig.28

Belgium's top 20 suppliers in 2013 (compared with 2012) (x EUR 1,000)



2.2.2

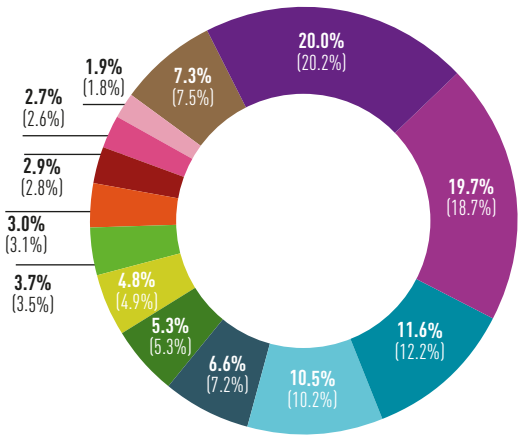
The sectoral evolution of imports

As in the case for exports, the largest share of imports belongs to **chemical products**, which account for a fifth of our total imports (20.0%). The share of this group of products fell slightly in 2013, due to a decrease in imports of this type of product amounting to 2.0%.

Mineral products occupy second place with a share of 19.7%, an increase of 5.1%.

The top five major import sections was completed by **machinery and equipment, transport equipment** and **base metals**, with a share of total Belgian imports of 11.6%, 10.5% and 6.6% respectively.

fig.29 Sectoral breakdown of imports in 2013 (compared with 2012)



2.3

GEOGRAPHICAL TRADE BALANCES

Belgium announced a trade surplus with the **European Union**. It even increased significantly from EUR 12.1 billion in 2012 to EUR 22.6 billion in 2013.

Euro area countries

In 2013, the positive trade balance with France grew to EUR 19.4 billion. Significant, but lower surpluses were also recorded with Germany (EUR 14.0 billion), Italy (EUR 5.0 billion), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (EUR 3.7 billion), Spain (EUR 2.0 billion) and Austria (EUR 1.4 billion).

The trade deficit with the Netherlands fell from EUR 27.0 billion in 2012 to EUR 26.1 billion in 2013. The trade balance with Ireland also remained negative (EUR -10.2 billion).

EU countries outside the euro area

With regard to the EU countries outside the euro area, the overall trade balance remains positive. It increased from EUR 8.7 billion in 2012 to EUR 11.6 billion in 2013.

fig.30 Belgium-EU trade balance in 2013 (in billions of EUR)

Belgium's trade balance with the **other European countries outside the EU** remained negative. The deficit even increased significantly, from EUR -2.1 billion to EUR -3.7 billion. Belgium's negative balance with Russia and Norway increased to EUR -4.8 billion and EUR -4.4 billion respectively. Conversely, the deficit with Iceland changed to a slight surplus.

With regard to the other continents, it should be noted that Belgium's trade balance with **America** declined considerably. The deficit of EUR -2.8 billion recorded in 2012 more than doubled in 2013 to EUR -5.8 billion.

The deficit with **Asia** dropped slightly in 2013, from EUR -8.9 billion to EUR -8.6 billion.

Belgium's trade balance with **Africa** showed a surplus of EUR 4.8 billion in 2013, which is a vast improvement over 2012, when the surplus amounted to just EUR 2.6 billion.

The trade balance with **Oceania** ended 2013 with a surplus of EUR 403.9 million, compared with a surplus a year earlier of just EUR 75.5 million.

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Baudouin Gillis

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of the Credendo Group

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Director
KBC Bank & Insurance

Pierre Henri Rion
Business Angel

Baudouin Gillis

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Director General

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Fabienne L'Hoost
Deputy Director General

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Céline Vandermeersch
Economic Mission Coordinator

Julie Derwa
Economic Mission Coordinator

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Deputy Director

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Roland Bastaits
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Koen Vanheusden
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Christelle Charlier
Director

Kathleen Deridder
Communications Manager

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ACTION PLAN FOR 2014

JOINT TRADE MISSIONS

PRESIDED OVER BY **HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS ASTRID,**
REPRESENTATIVE OF **HIS MAJESTY THE KING**

14 > 21 MARCH 2014

&

18 > 25 OCTOBER 2014

&

22 > 28 NOVEMBER 2014

&

Dates to be confirmed.

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COMPOSITION: CÉLINE VANDERMEERSCH
TRANSLATION: MONIQUE DE CLERCK
RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHER: FABIENNE L'HOOST
PICTURE CREDITS: © IMAGEGLOBE.BE
PUBLICATION DATE: MAY 2014
PRINTED ON FSC-CERTIFIED PAPER

belgian
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