

# Activity report 2022









# Mission Statement

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

1. deciding on and organising joint economic missions at the initiative of one of more Regions, or at the request of the Federal Government
2. organising, developing and disseminating information, studies and documentation on foreign markets for the regional departments responsible for foreign trade, in accordance with Appendix 1
3. tasks of common interest decided unanimously by the Board of Directors. In December 2014, the Board decided that from 2015 the BFTA would contribute to the logistical organisation and economic aspects of the two State Visits abroad by the Belgian Sovereigns each year.



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# Foreword by the President

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On 14 December 2021, the Board of Directors of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA) elected me as president, based on the proposal of HE Mrs Sophie Wilmès, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the Federal Cultural Institutions.

I took up the mantle on 1 January 2022, succeeding Minister of State Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, who had presided over the Agency since its creation in 2003.

The Agency plays a key role in promoting foreign trade, supporting the FPS Foreign Affairs and the three regional agencies responsible for foreign trade and investments: Flanders Investment & Trade, the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX) and hub.brussels. Over time, a strong partnership has developed between these institutions.

After two years of paralysis linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2022 has proven to be an exceptional year, with three Belgian economic missions (UK, USA and Japan) and two State Visits (Greece and Lithuania). These five major actions aimed to reposition our companies abroad. The number of participants also reached record heights. Indeed, more than 1,500 people accompanied us during the three missions under the auspices of Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid. This is a testament to the immense success and usefulness of these activities, which are much needed during this period of economic and political uncertainty.

Global trade has experienced many ups and downs in recent years. The conflict in Ukraine has had major repercussions for the energy and food markets, and has impacted the economy as a whole. This has led many countries to reconsider their overall strategies, in particular with respect to supply. Nearly 90 countries, ranging from China and the United States to Turkey and Ecuador, among others, representing more than 85% of global trade, are engaged in a series of discussions around the theme of sustainability. The topics being discussed range from plastics to the circular economy, and from climate change policies to biodiversity and green technologies.

The Belgian State Visits and economic missions are part of this new dynamic, and highlight the many Belgian companies that play a pioneering role in these fields.



I hope that, in 2023, our missions will be a driver of sustainable growth for our economy more than ever before. I expect that the Agency's team and partners will give 100% to achieve this goal.

Finally, we will also have the opportunity to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Agency, to support a particularly open Belgian economy and to be considered a leader in exports (top ten in the global rankings – WTO).



**Didier Malherbe**

President

# Message from the General Management

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The year 2022 was rich in events and achievements for the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, while putting the team to the test, in particular due to the missions.

After two years of forced idleness due to the Covid-19 pandemic, State Visits and economic missions could finally be organised again, and even taken further. At the invitation of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the Belgian Sovereigns made a State Visit to Greece on 4 May 2022. This State Visit was followed by a joint economic mission chaired by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid to the United Kingdom between 9 and 12 May 2022. The mission, which involved 406 participants, helped to reposition our companies in the British market in the post-Brexit period. After a very brief respite, they headed to the United States for the largest Belgian economic mission ever on the other side of the Atlantic between 4 and 12 June 2022. During this mission, which included stops in Atlanta, Boston and New York, and led to the conclusion of several partnerships, 540 participants accompanied the Princess.

Between 24 and 26 October, Their Majesties the King and Queen made a State Visit to Lithuania to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bilateral relations between the two countries. Finally, the year ended in style with a princely mission to the Land of the Rising Sun between 5 and 9 December 2022. The mission to Japan was the second largest ever organised by the Agency, with 575 participants.

The other departments within the Agency were not neglected. The Studies Department published two economic reports: a study on the importance of logistical operators in the use of FTAs and a sectoral publication.

The employees in the Statistics department answered numerous questions from clients and published the standard notes, fact sheets, brochures and annual publications, which made them the most frequently visited section on the Agency's new website.

It is worth briefly noting that the BFTA has passed 4,000 followers on LinkedIn, which is undoubtedly attributable to the publication of several posts.

The Regulations department answered many questions and drafted legal alerts for Trade4U subscribers, as well as a legal chapter for the Japan study.



The OBOC department finalised the integration of CPV codes, which has given a fresh boost to the exporters database. Data exchanges with the Regions increased in 2022. The department disseminated nearly 25,800 international business opportunities to businesses in 2022 via the Trade4U mobile application, meaning a slight decrease compared to 2021, which was a record-breaking year.

In short, it was a prolific year for the Agency, but the frantic pace of 2022 should not be repeated if we want to avoid 'incidents' at the personnel level.

The General Management and staff are delighted with the appointment of Didier Malherbe as President. There is no doubt that, under his leadership, the Agency will flourish once more.



**Fabienne L'Hoost**  
Director General

# Strategy and objectives for 2023

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The year 2023 is about stabilisation, since we are returning to a steady pace of two State Visits and two economic missions per year.

The first State Visit will take our Sovereigns to South Africa between 22 and 27 March 2023. Africa will also be in the spotlight during the princely mission to Senegal, which will be led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid between 21 and 25 May 2023.

In the second half of the year, the Princess will take the Belgian delegation to Australia for a mission between 23 and 27 October. Finally, the year will come to a close with a State Visit to Germany between 5 and 7 December.

At the same time, the Studies department will publish the standard economic reports concerning Senegal and Australia. It will produce two new sectoral publications, 'Belgian advanced manufacturing' and 'Belgian nuclear medicine', as well as a report concerning the use of free-trade agreements by Belgian exporters.

The Statistics department will launch a new platform that allows users to obtain information concerning foreign trade 24/7.

The Belgian exporters' database will be further improved and added to, among other things, thanks to data exchanges that are resuming with regional partners and also by incorporating company turnover figures. The Trade4U team will continue searching for international business opportunities, which will be targeted even more effectively using the new CPV classification.

# Institutional and financial framework

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The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is a public institution with a legal identity, founded under the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and the Regions on 24 May 2002 (published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 20 December 2002).

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is managed by a Board of Directors, of which His Majesty the King is the Honorary President. The Board comprises 16 members appointed by the Regional Governments and by the Federal Government, drawn equally from the public and private sectors. Each Region appoints a Government Commissioner. The Board of Directors of the Agency met five times in 2022.

A Support Committee coordinates the implementation of the decisions made by the Board of Directors. It is chaired by the Agency's Director General and comprises the three officials in charge of the regional export institutions (the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), hub.brussels and Flanders Investment & Trade) and the Director General responsible for Bilateral Economic Relations from the FPS Foreign Affairs. The Support Committee met three times in 2022.

The day-to-day management of the Agency is handled by the Director General, appointed by the Board of Directors, Fabienne L'Hoost. In addition, a Management Board, comprising the Director General and two Directors, Mrs Christelle Charlier and Mrs Rosemary Donck, meets on a regular basis.





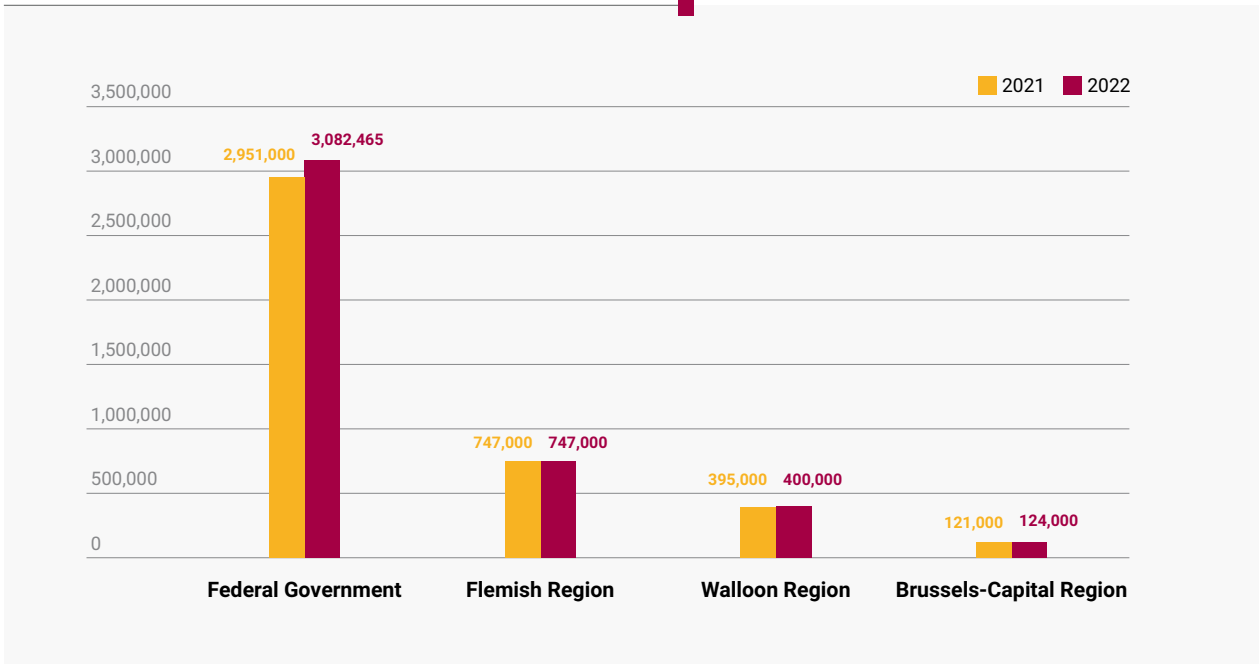
# Allocations for 2022

The Agency is funded by an indexed annual federal allocation and by contributions from the Regions, based on a distribution key for personal income tax. The income provided for in the 2022 budget (which was approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting on 15 December 2022) was €4,353,465. Federal and regional allocations represented the largest share of revenue.

TABLE 1 – Amount of allocations in 2022

	EUR
Federal Government	3,082,465.00
Flemish Region	747,000.00
Walloon Region	400,000.00
Brussels-Capital Region	124,000.00

FIGURE 1 – Breakdown of allocations for 2021 and 2022



## LAW OF 22 MAY 2003

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency applied the Law of 22 May 2003 concerning the organisation of the budget and accounting of the Federal State and its implementing decrees for the first time in 2019.

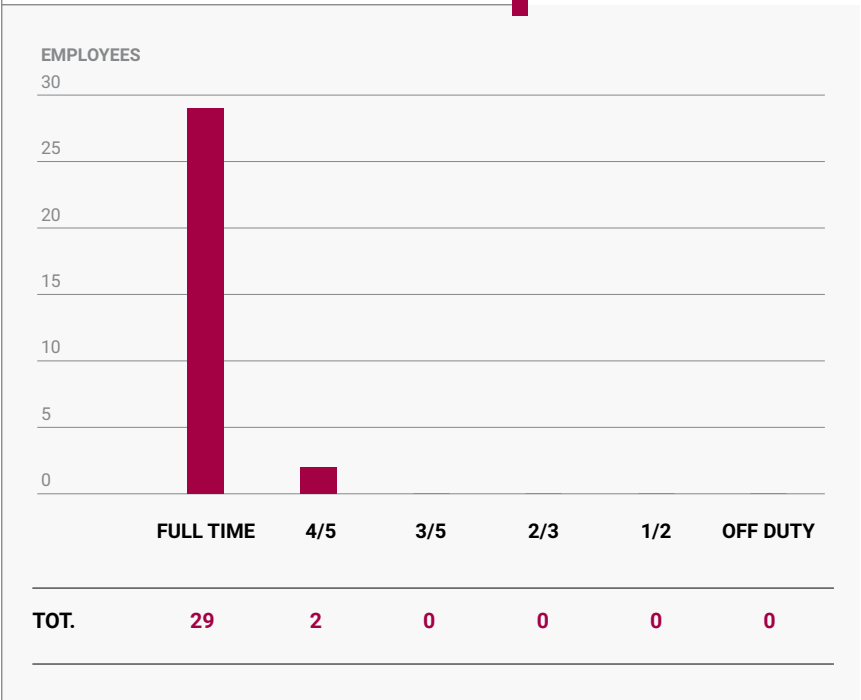


# Staff members in 2022

The Cooperation Agreement stipulates that the number of staff members within the Agency cannot exceed 50. The BFTA had 31 staff members as of 31 December 2022. Excluding part-time work, the workforce amounts to 30.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers.

The year 2022 was marked by five departures and five hires. In 2022, two staff members worked on a part-time (80%) basis.

FIGURE 2 – Working time arrangements

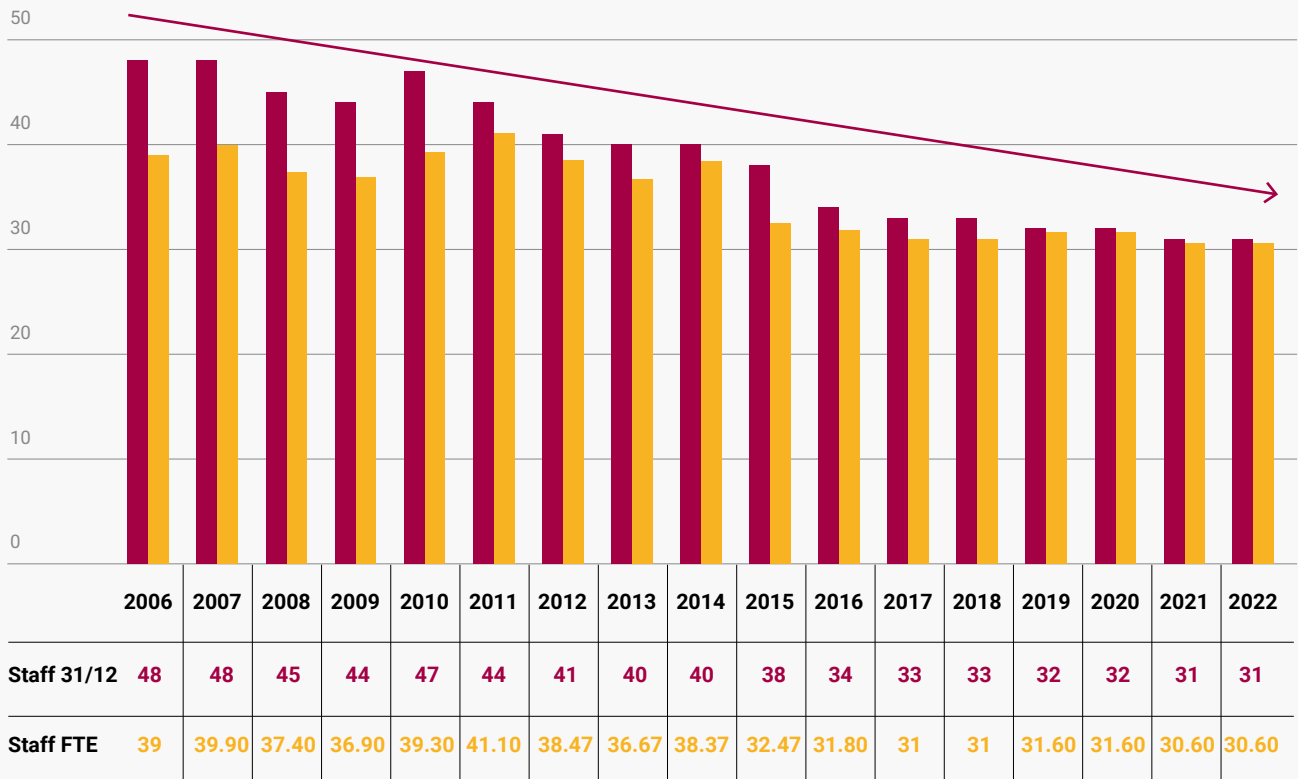


Over the past 16 years, the number of staff has decreased significantly, from 48 staff members (or 39 FTE workers) in 2006 to 31 staff members (30.6 FTE workers) in 2022. This represents a 35.4% reduction in staff numbers, or a 21.5% reduction in full-time equivalent workers.



**FIGURE 3 – Number of full-time equivalents, 2006 – 2022**

EMPLOYEES



-17 (= -35.4%)

-8.4 FTE (= -21.5%)



# The BFTA in 2022



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# 1. State Visits and Belgian economic missions

## 1.1. STATE VISITS

In accordance with the service contracts concluded with the FPS Foreign Affairs, the BFTA assumed the logistical role for the two State Visits organised in 2022: the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of Lithuania.



### GREECE 2 – 4 MAY 2022

The State Visit to Greece by the Belgian Sovereigns took place between 2 and 4 May 2022. This was the first foreign State Visit by Their Majesties the King and Queen since the Covid-19 pandemic.

This three-day visit included top-level official meetings and aimed to further strengthen historical, economic, academic and cultural ties between the two countries.

Their Majesties the King and Queen were accompanied by 16 business managers, 10 representatives from academic institutions and 20 journalists, among others. In total, 113 people participated in the State Visit.

A Federal Minister and five Minister-Presidents from the Regions and Communities of Belgium were also present:

- HE Petra De Sutter, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Administration, Public Enterprises, Telecommunications and the Post
- HE Elio Di Rupo, Minister-President of the Walloon Government
- HE Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region
- HE Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders
- HE Pierre-Yves Jeholet, Minister-President of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation
- HE Oliver Paasch, Minister-President of the German-Speaking Community of Belgium.

After a three-hour flight, Their Majesties the King and Queen were welcomed on arrival by HE Nikos Dendias, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs. From the airport, the Sovereigns immediately headed to central Athens for a series of official meetings.





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The Monarchs first visited the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in Syntagma Square, which is located opposite the Greek Parliament, for a wreath-laying ceremony.



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Their Majesties the King and Queen were then officially welcomed by HE Katerina Sakellariopoulou, President of the Hellenic Republic, and her partner, Mr Pavlos Kotsonis. At this time, His Majesty the King also presented the official delegation, which comprised the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister-Presidents, to the Greek President. An award ceremony was also held at the President's residence.

After a brief walk, the Sovereigns were welcomed by the Greek Prime Minister, HE Kyriakos Mitsotakis, and his partner, Mrs Mareva Grabowski-Mitsotakis, at the official residence, where His Majesty the King had a long meeting with the Greek Prime Minister and the group of ministers.

There was also a meeting with Mr Kostas Bakoyannis, the mayor of Athens, who awarded His Majesty the King a gold medal from the City of Athens in a solemn closing ceremony.

During this time, Her Majesty the Queen took part in an activity with one of the largest NGOs in Greece, 'The Smile of the Child', which is dedicated to helping children experiencing difficulties.

This first official day finished with a State Dinner in honour of Their Majesties the King and Queen, which was hosted by HE Katerina Sakellariopoulou, President of the Hellenic Republic, and her partner.

The second day of the State Visit combined social, economic and cultural elements. A visit to the Adama centre was organised in the morning, in order to highlight the positive results achieved in recent years in terms of migration, and also to recognise and support Greece's efforts to integrate refugees. Notably, the delegation was welcomed by HE Notis Mitarachis, the Greek Minister for Migration.

Their Majesties the King and Queen then left Athens and went to Sounion, where they visited the Temple of Poseidon with HE Petra De Sutter, HE Rudi Vervoort, HE Pierre-Yves Jeholet and HE Lina G. Mendoni, the Greek Minister for Culture and Sports. They then took part in an activity based around immersive technology, which could be applied in the tourism sector. During the academic lunch, discussions continued with Belgian and Greek researchers who are studying how new technology can be used in archaeology and to preserve cultural heritage. Next, the delegation visited the archaeological site in Thorikos, one of the three neighbouring excavation sites belonging to the Belgian School of Archaeology in Greece, in the company of the Greek Minister for Culture and Sports.

In the evening, the Sovereigns visited the Acropolis Museum with Belgian Ministers, before offering a concert with a string quartet from the National Belgian Orchestra in honour of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou. This concert was held in the only exhibition hall in the Parthenon frieze and was followed by a reception.

At the same time, the economic and academic delegations also had a very busy schedule. Highlights included a demonstration of OTN systems and a seminar on renewable sources of energy, 'Expertise Meets Opportunity,' in



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which HE Jan Jambon took part, a day of cyber-innovation, including a conference on cyber-security in the presence of HE Elio Di Rupo, and a seminar entitled, 'Immersive Technologies: the Future of Tourist and Cultural Sites' in the presence of HE Rudi Vervoort.

A signature ceremony also took place on the afternoon of 3 May. Three cooperation agreements were signed, in particular by the AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts Antwerp and the Athens School of Fine Arts, Eoly Energy, which is part of the Virya Group, and the CRES and, finally, the University of Saint-Louis in Brussels and the Athens University of Economics and Business.

The final day of the State Visit was heavily focused on the economy, starting with a visit to the liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Revithoussa, a strategic project in which the Belgian company Fluxys is a stakeholder. The entire economic delegation, along with HE Kostas Skrekas, the Greek Minister of the Environment and Energy, was also able to participate in this activity, which included a boat trip around the island and explanations about renewable sources of energy, the geopolitical context and Fluxys' investments.

Their Majesties the King and Queen then returned to Athens for a short meeting with the Belgian press, following by a working lunch.

The King met with CEOs from Belgium and Greece to exchange opinions about the energy sector. The Queen took part in a working lunch around the theme of sustainable development, which brought the State Visit to Greece to a successful end.



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## LITHUANIA 24 – 26 OCTOBER 2022

Their Majesties the King and Queen of Belgium paid a State Visit to Lithuania between 24 and 26 October 2022, at the invitation of President Gitanas Nausėda. This visit was postponed twice due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and finally took place in the year when Belgium and Lithuania were celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In addition to Vilnius, the visit also included Kaunas, the second-largest city in the country, and the Pabradė military base.

### Participants

The Royal Couple was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, HE Hadja Lahbib, and four Minister-Presidents:

- HE Elio Di Rupo, Minister-President of the Walloon Government
- HE Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region
- HE Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders
- HE Pierre-Yves Jeholet, Minister-President of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

and an official economic (15), academic (11) and media (17) delegation of around 120 people. This was the first State Visit made by Their Majesties the King and Queen to a Baltic State.

Through the central theme of the State Visit, 'solidarity rooted in the past, and cooperation looking to the future', several interesting aspects of our bilateral relations and cooperation in the broader sense of the term were brought into focus: existing and future economic, academic and cultural cooperation, as well as Belgium's military commitment within NATO, in a context where the war in Ukraine was on the mind of all the participants in the State Visit.

### Programme

#### DAY 1



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Protocol and official activities were on the programme for the first day of the State Visit, with the official welcoming ceremony in the courtyard of the Presidential Palace, a private conversation between the Presidential Couple and the Royal Couple and then an exchange of gifts and awards. The King and the Ministers were then welcomed to an official meeting with the President and several members of the Lithuanian government, while Her Majesty the Queen, along with Mrs Nausėdienė, visited the Museum of Jewish History in Vilna Gaon, where cooperation with the Jewish Museum in Brussels was officially finalised by signing an agreement in the presence of Minister-President Vervoort, and works of art loaned by the Jewish Museum in Brussels were unveiled.



The State Banquet, which was organised that evening at the Palace of the Grand Dukes in honour of the Sovereigns, brought the first day of the State Visit to a close. A small delegation of businessmen and rectors was also invited.

## DAY 2



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On Tuesday morning, our economic relations were honoured at the City Hall in Vilnius. Three pairs of Belgian and Lithuanian companies were able to present their collaborations to the Sovereigns and the Presidential Couple, before the opening of a large economic forum about renewable sources of energy and environmental construction, which was co-organised by the three Regions (Flanders Investment & Trade, AWEX and hub.brussels) and the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, with participation from the FEB. This was also an opportunity for the Lithuanian President and His Majesty the King to

deliver an opening speech in front of a crowd of more than 200 officials and entrepreneurs from Belgium and Lithuania.

The Royal Couple and a portion of the delegation then went to the Sunrise Valley science and technology park outside the city, where they received explanations about the scientific research conducted in the field of material science and mass spectrometry in the laboratories belonging to the Centre for Physical Sciences and Technology and the Centre for Life Sciences at the University of Vilnius.

The lunch hosted by Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, the President of the Lithuanian Parliament, in honour of the Sovereigns and a small delegation of Belgian and Lithuanian officials was an opportunity for the participants to exchange opinions on a number of domestic and foreign issues.



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Due to the changeable weather, the walk through Vilnius' old city centre with President Nausėda and the First Lady was limited to a visit to the Gate of Dawn. A subsequent visit was made to the Heritage Museum at St Michael's Church, with a particular focus on the tomb of several prominent members of the Sapieha family, the ancestors of Her Majesty the Queen.



These historic family ties were also highlighted during the visit to the old campus of the University of Vilnius, also in the company of the Presidential Couple. Afterwards, Their Majesties, President Nausėda and Mrs Nasėdienė had the chance to converse with small groups of Lithuanian and Belgian students about topics ranging from climate change and biodiversity to mental health in academia.

In the evening, the Belgian delegation organised a performance in honour of the Presidential Couple in return. The National Orchestra of Belgium and La Monnaie collaborated on a musical performance for the occasion, which was particularly appreciated by the 300 guests who were gathered at the Vilnius Philharmonic Institute.

### DAY 3



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The Sovereigns began the final day of the State Visit with separate itineraries. His Majesty the King was joined by President Nausėda, HE Hadja Lahbib and the Belgian and Lithuanian Defence Ministers on a visit to the Belgian detachment at the German military base in Pabradė. After briefings and various demonstrations from Belgian and Lithuanian soldiers, and a statement to the press and soldiers that addressed the war in Ukraine in particular, the King took the time to informally mingle with Belgian soldiers who are currently based in Lithuania.

That same morning, Her Majesty the Queen and Mrs Nausėdienė remained in Vilnius to visit the Centre for Ukraine, an initiative that offers Ukrainian refugees various forms of training and psychological support. They then visited Pirmas Blynas, a restaurant that employs people with disabilities.

In the afternoon, the delegation went to Kaunas, the former capital of Lithuania. After an official meeting with the mayor of the city, the Sovereigns were welcomed to the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, where the Presidential Couple was waiting for them. A short walk led by the CEO of Kaunas' time as European Capital of Culture 2022 led the delegation to Vytautas Magnus University, where an exhibition about design collaborations between the cities of Courtrai and Kaunas, funded by the Flemish government, was presented to them. The State Visit ended with a meeting with the Belgian press and an informal farewell between the Sovereigns and the Presidential Couple, who were particularly available throughout the State Visit.

## 1.2. BELGIAN ECONOMIC MISSIONS

The year 2022 was a post-Covid year full of global challenges, and this was also true for the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, which has organised, on an exceptional basis, not two, but three Belgian economic missions led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid. As per usual, these missions were organised through an effective collaboration between the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and the three regional agencies responsible for promoting foreign trade: the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), hub.brussels and Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT).

The number of participants per mission increased drastically in 2022. The 2019 economic mission to China remains the largest mission ever organised, but the missions to the United States of America and Japan rivalled this mission in terms of the number of participants. Likewise, the very first mission to the United Kingdom generated significant interest.

In total, the Belgian economic mission to the United Kingdom had 406 participants, included 195 companies represented by 332 businessmen and women. The mission to the United States of America counted 541 people (2016: 240 participants), including 459 businessmen and women representing 278 companies. Finally, the mission to Japan was the largest mission in 2022, with a total of 575 delegates (2012: 256 participants), including 224 companies represented by 372 participants. This means that Belgian economic missions in 2022 attracted no fewer than 1,522 participants in total. We can proudly state that, after a period of absence, the interest in participating in a Belgian economic mission has not diminished, but increased!



### UNITED KINGDOM 9 – 12 MAY 2022 #BEmissionUK

An initial Belgian economic mission to the United Kingdom was organised for spring 2022. For the first time ever, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency chose to organise a virtual briefing, which many people took part in.

The itinerary for the mission included activities in the Greater London Area and a full day in Oxford. In addition to the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, one Federal Minister and three Regional Ministers also participated in the mission. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, Sophie Wilmès, had to put her duties on hold during this period for family reasons, so it was the Federal Minister of Energy, Tinne Van der Straeten, who represented the federal government.

At the regional level, the following Ministers took part in the princely mission:

- HE Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders and Flemish Minister for Foreign Policy, Culture, Digitisation and Facilities
- HE Willy Borsus, Vice-President of the Walloon Government and Minister of Economy, Foreign Trade, Research and Innovation, New Technologies, Agriculture and Urban and Spatial Planning
- HE Pascal Smet, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region responsible for Urbanism and Heritage, European and International Relations, Foreign Trade and Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Assistance.

HE Hilde Crevits, Deputy Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Economy, Innovation, Labour, the Social Economy and Agriculture also attended the first day of the mission.

The key sectors for this visit were:

- chemical products, pharmaceuticals and life sciences
- agri-food and the food industry
- architecture and construction
- transport and logistics
- clean tech.

On Sunday, 8 May, the delegation travelled to central London via Eurostar, where Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid was welcomed by HE Bruno van der Pluijm, the Belgian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Mr Nicholas Jarrold, a special representative for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Commonwealth and Development, Mr Gareth Williams, Director of Strategy and Secretary General of Eurostar, and Mr Victor Murgioni, Director of St Pancras train station.

That evening, an information session was organised for members of the delegation. The itinerary for the mission was discussed in detail and the regional representatives exchanged business tips.

The first day of the mission, Monday, 9 May, began with the 'Success Stories' breakfast organised by the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (FEB), and was followed by a visit to the Ghelamco property group, who outlined their activities and projects, in particular the London based 'The Arc' project. The first awards ceremony of the mission took place at the Belgian embassy. Adrian Bradshaw, KCB OBE DL, the Governor of the Royal Hospital, was awarded the distinction of Commander of the Order of the Crown. Shortly before noon, Agoria Sports & Entertainment Technology Club organised a presentation called 'Best of Belgium Sports Technology' in collaboration with hub.brussels, in the presence of the former athlete Kim Gevaerts.



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In the afternoon, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid was welcomed to the 'Chelsea Pensioners - Royal Hospital'. She inaugurated a garden square designed by Peter Wirtz to the sound of bagpipes. The first official meeting of the mission took place at the residence of the Minister of State (Minister for Europe and North America) James Cleverly. This meeting was followed by a seminar by the Belgian Food Industry Federation (Fevia), which included, among other things, an in-depth discussion on the impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic on the food industry and

the shipping of food and drink products via the port of Zeebrugge to the United Kingdom. The official reception at the famous Guildhall ended the day in style.

Tuesday, 10 May, was marked by several back-to-back seminars, in particular: 'Towards net positive cities,' or how can London and Brussels help each other by encouraging the sharing of innovation between companies and governments? 'Ten years of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights'; 'EU-UK Trade & Cooperation Agreement (TCA) in practice'; 'The North Sea as a power hub – UK-Belgian Business opportunities'; and 'Belgium, the logistics hub connecting the UK with the world: stronger together'.

Royal links were strengthened on this day with a visit by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid to Clarence House, where she met His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Later, Princess Astrid and Princess Anne went to vibrant central London together for a wreath-laying ceremony at the Edith Cavell monument.



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The following day, Wednesday, 11 May, the delegation left London for Windlesham to visit UCB's new headquarters and inaugurate a plaque commemorating the visit of Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid. The journey then continued to Oxford, where Princess Astrid had a brief meeting with Crown Princess Elisabeth of Belgium, before visiting Professor Louise Richardson, the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University. On campus, essenscia also organised a 'high-level healthy lunch: Belgium, the health and biotech valley of tomorrow' seminar. The last stage was the visit to the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, where the importance of fusion energy for a future sustainable energy supply was highlighted. Upon their arrival in London, the delegation attended the signing ceremony, where nine contracts were signed.

On 12 May, the final day of the mission, the delegation was invited to inaugurate the Rivenhall Integrated Waste Management Facility (IWMF) in Indaver. The Rivenhall project was officially launched with the push of a large red button.





## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 4 – 12 JUNE 2022

### #BEmissionUSA

The mission to the United States of America came shortly after the mission to the United Kingdom. For this mission, it was also decided that a virtual briefing would be organised. During the mission, the delegation visited the cities of Atlanta, New York and Boston, with the following sectors being highlighted in particular:

- energy, renewable sources of energy and clean tech
- health, biosciences, biotechnology and pharmaceutical products
- infrastructure, transport and logistics
- artificial intelligence, robots, aeronautics and space
- agri-food
- smart economy: digital economy, FinTech and e-commerce
- architecture and sustainability.

This mission was also led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid.

She was accompanied by:

- HE David Clarinval, Federal Minister in charge of Foreign Trade
- HE Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders and Flemish Minister for Foreign Policy, Culture, Digitisation and Facilities
- HE Willy Borsus, Vice-President of the Walloon Government and Minister of Economy, Foreign Trade, Research and Innovation, New Technologies, Agriculture and Urban and Spatial Planning
- HE Pascal Smet, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region responsible for Urbanism and Heritage, European and International Relations, Foreign Trade and Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Assistance.



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After a day of rest and recovery following the long flight (Brussels – New York – Atlanta), the mission began on Sunday, 5 June, which was also Princess Astrid's birthday. Princess Astrid received a warm welcome from Ilham Kadri, the CEO of Solvay at the Solvay Alpharetta site. After a few short speeches, she accompanied the delegation through Solvay's new app-development laboratory, where the development of their 3D-printing technology was explained. During this visit, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid also presented an award to Michael Finelli, the President of Solvay Growth Initiatives and the General Manager for North America. Solvay had prepared a surprise birthday cake for Princess Astrid, which

brought this first activity to a festive close. Later in the day, an information session was organised at the hotel for the mission, where HE Jean-Arthur Régibeau, the Belgian Ambassador to the United States, Mr Michel Gerebtzoff, the Consul General in Atlanta and the local representatives welcomed the entire delegation.

The second day, Monday, 6 June, began with the inauguration of UCB's new inSpace building, where Mrs LaKeisha, an epilepsy sufferer and advocate for UCB patients, told her story. A commemorative plaque for Princess Astrid's visit was unveiled. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights (NCCHR) was the ideal location for the 'Business and Human Rights' seminar organised by Foreign Affairs. After an Invest Lunch organised by AWEX at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, where Belgium's strengths were promoted to potential American investors, a round table on artificial intelligence and, in particular, the key role of open innovation and partnerships between the United States and the European Union was organised by FIT at the Georgia Tech Research Institute Conference Center.

In the United States, governors play a decisive role in economic decisions, so the official meeting with Brian Kemp, the Governor of Georgia, was an opportunity for our officials to promote our country's interests once more. Finally, the Princess and the Ministers met up with the economic delegation at the Creative Media Industries Institute, where the gaming industry was highlighted. This sector is booming and Belgium is home to some real gems. This was an opportunity for Princess Astrid and Minister-President Jambon to take part in an online video-game competition, and even to have avatars created in their likeness! In the evening, the Atlanta portion of the mission drew to a close on an elegant note on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor of the King & Spalding building, with a large networking reception organised by the Belgian-American Chamber of Commerce of the South. Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid and Governor Kemp gave a speech there in front of 500 guests.

The following morning, Tuesday, 7 June, the delegation travelled to New York. Once she touched down in New York, Princess Astrid headed to the offices of AB Inbev for a presentation about the group's development strategy for the American market. Flanders Investment & Trade selected the prestigious Harvard Club in New York for their seminar on Data-Driven Healthcare Excellence in the presence of high-level guests. The official reception for the mission, which took place in the idyllic Loeb Boat House in Central Park, was attended by 900 guests from Belgium and America.



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On Wednesday, 8 June, several memorable meetings were held. The day started in southern Manhattan with an event organised by hub.brussels about the best practices for the economic and sustainable transition of New York and Brussels. Then, the official delegation and around thirty businessmen and women had the exceptional opportunity to be hosted at the United Nations, where a seminar about the potential for collaboration and business opportunities for our companies was held. A B2G lunch organised by the FEB, and a showcase of the best technological solutions from Belgium in the sports sector, brought this second day of activity in New York to a close.

On the morning of Thursday, 9 June, before travelling to Boston, the Princess, Minister-President Jambon and State Secretary Smet were met by the mayor of New York, Eric Adams. For their part, Minister Clarinval and Minister Borsus went to Hartford and visited the headquarters of Pratt & Whitney.

The itinerary for Boston started with an official meeting with the Governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker, following by a visit to the American offices of Takeda. The iconic Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was also on the schedule for our delegation that afternoon, in particular a round table aimed at further developing academic and technological collaborations with our universities. The delegation met with Governor Baker again in the late afternoon for a large event on offshore wind energy and the potential for collaboration between Massachusetts and Belgium. In the evening, the whole delegation was invited to visit the Museum of Fine Arts and admire the new galleries of Flemish art, on the initiative of Flanders Investment & Trade.



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The final day of the mission, Friday, 10 June, began with the 'Success Stories' breakfast organised by the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (FEB) and the official launch of 'Life Science Day'. The Princess and the Ministers were then able to meet the Mayor of Boston, Michelle Wu. A presentation of the 'American Academy of Arts & Sciences' was held at the Harvard Club in Boston, where Professor Peter Baron Carmeliet has been recognised for his research. The day ended with a visit to the Massachusetts General Hospital Burr Proton

Therapy Center, where the Walloon company IBA has installed its first standardised proton-therapy device in the USA.

No fewer than 40 agreements were signed during this mission.



## JAPAN 5 – 9 DECEMBER 2022 #BEmissionJPN

The final economic mission of 2022 took place in the Land of the Rising Sun: Japan. Given the large number of participants, it can be said that, after ten years without an economic mission to Japan and the Covid-19 pandemic, this country remains an important economic partner.

In the autumn, there were no longer any Covid-related rules regarding gatherings, so it was possible to organise an in-person briefing once again. Thanks to the support of Belfius, the first post-Covid briefing took place in the auditorium of Passage 44. To make the most of this extended trip to Japan, activities were organised not only in the well-known cities of Tokyo and Osaka, but also the port city of Nagoya and the cultural city of Kyoto.

Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid led this mission, alongside:

- HE Hadja Lahbib, the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions
- HE Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders and Flemish Minister for Foreign Policy, Culture, Digitisation and Facilities
- HE Pascal Smet, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region responsible for Urbanism and Heritage, European and International Relations, Foreign Trade and Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Assistance.

Various political, economic, academic and cultural activities were included on the itinerary.

During this mission, particular attention was paid to the following themes:

- renewable sources of energy
- life sciences
- the automotive industry
- environmental construction
- market access
- the food industry.

As per usual, an information session was also organised for all the participants in this mission. Ambassador Roxane de Bilderling and the local regional representatives were delighted to welcome the delegation.

The first activity on Monday, 5 December, took place in a TOHO cinema, where the collaboration between Barco and TOHO cinemas was showcased on the big screen. The delegation then visited Panasonic headquarters, where the collaboration between Belgium and Japan was illustrated through the expertise of Zetes in the field of legal and digital identity. During a guided tour, Panasonic expressed its keen interest in new technologies, hydrogen and green technologies. During a small committee meeting, Takeda explained its future global strategy by focusing on Belgium. Furthermore, Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) and the port of Antwerp-Bruges affirmed their ambition to be carbon neutral by 2025. The Japanese media was present at a bilateral meeting in which HE Fumio Kishida, the Prime Minister of Japan, and HE Yoshimasa Hayashi,





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Minister of Foreign Affairs, welcomed Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid and the Ministers. In the evening, during the official reception for the mission, and in the presence of the entire Belgian delegation and their Japanese guests, HE Yasutoshi Nishimura, Minister for the Economy, Trade and Industry, and HE Taro Kono, Minister of Digital Affairs, both received the distinction of Grand Officer of the Order of the Crown.

On the second day, Tuesday, 6 December, in the presence of HE Tetsuo Saito, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Princess Astrid unveiled a scale model of the Sea Challenger turbine-installation vessel, which will be deployed in Japanese waters by DEME. The conference concerning decarbonisation and the technological development of hydrogen and offshore wind energy organised by FIT, the conference on decarbonisation and artificial intelligence organised by AWEX, and the seminar on the accessibility of the European market for Japanese companies, organised by hub.brussels all met with great success.





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Waseda University presented some ideas and post-pandemic funds to promote the internationalisation of academia. The final evening in Tokyo concluded with the launch of the Belgian Beer Weekend 2022 in the commercial and administrative district of Shinjuku. This event allowed the Japanese to learn about Belgian beer culture. Princess Astrid was appointed 'Honorary Grand Master of the Belgian Brewers' Guild' amid much fanfare and met with Belgian importers of food and drink products (including chicory). At the same time, jazz artists Jeff Neve (piano) and Teus Nobel (trumpet) paid tribute to 100 years of Toots Thielemans.

The next day, Wednesday, 7 December, the delegation stopped at the Suzuka International



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Circuit on the road to Nagoya. This racetrack has a long history with the Spa

Francorchamps circuit and wanted to discuss its innovations with respect to climate change and carbon neutrality within the automotive industry. The guests of the delegation and their Japanese hosts had lunch with a show, to the soundtrack of race cars, before venturing onto the circuit themselves. The afternoon was dedicated to a visit to the port of Nagoya, the largest car-export port in the world. The port of Antwerp-Bruges, the largest car-import port in the world, maintains a lasting collaboration with the port of Nagoya, and organised a ceremony during this visit to sign a new cooperation agreement as a result of the merger between the

ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge. HydroBingo, the world's first hydrogen-powered ferry, was then officially inaugurated on a quay, and a short cruise was arranged. Before taking the bullet train to Osaka, the official delegation visited HE Hideaki Omura, Governor of the prefecture of Aichi, on the occasion of important cooperation agreements with the Belgian regions.

On Thursday, 8 December, the focus was on sustainable chemistry and life sciences. At the breakfast, held by the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (FEB), eight successful Belgian companies in Japan were showcased. An activity organised by essenscia highlighted the potential for investment in the Belgian chemical industry to ensure a sustainable future. The Japanese company Air Water Inc invited the delegation to announce the development of the innovative renewable energy project in Matsumoto in collaboration with Belgium-based Xylergy, which provides local, circular and clean energy solutions.

AWEX and FIT organised activities based around life sciences. To this end, AWEX organised a lunch in collaboration with essenscia on the theme of 'Belgium: world champion in chemistry and life science', and FIT organised a conference on life sciences which touched upon the opportunities and challenges in this sector. The day ended with a visit to the Daikin Technical Innovation Centre, which cooperates with the Daikin European Development Centre in Ghent and Ostend. The visit included a guided tour and access to the Open Lab to see some cutting-edge technology.

On the final day of the mission, Friday, 9 December, the delegation travelled to Kyoto, where they attended a seminar on gender equality within the context of 'Business & Human Rights' at Doshisha University. Japanese students shared their opinions on gender equality by means of video messages and during a round table. The active participation of Japanese students showed that they were interested in this subject.

A part of the official delegation was then welcomed to Villa Seifuso by prominent members of the Kyoto University. They commemorated the donation of a collection of Japanese books to the University of Louvain 100 years ago. Seifuso is a very traditional Japanese villa with a unique Japanese-style garden. A private viewing of sculptures by Folon and photographs by Thierry Renauld was organised at the magnificent Hakuso Sonso Hashimoto Kansetsu Garden & Museum.



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The final activity for this mission was a Game Jam award ceremony with young people from Belgium and Japan. They had to develop a video game from scratch in 48 hours. This creative project showcased the cooperation between Japan and Belgium in the video-game industry. Princess Astrid announced the winner and received a manga-style drawing of herself and her husband, Prince Lorenz.

A total of 47 agreements were signed during this mission, including 29 academic agreements.

### 1.3. CALENDAR OF STATE VISITS AND BELGIAN ECONOMIC MISSIONS IN 2023

#### State Visits by Their Majesties the King and Queen

	<b>South Africa</b>	22–27 March 2023
	<b>Germany</b>	5–7 December 2023

#### Belgian economic missions led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, Representative of His Majesty the King

	<b>Senegal</b>	21–25 May 2023
	<b>Australia</b>	19–28 October 2023



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## 2. Webinars

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**As a continuation of the previous two years, webinars were again organised in 2022, on the occasion of the release of new publications, or following current events.**

In 2022, the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency offered five themed webinars in collaboration with its institutional partners – the FPS Foreign Affairs, the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), hub.brussels and Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT).

The Studies and Statistics departments mainly contributed to these remote seminars when organising three virtual events: the presentation of the sectoral publication 'Belgian Entertainment Technologies', a presentation on the role that logistics service providers can play in using free-trade agreements more effectively entitled 'How your logistics service provider can make you (even) more successful abroad with FTAs', and the 'Rebound of Belgian foreign trade in 2021 and economic projections during uncertain times' webinar, which focused on the performance of Belgian foreign trade over the past year, on one hand, and future prospects on the other.

The Trade4U department and the Regulations department took turns organising a webinar. For Trade4U, the subject was 'The US and Belgium: a long term partnership story full of opportunities', during which the United States Ambassador to Belgium, Michael Adler, announced a 'new era' and then presented opportunities for investment and trade in the United States. In light of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the Regulations department offered a webinar on the sanctions regimes and their impacts on Belgian companies, entitled 'Trade barriers and sanction regimes – Russia and Ukraine'.

These webinars, which were organised in English in order to reach a wider audience abroad and to give them an international scope, attracted great interest from a specialised audience.

The five webinars are briefly presented, in chronological order, below.

## 2.1. 'HOW YOUR LOGISTICS SERVICE PROVIDER CAN MAKE YOU (EVEN) MORE SUCCESSFUL ABROAD WITH FTAS'



**Date:** 15 March 2022

**Organiser:** Studies and Statistics departments of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, in collaboration with its institutional partners.

**Speakers:**

- Mrs Geraldine Emberger, Advisor for Implementation of EU Trade Agreements, European Commission/DG TRADE.
- Mr Dirk Pottilius, Representative of Forward Belgium, Head Customs and Fiscal Representation, Ziegler Belgium.
- Mr Wouter Decoster, International Trade Analyst and author of the publication, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA).

**Participants:** 108 people

The first webinar of the year was organised following the publication of the study '*The role of logistics service providers in the utilization of FTAs by exporters*', in close collaboration with the European Commission and Forward Belgium.

The European Commission opened the webinar by presenting the context for concluding free-trade agreements and monitoring their implementation. The study was then discussed and general information, *tips and tricks* were offered on how exporters can optimise their collaboration with their logistics service provider, in order to be (even) more successful abroad. Finally, a logistics service provider representing the industry association, Forward Belgium, presented some case studies.

In addition to the study '**The role of logistics service providers in the utilization of FTAs by exporters**', additional information (PowerPoint presentations and a video) about the webinar can be consulted on our [website](#).





## 2.2. 'THE US AND BELGIUM: A LONG TERM PARTNERSHIP STORY FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES'



**Date:** 31 March 2022

**Organiser:** Trade4U department of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, in collaboration with its institutional partners

### Speakers:

- HE Mr Michael Adler, United States Ambassador to Belgium.
- HE Jeroen Cooreman, Director-General for Bilateral Affairs, FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.
- Mr Karel Vantomme, U.S. Commercial Service.
- Mr Archibald Astley-Corbett Esq., Director of Investment Europe Economic Development Partnership North-Carolina.
- Mr Drew Combs, Government of North Dakota.

**Participants:** 225 people

The second online event was organised by the Trade4U department. The goal was to highlight the importance of trade between the United States and Belgium, and the potential for trade and investment in certain lesser-known, but promising, states. Moreover, the webinar took place before the Belgian economic mission to the United States.

The United States ambassador to Belgium, Mr Adler, started the webinar by announcing a new era for American-Belgian relations had begun. An overview of support measures offered to companies by the American government was then provided. North Carolina and North Dakota were cited as examples by their representatives for investments and exports.

Information about this webinar (a PowerPoint presentation and a video) is available on our [website](#).



## 2.3. 'BELGIAN ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGIES'



**Date:** 30 May 2022

**Organiser:** Studies and Statistics departments of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, in collaboration with its institutional partners.

**Speakers:**

- Mrs Valérie Cuvelier, Advisor, Directorate of Economic Interests, FPS Foreign Affairs.
- Mr David Verbruggen, General Manager, Flemish Games Association (FLEGA).
- Mr Pierre Collin, Executive Manager, Cluster TWIST
- Mrs Emilie Thiry, Audiovisual & ICC advisor, cluster play.brussels, hub.brussels.
- Mr Lorenzo Van Elsen, International Trade Analyst and author of the publication, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA).

**Participants:** 62 people

On the occasion of the sectoral publication 'Belgian Entertainment Technologies', the Studies department of the Agency organised the third online event of the year.

During this webinar, the panel of speakers from public institutions highlighted how technology directly impacts music, television and film, sports and the arts and culture sector. They demonstrated how technology allows companies in the sector to offer increasingly intense experiences to audiences, fans and visitors. Indeed, with the fourth industrial revolution in full swing, entertainment companies are seizing the opportunities offered by the digital transformation and innovative technologies to develop new commercial and operating methods.

In addition to the study, additional information about the webinar (PowerPoint presentations, a video and interviews with three Belgian companies) is available on our [website](#).



## 2.4. 'TRADE BARRIERS AND SANCTION REGIMES – RUSSIA AND UKRAINE'



**Date:** 02 June 2022

**Organisers:** Regulations department of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, in collaboration with its institutional partners.

**Speakers:**

- Mrs Pascaline della Faille, Country and Sector Risk Manager, Risk Management, Credendo Export Credit Agency.
- Mr Grégory Claude, General Director of Economic Analyses and International Economy, International Trade and Investments Department, FPS Economy
- Mr Didier De Baere, Deputy Director General, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA).
- Mrs Katrien Van Loocke, Legal Advisor, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA).

**Participants:** 100 people

Since the world has been significantly impacted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the largest conflict on European soil since the end of World War II, the Regulations department thought it was appropriate to assess what sanctions regimes have been implemented and how they are affecting Belgian exporters. The focus was on examining sanctions regimes, existing trade barriers in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine and instruments that aim to remove these barriers. In order to clarify these technical and legal issues, the Agency was also able to rely on the support of Credendo, which discussed the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine for its risk-coverage policy, and the expertise of the FPS Economy.

In addition to the study, additional information about the webinar (PowerPoint presentations and a video) is available on our [website](#).



## 2.5. 'BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE & WORLD TRADE'



**Date:** 28 June 2022

**Organisers:** Studies and Statistics departments of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency, in collaboration with its institutional partners.

**Speakers:**

- Mrs Véronique Goossens, Chief Economist, Belfius.
- Mrs Christelle Charlier, Director Studies, Statistics and Communication, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA).
- Mr Dennis Gijsbrechts, International Trade Analyst, Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA).

**Participants:** 59 people

The webinar '*Rebound of Belgian foreign trade in 2021 and economic projections during uncertain times*' was organised after the publication of two studies: '*Belgian Foreign Trade*' and '*World Trade*'.

The economic crisis that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on imports and exports globally since the financial crisis of 2008/2009. While the international trade of goods has since returned to pre-pandemic levels, trade in services has fallen behind to a degree. The Chief Economist of Belfius also took the floor to present the bank's macroeconomic outlook in these uncertain times. While the economy in general was struggling to recover from the consequences of the pandemic, new crises emerged, in particular the war in Ukraine, high inflation rates and geopolitical tensions, among others.

In addition to the two **studies** – '**Belgian Foreign Trade**' and '**World Trade**' – all other information about the webinar (PowerPoint presentations and a video) is available on our [website](#).





## 3. Overseas Business Opportunities Centre – OBOC

The OBOC department is responsible for managing the Belgian Exporters' Database (Chapter 3.1) and the Trade4U department for Belgian exporters (Chapter 3.2).

### 3.1. BELGIAN EXPORTERS' DATABASE

Based on data about exporters provided by:

- the regional agencies: the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), hub.brussels and Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT);
- the federal institutions: FPS Foreign Affairs and FPS Finance;
- the Missions department of the BFTA, via the lists of participants in princely economic missions and State Visits;

the OBOC department supplements these to create a comprehensive file of Belgian exporters. Each firm is characterised by a profile that includes general information about it (contact details, contact people, etc.) and information about its turnover, activities (products and services) and export markets.

The Exporters' Database is a central tool for Trade4U operations, but also for different departments within the Agency (Missions, Studies, etc.). It is therefore essential to continuously improve the Exporters' Database, which makes it possible to achieve increasing levels of success with regional and federal partners and other institutions (e.g. Credendo, the city of Antwerp, etc.). The Agency receives numerous requests for lists of companies by country and/or by product.

At the end of 2022, the Exporters' Database included more than 43,000 companies that are confirmed to be active and, for more than half of these, comprehensive information is available. Furthermore, there are 950 new companies and more than 20,000 company profiles have been adapted in 2022.

Any companies that were already entered via the Thesaurus have been automatically linked to the CPV (Common Procurement Vocabulary) classification.

Approximately 11,000 companies have also already been categorised by turnover via Creditsafe data.

Since the aim is to have an exporters' database that is as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible, the legal status of exporters is verified on a regular basis via the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises. Companies that have ceased operations have been deleted.

Access to the National Bank of Belgium database has also been requested, in order to have a new source of financial information about companies.

The Exporters' Database also makes it possible to enrich the existing CRM systems within the regional agencies. To this end, each BFTA partner (the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), hub.brussels, Flanders Investment & Trade and the SPF Foreign Affairs) has access to it.

Since the latest version of DBTrade4U, which includes new features (CPV, a turnover category), the OBOC department has focused on the Exporters' Database, as well as resuming data exchanges with its regional partners.

Data exchanges with the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX) have been carried out on a regular basis since 2021. New companies are integrated into DBTrade4U and Thesaurus and CPV codes are added.

A meeting was held in October 2022, with the end goal of resuming data exchanges with Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT). It was then decided to proceed in stages, with the first being a comparison between the Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) database and the Exporters' Database.

Similarly, contact was made with hub.brussels in December 2022 to present the new features of DBTrade4U and to establish a data exchange concerning companies in Brussels.

Since the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), every person whose contact details are recorded in our database may exercise their 'right to be forgotten'.

### Developments in DBTrade4U

The DBTrade4U tool, which is used to manage the exporters file on a day-to-day basis, is based on the ElasticSearch concept, which allows for regular developments and to add features and content.

In 2022, the IT developments primarily concerned software updates to keep the system up-to-date from a technical point of view. Furthermore, a feature has been added to manage requests to have data deleted (GDPR).



### 3.2. TRADE4U: A DYNAMIC PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

#### A. Results in terms of number of subscribers

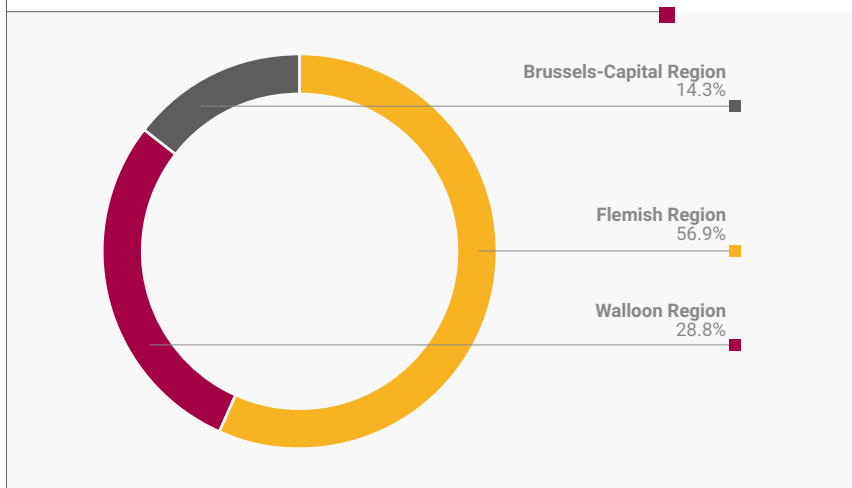
By the end of 2022, **177 companies** were affiliated with Trade4U. This number has fallen from the previous year. As in previous years with the Covid-19 pandemic, the future remains uncertain due to the global energy crisis. As a result, some companies preferred to suspend their subscription to Trade4U.

In addition to the number of subscribers, there are also companies that benefited from a promotional three-month subscription, namely:

- **110 companies** that participated in the princely economic mission to the United Kingdom;
- **119 companies** that participated in the princely economic mission to the United States of America;
- **100 companies** that participated in the princely economic mission to Japan.

The breakdown of subscribers by region is outlined below.

**FIGURE 4 – Breakdown of subscribers by region in 2022**



## B. Results in terms of offers/subscriptions

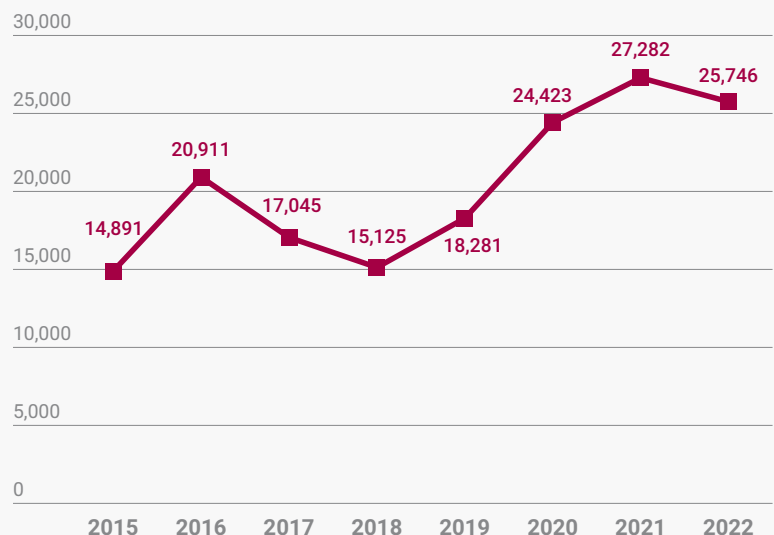
### INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The Trade4U department disseminated 25,746 international business opportunities to businesses in 2022 via the Trade4U mobile application, meaning a slight decrease compared to 2021, which was a record-breaking year.

Thanks to the new CPV classification, these business opportunities have been targeted even more precisely before being sent to subscribers.

The opportunities that were disseminated were mainly **calls for tenders** (69%), as well as **international projects** (30.8%) and, to a lesser extent, **B2B business proposals** (0.2%).

**FIGURE 5 – Number of business opportunities disseminated between 2015 and 2022**



### NEWSFLASHES

The Trade4U mobile application also facilitates the publication of economic and legal newsflashes. In 2022, **82 newsflashes** were disseminated. Almost half of this information (39 newsflashes) came from the FPS Foreign Affairs and its international diplomatic posts.



## SEMINARS

Since the launch of Trade4U, two seminars have been organised each year. However, it has been impossible to organise these in person since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 31 March 2022, the Agency organised a webinar on '**The US and Belgium: a long term partnership story full of opportunities**', in close collaboration with its partners (the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX), hub.brussels, Flanders Investment & Trade and FPS Foreign Affairs), which had the honour of welcoming **HE Michael M. Adler**, the United States ambassador to Belgium, as well as several other high-level speakers. More than 200 people participated in this webinar.



### Programme

- **10.00:** Opening by **Mr. Didier De Baere**, Deputy Director General of the BFTA
- **10.05:** **HE Mrs. Sophie Wilmès, Federal Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, Foreign Trade and responsible for the Federal cultural entities:** "The political and economic importance of the transatlantic cooperation"
- **10.15:** **HE Mr. Michael M. Adler, Ambassador of the US to Belgium:** "A new era in US-Belgian ties in the light of current circumstances"
- **10.25:** **U.S. Commercial Service – Karel Vantomme** - US Government support for your business in the United States
- **10.45:** **Mr. Archibald Astley-Corbett Esq., Director of Investment Europe Economic Development Partnership North-Carolina:** trade and investment opportunities in smaller US States – the particular case of North Carolina
- **11.05:** **Mr. Drew Combs, North-Dakota government:** Trade and investment opportunities in smaller US States – the particular case of North Dakota
- **11.25:** Closing remarks and Q&A



Check out the recording of the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/RdaQ1yopVzU>.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

In 2022, **14 specifications** were ordered by the OBOC department, in collaboration with diplomatic posts or regional economic and trade representatives, for the benefit of Trade4U subscribers. This service, which has been very popular with subscribers since the launch of Trade4U, was majorly impacted, first by the Covid-19 pandemic and currently by the energy crisis.

#### STATISTICS

A **personalised statistics subscription** is available. Each subscriber receives import and export figures for their products/services and target markets on a monthly or quarterly basis.

### 3.3. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE OBOC DEPARTMENT

#### Hosting interns

The OBOC department collaborates with several colleges and universities to host interns. Despite the full-time remote working that was in effect at the start of the year, and then structured remote working, an intern was still successfully supervised for a total of **44 internship days**.

This collaboration benefits all the parties: firstly, the interns are offered their first professional experience and are a valuable asset for the OBOC department with respect to maintaining the Exporters' Database and researching international business opportunities for Trade4U subscribers.

## 4. Studies, statistics and tax certificates

### 4.1. STUDIES

The year 2022 saw the publication of two economic studies, the United States and Japan, a sectoral publication entitled 'Belgian Entertainment Technologies' and 'The role of logistics service providers in the utilization of FTAs by exporters'.

All the studies can be consulted on the BFTA website  
<https://www.abh-ace.be/en/countries-and-statistics>.

#### 4.1.1. Economic studies

As part of the 2022 princely missions to the United States and Japan, the BFTA published two economic studies, which are available in French and Dutch. These studies aim to offer the reader a macroeconomic overview of the country, as well as an analysis of growth sectors for exports. In addition, these studies bring together all the information business owners need to optimise their export and investment decisions.

##### 4.1.1.1. THE UNITED STATES



The economic study about the United States, the world's leading economy ahead of the People's Republic of China, highlighted the reasons for organising a joint economic mission to this country. Despite its robust economy, the United States was not spared by the Covid-19 pandemic. GDP growth stalled in America in 2020, with the spread of the coronavirus around the world. However, the slowdown was less drastic than it was in other large developed economies.

Thanks to the Biden administration's US stimulus plan in particular, the country of Uncle Sam has quickly got back on course, with GDP growth in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022 reaching pre-pandemic levels. Investment and domestic consumption have been the main drivers of growth in America over the past year.





Thanks to a close Transatlantic relationship founded on shared principles, trade between the United States and the European Union has also resumed in a big way after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The economic study about the United States can be downloaded [here](#).

#### 4.1.1.2. JAPAN



The economic study on Japan showed that there are many reasons to organise a new joint economic mission in the country after ten years. In addition to the highly developed automotive industry, Japan also excels in biotechnology, the pharmaceutical industry, the food and drinks industry, energy, nano-technologies and ICT. The country also boasts modern infrastructure, a large domestic market of consumers (126 million people), very high savings reserves, a low rate of unemployment and a high level of social stability.

Like Belgium and the EU, Japan has also committed to a dual environmental and digital transition, with the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. In order to achieve carbon neutrality, the Japanese government adopted the *Green Growth Strategy* at the end of 2020. This industrial policy aims to foster a virtuous cycle of economic growth and environmental protection, in collaboration with economic stakeholders. The plan includes five cross-sector policy instruments, as well as action plans for 14 growth sectors. With the Green Growth Strategy, Japan aims to promote decarbonisation, which is one of the most crucial global challenges for the future of humanity. The Japanese government views this plan as an opportunity for growth, and will use it to transform itself into a sustainable society by encouraging innovation and fostering new industries.



The economic study about Japan can be downloaded [here](#).



### 4.1.2. Sectoral publication

A sectoral publication was realised in 2022, in collaboration with the federal and regional partners, as well as the relevant federations. It was called '*Belgian Entertainment Technologies*'. It is part of a collection of sectoral publications, which are produced in English. They are traditionally intended to support exporters in sectors that are particularly promising for the Belgian economy and are arranged as follows:

- the initial section gives an overview of the situation with the relevant sector in Belgium, and outlines the strengths of our country in this field;
- the second section highlights innovative companies in the relevant sector through interviews;
- the third and final section lists federations and clusters in the field in question.

#### 4.1.2.1. BELGIAN ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGIES

The sector publication entitled '*Belgian Entertainment Technologies*', which was published in the first half of 2022, describes the pioneering role that Belgium plays as a leader in the field of entertainment technology. Belgian companies in this sector are particularly innovative and invest significantly in research and development for new technologies, whether in the field of sports, video games, media or audio-visual systems.

With the fourth industrial revolution in full swing, entertainment companies are seizing the opportunities offered by innovative technologies and digital transformation to develop new commercial and operating models. This new ecosystem – in which technology has a direct impact on music, television, cinema, sports and the worlds of art and culture – allows companies in the sector to offer increasingly intense experiences to audiences, supporters and visitors. It is also important to note that new entertainment technologies are not only influencing the way in which entertainment is presented to the audience, but also the way in which stories are created (including the use of animation and special effects).

This publication is the first to include video interviews. To this end, a company has been picked from the Walloon Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Flemish Region. The goal was to improve their visibility.

**Table 2 – Companies interviewed to illustrate Belgium's strengths in entertainment technology**

Walloon Region	Brussels-Capital Region	Flemish Region
Alterface Projects	Demute	Bioracer Motion
Deltacast	Exhibition Hub	MEDIAGENIX
Fishing Cactus	OPNS	TinkerList
Intopix	The Pack	Triangle Factory

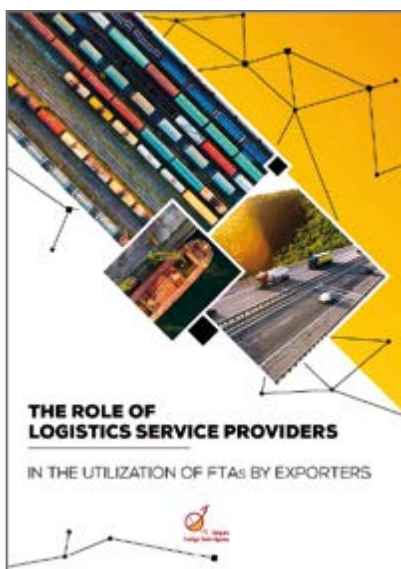




Finally, this publication was also the subject of a webinar on 30 May 2022. For more information about this, see the Webinars section in this activity report.

The sector publication 'Belgian Entertainment Technologies' can be downloaded [here](#).

#### 4.1.3. The role of logistics service providers in the utilisation of FTAs by exporters



In light of the increasingly important role of free-trade agreements for Belgian exporters, the Agency has become more specialised in this area. In 2022, in collaboration with the institutional partners, the study examined the extent to which logistics service providers (LSPs), such as freight forwarders, customs agents, maritime agents and the like, can support Belgian exporters in the use of free-trade agreements. A previous study showed that many exporters who work with LSPs are not sufficiently aware of free-trade agreements.

On 15 March 2022, the study '*The role of logistics service providers in the utilisation of FTAs by exporters*' was officially published alongside the webinar entitled '*How your logistics service provider can make you (even) more successful abroad with FTAs*' (see Webinars section).

Bespoke presentations about this topic were requested by a major Belgian logistics stakeholder in March, and by Flanders Investment & Trade during the Exportbeurs in June. This study has also sparked international interest, resulting in presentations during events organised by the European Commission in January (DG TRADE) and a presentation at the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in October.

The Agency is continuing its collaboration with the European Commission in this field. The Deputy General Director of DG Trade, Mr Denis Redonnet, has named Belgium as one of two EU countries that are heavily involved in the debate around implementing commercial agreements more effectively. Our agency, along with Sweden, has been invited to provide preliminary feedback on the '*Survey on EU Free Trade Agreement Preference Utilisation Rate for Exporters/Producers*', which will be launched by the European Commission later this year.

The study '*The role of logistics service providers in the utilisation of FTAs by exporters*' can be downloaded [here](#).



## 4.2. STATISTICS

### 4.2.1. Mission

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

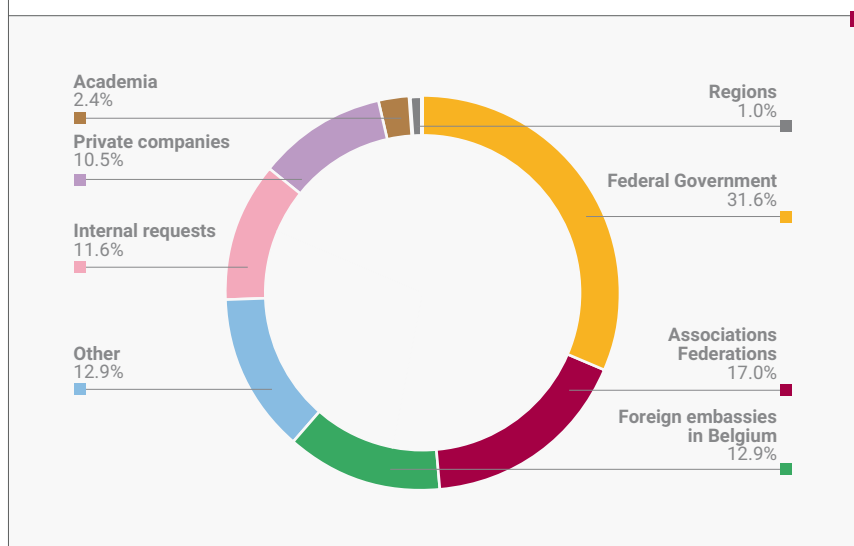
### 4.2.2. Activities

In 2022, 308 requests were sent to the department. In addition, 97 bilateral notes were drafted. Bilateral fact sheets are generated automatically and published on the Agency's website each month, which represents a total of 2,820 files per year. The department also participated in 17 briefings, during which it was able to present the bilateral trade relations of our country to incoming ambassadors.

### AD-HOC REQUESTS

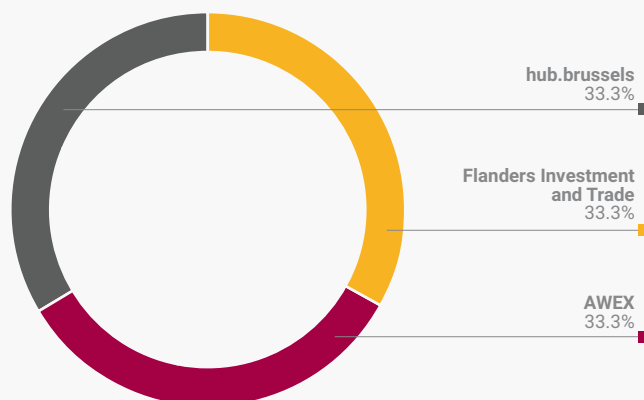
The main clients are the Federal Public Services, followed by associations and federations, foreign embassies in Belgium, private companies and internal requests from the BFTA. These trends have been confirmed over the years.

**FIGURE 6 – Breakdown of clients relating to ad-hoc requests in 2022**



Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders each represent 33% of regional requests.

**Figure 7 – Breakdown of regional clients for ad-hoc requests in 2022**



Furthermore, the Statistics department regularly answered questions from the media. A number of requests concerning the war in Ukraine have been sent to the department, both by the press and various public institutions.

The head of the department also ensured that the BFTA was represented during the three preparatory briefings for the press prior to the princely missions.

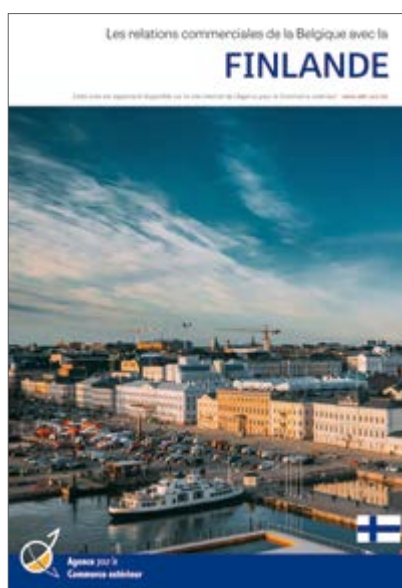
## BILATERAL TRADE NOTES AND SHEETS

The department produced 97 notes about bilateral trade relations in 2022, sixteen more than 2021. These were written in French, Dutch and English. These notes offer a very comprehensive overview of the exchange of goods and services from Belgium with its various partners.

These notes are also published on the Agency's website and are the most visited section year after year.

Of these notes, 51 were requested by the Royal Palace when presenting credentials to new foreign ambassadors in Belgium.

The following individuals and institutions have also requested notes: the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Belgian embassies in other countries, foreign embassies in Belgium, economic and commercial representatives, the European Parliament, federations and Chambers of commerce, journalists and students.







Bilateral trade sheets are abridged versions of the notes: they offer a concise overview of trade relations between Belgium and a partner. They are available in English and are now updated on a monthly basis for all commercial partners. They can be downloaded on the Agency's website.

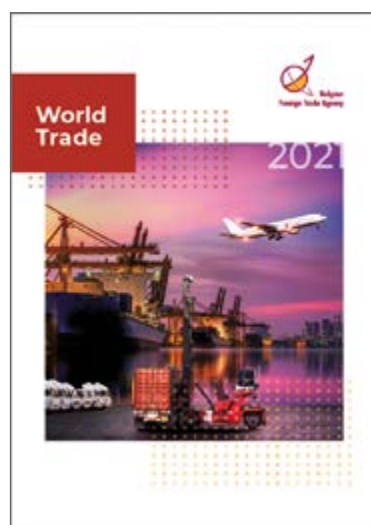
They are used by many of our partners and by the press, in particular to illustrate feature articles.

## QUARTERLY BROCHURES, ANNUAL BROCHURE AND FEEDBACK NOTES



A brochure containing the main data about Belgium's foreign trade is published every quarter. Two versions of this brochure are available: a bilingual French/Dutch version and an English version.

Quarterly feedback notes written in French, Dutch and English provide a precise picture of the development of imports and exports from Belgium over three, six, nine or twelve months.

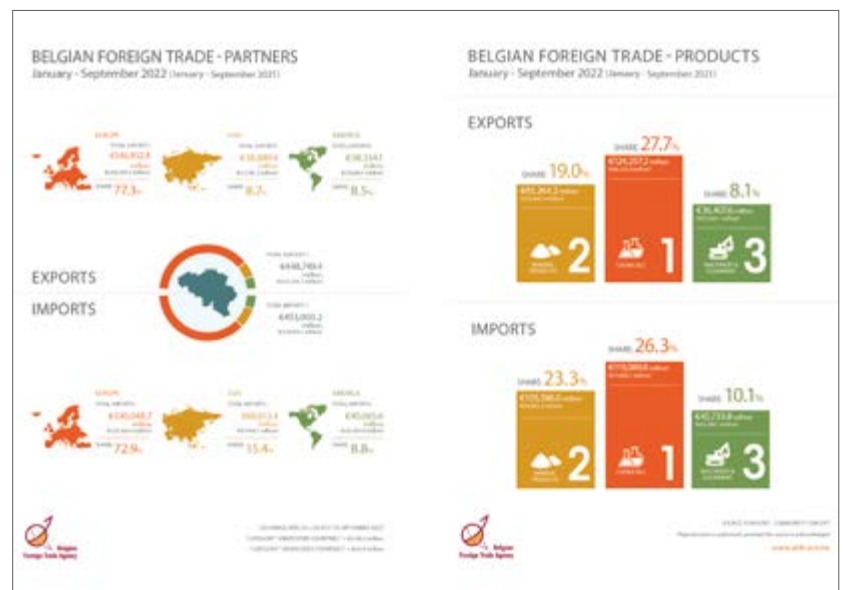


The BFTA publishes an annual brochure entitled 'Belgian Foreign Trade', which details Belgium's foreign trade with every country in the world and according to the 22 sections of the nomenclature.

A global note on global trade, known as 'World Trade', is drafted in English and based on results provided by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This note makes it possible to compare Belgium's commercial performance to other countries.

The Statistics department also publishes a list of the main products exported by Belgium and Belgium's share of the global exports of this product or group of products. This document lists the various products for which we are ranked first, second, third, fourth or fifth in the world for exports, in descending order of importance.

Finally, a summary sheet for continents/products is published monthly. It provides a simplified overview of the main partners and products exchanged.



## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Statistics department manages 770 subscriptions, which provide figures corresponding to a specific request or profile of interest at a pre-determined frequency (monthly, quarterly, annually).

Of these 770 subscriptions, 586 concern the trade of products and 184 relate to services.

All Trade4U subscribers (see the Overseas Business Opportunities Centre) receive a statistics subscription.

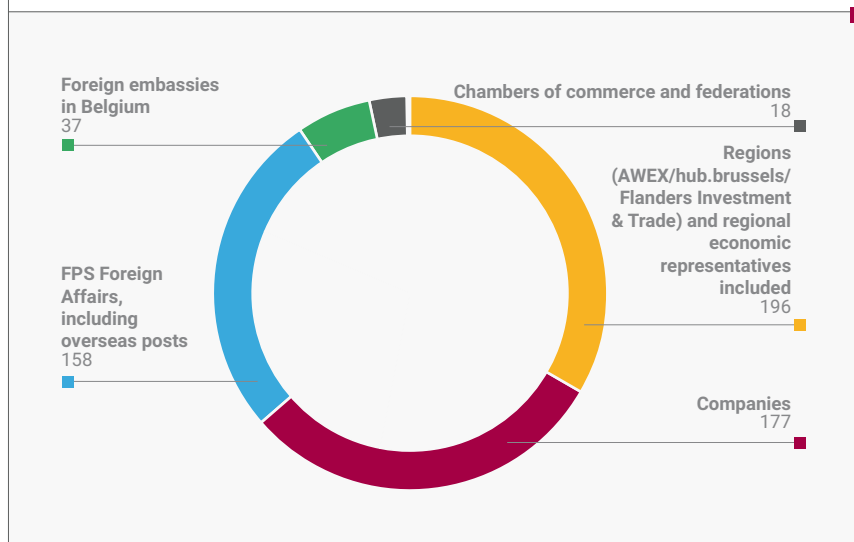
Furthermore, any diplomatic missions and Belgian consular posts receive the results for Belgium's foreign trade with the country or countries under their jurisdiction by email every month. This data is also sent to all the economic and commercial representatives for the three regions.

The BFTA also ensures that statistical data is sent to certain foreign embassies that want more specific information than what is provided in the 22 sections of the nomenclature.

All of these figures are sent electronically in .xls format.

Subscriptions relating to the department's statistics are almost exclusively aimed at companies. Subscriptions concerning the exchange of products break down in the following manner:

**FIGURE 8 – Number of clients subscribed for product statistics in 2022**



### 4.3. TAX CERTIFICATES

The tax exemption for hiring additional staff for exports is a tax support measure from the FPS Finance (Article 67 of the 1992 Belgian Income Tax Code, introduced by the Law of 27 October 1997 concerning provisions regarding tax stimuli for exports and research, published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 2 December 1997). It provides for a tax exemption on taxable profits up to €10,000 (indexed to €16,680 for 2022, based on 2021 incomes) in the event of hiring an additional full-time staff member as head of the Exports department within Belgium.

Since 1 January 2020, this exemption only applies to individually owned companies (self-employed individuals). On the other hand, liberal professions are excluded.

The Law of 25 December 2017 concerning the reform of corporation tax (published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 29 December 2017) abolished this tax deduction as of the 2021 tax year (for the fiscal years beginning on 1 January 2020). In real terms, this means that companies that have already benefited from this favourable scheme will also retain this advantage moving forward. However, new certificates will no longer be issued to companies that have not used this tax benefit before the 2021 tax year.

In 2022, 28 certificates were renewed, of which 26 were for Dutch-speaking companies and two were for French-speaking companies.

# 5. Regulations and legal questions

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## 5.1. GENERAL

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The Regulations department is available to the regional agencies that are responsible for promoting foreign trade. Article 2 of Appendix 1 of the Cooperation Agreement stipulates that, with respect to legal and regulatory documentation and information, the Agency is responsible for the following areas:

- exports (Belgian and European regulations);
- sales terms and contractual obligations;
- monitoring products; health and safety regulations and standards;
- tax obligations (customs and indirect taxes);
- commercial practices;
- sales and distribution;
- transport and imports in Belgium;
- industrial property;
- setting up abroad;
- payment rules and commercial disputes;
- financial sanctions and embargoes.

The legal department provides advice, such as researching and clarifying applicable (foreign) regulations, beginners' courses on how international trade works, advice on the use of free-trade agreements, customs procedures, VAT rules, etc. The department is qualified to provide practical advice about the aforementioned matters to the regional agencies, who can then pass that information on to businesses.

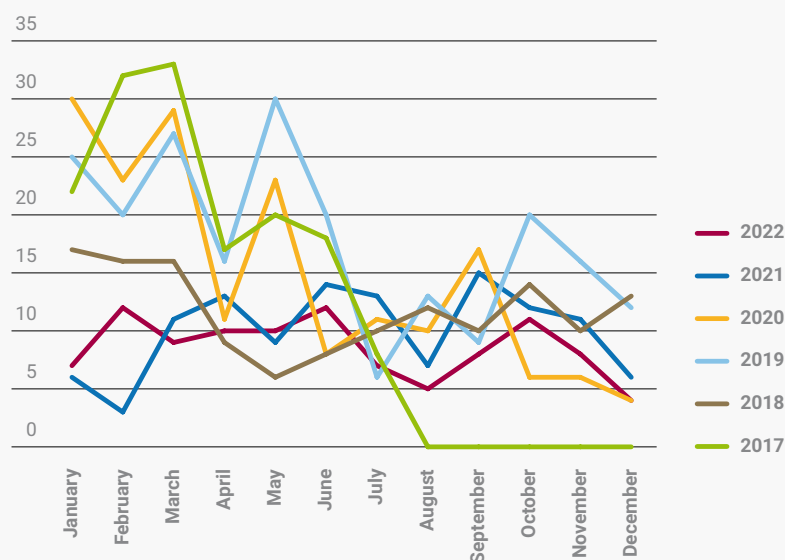
Most questions typically concern:

- strategic choices: distribution techniques, customs procedures, delivery conditions, etc.;
- verifying contracts;
- applying administrative regulations: invoicing, VAT, documents, complying with the law, etc.;
- evaluating the consequences of legal actions: compensating the client in the event a commercial agency is terminated, payment conditions, retention of title, etc.;
- analysing disputes.

## REGULATORY FILES

In 2022, a total of 103 new files were opened on behalf of the Agency's regional partners.

**FIGURE 9 – Number of questions answered by the Regulatory department, 2017 – 2022**



Requests for information made by phone, and people who did not send their questions in writing, are not included in these totals.

The questions span the full range of our skills. Of these questions, 65% were answered in Dutch, with the remaining questions answered in French (29%) and English (6%). The majority of the questions come from VOKA and Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT), but we are also seeing an increasing number of questions from companies in Brussels, who contact us via [hub.brussels](https://hub.brussels). Our fellow advisors from the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Agency, Creamoda, the Enterprise Europe Network, Fedustria, the Construction Confederation and foreign embassies, among others, also call on our expertise.

Answers are generally sent to these institutions in writing. In exceptional cases, they are sent directly to the company in question (with the regions in CC), typically after referral to the competent regional or federal agencies.



## 5.2. SPECIFIC ACTIONS IN 2022

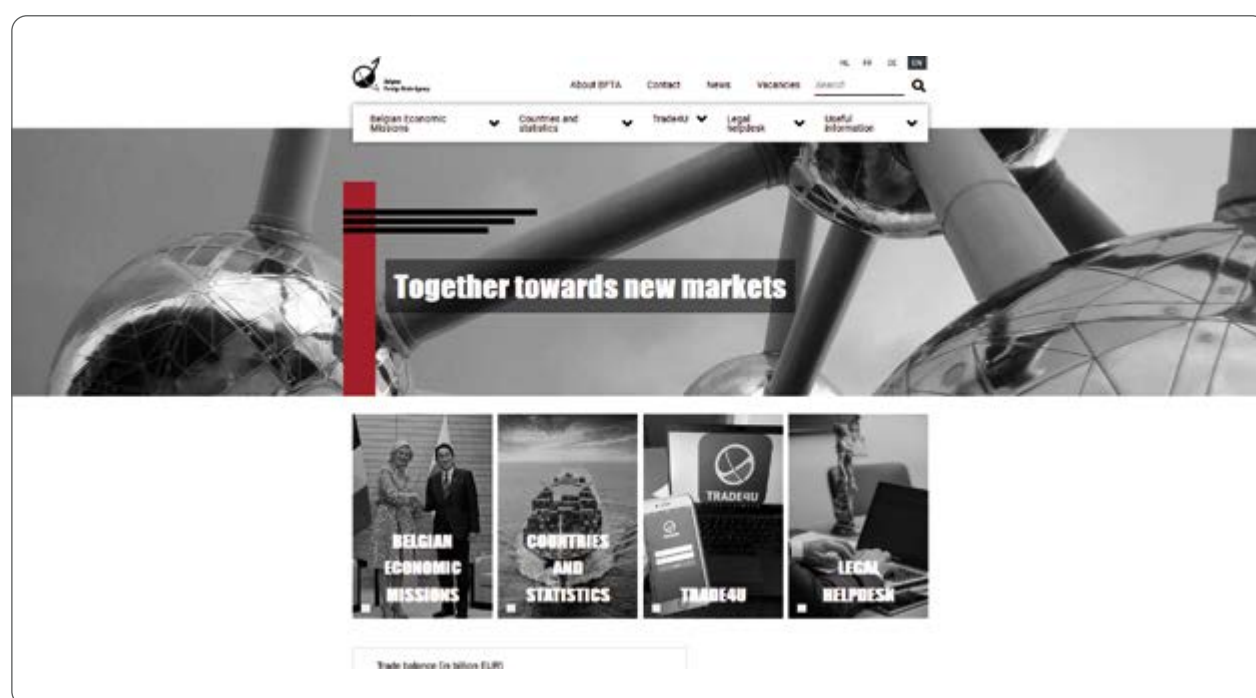
The world was radically affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which is the largest conflict on European soil since the end of World War II. As a result, economic and financial sanctions have been imposed, and the emergence of new protectionist measures have cast a worrying shadow over international free trade.

Therefore, the department has organised a webinar on sanctions regimes, during which we also took a look at existing trade barriers in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, and presented our tools for removing them. What exactly are these sanctions? What is possible? How can we find solutions when supplies and payments are blocked? Where are the trade barriers? Thanks to a panel of prominent and well-informed individuals from the relevant ministries and private and public entities, we have answered a number of questions.

The Regulations department is involved in various working groups within the National Customs Forum, the General Customs and Excise Administration's consultation platform and the private sector. Among other things, this consultation platform helps businesses to better understand the development and implementation of new laws and procedures by the General Customs and Excise Administration, and aims to improve the coordination and efficiency of different stakeholders in the field of international trade.

Since 2021, the Regulations department has also been participating in preparatory coordination meetings with the Market Access Advisory Committee within the European Commission as a representative of the BFTA. Participating in these meetings will allow us to more closely monitor the issues that companies encounter in terms of market access at different levels and to respond to them proactively.

## 6. Websites and social media



### 6.1. THE BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE AGENCY'S WEBSITE - [www.abh-ace.be](http://www.abh-ace.be)

The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency's website, which was created in 2010, was replaced by a new site at the end of 2021.

#### Growth in the number of unique visitors

As can be seen in the table and graph below, for the 2016–2022 period, the upward trend in the number of unique visitors continued, reaching more than 61,000 unique visitors in 2022, an increase of nearly 6% compared to 2018.

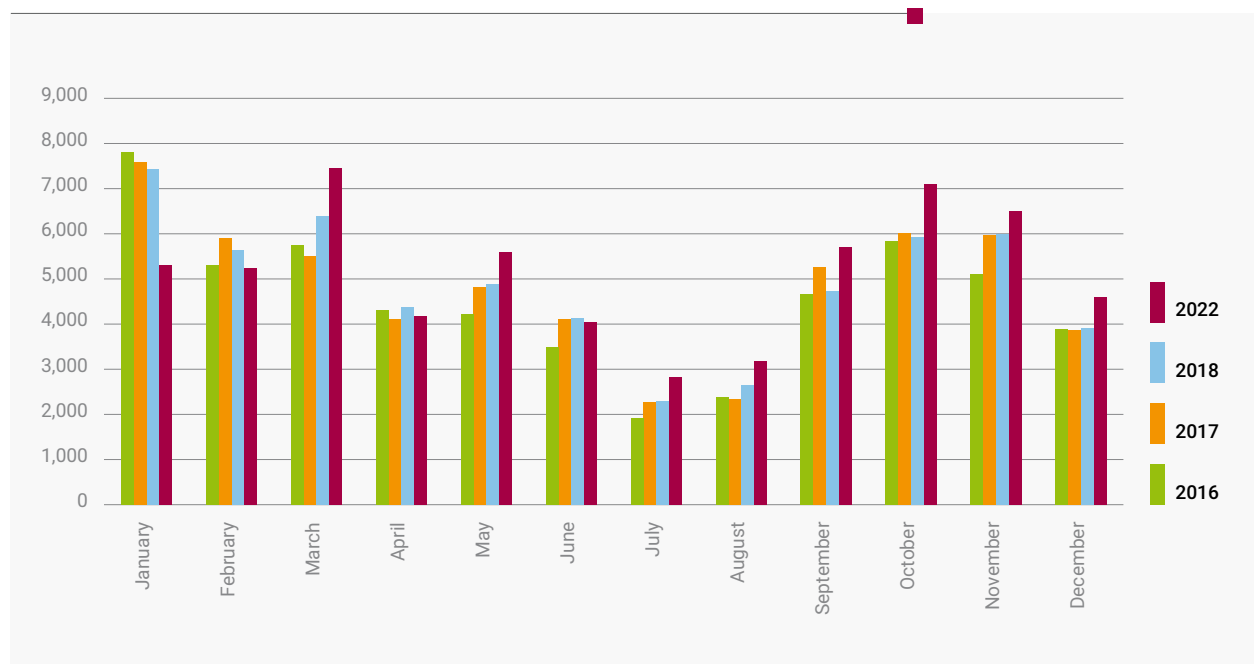
**TABLE 3 – Monthly growth in the number of unique visitors, 2016 – 2022(\*)**

	2016	2017	2018	2022
January	7,808	7,591	7,435	5,315 (**)
February	5,294	5,896	5,632	5,229
March	5,745	5,501	6,396	7,454
April	4,312	4,117	4,376	4,170
May	4,211	4,822	4,877	5,594
June	3,481	4,103	4,123	4,042
July	1,919	2,267	2,296	2,826
August	2,373	2,342	2,641	3,175
September	4,671	5,262	4,725	5,699
October	5,842	6,012	5,927	7,097
November	5,101	5,959	5,985	6,497
December	3,896	3,860	3,899	4,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,653</b>	<b>5,732</b>	<b>58,312</b>	<b>61,698</b>

(\*) Due to the strict cookie policy, it was impossible to obtain an accurate analysis of visitors from 2019 to 2021, so this data is not included in the table.

(\*\*) Due to technical constraints, only information after 10 January 2022 has been made available.

**FIGURE 10 – Monthly growth in the number of unique visitors, 2016 – 2022(\*)**



Analysis of visitors

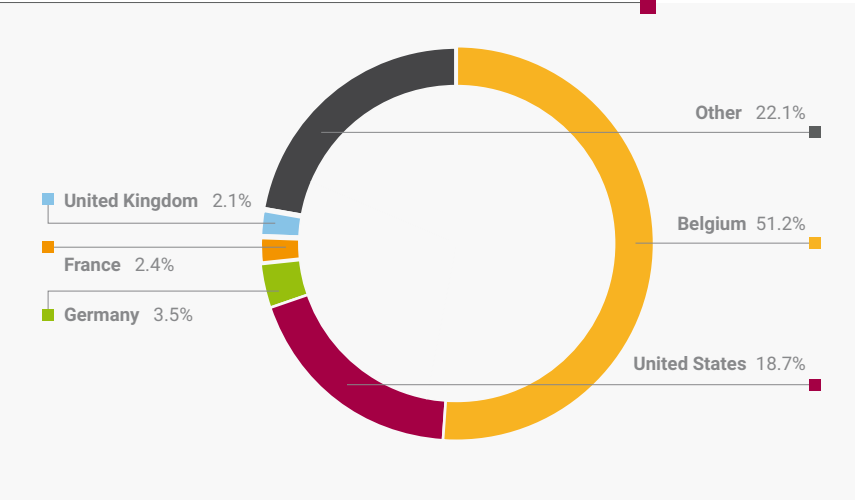
A. GEOGRAPHICAL RANKING, 2022

A little more than half of the visitors to the website are based in Belgium. Probably as a result of the economic mission to the United States, 18.7% of visitors come from the United States. Germany, France and the United Kingdom occupy third, fourth and fifth place, respectively.

TABLE 4 – Breakdown of visitors by country, 2022

Breakdown of visitors by country, 2022	
Belgium	51.20%
United States	18.70%
Germany	3.50%
France	2.40%
United Kingdom	2.10%
Other	22.10%

FIGURE 11 – Breakdown of visitors by country, 2022



B. RANKING BY SECTION

The statistics page is still the most frequently visited page on the site. It is now called 'Countries and Statistics' and is available in three languages. The 'Trade by country' page (bilateral trade notes and sheets) is the most visited within this section, followed by the 'Belgian Trade' section (statistics and figures relating to Belgian foreign trade). The studies and publications produced by the Agency are also located on the 'Countries and Statistics' page and are visited very frequently.

Next in order of importance are the economic missions, Trade4U, news, information about the BFTA itself, information pages and the regulations page.

**TABLE 5 – Most visited sections, 2022**

Most visited sections, 2022	As a %
Countries and Statistics	47.99%
Economic missions	14.56%
Trade4U	4.73%
News page	4.43%
Page about the BFTA	4.27%
Information pages:	
- Useful information (Embassies, Chambers of commerce, etc.)	2.70%
- Contact page	1.82%
- Vacancies	1.69%
Legal helpdesk (Regulations)	1.68%

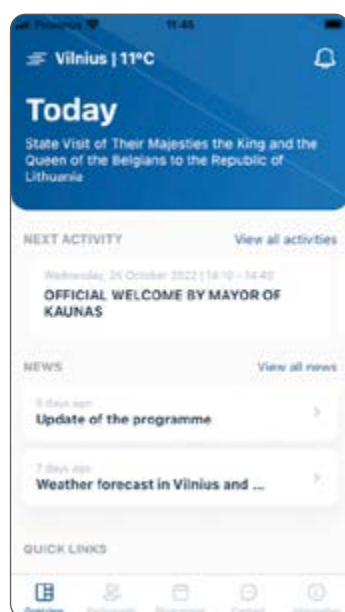
## Q FACTS AND FIGURES

- Visitors remain active on the site for an average of three minutes and sixteen seconds.
- The website was visited from 160 different countries, via PC, laptop, smartphone, phablet and tablet.
- We recorded 9,300 downloads from 61,698 unique visitors in 2022.



## 6.2. STATE VISITS' WEBSITE – [www.belgianstatevisit.be](http://www.belgianstatevisit.be)

A temporary website, [www.belgianstatevisit.be](http://www.belgianstatevisit.be), was created for the two State Visits organised in 2022. The website for the State Visit to Greece was visited 1,368 times and 5,889 pages of the website were browsed. In autumn, the website for the State Visit to Lithuania was visited 791 times and 4,992 pages were viewed. These temporary websites (which were online for a maximum of six weeks) are an important source of information, not only for Belgian participants in the State Visit, but also for the host countries.



### Mobile app for the State Visits

The major innovation in 2022 was the development of a specific mobile app for the State Visits. This app was developed thanks to a budget allocated as part of the European Recovery Plan. The BFTA team made every effort to have this app ready by the end of April for the State Visit to Greece. Mission accomplished, with the application having been downloaded more than 550 times since 2022 for the State Visits to Greece and Lithuania. This app, which is directly linked to the [www.belgianstatevisit.be](http://www.belgianstatevisit.be) website, contributes to the digitalisation of the BFTA's services and presents all the information that was previously printed (schedules, the profile of participants, studies, etc.) in an intuitive manner. The app is also an essential communication tool for the organisers, who can now send notifications to users in the event of a scheduling change, for example.

### 6.3. WEBSITE FOR THE BELGIAN ECONOMIC MISSIONS – [www.belgianeconomicmission.be](http://www.belgianeconomicmission.be)

Once again, the participants had access to a website specifically designed for each of the missions this year. The website [www.belgianeconomicmission.be](http://www.belgianeconomicmission.be) went online on the day of the briefing, and allowed the participants to obtain detailed information about the activities, the participating companies and practical information about travel, the hotel(s), etc.



#### Mobile app for the Belgian economic missions

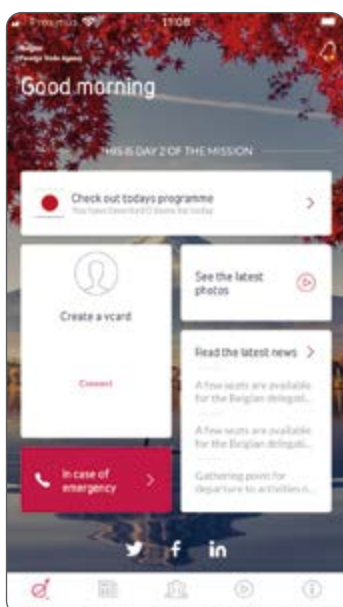
An app connected to this website is available on the App Store and Google Play via the search term 'Belgian economic mission'. The Belgian Foreign Trade Agency is very grateful to Belfius for providing IT and financial support once again.



This app allows participants to find information very easily via their phone or tablet, whether before, during or after the mission. The app allows participants to stay abreast of last-minute changes in real time through notifications.

A hashtag was also created for each mission and was used by partners and participants.

Due to two missions taking place within very short timeframes this year, alternative platforms had to be put in place. This made it possible to work on the websites for the United Kingdom and United States missions at the same time. Furthermore, the upgrade to Drupal 9 also took place, so no specific figures concerning visits to the website can be provided this year. The app also experienced issues when saving download data. This information is not available for the mission to the United Kingdom. However, during the mission to the United States, the app was downloaded up to 421 times, and up to 446 times during the mission to Japan.





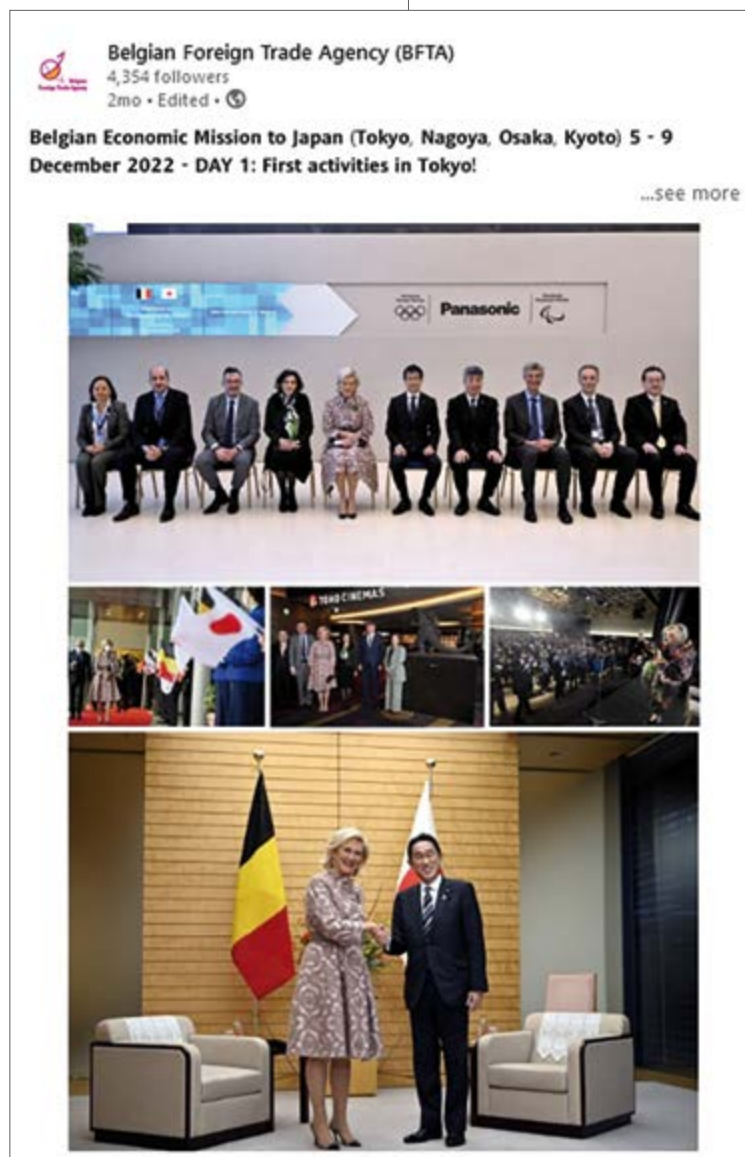
## 6.4. THE BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE AGENCY'S LINKEDIN PAGE

The 'Belgian Foreign Trade Agency' company page on LinkedIn has been active since June 2017.

Since then, the upward trend in the number of followers has continued: at the end of 2022, more than 4,000 followers followed the BFTA's activities via the many posts, meaning a growth of 1,500 followers in one year.

There were significant increases during the Belgian economic missions and State Visits. As a result, the periods of May, June and December 2022 were particularly noteworthy in terms of growth.

The vast majority of followers are Belgian.



More than 2,700 unique visitors consulted the BFTA's page on LinkedIn. They viewed nearly 7,500 pages.

The most popular posts (between 1,000 and 9,000 views) are about the Belgian economic missions and State Visits.

## 7. Collaboration with third-party initiatives

The Agency supports various events on an occasional basis. In most cases, these are organised by the regional agencies responsible for promoting foreign trade (or in close collaboration with them), as well as the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. In 2022, the BFTA contributed to the following activities:

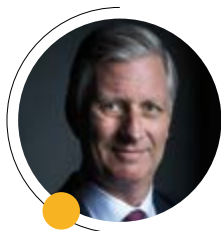
27/01/2022	Presentation of the BFTA to intern diplomats from the FPS Foreign Affairs
24/05/2022	Presentation of the BFTA to intern diplomats from the FPS Foreign Affairs
30/09/2022	'Presentation of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency' – A reception programme for diplomats who have recently arrived in Belgium (Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations)
25/10/2022	Presentation during the 'EFTA Workshop on FTA preference utilisation'
22/11/2022	'International Trade – Evolution & impact' presentation for the University of Antwerp – Antwerp Tax Academy
05/12/2022	Presentation of the BFTA to diplomats and senior officials in Guinea (Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations)

### THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

- Visiting professor for the 'Foreign Trade' course at the Odisee University of Applied Sciences in Brussels.
- Feedback given, at the request of DG Trade from the European Commission, on the 'Survey on EU Free Trade Agreement Preference Utilisation Rate for Exporters/Producers'.
- Since 2021, the Regulations department has also been participating in preparatory coordination meetings with the Market Access Advisory Committee within the European Commission as a representative of the BFTA. Participating in these meetings will allow us to more closely monitor the issues that companies encounter in terms of market access at different levels.
- The Statistics department participates in briefings for ambassadors organised by the FPS Foreign Affairs (17 in 2022).

# Management bodies – Situation as at 31.12.2022

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**Honorary President**  
His Majesty the King



**Chair**  
**Didier Malherbe**  
Chairman of the Board – BCI Pharma  
& CEO EU Biotech Campus



**Vice-Chair**  
**Claire Tillekaerts**  
Former CEO - Flanders Investment  
& Trade (FIT)

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

### Public sector



**Jeroen Cooreman**  
Director General for Bilateral Affairs,  
FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and  
Development Cooperation



**Julien de Fraipont**  
Advisor, Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
European Affairs, Foreign Trade and in charge of  
Federal Cultural Institutions, Hadja Lahbib

### Private sector



**Didier Malherbe**  
Chairman of the Board – BCI Pharma  
& CEO EU Biotech Campus



**Benoit Monteyne**  
Adviser – Federation of Enterprises in  
Belgium (FEB)



## FLEMISH REGION REPRESENTATIVES

### Public sector



**Claire Tillekaerts**  
Former CEO - Flanders Investment  
& Trade (FIT)

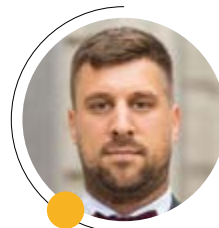


**Jurian Van Parys**  
Legal Adviser - Flanders  
Chancellery and Foreign Office

### Private sector



**Maarten Libeer**  
Advisor International  
entrepreneurship – Voka - Vlaams  
netwerk van Ondernemingen



**Thomas Pirard**  
Attaché European and International  
Affairs - Study Unit – UNIZO

### Government Commissioner



**Thomas Moens**  
Deputy Chief of Cabinet Foreign Policy,  
Cabinet of the Flemish Minister-President  
and Flemish Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Culture, Digitization and Facilities, Jan  
Jambon

## WALLOON REGION REPRESENTATIVES

### Public sector



**Pascale Delcomminette**  
CEO - Wallonia Export-Investment  
Agency (AWEX) and Wallonia-  
Brussels International (WBI)



**Emmanuel Calay**  
Manager Sofinex

### Private sector



**Jean Marbehant**  
Vice President Public Affairs –  
Lhoist Europe



**Jean-Christophe Dehalu**  
Adviser Economy - R&D - International -  
Walloon Business Association (UWE)

### Government Commissioner



**Geoffrey Bedoret**  
Diplomatic Advisor to the Vice-President  
of Wallonia Government, Minister of  
Economy, Foreign Trade, Research and  
Innovation, Digitalization, Agriculture,  
Land Planning and Skills and Training  
Centers, Willy Borsus

## BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION REPRESENTATIVES

### Public sector



© Laetitia Bazzoni

**Isabelle Grippa**  
CEO - hub.brussels



**Frank Lelon**  
General Management Image of Brussels, Statistics and Civil Service, Office of Brussels Minister of Finance & Budget, Multilingualism, Dutch-speaking Education, Civil Service, Sven Gatz

### Private sector



**Olivier Willocx**  
CEO - BECI



**Pierre Konings**  
Director - KBC Asset Management

### Government Commissioner



**Daan Fonck**  
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Director General - Belgian  
Foreign Trade Agency

## MANAGEMENT BOARD

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**Fabienne L'Hoost**  
Director General



**Christelle Charlier**  
Director Studies, Statistics  
and Communication



**Rosemary Donck**  
Director, Head of Department State  
Visits - Economic missions



# Organisational chart – Situation as at 31.12.2022

## GENERAL MANAGEMENT



**Fabienne L'Hoost**  
Director General

## LOGISTICAL ORGANISATION FOR STATE VISITS, ORGANISATION OF BELGIAN ECONOMIC MISSIONS AND WELCOMING OF VIP DELEGATIONS



**Rosemary Donck**  
Director, Head of Department State  
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State Visits - Economic missions



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**Wallis Raekelboom**  
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**Eline Van Noten**  
Coordinator State Visits -  
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## STUDIES AND STATISTICS / TAX CERTIFICATES FOR APPOINTING AN EXPORT MANAGER

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**Christelle Charlier**  
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International Trade Analyst



**Arthur Verelst**  
International Trade Analyst



**Wouter Decoster**  
International Trade Analyst

## OVERSEAS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES CENTRE - OBOC

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**Sammy Sioen**  
Manager OBOC

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**Wouter Decoster**  
Head of Department &  
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**Stéphane Coppens**  
Human Resources Manager

## DATA PROTECTION | PREVENTION

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**Sammy Sioen**  
DPO, Prevention Officer

## ACCOUNTANCY

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**Nancy Vermeulen**  
Financial Manager

## REGULATIONS DEPARTMENT

---



**Katrien Van Loocke**  
Legal Counsel

## COMMUNICATION

---



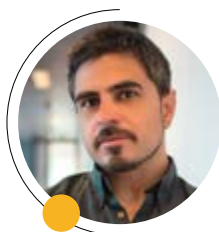
**Christelle Charlier**  
Director



**Nancy Willems**  
Communication Manager

## GRAPHIC DESIGN PRODUCTION & LOGISTICS

---



**Jérémy Clemens**  
Graphic Design Production  
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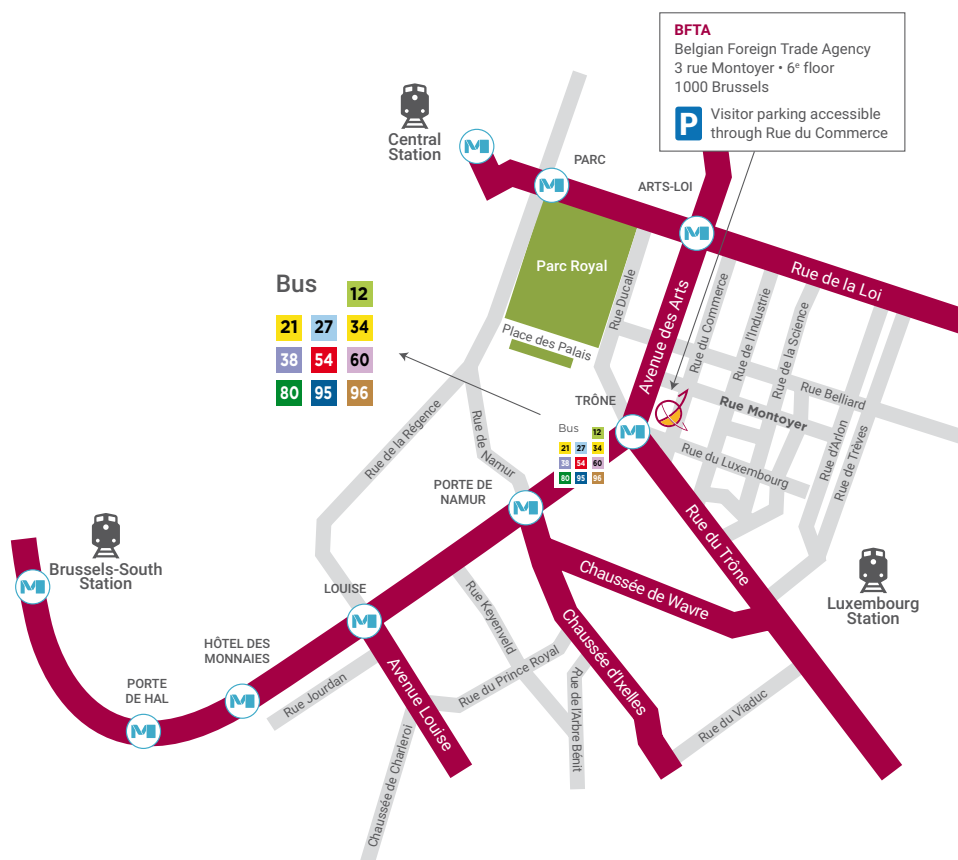
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