

Good news from Belgium (the economy & business) – March/April 2010

1. Foreign investments in Belgium

This section was prepared in collaboration between the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs and the Liaison Cell Federal-Regions Foreign Investments. The Liaison Cell was created in 1995 as a result of the Cooperation Agreement "Foreign Investments" of 7 February 1995. Its mission is to raise important issues concerning the investment climate in Belgium to policy makers, and create synergies between all the Belgian authorities involved in the attraction of foreign investments. The following authorities are represented in the Cell: FPS Foreign Affairs, FPS Economy, FPS Finance, Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT), Agence wallonne à l'Exportation (AWEX), the Brussels Enterprise Agency (BEA) and the Ministry of the Brussels-Capital Region. Its chair is held by the Regions on a rotating basis and its secretariat is ensured by the FPS Economy.

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Swiss company COMSOFT direct expands to Belgium

On 1 March 2010, the Swiss company *COMSOFT direct* established a new subsidiary in Hamont-Achel (province of Limburg), near the Dutch and German borders. The new subsidiary fits perfectly in the company's European expansion strategy. *COMSOFT direct* is now active in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Belgium.

COMSOFT direct specializes in software licensing, Software Asset Management services and online services for Belgium and Luxembourg.

The company, a daughter of *Bechtle AG*, is the licensing specialist within the group. *Bechtle AG* offers services in the field of system development and direct sale of software, hardware and support services. In 2008, the group had a turnover of € 1.43 billion and employed 4,400 persons worldwide. *Bechtle* is a major partner for 56,000 customers in different fields of activity.

<http://www.comsoft-direct.be>

http://www.onlinepc.ch/index.cfm?CFID=43045677&CFTOKEN=74590970&page=104029&artikel_id=22769

South Korean company Jubilee to open production line in Belgium

South Korean company *Jubilee* is planning to open a production line for chocolate in Saintes (province of Walloon Brabant) in September 2010. The company name in Belgium will be *Dear Food Europe*.

Belgian chocolate is indeed very much appreciated in Asia. This is why *Jubilee* has decided to produce chocolate in Belgium in order to export it to South Korea afterwards. Moreover, there are plans to create a chain of chocolate tasting bars.

<http://www.jubileechocolatier.com>

<http://www.jfnb.co.kr>

French group Intermarché-Groupement des Mousquetaires wants to open twenty branches in Belgium

The *Mousquetaires de la Distribution*, an association of independent grocers, wants to open up to twenty *Intermarché* shops in Wallonia in 2010 and 2011. To do this the *Groupement des Mousquetaires* is looking for new independent grocers who are also part of the cooperative. Open door days will be organised in March, June and September at which the shop concept will be presented to prospective managers. At the moment the group has 73 sales points in Belgium, including 55 supermarkets of the *Intermarché* type and 18 local supermarkets under the *Ecomarché* label.

<http://www.intermarche.be/>

http://www.skynet.be/actu-sports/actu/belgique/detail_groupement-des-mousquetaires-veut-ouvrir-magasins-wallonie?id=634628

American pharmaceuticals concern Johnson & Johnson builds distribution centre in Belgium

The American pharmaceuticals concern, *Johnson & Johnson*, has decided to set up its European distribution centre for pharmaceutical products in La Louvière (province of Hainaut). This new investment will initially lead to the creation of 110 new jobs. Building will start this year and the distribution centre should be operational in two years. Freight will depart from the new centre bound for destinations in eleven European countries and subsidiaries of *Johnson & Johnson* in the rest of the world. An investment of € 49 million is involved in the project. The Walloon Region will contribute € 11 million.

<http://www.jnj.com/connect/healthcare-products/country/>

<http://marcourt.wallonie.be/actualites/~johnson-johnson-projet-je-un-centre-europeen-de-distribution-de-produits-pharmaceutiques-a-la-louviere.htm?lng=fr>

Brussels inaugurates incubator for Chinese companies

A special start-up incubator has been opened for incoming Chinese companies at the *Brussels Business Base*. This is the first incubator to be established by *Invest in Brussels* specifically for foreign business.

The 1,500 m² (16,145 sq ft) building comprises a series of ready-to-use "plug and play" business suites together with meeting rooms and all facilities. Under the two-year agreement between Brussels and Shenzhen, working space will be provided rent-free for the first year of occupation and at 50% for the second year.

Shenzhen companies will also have the services of a multilingual coach – French, Dutch, English and Chinese – to help them develop their European businesses. An internet site has also been created to make these facilities known to Shenzhen industry.

The *Brussels Business Base* is located next to the *Solvay* Research & Technology Centre which also houses incubator and support facilities for companies active in the chemical, plastics and pharmaceutical fields.

<http://www.3b4shenzhen.eu/>

An incubator for Indian companies in Liege

On 8 March 2010 the *Indian Welcome Office*, an incubator specially set up to welcome Indian companies, was inaugurated in Liege. Two specialised advisors, one of whom speaks Hindi, are available full time to assist potential investors and give them information about their new host country. Within this structure companies can use the available service pack free of charge for three months, including assistance in their own language, meeting rooms, etc.

Two Indian companies have already established themselves in the region: *Caliber Corporation*, which distributes its textile products from Liege, and *Snowwood*, which is specialised in the design of industrial software applications and telecommunications.

A budget of € 2.5 million spread over 5 years has been earmarked to set up a series of incubators that will see the light of day between now and 2013 (Brazil in 2011, Japan in 2012 and America in 2013).

http://www.investinwallonia.be/of-belgium/menu-news/documents/AWEX_brochure_Inde.pdf

Zaventem Airport to become West European hub for Korean air freight

The cargo airline companies *Korean Air* and *Asiana*, which are already active at Zaventem airport, want to make this Belgian airport the hub for their freight transport to Western Europe. The two companies would like to increase the number of slots they have now. *Korean Air* would also make stopovers in China, so Belgium will have an extra connection to China.

The agreements with the airline companies came about during a meeting between former Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme and the leadership of the freight carriers, in the South Korean capital Seoul.

http://cargo.koreanair.com/eng/main_page.jsp
<http://www.asianacargo.com/English/index.htm>

Japanese automobile manufacturer Toyota further expands research centre in Zaventem

During a working visit to China and Japan by former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Steven Vanackere, in April, Katsuaki Watanabe, the Vice Chairman of *Toyota*, announced that the Japanese automobile manufacturer intends to further expand its research activities in Zaventem (province of Flemish Brabant) in the coming years. At this moment, the department concerned numbers approximately eight hundred employees. *Toyota* intends to create another two hundred new jobs on its site in Zaventem over the next few years.

<http://www.toyota.be>

American company Owens Corning opens fabrics excellence centre in Belgium

Owens Corning, a leading producer of glass fiber reinforcements for composite systems and building materials, has announced the establishment of an excellence centre for technical fabrics in Zele (province of Oost-Vlaanderen).

The new excellence centre is a 5,500 square-meter facility that focuses on developing, testing and evaluating new fabric technologies before production and use in customer processes.

By centralizing its fabric development activities in Zele, *Owens Corning* will have more flexibility in job scheduling, resulting in 24/7 activity if necessary. Furthermore, the expertise at this centre will further drive standardization and improve quality at all its manufacturing facilities.

The new excellence centre for technical fabrics has robust links to the company's major innovation centres in Chambéry (France) and Granville (Ohio, USA).

<http://www.ipaworld.com>
<http://www.owenscorning.com>

Siemens opens green datacentre in Huizingen

Siemens IT Solutions and Services has officially opened its new datacenter in Huizingen near Brussels. This center offers cloud computing technology services, in a building that consumes 30 % less power than a conventional datacenter.

As an international and industry-leading provider, *Siemens IT Solutions and Services* (part of German-based *Siemens AG*) offers one-stop shopping for the complete IT

service chain. The new datacenter will be used both to host services for traditional outsourcing activities and for the provisioning of a hybrid cloud infrastructure. Combining all ICT infrastructure components (e.g. servers, systems and networks), this hybrid cloud allows Siemens to deliver 'Infrastructure as a Service' (IaaS) to customers in a flexible way.

A lot of effort was gone into reducing the energy consumption of the datacenter. The use of cold corridors, separating hot and cold air streams and thereby facilitating cooling, results in less extra cooling via energy-consuming compressors.

<http://www.it-solutions.siemens.com>

<http://www.zdnet.de>

2. Contracts abroad for Belgian companies

Belgian IT company Cegeka concludes contract with Dutch group Ziut

The IT company *Cegeka*, from Hasselt (province of Limburg), has pocketed a contract with the Dutch group *Ziut*, which is responsible for public lighting, traffic regulation systems and camera surveillance in the Netherlands. As a result of the contract *Cegeka* will deliver office automation for five hundred work stations and manage local computer networks and data centres for *Ziut*. The contract will last for three years. The Limburg IT company is aiming for further growth throughout the Benelux.

<http://www.cegeka.be>

Dredging International widens and deepens Durban Harbour entrance (South Africa)

In Durban, South Africa, *Dredging International* has widened and deepened the existing port access. This will both enhance the safety and give larger vessels access to the port.

The Durban contract represents a value of € 193 million and was awarded by *Transnet Ltd South Africa*. The contract was executed by a consortium of *Dredging International* and *Group Five*, with *Dredging International* being the leading party.

The access channel has been widened from 150m to 240m and deepened from -12 m to -19 m. In total, 10.5 million m³ of sand were dredged.

The dredged materials were dumped in a dedicated zone, located 6.5 km at sea. *Dredging International* deployed trailer suction hopper dredgers as well as a new very powerful backhoe dredger for works below the waterline along the breakwaters.

The civil works included demolition and rock dumping for the reconstruction of the northern and rehabilitation of the southern breakwater, allowing the actual widening of the port access.

The new port was officially inaugurated on 31 March in the presence of numerous officials and the press.

<http://www.deme.be>

Devgen and the International Rice Research Institute form a partnership for the development of drought-tolerant rice

Belgian biotech company *Devgen* has signed a four year contract with the *International Rice Research Institute* (IRRI) for the development of hybrid rice varieties capable of withstanding drought more efficiently than the presently available varieties. Indeed, due to climate change, rice producing regions are expected to increasingly suffer from drought. By developing drought-hardy crops, *Devgen* and the IRRI hope to contribute to guaranteeing food security for the most vulnerable populations in Asia.

The IRRI has identified traits that enhance drought resistance in rice. Under the terms of the agreement, IRRI and *Devgen* will apply *Devgen's* innovative technology in order to develop drought-resistant rice hybrids. Following appropriate trials, *Devgen* will start to market its hybrids through its distribution channels.

<http://www.devgen.com>

<http://www.irri.org>

Belgian construction company Six Construct will build clinic in Abu Dhabi

The *Six Construct* – *Samsung* Joint Venture has signed a € 940 million contract with *Mubadala Healthcare*, an investment company owned by the Abu Dhabi Government, for the execution of the Cleveland Clinic in Abu Dhabi. *Six Construct* is BESIX 100% subsidiary and has been operating in the Middle East for over 40 years. Works started on 7 March and the project will be completed in the first quarter of 2013.

The Cleveland Clinic will bring high-quality medical service to its patients in an environment equipped with state-of-the-art amenities. The project includes 375 top of the range medical rooms including exclusive Royal Suites.

<http://www.besix.com/news.asp?idLayout=12&cid=97&cid=98>

Barco signs contracts in China for the deployment of digital cinema systems

Barco, a Belgian technology company from Kortrijk (province of West-Vlaanderen), which is globally active, is a world leader in visualization and display solutions. In March 2010, it signed two contracts in China. The first concerns the deployment of 200 digital cinema systems for *Jinyi Zhujiang Movie Circuit*, based in the city of Guangzhou, and China's sixth largest cinema chain. The other one concerns the deployment of 100 of those cinema systems for *Zhejiang Time Cinema*, China's seventh largest chain, which is active in and around Zhejiang province.

<http://www.barco.com>

Barco concludes contract for digital conversion of US cinemas

The Belgian image technology company *Barco* has concluded a contract for the delivery of more than 3,000 projectors to the American *Cinemark Holdings Inc.* This is the result of a recent decision by *J.P. Morgan* and *Blackstone Advisory Partners L.P.* to provide 660 million dollars in financing for the digital conversion of thousands of cinemas in the United States and Canada. This agreement is the green light for *Barco* to equip over 3,000 Cinemark cinemas with brand new *Series II digital cinema* projectors. *Barco* will fit out close to 250 sites in North America with the new projectors.

<http://www.barco.com/>

Studio 100, a Belgian production company specialised in family entertainment, makes breakthrough in US

The production house Studio 100, from Schelle near Antwerp, is going to make *House of Anubis* for the American Nickelodeon US, a remake of the successful Belgian-Dutch children's series *Het Huis Anubis*. This is the first time that the American children's channel has ordered a TV series from a European production house. 97 million American families will be able to watch the series during prime time this autumn.

Het Huis Anubis will soon start its fifth season on Nickelodeon in Belgium and the Netherlands. A remake with German actors is being shown on Nickelodeon in Germany. In Sweden and Mexico dubbed versions are running. Season 1 of *House of Anubis* for Nickelodeon US will be filmed by Studio 100 in Liverpool (United Kingdom). The castings for this new series are in full swing and filming starts this spring.

So far *Het Huis Anubis* has had unprecedented success in Belgium and the Netherlands, and the series has won several awards. The first *Het Huis Anubis* board game was proclaimed "Toy of the Year". Over 200,000 of these board games have been sold. The *Het Huis Anubis* novels are a huge success too, so far over 780,000 books have been sold. 1,250,000 visitors have seen the full-length films *Het pad der 7 zonden* (The Path of the 7 Sins) and *De wraak van Arghus* (The Vengeance of

Arghus) in the cinema. The theatre shows, *De graal van de eeuwige vriendschap* (The Grail of Eternal Friendship) and *De legende van het Spooktheater* (The Legend of the Ghost Theatre), were sold out in no time at all.

The huge success of the programme has not gone unnoticed at Nickelodeon US and this has resulted now in a unique partnership between Studio 100 and the American channel. In the context of Studio 100's further internationalisation this partnership with Nickelodeon US signifies a new and important step. Besides this the production house has lots of other international activities outside its language area. In addition to existing co-productions with the BBC (including *Big & Small* and *Kerhwizz*) work is in full swing at their own animation studios, *Flying Bark Productions* in Sydney and *Studio 100 Animation* in Paris, on the remakes of the great classics, *Maya the Bee*, *Wickie the Viking* and *Heidi*.

<http://www.studio100.be>

<http://www.studio100.tv>

http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/world/news/e3i73c1f8a93e23a5cefba6917d34d557f4

3. General economic information about Belgium

Belgian students help entrepreneurs innovate

Nearly 200 students and 40 company leaders took part in the *Mega Brainstorm*, a creative competition organised by Voka (East Flanders Chamber of Commerce) in Ghent. Under the theme "Dare to be an Entrepreneur" the students were invited to think up innovative and creative products.

The brainstorm threw up some amusing schemes. The "hands-free toothbrush" scooped the first prize. The *Teeth Cleaning System* is a toothbrush transformed into a mouthpiece for hands-free tooth cleaning. The user fills the device with toothpaste and puts it into the mouth everyday for a particular length of time. A melody, which you can select yourself, indicates when the daily cleaning has been completed.

Other ideas received prizes too:

- *The Moody's* are shoes with heels that can be adjusted in height and whose colour can be adapted, too. There is also a pedometer and calorie-counter built into the shoes.
- *The Flowermatic* is a flower pot with a built-in water reservoir that indicates when the water in the pot needs to be refilled. Built-in LED lighting adapts the colour of the pot to suit the environment or the plants and flowers in the pot.
- Another team thought up a folding chair whose seat adapts completely to the user's physique. The *C'est chill* can be converted into a table, a pouf, an office chair, a storage unit or a bar stool.

<http://www.voka.be/oost-vlaanderen/nieuws/Pages/170Oost-Vlaamsestudentenhelpeondernemersaaninnovatieideeën.aspx>

Belgium is European leader in clinical trials

Belgium has the highest number of pharmaceutical drugs in development per capita in Europe. This is one of the main conclusions of a recent survey by *Deloitte*.

The pharmaceutical industry is of crucial importance to the Belgian economy. Over 40% of private investment in R&D is targeted at the pharma sector.

The Belgian authorities have taken measures to keep approval times among the shortest in Europe: 15 days for Phase I and 28 days for Phase I-IV.

This provides life sciences companies having trial activities in Belgium with a competitive advantage over other European regions. The collaborations between hospitals, universities, research centers and pharmaceutical companies have created an ideal environment for this essential part of developing an innovative therapeutic.

With 'The initiative to promote clinical trials in Belgium', key organizations in the pharmaceutical industry have established a shared Internet platform to cope with sector challenges, such as increased competition from countries like India and China. Goal is to safeguard the leading role Belgium is playing in clinical research.

<http://www.theinitiative.be/>

More efficient patent application process in Belgium

Applying for a patent will become even easier in Belgium. Several measures have been taken: electronic application, greater flexibility on the application date, more feedback on the procedure and faster settlement of patent disputes.

These measures follow earlier ones taken by the Belgian government. In 2007 the taxes on a patent application were reduced by more than 50% (from € 937 to 350) and in 2009 the 'six year patent' was abolished. Between 2005 and 2009 the number of patent applications in Belgium rose from 622 to 819.

http://www.belgium.be/en/economy/intellectual_property/index.jsp

Belgian lighting designers win prestigious awards

Brick in the Wall, a Belgian company from Waregem (province of West-Vlaanderen) specializing in innovative lighting designs, wins both the prestigious Red Dot Design Award and Design Plus Award.

Brick in the Wall was established in 2009 and designs integrated lighting solutions. Using their specially developed plaster (Calcyt ®), this young company succeeds in

seamlessly integrating lighting into walls and ceilings. The resulting minimalist design is only driven by its function, with light and architecture as a true amalgam.

The Red Dot Design Award is one of the largest and most renowned design competitions in the world. With over 12,000 submissions from more than 60 countries, it rewards the most innovative product designs, communication designs and design concepts. The winners are presented to an international public at the red dot design museums (in Berlin and Singapore).

The Design Plus Award is an initiative of the *Frankfurt Messe*, in cooperation with the German Design Council and the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce. It rewards outstanding product design which is not 'merely an end in itself but rather exemplary and trendsetting'.

More than 80 per cent of *Brick in the Wall's* products are reserved for export, mainly to the Middle East.

<http://www.brickinthewall.eu>

Belgian beers loaded with medals at the World Beer Cup in Chicago

Six Belgian breweries were given awards at the World Beer Championships in Chicago (US) at the beginning of April. They carried off four gold and three silver medals. 3,330 types of beer from 642 breweries took part in this edition of the contest.

The following brands took gold medals: *Troubadour Blond* from *The Musketeers* brewery in Ursel (in the category *Belgian-style blond ale*), *Geuze Mariage Parfait* from the *Boon* brewery in Lembeek (*Belgian-style sour ale*), *Witte Noire Imperial Amber Wheat Ale* from *De Proef* brewery in Lochristi (*Belgian-style dark strong ale*) and *Omer* from the *Bockor* brewery in Bellegem (*Belgian-style pale strong ale*).

Silver medals were awarded to *Brugse Zot Blond* from *De Halve Maan* brewery in Bruges (*Belgian-style blond ale*), *Oude Geuze Boon* from the *Boon* brewery (*Belgian-style sour ale*) and *Rodenbach Vintage* from the *Palm* brewery in Steendorp (*wood- and barrel-aged sour beer*).

<http://www.worldbeercup.org/>

