

Economic & business news from Belgium – July 2013

This newsletter was prepared by the Federal-Regional Liaison Unit for Foreign Investment. The Liaison Unit 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, the Chancery of the Prime Minister, Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT), Agence wallonne à l’Exportation et aux Investissements Etrangers (AWEX) and Brussels Invest & Export (BIE). Its chair is held by the Regions on a rotating basis and its secretariat is ensured by the FPS Economy.

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1. Foreign investments in Belgium

Total to invest EUR 1 billion in Antwerp

General Manager of Total, Patrick Pouyanné, has announced a strategic reorganization worth EUR 1 billion at the company's refinery in Antwerp (Belgium).

The refinery, located in the port of Antwerp, is considered the gem of the Total Group in Europe. In the Belgian newspaper La Libre Belgique, Pouyanné also announced that the investment will enable the integration of extra refining capacity and petrochemicals.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/05/22/uk-refining-total-antwerp-idUKBRE94L0WQ20130522>

Devolo opens regional office in Ghent

German network specialist devolo is opening a new office in Ghent. In doing so, the company intends to further concentrate on the Benelux market.

Devolo has already been active in Belgium through Kortrijk-based reseller Bizz-In-Motion. These activities, however, will be integrated into the official Belgian company site in Gentbrugge. As a leading producer of Power LAN products, devolo recently posted a revenue increase of 20 to 25 per cent in the Benelux.

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

China's Largest Law Firm Comes to Belgium

Dacheng, China's largest law firm with a team of 3,000 professionals around the world, has established a Brussels-based office in association with the Belgian law partnership Dugardyn & Partners.

Announcing the decision Ling Xiao, director of Dacheng, commented: "Considering the importance of Brussels as the decision-making centre in Europe, it seems natural to us to have a key presence here."

According to Dugardyn, Dacheng's clients include Chinese government-backed funds that have identified investment opportunities in Europe. These include green energy and infrastructure.

<http://www.dachenglaw.com/en/network/#hezuo>
<http://www.d-lawfirm.be/>

Kuehne + Nagel expands in Belgium

Swiss-based logistics company Kuehne + Nagel has begun construction works to expand its distribution center in Geel in Flanders (Belgium) by 20,000 square meters by next October. 10,000 square meters will be added in a subsequent phase.

With these plans, Kuehne + Nagel is bringing the total surface area to 75,000 square meters. The additional capacity will be used for the new clients the company brought in last year, namely a vendor of espresso and other coffee machines, and a producer of toys.

http://www.joc.com/international-logistics/logistics-providers/kuehne-nagel/kuehne-nagel-expands-facility-belgium_20130430.html

Qatar Airways arrives in Bierset

Liege Airport has attracted a new airline: Qatar Airways Cargo, which will operate two weekly flights between Liege and Doha with a stopover in Nairobi, Kenya.

The imported goods will be flowers, agricultural products and fish. Bierset offers an appropriate logistics chain for all these perishable products.

<http://www.liegeairport.com/news/index/read/id/83>

E.ON plans to build biomass power plant in Antwerp

A new huge biomass power plant will emerge in Antwerp in 2018. With the German energy concern E.ON, the Port of Antwerp has found a partner to invest in the project.

With an investment of EUR 400 to 700 million, the plant will become one of the Port's major projects, supplying green energy for 340.000 to 800.000 households. The Flanders-based international chemical group Solvay is also a shareholder in the 'Antwerp Biopower' project. The power station will be built on the Solvay site.

The Port of Antwerp sees the biomass plant as a way to make its operations more sustainable and stress its international ambitions.

<http://www.eon.be/en/zakelijk/Energy-from-Eon/industrial-energy/antwerp-power-plant>

Pullman opens his first hotel in Brussels

Pullman, the Accor Group's upscale hotel brand, is to open its first establishment in Belgium.

With its location at Belgium's most important high speed rail station, the Pullman Brussels Centre Gare du Midi will target both the business and leisure markets. A true European crossroads, a hundred thousand travellers pass through the station each day by rail to reach neighbouring countries and the major European capitals.

"The opening of Pullman Brussels Centre Gare du Midi, expected during the summer of 2013, is part of the development strategy that Accor is continuing in Belgium and around the world" said Xavier Droin - Accor Managing Director Belgium and Luxembourg.

<http://www.thecorporatetraveller.be/latest-news-per-company/item/1660-accor-opening-pullman-brussels-centre-gare-du-midi-first-pullman-hotel-in-belgium.html>
<http://www.pullmanhotels.com/gb/hotel-7431-pullman-brussels-midi/location.shtml>

Novartis targets growth in Puurs

Leading eye medicine producer Alcon (US) – the second largest division of multinational Novartis – recently announced its intention to expand its activities in Puurs (Belgium) with biopharmaceuticals.

The news was made public during a visit by Novartis CEO Joe Jimenez to the plant in Puurs. The Alcon plant in Puurs is the world's biggest production site for eye medicine. Production levels at the site have increased from 20 million units in 1977 to 200 million units today. Medicine fabricated in the plant is distributed to over 120 countries, including Japan and the US.

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

A new business law firm is launched in Brussels

Partners from a number of top-notch firms have got together to set up a new law firm, specializing in dispute resolution and transactional work in business law. It is called Strelia and is located in the centre of Brussels.

Strelia is active in the field of mergers and acquisitions, domestic and international arbitration, commercial and tax law. The new firm is targeting large and medium-sized businesses, both Belgian and foreign, as well as public authorities and public-sector enterprises. It is active internationally through close cooperation with a number of foreign firms.

<http://www.strelia.com>

2. Belgian companies

De Lijn receives the Ashden Award 2013 for sustainable travel

The Belgian transport company De Lijn has received the Ashden Award 2013 in the category of "Sustainable Travel" sponsored by Eurostar, who created the award last year.

De Lijn received the award thanks to the ingenious heating system of the trams invented by one of its engineers, Patrick Deboeuf, which allows a reduction of 50% in the heating cost during the winter (or 20% per year), an important saving for those trams for which the cost of heating is higher than the cost of travel.

http://www.ashden.org/travel_awards

<http://www.incentivetravel.co.uk/news/awards/14320-winners-announced-in-the-eurostar-ashden-award-for-sustainable-travel>

Brussels South Charleroi Airport fourth best "low cost" in the world

Brussels South Charleroi Airport (BSCA) is ranked the world's fourth best "low-cost" airport in the World Airport Awards, the annual ranking published by the British consultancy firm Skytrax.

The survey was conducted by Skytrax Research (known for its reports and annual rankings of airlines and airports) over nine months between 2012 and 2013. It focuses on traveller perceptions of 39 services, such as check-in, arrivals, transfers, shopping, security, etc.

'This is proof of recognition of the work done by the airport's entire staff', said Jean-Jacques Cloquet, CEO of BSCA.

<http://www.charleroi-airport.com/>

Port of Antwerp wins third consecutive award

For the third time in a row, the port of Antwerp has won an award for its efforts towards sustainability. Eddy Bruyninckx, CEO of Antwerp Port Authority, was presented with the bronze Environment Award in Los Angeles.

The award was handed out at the annual meeting of the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH).

Among other things, the Port Authority collaborates with nature conservation societies – like Natuurpunt – to create a framework in which ecological requirements and economic development go hand in hand. In March this year, Antwerp also bagged the prestigious ‘2013 Environmental World Ports Award’ in Abu Dhabi.

<http://www.portofantwerp.com/en/news/port-antwerp-wins-bronze-iaph-environment-award>

<http://www.portofantwerp.com/en/news/port-antwerp-wins-prestigious-2013-environmental-world-ports-award-1>

3. General economic information about Belgium

Belgium fifth-largest recipient in Europe for foreign investment projects

According to the Ernst & Young Attractiveness Survey, Belgium has earned itself a place in the top five destinations in Europe for attracting FDI projects. Overtaking the Netherlands to become the fifth-largest recipient for FDI projects, Belgium recorded its highest number of projects since 2007. A total number of 169 projects were launched in 2012, which is a 10.5% increase over 2011. While the number of investment projects increased, the number of jobs created went down by 18% to 2,939 jobs.

The most important foreign investors in Belgium are the United States and the neighboring countries France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Their total share in foreign investment towards Belgium reaches 58%.

Business services accounted for the most investment projects, but investments in other sectors such as food, chemicals, machinery and equipment, plastic and rubber and scientific instruments also increased.

Greenfield investments continued to rise and accounted for 63.3% of all investment projects in Belgium. Since this type of investments are an important measure to assess the attractiveness of a country for attracting FDI, Belgium shows that it still has what it takes to convince foreign investors.

<http://www.ey.com/GL/en/Issues/Business-environment/2013-European-attractiveness-survey>

Belgian cinema as an export product

The website www.belgiumfilm.be was revamped for the economic mission to the United States, which took place from 2 to 9 June 2013. The site provides an overview of the strengths of the Belgian film industry: a tax shelter, regional and community subsidies, cutting-edge technology, expertise in international co-productions, and much more. Short films showcasing three aspects of Belgian cinema were also produced for the occasion.

The site was updated by FPS Chancellery of the Prime Minister, in cooperation with FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and FPS Finance, with the support of the competent regional and community bodies.

www.belgiumfilm.be

Gosselies: cornerstone of the Wallonia cell therapy platform

The Wallonia ministers Jean-Claude Marcourt and Jean-Marc Nollet, together with the heads of two companies specialised in cell therapy have recently laid the cornerstone of the future Wallonia cell therapy platform in Gosselies (Charleroi).

The companies are Bone Therapeutics (Brussels Free University) and Promethera Biosciences (Catholic University of Louvain). They are specialised respectively in bone diseases and the treatment of liver pathologies.

Some 20 million euros, contributed thanks to a public-private partnership (40-60%), will be needed to build the new buildings, which will be equipped with almost 2,000 square metres of clean rooms for the production of cells.

The structure will enable the two companies to achieve a critical mass beyond which sub-contractors may be tempted to collaborate. "Training sessions can be organised and economies of scale can be achieved", states Eric Halioua, CEO of Promethera Biosciences.

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

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

The Belgian Food Industry launched the website www.food.be

FEVIA launched the food.be campaign to showcase the excellence of Belgian food, bolster the brand image of Belgium in this field, and promote exports.

The concept moreover represents a necessary step towards attaining the goals set in the ambitious FOOD2015 project. Launched last December under the aegis of Bernard Deryckere, the new President of FEVIA, the FOOD2015 plan is geared to strengthening the positioning of the Belgian food industry as a world reference for excellence and to securing growth of € 1 billion for the domestic market and €5

billion for exports by 2015. Growth of the exports in 2012 amounted to 5.1%, in spite of the difficult economic context.

www.food.be

Belgium may be a small country, but it has some great food!

Launch in Namur of “Wallonia, European Creative District”

The European Commission launched a call for proposals for ‘European Creative District’ in April 2012. Together with Tuscany, Wallonia is one of the two European regions selected by the European Commission for their ‘exemplary’ strategy to support a creative economy. The two regions were selected from 44 European regions. One of the strengths of the Wallonia proposal was the experience gained by the region through the ‘Creative Wallonia’ programme, initiated in 2010 by Jean-Claude Marcourt.

<http://www.creativewallonia.be/?lng=en>