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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Huawei (China) launches new R&D hub in Leuven

Headquartered in China, Huawei is a leading global ICT solutions provider. The multinational has recently launched its new European Research Institute (ERI) in Leuven.

The ERI will manage Huawei’s growing array of European R&D facilities. Its purpose is to oversee the research and innovation activities of 18 R&D sites in 8 European countries. There, no fewer than 1,200 employees are currently working on next-generation network technology.

“The new ERI will enable us to strengthen our cooperation with Europe’s industry and academics”, explains Guo Ping, Rotating CEO at Huawei. “Especially as we move towards Europe 4.0 — the digitized European Union of the future, where everyone and everything is connected.”

Huawei’s new Belgium-based R&D hub represents a major milestone in the company’s global innovation strategy and commitment to deliver on its European investment plans. Leuven, with its proximity to numerous EU institutions and partner organizations, proved to be the ideal location.


MOBIS Parts Europe builds distribution center in Beringen

Part of the South-Korean Hyundai concern, MOBIS Parts Europe is reorganizing its logistics network. The automobile parts builder will be investing over EUR 50 million in a new distribution center at the Ravenshout industrial estate in Beringen.

In the near future, the company’s current Belgium-based subsidiary (in Lummen) will be responsible for handling all inbound goods for the European market. It will also serve as a supplier to the other six regional distribution centers of MOBIS Parts Europe, as well as to Kia and Hyundai dealers in the Benelux, France and Switzerland.

To cope with these broader responsibilities, MOBIS Parts Europe will create a new distribution center on a 123,000 m² site. In a first phase, the company will build a 55,000 m² warehouse and 3,000 m² of office space. Construction will start this summer and will be finished by July 2016.

http://www.mobisparts.eu/de_de/custom/mobis_accessories_db/
Nippon Shokubai (Japan) invests EUR 350 million in Belgium

Japanese chemical group Nippon Shokubai invests EUR 350 million in its plant in the port of Antwerp. The group wants to increase the annual production of superabsorbent polymers from 60,000 to 160,000 tonnes.

With this substantial investment, Nippon Shokubai caters to the growing demand for superabsorbent polymers in central and eastern Europe. Upon completion, the group’s global output will reach 710,000 tonnes, making the group one of the world’s leading polymers producers.

On top of that, the group is also building a production facility for acrylic acid, which is the basic raw material for polymers. This new plant will have an annual capacity of 100,000 tonnes and should be operational by May 2018.


JSR (Japan) and Imec (Belgium) expand partnership

Materials group JSR (Japan) and research center Imec expand their partnership in the production and quality control of EUV lithography. JSR also announced significant investments at its subsidiary in Leuven.

JSR and Imec have signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) to jointly develop solutions for the manufacturing and quality control of EUV (Extreme Ultraviolet) lithography materials for the semiconductor industry. EUV lithography is one of the most promising technologies for creating more powerful chips. The partnership between Imec and JSR will be formalized in a joint venture, with Imec as a minority shareholder.

By bringing together their expertise and assets, Imec and JSR will stimulate the production of photoresists needed for EUV lithography. JSR will make its production technology available, while also investing in its subsidiary JSR Micro in Leuven for the expansion of its production and analysis equipment.

“This joint venture firmly anchors a unique expertise domain in Belgium”, comments Luc Van den hove, CEO and president of Imec. “It will grant our technology partners access to best-in-class materials for the development of new generations of chip technology.” Nobu Koshiba, President of JSR, added: “This expansion of our partnership is based on a long relationship of mutual trust. It is an interesting challenge, and I have the greatest respect for Imec’s courage and enthusiasm.”


Silicon Line (Germany) opens new factory in Belgium

Silicon Line, a German multinational that produces components for consumer electronics, is investing EUR 3.5 million in a new production facility at Hasselt. In time, 30 people will be employed at the site.
The new plant will manufacture ‘optical sub-assemblies’, or the packaging for optical connector components destined for consumer electronics. A production unit at the Corda Campus will be equipped with all the necessary machines and technology. Initially, 5 people will be employed there. Within 5 years, that number will grow to 30.

The sum earmarked for this project is part of a larger investment package of EUR 6.3 million that Silicon Line collected from existing and new investors, including a German venture capital fund, Capital-E Arkiv from Antwerp and investment company LRM from Limburg. “The capital will help us industrialize and broaden our technology platform,” explains Ruud van der Linden, CEO of Silicon Line. “Furthermore, this investment will help boost our international expansion.”

http://www.silicon-line.com/

**Direct flights between Brussels and Tokyo**

Japanese airline All Nippon Airways (ANA) announced that it will be offering direct flights between Brussels and the Japanese capital Tokyo.

As a result, Brussels Airports —located in the heart of Europe— fills one of the very few blind spots in its network. “We never made it a secret that setting up a direct connection with Tokyo was one of our main goals”, comments Arnaud Feist, CEO of Brussels Airport.

For Belgium the direct flights to Tokyo are a distinct asset. Especially since more than 300 Japanese companies are investing directly in the country.

http://www.ana.co.jp/eng/aboutana/press/2015/150601.html

**Subcon (Australia) conquers Europe via Belgium**

Subcon, an Australian multinational specialized in subsea stabilization and foundation solutions for the offshore energy sector, will open its first European office in the GreenBridge incubator in Ostend.

The move is part of Subcon’s strategy to expand its European network. At the new site, which is located in the science park of Ghent University, Subcon will mainly focus on offshore grouting and artificial reefs.

Vic Bauwens, General Manager of Subcon Europe explains the company’s decision to settle in Belgium: “Apart from the positive entrepreneurial climate, we also considered the link with Ghent University, the construction of a wave tank in the science park and the link with the port of Ostend. This focus on wind energy was decisive for us.”

http://www.subcon.com.au
AIM (Canada) sets up first European base in Belgium

Canadian recycling group AIM —short for ‘American Iron & Metal’— is plowing a staggering EUR 12 million into its very first Europe-based recycling plant. The site will be located at the Port of Ostend, on the Plassendale 1 dockyard.

The investment project is a joint venture between the Port of Ostend and AIM Recycling Europe. AIM recently bought a 32,000 m² plot along the Ostend-Bruges channel. This site will feature an indoor waste treatment and recycle installation of about 20 m high. If everything goes according to plan, it will be operational by September.

In Ostend, AIM will be specializing in the recovery and recycling of non-ferrous metals like copper, lead, aluminum, zinc, brass and bronze. A fine example of how to achieve a circular economy that maximizes the reusability of resources, while minimizing their destruction.

"AIM chose to locate its plant in Ostend, because of the port's expertise and accessibility", comments Johan Vande Lanotte, Ostend’s alderman for economy. "In addition, the port offers a lot of expertise and support, especially during the requisite administrative procedures."

Continental Foods invests EUR 4 million in its Puurs plant

Multinational Continental Foods Group opened new production lines in its Belgium-based plant to enable ambitious growth plans, and increase export volumes. The significant expansion demonstrates the company’s commitment to the production plant.

The EUR 4 million investment will raise the annual production volume substantially by 40%. At the same time, the Puurs plant product portfolio will include a further 300 recipes, boosting the export volume by no less than 17%, from 40 to 57%. Fifteen people will be hired to cope with the additional workload.

"And that is not the last investment we have planned for our plant in Puurs," says Pascal Van Laere, Managing Director for Continental Foods Belgium. Mayor of Puurs Koen Van den Heuvel, who inaugurated the new product lines of the Continental Foods Group’s headquarters, is delighted with this news. "As a mayor, I am proud that renowned brands such as Devos Lemmens and Imperial are being produced in Puurs."
Continental Foods Belgium is part of the European Continental Foods Group, which is owned by UK based CVC Capital Partners. The group, which operates in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and Sweden, produces food products such as soup, broth, desserts and sauces. It holds well-known brands such as Royco, Aïki, OXO, Liebig Bouillon, Devos Lemmens and Imperial.


**Atlas Copco (Sweden) expands distribution center in Flanders**

In Hoeselt, Swedish machine manufacturer Atlas Copco has ploughed EUR 8 million into the expansion of its local distribution center. The company’s CEO Ronnie Leten flew in from Sweden for the official inauguration.

In all, the distribution center now covers an area of 30,000 m²: an addition of 10,500 m². Its new facility — which has 12 loading docks and ergonomic packing stations — now houses all packing activities. About 5,000 m² remains available for future expansion plans.

In Hoeselt, Atlas Copco has amassed unprecedented expertise in logistics. For example, the distribution center has specific know-how in the logistic handling of various weights and dimensions, ranging from 1 gram to 10 tonnes. “It’s precisely that know-how — in addition to the center’s expertise in transport, customs and IT — that explains Atlas Copco’s firmly-rooted presence in Belgium”, Leten commented.


**Chauvet (US) sets up a base in Ghent**

Headquartered in the United States, Chauvet is a leading manufacturer of professional luminaires and entertainment lighting. The company has recently created a full-service subsidiary in Ghent.

This facility will act as Chauvet’s distributor for Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, while supporting other Chauvet distributors and strategic partners across Europe. “Inspired by the success of our UK-based subsidiary, we realized that an inland site in Belgium would allow us to better serve customers in the Benelux, and even the whole continent”, explains Albert Chauvet, President of Chauvet.

The Ghent-based facility is Chauvet’s fifth office around the globe, joining two others in the United States, one in Mexico and one in the UK. Besides a sales, service and distribution center, it also houses a showroom: a place for product demos and training sessions.
“We are eager to discover how our new subsidiary in Belgium will build on the success we have enjoyed elsewhere”, concludes Michael Brooksbank, General Manager of Chauvet Europe.


**Filorga installs a production unit in Brussels**

In March, the French cosmetic leader FILORGA opened a new production unit in Anderlecht. The new facility takes place on a 1,000 m² field owned by the Region and is dedicated to the production of anti-ageing solutions such as line fillers.

Filorga had already two laboratories in Brussels employing 12 people. The new facility will employ 40 people.

The company chose Brussels for its central strategic position and its status as a European capital.

http://www.filorga.com/

**French adventure park in Docks center**

By the end of 2016, the French entertainment leader IQ Concept will open its first Koezio park in Belgium. Koezio is a unique “urban recreation park” concept, with the theme of having a “video game, where you are the heroes”!

Koezio will be located in “Docks Bruxsel”, a new shopping and leisure district center which will take place on the banks of Brussels Canal. The park will employ approximately 40 people.

http://en.koezio.co/
Belgium emerges as a 3D bioprinting pioneer

When it comes to 3D manufacturing of artificial implants, Belgium has always been in the forefront of this effort. Now, our universities are giving this innovative role an added dimension with their research on 3D bioprinting of live stem cells.

Together, the Universities of Antwerp and Leuven aim to print a cornea made of live cells within 5 years from now. Antwerp will develop the corneas, while Leuven will supply the 3D manufacturing equipment.

"We use collagens — the building blocks of all human tissue — to make the cornea solid and transparent”, explains Nadia Zakaria, researcher at the University of Antwerp. “In a later phase, we will also incorporate cells, so that the cornea can serve as an implant for people. Our main challenge will be to connect the cells to the collagens, without causing the cornea to die off. What is more, pressing the cells through a small printer head generates a lot of pressure that might damage our ‘bio ink’, so to speak.”

Belgium also pioneers in other bioprinting domains. To give just one example: scientists from the University of Leuven are developing a way to repair a 2-cm bone fracture by means of a bio implant. Belgium’s leading role in bioprinting doesn’t surprise Fried Vancraen, owner of 3D printing company Materialise (Leuven): “Belgium has a lot of know-how, and can leverage a leadership position in the 3D manufacturing industry as well as a highly developed life sciences sector.”


VIB and Brazilian partner launch GlobalYeast

VIB, the Belgium-based life sciences research institute, has teamed up with a Brazilian investment company to launch GlobalYeast. The aim of this new company is the development of high-quality yeast strains for the production of bioethanol.

Yeasts are necessary for the production of bioethanol from waste flows. Up till now, however, no strain was able to convert the total amount of sugars from the cellulose biomass into ethanol. The Johan Thevelein lab —a joint initiative of VIB and KU Leuven— managed to tackle this challenge via genetic engineering.

GlobalYeast will bring these patented, high-quality yeast strains onto the market, along with tools to safeguard and manage the fermentation process. In total, EUR 6.25 million was collected with an investment consortium comprised of Performa Investimentos (Brazil) and the Belgian venture funds Gemma Frisius and SOFI. Global Yeast will have management offices both in Belgium and Brazil. Scientific founder Johan Thevelien will be the Chief Scientific Officer of the new company.
Alpro (US/Belgium) invests EUR 80 million in new production

Belgium-based food company Alpro –a subsidiary of WhiteWave Foods (US)– is investing EUR 80 million in eight new production lines this year. In addition, the company is hiring 250 new employees.

80% of the total investment (or EUR 65 million) goes to the company’s largest plant in Wevelgem, Belgium. Here, 5 new production lines will be opened. The other 3 lines will be implemented in Alpro’s UK plant. The plant in Wevelgem is attracting the vast majority of new employees as well: 200 of the 250 in total.

The investment is part of Alpro’s strategy to increase its production capacity and maintain its current rate of growth. In the coming years, Alpro anticipates strong growth in the market of plant-based drinks and food products.

BioWin takes over the chairmanship of the Council of European BioRegions

BioWin the Health Cluster of Wallonia (Belgium) has been chosen to chair the Council of European BioRegions (CEBR), a network of 40 health clusters and science parks throughout Europe. This appointment is, for BioWin and its members, the opportunity to raise awareness and visibility around its expertise but also to set potential new collaborations on the European stage.
Set up in 2006 as part of a European inter-cluster health project, the Council of European BioRegions (CEBR) helps to boost the competitiveness of the European biotech sector around the world. In January 2008, the network became independent thanks to the affiliations of its members (over a hundred since 2006) as well as its involvement in projects funded by Europe. Since 2013, the CEBR has been a not-for-profit association governed by Belgian law. The network is being run from its head office in Brussels by its secretary, Claire Skentelbery.

The main goals pursued by the CEBR are to bring together European regions involved in biotech innovation related to health (for the benefit of their members), share best practices when it comes to managing health clusters, and consolidate skills in areas of shared interest, such as clinical innovation, the internationalisation of SMEs and access to technological platforms. In 2014, the CEBR also launched directories describing the skills of members of affiliated clusters in different fields, such as biomarkers (2014) and medical equipment (2015).

“We are delighted with the potential positive impact that this mission involves, both in terms of international reputation and the establishment, in the frame of the CEBR, of activities that will help to boost the international outreach as well as the skills of our members. With this in mind, we have just set up a task group within the CEBR, focusing on the themes of training and skills management in SMEs”, explains Frédéric Druck, Chairman of the CEBR and Deputy Managing Director of BioWin. After acting as Vice-Chair of the CEBR for two years, BioWin is today succeeding BioCat, the Health Cluster of Catalonia (Spain), represented by Montserrat Vendrell, who chaired the CEBR from 2013 to 2015. Since January 2015, the BioWin cluster has also chaired the European Diagnostic Clusters Alliance (EDCA), a European network of clusters involved in in vitro diagnostic.

http://www.investinwallonia.be/the-key-sectors/life-sciences/?lang=en

**Brussels South Charleroi Airport, the third best low-cost terminal in the world**

Brussels South Charleroi Airport (BSCA) has been voted one of the best terminals in the world in the annual World Airport Awards 2015 organised by the British consultancy Skytrax.
This year, the airport came third behind Kansai (Japan) and London Stansted (United Kingdom). As well as being voted second best airport in the world in terms of punctuality in OAG’s 2014 punctuality league, BSCA has been recognised several times for the quality of its services and terminal.

Brussels South Charleroi Airport’s CEO is thrilled that the airport came in third, and congratulates his teams for all their hard work: “Being voted third best terminal in the world by Skytrax shows once again that hard work pays off. This recognition is the fruit of the considerable efforts made by all of BSCA’s staff members; efforts that mean our passengers can enjoy fantastic facilities and stress-free travel. To be voted second best airport in the world in terms of punctuality and third best low-cost terminal in the world highlights the advantages of working as a team for the benefit of the company and its long-term future. This international recognition conveys an excellent image of the Walloon Region and the City of Charleroi.”

http://www.charleroi-airport.com/en/shortcuts/news/index.html?tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=20&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=743&cHash=ed064ae355e48e44a43bff265593c310

3. General economic information about Belgium

Convention between Belgium and the Russian Federation

On May 19, 2015 Belgium and the Russian Federation signed a new agreement for the avoidance of double taxation. This agreement must still be approved by the Belgian federal parliament and the parliaments of the regions and communities.

You can consult the text of the agreement on Fisconet
Belgium most popular for clinical studies

Belgium is Europe’s most popular destination for commercial clinical studies, especially for pharmaceutical companies.

Last year, almost 570 clinical studies were conducted in Belgium, which corresponds with the highest number of studies per inhabitant in Europe.

One of the main reasons for this is the fact that research applications are processed very quickly by the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP) and by the medical ethics review committees (METCs) of the participating research hospitals. Another key factor is the excellent reputation of Belgian researchers, as shown through several audits.


Belgium — world leader in vaccines

Belgium is a world leader in vaccine research, development and production. This was recently confirmed by pharma.be, the general association of the Belgian pharmaceutical industry.

In Belgium, nine pharmaceutical companies— including GSK and Janssen Pharmaceutica— have created no fewer than 77 vaccines in the last few years. The ones against mononucleosis and cervical cancer, in particular, were groundbreaking. Today, researchers are working hard to develop effective vaccines against malaria and Ebola. In addition, Belgium has an excellent reputation in the development of animal vaccines, with a total of 204.

Recently, Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family Matters Jo Vandeurzen inaugurated the innovation platform ‘Flanders Vaccine’ in Diepenbeek. The goal is to further support the development of vaccines in Flanders by allowing research institutions, companies and organizations to exchange know-how and experience. Members include Vaxifectio (University of Antwerp), Provaxs (Ghent University), FlandersBio, BioMaric and LifeTechLimburg (Hasselt University).

http://pharma.be/

Belgium fastest climber in global e-commerce

Belgium posts the fastest growth on AT Kearney’s Global Retail E-Commerce Index 2015. The country is ranked 9th, outperforming the Netherlands.

The Global Retail E-Commerce Index is an annual ranking of the e-commerce growth potential in 30 countries. This year, Belgium rose 15 places, entering the top 10 at number 9. The top 3 e-commerce countries are the US, China and the UK. Neighboring country the Netherlands ranks 13th.
In the accompanying report, AT Kearney (US) praises Belgium’s infrastructure and the growing number of online buyers: “Belgium is small, but its market is ripe with potential. Its infrastructure is solid, its connected consumer base is shopping online and its competitive landscape is fragmented. Strong e-commerce growth is expected – as much as 25 per cent per year through 2020 – led, in particular, by the apparel, food and electronics sectors.”

https://www.atkearney.com/consumer-products-retail/e-commerce-index

Belgium in top five of European destinations for attracting FDI projects

According to the Ernst & Young Attractiveness Survey, Belgium maintains its place in the top five destinations in Europe for attracting FDI projects. A total number of 198 projects were launched in 2014, which is a 13% increase over the 175 projects in 2013. However, the number of jobs created through these investments decreased slightly from 3,536 jobs in 2013 to 3,481 jobs in 2014.

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 62%. Sales & marketing accounted for the most investment projects, while the production and the logistics sector complete the top three of most successful sectors in Belgium for attracting investment projects.

Greenfield investments accounted for 64% 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 has what it takes to convince foreign investors.


Brussels held its first "Smart City Summit".

Brussels wants to learn from innovative projects in Vienna, Barcelona or Berlin. To improve the efficiency of public management and the quality of life through the use of new technologies, involvement of citizens and a policy of "open data" are essential.

The Brussels Region is expected to adopt a vision and strategy of "Smart City" in 2016.

http://event.smartcity.brussels/
The Government of Wallonia adopts the Marshall Plan 4.0

The Government of Wallonia has just approved the Marshall Plan 4.0, the third draft of the economic redeployment programme for Wallonia launched ten years ago. It has decided to devote €2.9 billion to it based on five main measures during the 2015-2019 period.

The term 4.0 corresponds to the executive’s wish to include the Region in the digital revolution. The Magnette team is pursuing the wish of its predecessors to reindustrialise Wallonia. Industrial employment represents 13% of employment in Wallonia compared to 20% in Germany, just 10% in France and 8.5% in Britain.

The new plan intends to refocus actions and reinforce collaboration with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and is organised around five measures, namely:

1. To make human capital an asset – 304.5 million (10 million of which through alternative funding)
2. Support the development of industry through a policy of innovation and business growth – 850.5 million
3. Mobilisation of the region towards economic development – 374 million (325 million of which through alternative funding)
4. Support efficiency, energy transition and the circular economy – 1.1 billion (133 million of which through alternative funding)
5. Support digital innovation – 244.8 million

http://www.wallonie.be/fr/plan-marshall