

Introduction

Belgium is a country in Western Europe that borders the North Sea. Neighboring countries include France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Flat coastal plains take up most of the northwest, but rugged mountains of the Ardennes Forest lie in the southeast. The government system is a federal parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. The chief of state is the king, and the head of government is the prime minister. Belgium has a mixed economic system which includes a private-enterprise system, combined with centralized economic planning, and government regulation. Belgium is a member of the European Union (EU).



Location: Western Europe

Capital City: Brussels (+1 GMT)

Chief of State: King Philippe

Head of Govt.: Prime Minister Charles Michel

Currency: Euro (EUR)

Major Languages: <p>Dutch (official) 60%, French (official) 40%, German (official) less than 1%</p>

Primary Religions: <p>Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant and other Christian 2.5%, Muslim 5%, Jewish 0.4%, Buddhist 0.3%, atheist 9.2%, none 32.6% (2009 est.)</p>

Calling Code: 32

Voltage: 230

Key Websites

Main Government Page: belgium.be

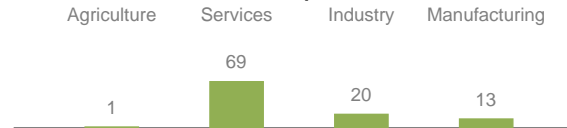
Export Promotion Agency: abh-ace.be

Investment Promotion Agency: abh-ace.be

Key Economic Facts

Income Level (by per capita GNI):	High Income
Level of Development:	Developed
GDP, PPP (current international \$):	\$544.04 billion (2017)
GDP growth (annual %):	1.73% (2017)
GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$):	\$47,840.20 (2017)
Manufacturing, value added (% of GDP):	12.54% (2017)
Current account balance (BoP, current US\$):	-\$0.79 billion (2017)
Inflation, consumer prices (annual %):	1.97% (2016)
Labor force, total:	5,011,369 (2017)
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate):	7.09% (2017)
Imports of goods and services (current US\$):	\$415.57 billion (2017)
Exports of goods and services (current US\$):	\$419.04 billion (2017)

GDP Composition %



**Although Manufacturing is included in the Industry figures, it is also separately reported because it plays a critical role in economy.*

Rankings

Index	Rank
Corruption Perceptions Index	16 / 178
EY Globalization Index	4 / 60
Global Competitiveness Index	18 / 137
Global Enabling Trade Index	10 / 136
Global Manufacturing Competitiveness Index (GMCI)	26 / 40
Index of Economic Freedom	52 / 180
International Logistics Performance Index (LPI)	3 / 160
Inward FDI Potential Index	15 / 139
KOF Index of Globalization	3 / 185
Networked Readiness Index (NRI)	23 / 139

Risk Assessment (Provided by Coface)

Country rating: A2 - The political and economic situation is good. A basically stable and efficient business environment nonetheless leaves room for improvement. Corporate default probability is low on average.

Business Climate rating: A1 - The business environment is very good. Corporate financial information is available and reliable. Debt collection is efficient. Institutional quality is very good. Intercompany transactions run smoothly in environments rated A1.

Strengths

- Optimal location between UK, Germany, and France
- Presence of European institutions, international organizations, and global groups
- Ports of Antwerp (second largest in Europe) and Zeebrugge, canals, motorways
- Well-trained workforce through professional education, multilingualism
- Net external creditor position
- Excellent business climate

Weaknesses

- Political and financial tensions between Flanders and Wallonia
- Complex institutional structure and multiple administrative levels
- Strong dependence on the Western European situation (goods and services exports = 82% of the GDP)
- Exports concentrated on intermediate products and the European Union
- High level of structural unemployment
- Heavy public debt
- Tight housing market
- Saturation of transport infrastructures

U.S. Embassy

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