

**19/12/2008**

### **2008 absolute record year for the port of Ghent**

For the port of Ghent, 2008 was an absolute record year both for maritime transshipments and for inland shipping figures. The port finished the year with a total of 27 million tons (+ 8 %) of maritime transshipments, while inland shipping came to 20 million tons (+ 13 %). Together inland and sea transshipments accounted for 9.8% growth. In particular, transshipment of agricultural products rose in 2008 with an increase of 833,345 tons, or 37.5 % more than in 2007. Ores and metal residues are still at the top of the list, though there the increase is more modest at 539,880 tons or 6.8 %.

**See also :**

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

**16/12/2008**

### **ExxonMobil invests in cleaner diesel in Antwerp**

*ExxonMobil* is going to expand the existing installations in its Antwerp refinery and refit them to produce greater quantities of cleaner diesel. This project is part of a global effort. *ExxonMobil* will invest a total of more than one billion dollars in three refineries in Europe and the United States. As a result, the production of low-sulphur diesel at these plants will increase by a good 22 million litres per day. As part of this project a so-called *High Pressure HydroTreater (HPHT)* will be erected in the Antwerp refinery in the coming years. This is an installation that uses high pressure hydroxide to desulphurize diesel. The new *HydroTreater* will make it possible for the refinery in Antwerp to produce much more low-sulphur diesel. A major part of this is intended for export. With a processing capacity of 305,000 barrels a day, the refinery in Antwerp is the second largest branch of *ExxonMobil* in Europe. Besides units for primary and secondary distillation the plant complex also includes, amongst other things, a catalytic cracker unit, a petrol factory and an asphalt factory.

**See also :**

[http://www.exxonmobil.com/Benelux-English/Newsroom/Bnl\\_16122008.asp](http://www.exxonmobil.com/Benelux-English/Newsroom/Bnl_16122008.asp)

**15/12/2008**

### **Belgium best in e-banking**

Internet research bureau, *ip-label.newtest*, ranks Belgium number one for the quality of its e-banking. *Ip-label* studied the accessibility of e-banking websites in 7 European countries - Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Spain. The company carried out tests on the accessibility, stability and speed of the websites. In Belgium they looked at, amongst others, *Citibank*, *KBC*, *Fortis*, *Centea* and

*Dexia*. Finally the quality of the websites was formulated as a percentage. With 87.38% Belgium scored highest of the 7 countries studied.

**See also :**

<http://www.ip-label.net/>

**09/12/2008**

### **Belgians work longer than other Europeans**

According to the EU statistics office, *Eurostat*, Belgians work longer than the average EU citizen. In 2007 the average “effective age of withdrawal from the labour market” in our country was 61.6 years. That put our actual retirement age a little higher than the averages in the EU and the eurozone, which are 61.2 and 61.3 years respectively.

**See also :**

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1996,39140985&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=fr&product=REF\\_TB\\_labour\\_market&root=REF\\_TB\\_labour\\_market/t\\_labour/t\\_employ/t\\_lfsi/t\\_lfsi\\_act/tsiem030](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=fr&product=REF_TB_labour_market&root=REF_TB_labour_market/t_labour/t_employ/t_lfsi/t_lfsi_act/tsiem030)

**09/12/2008**

### **Belgian companies least likely to resort to corruption**

Companies in Belgium are the least likely to resort to bribes and backhanders when they do business abroad. In the annual ranking of 22 countries by *Transparency International* (TI), an organisation that works for more honesty and transparency in business life and politics, Belgium and Canada score highest, with 8.8 points out of a maximum of 10.

**See also :**

[http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/latest\\_news/press\\_releases/2008/bpi\\_2008\\_en](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases/2008/bpi_2008_en)

**04/12/2008**

### **Ford invests 70 million euros in Genk**

*Ford* Genk is to invest 70 million euros. Despite the economic crisis and the fact that the car manufacturer had to put employees on temporary unemployment from 12/12/2008 till 9/1/2009, an investment programme totalling 70 million euros is to be carried out as part of its revamping of the *S-MAX*, the *Galaxy* and the *Mondeo* in 2010.

**See also :**

<http://www.tvl.be/nl/nieuws/2008-12-03/ford-investeert-70-miljoen-euro-in-genk/>

**03/12/2008**

**IBA opens a new PET centre (Positron Emission Tomography) for the production of radio pharmaceuticals in Dallas, Texas.**

The new plant is intended to reinforce *IBA's* distribution network. The network already includes 47 radio pharmaceuticals production centres all over the world. 17 of these are based in North America. The new plant will serve PET imaging centres in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

**See also :**

<http://www.iba-worldwide.com/pressroom/group/2008/12/IBA-opens-a-new-radiopharmaceuticals-production-center-in-Dallas--Texas/en>

**03/12/2008**

**Taiwanese technology company Aten International expands European distribution centre in Belgium**

The Taiwanese technology company, *Aten International*, is going to expand its European distribution centre in Heusden-Zolder, involving an investment of 2.5 to 3 million euros. The manufacturer of computer communications equipment hopes this will enable it to meet the growing demand for its products in Europe. Aten is specialised in the development and production of equipment for linking computers to each other, in particular so-called KVM switches (Keyboard, Video and Mouse), which allow a whole battery of computers to be operated with one mouse, keyboard and monitor. The Taiwanese group, *Aten International*, which has its headquarters in Taipei, has 1,287 employees, and branches in the US (2), South Korea, Japan, China, UK and Belgium. The factories are located in Taiwan in China.

**See also :**

<http://www.ipaworld.com/hot.cfm?newsid=27015>

**02/12/2008**

**Direct shipping link Brussels-Casablanca**

The ports of Brussels and Casablanca have signed a cooperation agreement for a direct shipping link between Brussels and Casablanca. The direct link will go via the port of Antwerp. Casablanca is not only the biggest port city of Morocco, it is also one of the most important shipping destinations in Africa.

**See also :**

<http://www.lematin.ma/Actualite/Express/Article.asp?id=103162>

**27/11/2008**

## **German chemicals group triples isobutane capacity with new production installation in Antwerp**

The German chemicals group, *Evonik Industries* – the former *Degussa* – is to invest in a tripling of the annual production of isobutane at its plant in the port of Antwerp. The new factory will have a capacity of 110,000 tons of isobutane per year and should be in commission in the fourth quarter of 2010. Isobutane is used for the production of rubbers for tires and synthetics, antioxidants and fine chemicals. *Evonik* Antwerp also announced that the production capacity of methionine - an essential amino acid processed into chicken feed - has been increased in response to the sharp rise in demand in the global market.

**See also :**

[http://www.degussa.be/antwerpen/en/pressreleases/antwerpen/2008/evoniktotripleitsisobutenecapacitywithnewproductionfacilityinantwerp/evonik to triple its isobutene capacity with new production facility in antwerp.htm](http://www.degussa.be/antwerpen/en/pressreleases/antwerpen/2008/evoniktotripleitsisobutenecapacitywithnewproductionfacilityinantwerp/evonik%20to%20triple%20its%20isobutene%20capacity%20with%20new%20production%20facility%20in%20antwerp.htm)

**25/11/2008**

## **Number of unemployed receiving benefits falls despite economic and financial crisis**

In October 2008 the number of unemployed job-seekers dropped by 11,673 units compared to September and by 15,981 units on an annual basis. According to information from Belgium's *National Employment Office (NEO)* a total of 396,875 unemployed received benefits in the country in October. In Wallonia and Flanders numbers of unemployed fell, while in Brussels they remained stable.

**See also :**

[http://www.rva.be/D\\_new/Press/Mededelingen/2008\\_11\\_25/StatNL.pdf](http://www.rva.be/D_new/Press/Mededelingen/2008_11_25/StatNL.pdf)

**21/11/2008**

## **European environmental award for Belgian company**

The Belgian company, *Imperbel-Derbigum*, has been given an *EMAS Award* by the European Commission. The *EMAS Awards (European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme)* are given annually to companies and public services for their efforts to conserve the environment. In 2008 the theme was the reduction of consumption and emission of greenhouse gases. *Imperbel-Derbigum* produces waterproof membranes. It received the award in the category medium-sized companies for its low energy consumption and its engagement to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**See also :**

<http://www.emasawards.eu/index.html?page=1>

**16/11/2008**

**American biotech company establishes itself in Hasselt**

*MabCure*, an American biotech company, will move its activities to Hasselt and establish its headquarters there. Research carried out at the Biomedical Research Institute (BIOMED) in Hasselt is closely linked to *MabCure*'s activities. The American firm, which does research into cancer with a view to developing screening methods and drugs, was attracted to Belgium by, amongst other things, the research grants given by the Flemish government. The interesting fiscal climate with regard to royalties for intellectual property also played a part in the company's decision to establish itself in Flanders. *MabCure* is already quoted on the stock exchange in the US, but is still in the start-up phase. The company has a good 3 million euros in starting capital.

**See also :**

<http://www.mabcure.com/newsreleases/20081030.pdf>

**14/11/2008**

**New container service between Finland and the port of Antwerp**

The Finnish shipping company, *Merilinja Oy*, has launched a new container service between Antwerp and Kokkola, a port in the west of Finland. The first ship on this line, the container ship, *MS Baltic Sea*, which has a capacity of 366 TEU (*twenty-foot equivalent units*), was loaded in the port of Antwerp on 4 November 2008. The ship will dock there three times a month. The new container link is useful for the mining industry and consumables producers amongst others, says Dick Fraser, the European representative of the port of Kokkola. The shipping company chose the port of Antwerp because of the first-rate access it offers to the US, East Asia and the European hinterland.

**See also :**

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

**12/11/2008**

**Belgian IMEC and Japanese Panasonic expand their strategic alliance**

*IMEC* is a world-class research centre specialised in nanoelectronics and nanotechnology. *IMEC* and *Panasonic*, the Japanese electronics giant, have decided to expand their collaboration further.

*IMEC* and *Panasonic* have been partners in research into advanced technology in the field of semi-conductors since November 2004. Now three new research domains are being added to the programme. The Panasonic *IMEC Centrum* was set up in December 2008. It will do R&D on communication for multimedia applications, body area networks

for healthcare and well-being and new biomedical technologies such as biosensors for detecting diseases via antibodies in the blood.

**See also :**

<http://www2.imec.be/>

**10/11/2008**

### **Number of unemployed in Belgium drops**

Figures from the *OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)* show that the unemployment rate in Belgium was at 6.6% of the active population in September 2008. That is a drop of 0.5 % compared to September 2007 and 1.1% compared to the third term of 2007. In the eurozone the unemployment rate in September was 7.5 %.

**See also :**

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/37/41652934.pdf>

**07/11/2008**

### **KBC Asset Management and Union Bank of India start asset management partnership in India**

On 07/11/2008 *KBC Asset Management (KBC AM)*, KBC Group's asset management arm, which has activities worldwide, and the Indian state bank, *Union Bank of India (UBI)*, signed an agreement for a joint venture in asset management for private and business investors in India. *KBC AM* will have a 49% stake and *Union Bank of India* 51%.

**See also :**

[https://multimediafiles.kbcgroup.eu/ng/published/KBCCOM/PDF/COM\\_RVG\\_pdf\\_KBC\\_Asset\\_Management\\_en\\_Union\\_Bank\\_of\\_India\\_NL\\_14\\_07\\_2008.pdf](https://multimediafiles.kbcgroup.eu/ng/published/KBCCOM/PDF/COM_RVG_pdf_KBC_Asset_Management_en_Union_Bank_of_India_NL_14_07_2008.pdf)

**04/11/2008**

### **IBA ships particle accelerator to India**

*IBA* has shipped a Cyclone ® 30 particle accelerator - a 30 million electron volt cyclotron - to India for the Department of Atomic Energy in Kolkata. The contract was signed in 2007 and should be operational by the end of 2009. India is a growth market for *IBA*, which has been in the country for several years.

**See also :**

<http://www.iba-worldwide.com/>

**30/10/2008**

**Belgian becomes head of Corporate Division International of Swiss insurance group Baloise**

Since 1 January 2009 the Belgian, Jan De Meulder, has headed Baloise's international activities. *Baloise* is one of Switzerland's biggest insurance groups. De Meulder had been the CEO of *Mercator Verzekeringen* in Antwerp, the Belgian subsidiary of *Baloise*, since 2004. Before that he was active at *Fortis* and *ING*.

**See also :**

<http://www.baloise.com/website2/chbs585e.nsf/web/News/2008/10/29/BaloiseverstaerktFuehrungsspitze?OpenDocument>

**27/10/2008**

**American weekly TIME celebrates ECOVER**

Under the title "Heroes of the Environment 2008" the American magazine, TIME, chose ECOVER as eco-pioneers fighting for a greener future. A whole article was dedicated to the company, which has its headquarters in Malle near Antwerp.

ECOVER was founded in Belgium in 1980. The company is active in the production of ecological washing and cleaning products. From the start ECOVER was a pioneering company that came out with a phosphate-free washing product even before phosphates were branded as a problem.

Since then ECOVER has developed into the biggest producer of ecological washing and cleaning products. Besides its headquarters in Malle, near Antwerp, ECOVER has branches in the US, the UK, Germany and Switzerland and its products are sold in more than 20 countries.

ECOVER's revolutionary environmental policy is expressed not only in the products that the company puts on the market, it is also an integral part of its business management. ECOVER has extended its environmental policy to every department in the company, from production to marketing. The most recognisable characteristic of this is the first ecological factory in the world.

The exceptional services ECOVER has rendered in the area of environmental conservation and sustainable development have frequently been recognized and honoured. The most prestigious mark of recognition is perhaps the United Nations Environment Programme's Global 500 Roll of Honour, which was awarded to ECOVER back in 1993.

**See also :**

[http://www.ecover.com/be/nl/default\\_home.aspx](http://www.ecover.com/be/nl/default_home.aspx)

&

[http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1841778\\_1841780\\_1841784,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1841778_1841780_1841784,00.html)

**24/10/2008**

### **Important Mexican contract awarded to Jan De Nul Group**

The Mexican subsidiary of *Jan De Nul Group* has signed a contract with the port authorities of Ensenada, Mazatlan and Manzanillo, on the Pacific Ocean. The contract is worth €48 million. The contract includes various dredging and expansion operations in the different ports. In Manzanillo *Jan De Nul* will also deforest, excavate and reclaim a terrain that will later become an extension of a container terminal.

**See also :**

<http://www.jandenul.com/newsitems/NF200810B.pdf>

**22/10/2008**

### **Flanders and Wallonia are most interesting locations to establish a distribution centre**

According to the real estate consultant *Cushman&Wakefield's European Distribution Report 2008* Flanders continues, as in previous years, to be the most interesting location in Europe to establish a distribution centre. According to the report, Wallonia is now just as interesting as Flanders, thanks to relatively low real estate prices and their expected evolution, what is on offer and traffic congestion. Within a range of a few hours drive a truck can reach just about the whole of the Benelux and the Ruhr Area.

**See also :**

<http://www.cushwake.com/cwglobal/jsp/newsDetail.jsp?repld=c17700012p&LanId=EN&LocId=GLOBAL>

**22/10/2008**

### **Foreign investments in Belgium become more knowledge-intensive**

From *IBM's* annual report on *Global Location Trends* it appears there were 189 foreign investment projects in Belgium in 2007. In addition around 7,800 jobs were created.

Companies from the United States, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were the most important investors in Belgium. They were responsible for the creation of more than three quarters of all jobs. Foreign investments in Belgium take place increasingly in knowledge-intensive sectors, such as ICT and life sciences. In contrast, there was a drop in the transport materials sector, the chemical industry and metals. For their part, Belgian companies created around 7,500 jobs abroad. The most important locations for Belgian companies are Romania, Brazil, France, Poland and China.

**See also :**

<http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/25623.wss>

**22/10/2008**

### **British biotech company establishes headquarters in Belgium**

The British biotech company, *Apitope International*, has established its headquarters in Diepenbeek, Limburg. *Apitope* develops pioneering therapies to combat autoimmune diseases and allergies. The British company took this decision after it received financing of 10 million euros from investors in Belgium and Luxembourg. The favourable fiscal regime concerning patents also played an important role in the decision to move. One of the investors is the University of Hasselt. The university will work closely with *Apitope* and will make its own research available to its British partner. In addition there is also financing from the Limburg Investment company *LRM*, *Vesalius Biocapital* (a Luxembourg risk capital fund) and *Vinnof*, the Flemish Innovation Fund. These investments will allow *Apitope* to expand its clinical tests for its main product, a drug against multiple sclerosis. The investment – the fifth largest investment in a biotech company in the region – is a new step in the master plan to turn Hasselt and the surrounding area into a new Biotech Valley in Flanders.

**See also :**

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

<http://www.uhasselt.be/english/Default.asp>

<http://www.lrm.be/homepage.aspx?orig=111&page=31285&temp=588&caty=12686&icat=True&mcat=12684&cont=15099>

**21/10/2008**

### **Cortix, the French specialist in company website design, opens a second Belgian agency in Ghent**

*Cortix*, a French specialist in internet and multimedia products such as the creation of websites for companies, is to open a second Belgian agency in Ghent. The first was opened in the Brussels Region in 2007. The new subsidiary fits the company's European expansion policy.

The company says it will again use the economic model that is the source of its success, i.e. management of a commercial structure by a regional manager, which enables close

contacts with local clients. Jimmy Voorhoof has been appointed as director of the Ghent branch.

**See also :**

<http://www.cortix.fr/international/index.php>

**18/10/2008**

### **Solvay takes over Alexandria Sodium Carbonate Company in Egypt**

The Belgian group, *Solvay*, has concluded an agreement to take over the Egyptian soda manufacturer, *Alexandria Sodium Carbonate Company (ASCC)*, from the  *Holding Company for Chemical Industries (HCCI)*, an Egyptian state holding, for 100 million euros.

The operation will strengthen *Solvay's* position in the fast-growing market of North Africa and the Middle East. At the moment *ASCC* in Alexandria produces 130,000 tons of sodium carbonate and bicarbonate. *Solvay* wants to increase that capacity to 200,000 tons per year in the short term and to 500,000 tons in the slightly longer term. The factory in Alexandria is relatively new (1974) and was modernised in the late 90s.

Sodium carbonate is a chemical product that is used for the production of glass and the chemical industry, as well as in detergents and cleaning products.

**See also :**

<http://www.solvaypress.com/pressreleases/0,,67826-3-0,00.htm>

**10/10/2008**

### **Mazda chooses Zeebrugge**

As of April 2009 the Japanese car manufacturer, Mazda, will supply the United Kingdom and Ireland from the port of Zeebrugge instead of Rotterdam. This was confirmed by Marc Adriansens, the managing director of *ICO (International Car Operators)*, a subsidiary of the Japanese shipping company *NYK (Nippon Yusen Kaisha)*. The shift of traffic to Zeebrugge represents around 126,000 extra vehicles annually, divided between import and export. This contract is a confirmation of Zeebrugge's role as a hub for the distribution of new cars in Europe.

**See also :**

<http://www.delloyd.be/nieuws/id22574-ICO-Zeebrugge-remporte-un-traffic-de-Mazda.html>

**08/10/2008**

### **Belgium has the 19th most competitive economy in the world**

The *World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2008-2009* shows that Belgium's competitiveness has risen slightly. For the last two years Belgium has been in 20<sup>th</sup> place, but now it is 19th. The ranking is based on a survey of 12,297 company leaders in 134 countries combined with various objective data that measure countries' competitive strength. According to the report Belgium's main strengths are its healthcare and education. In healthcare and primary education Belgium is third in the world, in higher education it is sixth.

**See also :**

<http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Global%20Competitiveness%20Report/index.htm>

**07/10/2008**

### **Contracts in Argentina for Belgian companies**

During an economic mission in October 2008, *AppliTek, Ion Beam Applications (IBA)* and *SCK.CEN (the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre)* concluded contracts with Argentine partners. The technology company, *AppliTek*, which is specialised in the development and production of analysis equipment, concluded an agreement for technological assistance with YPF group, Argentina's most prominent gas and oil company. *IBA* will collaborate with an Argentine laboratory from Villa Martelli, in the province of Buenos Aires. The contract concerns the sale of a cyclotron, on the one hand, and collaboration in research and development on the other. *SCK.CEN* concluded an agreement with *NA-SA (Nutroeléctrica Argentina)* with the objective of strengthening service provision to Argentina. The agreement comes against the background of a shortage of electricity in Argentina and at a time when the state wants to extend the life span of its two nuclear reactors. Together the two reactors guarantee nearly 10 % of the country's electricity production. *SCK.CEN* ensures the technical safety of the tanks of the Argentine reactors.

**See also :**

[http://www.abh-ace.org/expor/initiatives-actions/abh-ace/missions-sar/2008/argentina-uruguay/081004-annonce-form-out\\_fr.html](http://www.abh-ace.org/expor/initiatives-actions/abh-ace/missions-sar/2008/argentina-uruguay/081004-annonce-form-out_fr.html)

**06/10/2008**

### **Brussels fourth business city in Europe**

Brussels is ranked 4th in the European *Cities Monitor*, a rating of the main European business centres published annually by *Cushman & Wakefield*. Brussels comes after London, Paris and Frankfurt. The results are based on a survey of 500 European

company leaders and *senior managers* responsible for business location policy. The most important factor for companies was the availability of qualified personnel. Knowledge of languages, good and affordable housing, access to the market and national and international transport were also rated highly by business leaders.

**See also :**

<http://www.cushwake.com/cwglobal/jsp/newsDetail.jsp?repld=c19400007p&LanId=EN&LoclD=GLOBAL>

**03/10/2008**

**Collaboration between *Jet Airways*, *Brussels Airlines* and *Brussels Airport* is big success**

From the first flight, in August 2007, till the end of September 2008, the Indian airline company, *Jet Airways*, carried 700,000 passengers to and from Brussels Airport. In just four months time *Jet Airways* opened 6 routes in Brussels with daily flights to Mumbai, Chennai, New Delhi, Toronto, New York JFK and Newark. Bangalore was added to the list in October 2008. *Jet Airways* chose to have a hub in Brussels and a partnership with *Brussels Airlines*. The two airline companies have streamlined their flight schedules to ensure perfect connections. From Brussels passengers of the Indian airline company can reach all the major cities in Europe and a variety of destinations in Africa. This collaboration is interesting both for *Jet Airways* and for *Brussels Airlines*.

**See also :**

[http://www.aerocontact.com/actualite\\_aeronautique\\_spatiale/cp-bilan-positif-pour-le-premier-anniversaire-du-hub-europeen-de-bruxelle~01688.html](http://www.aerocontact.com/actualite_aeronautique_spatiale/cp-bilan-positif-pour-le-premier-anniversaire-du-hub-europeen-de-bruxelle~01688.html)

<http://www.jetairways.com/be/>

<http://www.brusselsairport.be>

<http://company.brusselsairlines.com/en/home/>

**02/10/2008**

**More than 20 % fewer unemployed than in 2004**

On 02/10/2008 Joëlle Milquet, the Minister for Employment, presented an evaluation of the 2004 *plan for the guidance and supervision of the unemployed*, also known as the "activation plan". Since the plan was introduced unemployment has dropped by an average of 24 %. This evolution is independent of the economic situation since the unemployment figures have continued to evolve favourably even though times are not so good. Moreover, the number of training courses has risen spectacularly (+ 40 %) and unemployment controls have steadily become more efficient.

**See also :**

<http://www.werk.belgie.be/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=20230>

<http://www.emploi.belgique.be/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=20234>