

Economic & business news from Belgium May/June 2011

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 et aux Investissements Etrangers (AWEX) and the Foreign Trade and Invest Department of the Ministry of the Brussels-Capital Region (Brussels Invest & Export). Its chair is held by the Regions on a rotating basis and its secretariat is ensured by the FPS Economy.

Contact: Secretariat of the Liaison Cell
FPS Economie
Vooruitgangstraat 50 rue du Progrès
B-1210 Brussels
tel : 02/277.69.13
Colette.Vanstraelen@economie.fgov.be

Korean Air Cargo triples Brussels flights

Korean Air Cargo, the biggest cargo airline company in the world, has announced that it will expand its activities at Brussels Airport. The company currently has three flights per week between Brussels Airport and South Korea and this will increase with immediate effect to four flights per week. By winter, the number of weekly flights will increase to nine.

Korean Air Cargo will transport 60,000 additional tonnes of cargo per year to and from its European hub at Brucargo. This represents approximately 10% of the current total airfreight activity at Brussels Airport.

According to the spokesperson of Brussels Airport this should lead to the creation of 300 direct jobs at Brussels Airport itself and a possible 600 indirect jobs outside of the airport.

<http://cargo.koreanair.com>

PM Group establishes its Benelux headquarters in Wavre

The engineering firm PM Group, which specialises in architectural design and project management, has just established its headquarters for the Benelux countries in Wavre, in order to support its expansion within the region. This decision follows the submission of a certain number of successful tenders by the PM Group.

The company has been awarded several guaranteed contracts in the biopharmaceutical and R & D sectors, worth over 400 million euros.

Major projects for Janssen, GSK, UCB, Abbott and Merck, the contracts, which were won thanks to its strategic partnership with Grontmij Industrie, include: a new chemical development pilot plant for Janssen Pharmaceutica and a major extension for Genzyme in Geel. The partners are also working on major projects within the region for clients which include GSK Biologicals, Abbott (formerly Solvay Pharmaceutical), MSD (formerly Schering Plough) and UCB.

Over the next two years, there is potential for 50 people to be employed at its new headquarters in Wavre and on the client sites. These people will, in the main, be locally-recruited professionals specialising in design and construction.

Belgium is attracting significant investment in the life sciences sector. Speaking during the official opening, Dave Murphy said: "The Belgian pharmaceutical market includes some of the biggest global players in the sector. Eight of them have confirmed growth estimated at over 1.5 billion euros for the next three years.

PM Group has considerable international experience in this sector and we are currently developing our operations within the Benelux countries. Wavre is at the heart of this region and attracts significant international investment from the life sciences industry. We are delighted to be setting up our headquarters here in the Benelux and are confident of being able to grow and develop our company from this key location."

www.pmgroun-global.com

Brussels to be location for largest Décathlon in Europe

The Boulevard Léopold III district in Evere will soon be home to Décathlon's new Benelux headquarters and, from 2013, a huge shop and associated restaurant services. The investment by the French sporting giant in the capital is great news as it should create 450 jobs.

www.decathlon.be

Caterpillar invests 150 million euros in Gosselies

For 45 years, Caterpillar Belgium, based in Gosselies, has produced wheel loaders and hydraulic excavators as well as high added value components such as hydraulic cylinders and valves, gears, axles and reduction gears. With the passing of the years, the facilities are beginning to be in need of a major overhaul. This is what has

just been decided by the American parent company, which will invest 150 million euros in its Belgian plant. This money will serve not only to renovate assembly lines for wheel loaders and hydraulic excavators but also to widen them in order to adapt them for larger and heavier machines. There is a need for various workshops to also be renovated and for infrastructure works to be undertaken. All of the works should be finished by 2015.

Caterpillar manufactures over 300 products in 23 countries to serve its customers in over 200 countries worldwide. With a turnover of over 42 billion dollars in 2010, Caterpillar is the global leader in the manufacture of machines for civil engineering and mining, and in the manufacture of diesel and natural gas powered engines. The Belgian site employs over 4000 people and is currently the second largest Caterpillar production centre in the world.

<http://belgie.cat.com>

Nitto Europe invests 6 million euros in Genk

The head office of Nitto Europe in Genk has just completed a 6-million-euro investment project in a new solvent recycling installation, enabling the company to reduce its annual CO2 emissions by 17%.

Nitto manufactures products such as double-sided adhesive tape, sealing materials, medical tapes and polarising films for LCD screens. The solvents that are produced during the manufacturing process have until now been extracted by air then burnt. The heat generated in this combustion process was already recycled and used to contribute to the heating of the company buildings.

By introducing this latest installation Nitto takes the whole process one step further. The solvents are recuperated via distillation and can then be reused in the production process. *"Recycling solvents not only makes us a more ecologically-friendly company, it also enables us to be less dependent on external factors,"* explained Eric Pass, Planning and Communication Manager. The price of solvents is based on the price of oil, which is currently highly volatile.

Nitto Europe is a major supplier to international markets such as the automobile sector, the electronics market for the public, paper and printing or the construction sectors. Nitto was founded in 1974 and has a Europe-wide sales network. In 2009-2010, the company, which employs 703 people, posted a turnover of 137 million euros. Nitto Europe is the European headquarters of the Japanese multinational Nitto Denko Corporation, which is made up of 108 different companies around the world.

www.nittoeurope.com

ITS group acquires IT People, reinforcing its position in Belgium

ITS group, expert in the sustainable development of IT infrastructure, has announced the acquisition, for a sum of EUR 900,000, of 100% of the share capital of IT People, a Belgian company specialising in support and management of IT infrastructure.

Established in 2007, IT People is an IT services company based in Zaventem, employing 23 people and with a turnover of EUR 2 million. IT People provides a service offering focused on support and management of IT infrastructure on behalf of large clients in Belgium. IT People's consultants are renowned for their substantial expertise in Microsoft environments. The company's founder, Eddy Van Frachem, is a veritable veteran of the Belgian IT world. He has formerly been, amongst other things, director of Fujitsu Services Belux. He founded IT People in 2007.

Already present in Brussels since its merger with Axialog in early 2010, this acquisition boosts ITS Group's position in our local, particularly dynamic market, where there is strong demand for IT infrastructure management and hosting expertise.

This first acquisition outside of France demonstrates ITS Group's desire to establish itself sustainably on the international stage by using local structures recognised for their expertise. With IT People, ITS Benelux, a subsidiary of the ITS Group, will double in size and employ over 40 people. The acquisition of IT People illustrates the ambitious development plan put in place by ITS Group, which aims to increase turnover to more than EUR 130 million between now and 2013 by combining organic growth with targeted acquisitions.

www.itsgroup.fr

A fifth Starbucks opens in Belgium. The sixth will follow soon...

On 22 June, the American Starbucks chain opened its first café in the centre of Brussels. The new Starbucks, ideally located in the main hall of the Central Station, welcomes the many commuters and tourists who tread the marble of the station each day.

Autogrill Belux, which acquired the licence from Starbucks Coffee Company, is responsible for the daily management of the Starbucks operating in the Belgian territory. Autogrill is already well known in the country since it operates about a hundred catering establishments along motorways, in airports, in shopping centres, in metro stations and in railway stations, under licence from various brands (Pizza Hut Express, Délifrance, Panos, Quick, Delhaize Shop 'n Go and Best Western).

As well as the Starbucks already established in Antwerp Station, in Brussels Airport (three establishments) and now in the capital's Central Station, a sixth establishment should materialise by the end of this year in Ghent.

www.autogrill.be
www.starbucks.com

Riverbed Technologies, specialising in WAN optimisation, has opened a Belgian subsidiary.

A WAN (*Wide Area Network*) is a computer network covering a large geographical area, on a country, continental or indeed even a global scale. The American company

Riverbed offers virtualisation, bandwidth optimisation and fast backup services over the WAN, enabling companies to make the most of their IT infrastructure.

Even though it already has an office covering the Benelux countries in the Netherlands, Riverbed is now opening a subsidiary in Diegem as a result of the strong growth which the company is experiencing in Belgium.

Founded in 2002, Riverbed Technology operates from 30 offices around the globe and has over 9,200 clients. Its global turnover is 550 million dollars.

www.riverbed.com

Belgian fashion scene flourishes

This year has been busy for the Belgian fashion scene as H&M open their first Men's store in Brussels, while Dirk Bikkembergs, the Belgian designer sells his label to the Italian Zeis Excelsa and Hollister, the renowned surfers brand comes to Belgium.

With over 70 stores in just Belgium and Luxemburg alone, H&M is extremely popular and highly in demand. From this month onwards, there will also be a H&M on the Rue Neuve in Brussels, a huge building, with a surface area of 440m² and three floors. This colossal building is the new home to the first Men's H&M.

Dirk Bikkembergs, the Belgian designer known for his trendy yet sporty clothes; which he states are: 'where fashion meets sport, and football in particular'. As a member of the 'Antwerp Six' fashion designers (six avant garde and dominant designers who graduated from the Antwerp Academy of Fine Arts between 1980/1981), Dirk Bikkembergs did not have any trouble finding a potential buyer for his brand. The opportunity was immediately snatched up by the Italian company Zeis Excelsa, which was already earning a large percentage of its turnover by selling Bikkembergs shoes and purses. The new CEO of Bikkembergs, Maurizio Pizutti, already has a plan to open ten new Bikkembergs stores within the next year.

Hollister, a worldly recognized brand known for its California surfers look, will open its shops in autumn in both Wijnegem and Waasland shopping centers in Flanders. Hollister is also well known due to the fact that it is an auxiliary of the famous American brand Abercrombie and Fitch. The stores are renowned for their attractive sales staff, who walk around the shop in their beach wear.

www.hm.com/be

www.bikkembergs.com

www.hollisterco.com

A new "Microsoft Innovation Center" in Belgium

The American computer multinational will shortly launch its third "Microsoft Innovation Center" (MIC) in Belgium. Along with the Mons and Brussels MICs, the new centre is due to be set up on two sites in Kortrijk and Genk.

These centres are the result of public-private partnerships and are aimed at encouraging the development of innovative businesses in the IT sector. Their principal missions are to create an innovation-friendly environment, promote knowledge (training, seminars), facilitate the testing of ideas and prototyping and, ultimately, support business creation.

The Kortrijk and Genk centre will, more specifically, be focused on digital applications for the healthcare sector (*e-health*). The Flanders government supports this Microsoft initiative which is perfectly in keeping with its *Flanders' Care* strategic plan which is aimed at stimulating innovation in the Flanders healthcare sector.

www.microsoft.com/mic
www.flanderscare.be

A new terminal for Antwerp port

Three world-class companies, Rubis Terminal (France), Intercontinental Terminals Company "ITC" (Houston, USA) and Mitsui & Co Europe (London), have joined forces to create the joint venture ITC Rubis Terminal Antwerp for the construction of a new terminal at Antwerp port.

The new terminal, located on the left bank of the Scheldt, will reinforce the logistics installations of the Antwerp chemical hub and satisfy the growing demand for petrochemical product storage for the European market. The terminal will be equipped with a deepwater jetty and will allow for the storage and handling of liquid or gaseous chemical products and oil products.

The first stage in the project (capacity of 14,000 m³ for gas and 57,000 m³ for chemical products) was officially launched recently. The remainder of the project should be completed between now and mid 2012.

www.itcrubis.com

An Indian company to set up a new PET plant in Geel.

An Indian based company – JBF Industries – is to set up a new polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plant in the town of Geel. PET is an extremely important industrial polymer which has a wide spectrum of uses, ranging from food packaging to engineering glass fibers. Around 60% of PET is used for synthetic fibers, whereas 30% is used for bottle production. PET has a growing market due to its appealing physical properties – it is surprisingly light material, an optical polymer and can act as a gas barrier.

JBF Industries, which was established in 1982, has an impressive reputation in the polyester industry, making it one of the top players in the Polyester Partially Oriented Yarns (POY) in India. The Chairman of JBF Industries, B.C Arya, expressed his views that opening a PET facility in Belgium is a huge step to international recognition and caters to the budding polyester market globally. Nonetheless, he is confident that due to JBF's expertise, its long term experience in the field of polyesters and its strategic commitment to its customers, a sustainable and

competitive market will be launched in the heart of Europe. JBF Industries already has a well established and thriving PET plant in the United Arab Emirates with a fiscal turnover of 663 million US dollars in 2010-2011 alone.

The new PET facility in Geel will be adjacent to BP's purified terephthalic acid (PTA) plant. Both companies, JBF Industries and BP Aromatics, have come to an agreement about the new plant and BP will be supplying PTA for JBF Industries. The new PET facility in Geel is said to be ready in 2014 and will have an astonishing capacity of 390,000 million tonnes per year.

www.jbfindia.com

Dutch dredging company's head office moves to Antwerp.

A Dutch dredging company – Boskalis' – head office will move from The Netherlands to Antwerp, Belgium from July onwards. Royal Boskalis Westminster is a large-scale international company which is part of the maritime infrastructure sector and conducts maritime services, among which dredging and earthmoving. Amid other things, the company takes on assignments in the gas, oil, ports and coastal defense markets. Boskalis also owns URS, a salvage and towage company, originally from Antwerp, and Smit, a maritime service provider. URS, has been owned by the company Smit for several years, while Boskalis has only recently acquired Smit.

The head office of Boskalis will accommodate the financial, commercial, maintenance and operational activities of the URS, which is located along the Italiëlei in Antwerp. The change of location of the head office of Boskalis was announced by the General Manager of URS, Peter Vierstraete, quite recently. This was anticipated as two new tugboats, the Union Hawk and the Union Eagle, which were manufactured in Spain, were finally ready for use. These two tugboats have a massive bollard pull (BP) of 86 tonnes, making them the most powerful tugboats in the Port of Antwerp. Boskalis and its partner companies boast 14,000 employees, operating in over 65 countries, across 6 continents.

www.boskalis.com

Flemish research centre, Imec, forms a partnership with Indian Wipro Technologies

The Flemish research centre, Imec, has collaborated with Wipro Technologies in India. Imec will be introduced into the Indian market, with the establishment of Imec India in Bangalore.

Imec is a Flemish research centre in Leuven which performs world leading research in nanotechnology, among which wireless communication and imaging systems. Imec provides a greener technology for a healthy and sustainable life style. Wipro Technologies is an Indian based company which advertises greener computing with style. Their partnership will cater for creating innovative nanotechnology systems for growing markets in the Middle East. These systems can be created due to this first class partnership by making systems-on-chip that can be combined with many functions such as optical or chemical functions.

Both Imec and Wipro Technologies have a number of awards and partnerships to their name. Wipro was ranked among the top 25 Enterprise companies in FinTech and won the Global Product Excellence Award in 2010 in the Identity Management Solution category. It also boasts a huge number of partner alliances with huge names such as Microsoft, Intel and McAfee. Imec's employees have won a variety of awards, from the Chancellors Fellowship Award to the Graduate Research Mentor Fellowship Award. Imec also has many partnerships to its name, such as the American Semiconductor Companies, NVIDIA, and Atrenta, a provider of systems-on-chip solutions.

Both companies have an outstanding net income, with Imec's revenue at 285 million Euros in 2010 alone, while Wipro Technologies managed a net income in 2009 of 806 million US dollars. Due to both companies' innovative technologies and huge success, they both employ a soaring number of employees, with Wipro Technology employing over 120,000 and Imec employing almost 2000.

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

Belgian Technology to be used in a high tech Chinese gaming device

A Chinese technology company, Eedo Technology, is using a Belgian 3D sensor technology to use in their new gaming device iSec. The practical sensor was made by a Belgian company, SoftKinetic, which is located in the heart of Belgium, Brussels. Eedo Technologies has exclaimed that they were, 'very impressed by SoftKinetic's 3D gesture-recognition technologies and found that it was a very good solution to support our iSec platform, in terms of cost and performance.'

Eedo Technology is a vast gaming company which specializes in 3D and interactive gaming. One of Eedo Technology investors is China's biggest computer manufacturers, The Levono Group. The new technology, the iSec platform is said to be launched in the second half of the year in China exclusively. Both Eedo Technology and Levono have set a very high target for iSec sales. They are aiming for the sales to reach 120 million. If over 1 million examples are sold, they will consider selling the device internationally.

SoftKinetic was formed in July 2007 and its mission was to 'transform the way people interact with the digital world'. SoftKinetic are the top suppliers of gesture based platforms for consumer electronics and markets. Within the iSec there is a depth sensing hardware, which uses a standard camera sensor to measure how long it takes for light to bounce off objects and return to its source. This indicates that the users will be able to navigate through a game using their bodies.

A free DanceWall game will be included in the purchase of an iSec, which was also created by SoftKinetics. However, video games and interactive user interface This interactive game consists of moving the players body to fit holes in approaching walls.

www.softkinetic.com

Brown McFarlane's new stockholding facility in Antwerp immediately put to good use.

Brown McFarlane, a renowned company for its steel plates, opened a warehouse facility in the port of Antwerp, which was put to immediate use as orders of steel plates were instantly put in place.

Brown McFarlane was founded in 1889 by Captain A.R Brown who was joined by a naval architect, George McFarlane. They formed a partnership and from this affiliation they created a joint venture, A.R Brown McFarlane & Co. Ltd. In the 1800's the company's main function was the building of ships in Japan and exporting machinery. In 1915 a London office was opened, to be directly followed by an office in Antwerp, New York and Tokyo. Nowadays, Brown McFarlane export steel plates to over 50 countries worldwide. It has an astounding turnover of 90 million USD and employs almost 200 people. Its headquarters are still in the UK, but over the years Brown McFarlane has developed into one of Europe's biggest and distinguished steel plate companies.

The stockholding facility in Antwerp seemed like a long awaited investment. After all, the majority of the steel that leaves Europe departs from the Port of Antwerp. Now

that the stock is being held in the warehouse in Antwerp, the delivery schedules are more flexible and the transportation process a great deal faster. This is not only an advantage for the customers, but to Brown McFarlane too, who will be saving both precious time and money.

Brown McFarlane's striking opening stock in Antwerp, which consisted of more than 1000 tonnes of steel, will be added to over time. A month after the announcement of the opening of the stockholding facility in Antwerp, Brown McFarlane have broadcasted that a new stockholding facility will also be opened in Singapore on the 1st of July.

www.brownmac.com

Sapa to launch new powder coating department in Landen

A Swedish company - Sapa - which produces aluminum building systems will invest a grand total of over 4 million Euros in the production of the new powder coating department in Landen. Powder coating, like painting, creates a layer on top of a surface. However, powder coating does not need a solvent to keep the parts in liquid suspension. It has to be heated to form that tough skin, associated typically with coating. This rather broad technology can be used for a variety of functions; such as dressing trains with an aluminum coating to reduce the noise output, or making the world's smallest billboard in aluminum.

Sapa Building Systems, which was founded in 1963, has a global reputation for its profile based building systems, aluminum profiles and heat exchanger solutions in aluminum. It is the worlds leading producer of aluminum profiles and the fourth largest supplier of aluminum building systems in the world. The company employs a massive 14.800 people all across the globe, from the USA to Lithuania to Mexico. A grand total of 180 employees work on the site in Landen, Belgium. The number of

employees in Belgium will expand by around 25 people due to the new department. In 2010, the company had astonishing net sales of 32 995 million SEK.

The site in Landen usually works with aluminum profiles of doors and windows, which are then sent all over the globe to their customers. The new powder coating department means that the company will take over an essential phase in the production of the coating profiles. Plant manager, Mik Durwael states, 'The coating is the last step in the production process, but also the most sensitive one.'

www.sapagroup.com

Nike to open another distribution center in Belgium

Worldly recognized sports retailer Nike has said to be opening a distribution center in Herentals.

The global retailer Nike was established in 1972, starting off with an athlete and a trainer in Oregon. Since then, Nike can be found all over the globe, in more than 160 countries. Nike now has reported revenues (recorded in May 2010) of 19 billion US dollars and employs globally over 1 million people, with 300 more jobs available with the launch of the new distribution center.

However, Belgium is not a new site for Nike. In 1994, the first Nike distribution center in Belgium was built in Laakdal, close to Herentals. The shop in Herentals itself is an enormous warehouse, recently built with shops and offices. 20.000 square meters of this huge site is to be used as warehouse space, while another 930 square meters is covered by offices and an additional 4100 square meters will be used for mezzanine structures. Due to the extremely large space, Nike will occupy this structure in phases, starting from September 2011 and ending in the early months of 2012. The recently built business offices will be leased to Nike by Intervest Offices & Warehouses, which is a property investment fund which owns the Herentals Logistics2 site.

Why choose Herentals? Nike Europe chose Herentals not just because of its large surface area but also due to the possibility of extension. The Herentals Logistic2 site is, moreover, located close to a major highway, the E313 which links to Germany. On top of that, the warehouse is equipped with solar panels, and with Nike Europe being partisans of greener energy, this seemed like a perfect location.

www.nikebiz.com

www.intervestoffices.be

2. Contracts abroad for Belgian companies

Barco strengthens its position as uncontested leader in the digital cinema sector

Cinema production is going through enormous change. Giant reels of film are a thing of the past: films today are delivered in digital format to completely digitalised multiplexes where 3D will soon be available everywhere. Barco's mission is to spearhead this change by supplying high-quality digital projectors and using state-of-the-art technology. And it works! Barco digital cinema division sales had already made a giant leap of 154% in 2010 amounting to 255 million euros. The start of 2011 is heading in the same direction as 2010.

In the first quarter of 2011 for instance, Barco received orders for more than 1500 digital projectors for China, where it has more than 65% market share in this sector. In order to continue meeting this strong market demand, the Barco factory in Beijing increased its production capacity from 200 to 500 digital cinema projectors per month. Barco has also set up a new R&D centre in Beijing dedicated to digital cinema thus underlining its long-term commitment to the Chinese market and the region (Barco's market share in Hong Kong and Taiwan is more than 80%).

Here in Europe on 3 May, Barco announced that it had been selected to be the exclusive partner of Blitz-CineStar, the leading cinema operator in Croatia. Blitz-CineStar recently inaugurated its brand new totally digital multiplex in the prestigious new Arena Centre in Zagreb. This multiplex, the most modern in the Croatian capital, has ten Barco DP2K digital projectors. Blitz-CineStar, together with Barco, will convert all nine of its other multiplexes into digital cinema complexes in the next year.

In the Netherlands cinemas have also opted for digital technology as part of the Digital Cinema Plan. Barco was chosen among almost 20 other companies including large cinema chains such as the Wolff Cinema Group, to carry out the conversion of a total of 200 screens.

In Brazil, CineSystem, one of the biggest cinema chains with 81 screens in six states, opted for DP2K-23B digital projectors for the first totally digital cinema complex in Rio de Janeiro.

Barco whose headquarters are located in Kortrijk, is an important IT company that designs and creates visualisation and display solutions for professionals. Barco has operations in more than 90 countries and employs approximately 3,500 people around the world. In 2010, Barco posted a turnover of 897 million euros.

www.barco.com

Solvay invests 13 million in an R&D Centre in Korea

Solvay and the EWHA Women's University in Seoul have just signed an agreement concerning the setting up of the Group's Korean Research, Development and Technology (RDT) Centre and of the Global Business Unit Special Chemicals.

EWHA is one of the largest Korean universities, which capitalises on a vast international network of universities and research centres in the USA, in France (CNRS), Germany (Max Planck Institute), Japan (National Institute for Materials Science) and Russia (Academy of Science).

Solvay will invest 13 million euros in the Research Centre, which will encourage cooperation in the field of research and which is likely to improve the relationship of trust with customers. The Group will also invest 3.8 million euros in the five-year collaborative research fellowship with the University.

The Research Centre will be mainly focused on high-growth markets, such as electronics, lithium ion batteries and photovoltaic cells, which are markets for which Solvay supplies high added value specialty polymers and chemical products.

The objective of this agreement is to enhance Solvay's activities in Korea and to participate in the development of products which may contribute to meeting the major challenges of the 21st century.

www.solvay.com

Sonaca expands its American site to supply Boeing

The Gosselies aeronautical equipment manufacturer has been selected for the supply, under subcontract, of part of the structure of the Boeing 737. While Sonaca is a longstanding supplier of Airbus for the leading edges of wings and since more recently, the equipment manufacturer has also been supplying the Brazilian manufacturer Embraer and the Canadian manufacturer Bombardier with structural components, Boeing, until now, had never called on its services.

This is now the case and it is the American Wichita (Kansas) plant, controlled by the Sonaca Group since 2003, which will be tasked with supplying the order amounting to 25 million dollars but which could rise to 50 million dollars depending on the performance levels achieved. On this occasion, the labour force of the plant will be increased by approximately 50 people.

Last year, the Sonaca Group's turnover amounted to over 240 million euros. The Gosselies site, which is the parent company of the Sonaca Group, accommodates the Group's design offices, where nearly 200 engineers work, and incorporates three production plants as well as the Group's main logistical centre. Approximately 1200 people are employed there.

www.sonaca.com

Ter Beke sets off to conquer Central and Eastern Europe

Ter Beke and the shareholders of Stefano Toselli, two major actors in the Western European fresh lasagne markets, signed on 25 May 2011 the final documents to create their joint venture. The objective of this joint venture will be to manufacture and market lasagne and cooked pasta meals in Central and Eastern Europe.

The business plan also provides for the construction of an automated production plant in Central Europe, exclusively dedicated to the markets of Central and Eastern Europe. The study undertaken before the creation of the joint venture confirmed the growth opportunities in these markets. This growth should be supported by the continuous development of consumer preferences as well as by an increase in the number of distribution channels.

Ter Beke will have a call option on the YHS's (holding company that controls Stefano Toselli) share in the joint venture and on Stefano Toselli's shares. Ter Beke has also granted a loan of 5 million euros to YHS.

The Belgian food group Ter Beke already markets its range of products in 10 European countries. The group has two main activities: cold meats and cooked meals. It has nine industrial sites in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, and employs approximately 1850 staff. In 2010, Ter Beke realised a turnover of 402.2 million euros.

www.terbeke.com

Solvay invests 120 million for the construction of a large speciality polymers plant in China

Solvay has announced the launch of the construction of a high added value speciality polymers plant in order to meet the growing demand for these products. The plant will be built on Solvay's industrial site in Changshu in Jiangsu Province and should be operational at the start of 2014. It requires an investment of 120 million euros and will significantly increase Solvay's global production capacity for these speciality polymers.

The plant in Changshu will make this site a strong industrial base for fluorinated polymers and their essential raw materials. The objective is to strengthen Solvay's position in the logistical chain of fluorinated products in China by offering greater proximity to customers. This new production unit should enable Solvay to benefit from the enormous growth potential of this dynamic region.

www.solvay.com

I-Movix to film Super Bowl in super slow motion

I-Movix has secured a large contract at the NAB SHOW in Las Vegas. Its systems for super slow motion will be used during the broadcast of great sports events in the US such as the legendary Super Bowl.

The Fletcher Chicago Camera & Lenses company was extremely impressed by the technology developed by I-Movix, which is based in Mons. It will make the special I-Movix cameras available to the production companies broadcasting the greatest sports events in the US: NBA (basket ball), NHL (hockey), MLB (baseball) and NFL (American football, including the Super Bowl, the most watched sports event in the United States).

I-Movix has developed cameras with which images in extreme slow motion (up to 5,800 images per second) can be filmed. Ordinary video cameras film 25 images per second at normal playback speed. (Source: www.agoria.be)

www.i-movix.com

American record contract for Van Hool

The bus constructor Van Hool has concluded a contract with the American company Stagecoach to manufacture 60 double-decker buses. With a value of approximately EUR 60 million, this is one of the largest contracts ever for the Belgian family business.

Part of order for the 60 new buses will still be delivered this year, and another part is to follow in 2012. All of these vehicles will be assembled in Belgium. Furthermore, discussions for a second contract for another 80 double-decker buses are already in progress. According to Van Hool, that deal also has a great chance of success.

The production of the double-decker buses for the US market is a first for Van Hool. Until recently, the use of double-decker buses was forbidden for long-distance transport on American motorways. The new buses will each be able to transport 81 passengers, whereas ordinary buses can carry 57. (Source: www.agoria.be)

www.vanhool.be

Solvay invests 15 million in Italy

Solvay has announced an expansion of the production capacity for its perfluoropolyethers in Spinetta Marengo (Italy). These are high added value specialty polymers, marketed under the FOMBLIN-Y® and GALDEN® brands.

The capacity expansion, which will be operational towards the end of 2010, requires an investment of 15 million euros. Demand for these two product families, which are used for very demanding applications, is expected to continue to grow.

The FOMBLIN-Y® product family is mainly used for industrial lubrication in high temperature bearings and chains, the lubrication of vacuum pumps in the semiconductor industry and for end-uses in the automotive industry. GALDEN® is frequently used as heat transfer fluid in the semiconductor industry and as a testing fluid for finished electronic components.

www.solvay.com

Encon designs lighting plan for Ikea

Encon, an engineering company in Genk, developed a lighting plan for Ikea Genk which proved to be so successful that it is now being applied in all the Swedish group's branches.

Encon performed various audits in Genk, of which the first stage resulted in a brand-new lighting installation in the whole warehouse which immediately yielded substantial energy savings. It was therefore decided to light all Ikea logistics sites in this way.

Encon's head office is in Genk, and it has subsidiaries in Liège, Ghent and Paris. The engineering company offers total solutions: it not only performs audits but also implements them. (Source: www.agoria.be)

www.encon.be

New deal for I-Movix in Poland

Polish Multi-Production has decided to purchase I-Movix ultra slow motion equipment. The new cameras 'made in Belgium' will be used to broadcast Polish premier league football matches.

This is not the first contract in Poland for I-Movix. Multi-Production already used I-Movix equipment during the European women's volley ball championship in 2009.

The company, which is based in Mons, has developed cameras with can film in super slow motion. They can record up to 5,800 images or frames per second, whereas normal playback is at 25 per second. (Source: www.agoria.be)

www.i-movix.com

Solvay and Tianjin Soda Ash Plant set up a soda ash plant in China

Solvay has announced that it has concluded an agreement with the Chinese soda ash producer Tianjin Soda Ash Plant. Solvay will invest 16 million euros in two steps to acquire a 30% share in the soda ash plant in Bin Hai, near the city of Tianjin in China. Solvay will also provide loan guarantees, bringing the total committed and invested sum to almost 60 million euros.

Tianjin Soda Ash Plant is one of the oldest chemical companies in China: it was established over a century ago in Tianjin. The company is a subsidiary of the Tianjin Bohai Chemical Industry Group and ranks among the leading Chinese producers of soda ash.

The Bin Hai plant, with annual production capacity of 800,000 tonnes of soda ash and related products (such as bicarbonate of soda), as well as 800,000 tonnes per

year of ammonium chloride, is currently in its initial start-up phase. It will be fully operational in the middle of this year.

Solvay will market yearly, under its own brand, 220,000 tonnes of soda ash and 30,000 tonnes of bicarbonate products in this plant.

This investment is a logical step in the expansion of Solvay Group's activities in China and complements Solvay's decision to locate the Asian headquarters of its Regional Business Unit Essential Chemicals entity in Shanghai.

www.solvay.com

3. General economic information about Belgium

68,000 jobs created in Belgium in 2010

The Belgian labour market is recovering from the crisis at astonishing speed. The results are better than expected and Belgium is doing better than most other EU member states. These are the conclusions drawn from the latest results of the Labour Force Survey carried out by the General Directorate of Statistics and Information of the Federal Public Service Economy and the 26 other member states of the EU. This survey examines the main changes in employment and unemployment according to international definitions, from which a certain number of important indicators for the labour market are established.

In 2010, the rate of employment in Belgium was 62.0%, the unemployment rate 8.4% and the activity rate 67.7%. The number of people working increased by 68,000 units, that is 1.5%, compared to 2009. This increase in employment is almost entirely down to the workforce of over-50s and is particularly tangible amongst private-sector employees.

The fourth quarter of 2010 saw a drop in unemployment, a positive trend which should continue this year.

http://economie.fgov.be/fr/binaries/3.1.2.1.EAK%20persbericht%20trim4%202010%20-%20F_tcm326-126815.pdf

Growth forecasts revised upwards for Belgium

On May 25, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its latest economic forecasts. It is predicting growth of 2.4% for Belgium this year, even though previous forecasts were banking on growth of closer to 1.8%.

On 15 June, it was the turn of the Belgian National Bank (BNB) to present its forecasts, which are also positive. The BNB states that the Belgian economy was able

to take advantage of the recovery in global demand, while private consumption quickly recovered due to the unexpected resilience of the labour market. Investment by business and households should also gradually recover. Growth in GDP might, therefore, benefit from several variables. Overall growth was 2.1% in 2010. It should, according to the BNB, hit 2.6% in 2011 then return to 2.2% in 2012, meaning higher growth rates than those in the eurozone. The continued growth in activity in Belgium is thought to mainly depend on the consolidation of the labour market.

www.oecd.org/document/4/0,3746,en_2649_37443_20347538_1_1_1_37443,00.html
www.nbb.be/pub/01_00_00_00/01_06_00_00_00/01_06_01_00_00/20110615_aprojectie.htm?!=en

Foreign investments in Belgium are stable

In the ranking issued in "Baromètre 2010" the attractiveness survey published by Ernst & Young, Belgium retains 6th place among the most attractive European countries for investors.

In 2010, Belgium attracted 159 investment projects, 97 of which were completely new. This represents an increase compared to the 146 investments recorded for 2009. In total, these investments generated around 4,010 new jobs in Belgium.

The sources of these foreign investments are more or less the same as in previous years: United States (50 projects), Germany (15), Netherlands (11), United Kingdom (9) and France (9). We also note a positive development within BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) which approved 17 investment projects in Belgium (compared to 6 in 2009) and which now represent more than 10% of foreign investments.

www.ey.com/GL/en/Issues/Business-environment/2011-European-attractiveness-survey

Belgium moves up two places in the World Competitiveness Ranking

Each year, the *International Institute for Management Development* (IMD), the management school located in Lausanne, issues its ranking of the most competitive countries in the world; the *IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook*.

This year, Belgium achieved an index of 76 out of 100, taking it from 25th place to 23rd place.

www.imd.org/research/publications/wcy/World-Competitiveness-Yearbook-Results/wcy-2010-rankings

MédiaCité shopping centre wins two awards in the space of one week

The Liege shopping centre MédiaCité was the recipient of two awards in the space of one week.

First of all, on 9 June: the "Global RLI Award" at the Natural History Museum in London for "the extraordinary renovation of an innovative shopping centre, its ability to regenerate a city and region as well as its contribution to the local community and to sustainable development".

Then, on 15 June: the "ICSC European Shopping Centre Award", at the CNIT in Paris, during the International Retail and Real Estate Faire (SIEC) in the "Refurbishments and Expansions/Large" category.

Peter Wilhelm, CEO of Wilhelm & C°, the developer of MédiaCité, was delighted to note that this was the first time ever that the "highest award for a shopping centre developer" was handed out and because of this, "we will forever be the first winners" (editor's note: jointly with Blagnac, in France, and Tallinn in Estonia).

L'Echo - 17/06/11

Wallonia sets out a digital excellence plan

Firms and households occupy the middle of the field in European terms. But time and tide wait for no man.

However, rest assured: Wallonia is innovating. With "CreativeWallonia" and the Marshall Plan, it has a framework programme which is aimed at putting creativity and innovation at the heart of the Walloon economy and society.

The Walloon Telecommunications Agency (AWT) has been brought on board to bring this commitment to life within the information and communications technology sector (ICT).

In three steps...

First, an assessment: the AWT therefore published its 2011 barometer, as it does every year. It is available in full on its website and this year focuses on ICT developments in healthcare, as it did for schools last year.

While progress has been made, it is all relative. Compared with its neighbours, insofar as they can be compared, Wallonia ranks in the middle of the field: Eurostat ignores firms with less than 10 employees, something which the AWT is unable to do given the make-up of the Walloon economy. Similarly, we are not comparing like with like when one is annual and the other weekly. What is certain at least is that everyone is moving forward.

But do time and tide really not wait for anyone? A 90-page "ICT master plan" has just been approved by the Walloon government. The idea is to coherently organise the "digital transformation" into a Walloon "land of digital excellence". The authors have assigned themselves six challenges: ranging from incorporation of ICT within the heart of the educational system to guaranteeing universal access, as well as the use of ICT within business and the development of a digital public service. Ten strategic objectives are structured in the form of around fifty operational objectives with fixed deadlines, which we are unable to summarise here. These objectives will draw on the cross-disciplinary strengths and budgets of the bodies concerned.

Two examples of this Master Plan in action? Six smart-working centres are planned for 2016, in addition to networked workspaces (co-working). A call for proposals for the first trials in this area comes with renewable funding of 900,000 euros.

Source: L'Echo - 17/06/11

Flanders invests 65 million euros in innovation

The Flemish government will invest an additional 65 million euros in R&D in 2011. The revenues of the Flemish government exceeded expectations (an additional 682 million euros) and the entire surplus will be spent on balancing the budget for 2011. 115 million euros will be reserved for new political initiatives and 65 million euros of this sum will go to R&D therefore.

17.3 million euros will be invested in socially responsible research projects such as ecology, green energy, basic healthcare and social innovation. The budget for the National Fund for Scientific Research (FWO) will increase by 10.3 million euros. An additional 10 million euros will go to the four Flemish strategic research centres (VIB, VITO, IBBT and IMEC). Private research projects will also benefit from an additional pool of 10 million euros.

The Flemish Minister for Innovation, Ingrid Lieten underlined the fact that investments in innovation will continue to increase in the years ahead. The budget increases foreseen for 2012, 2013 and 2014 will amount to 60 - 70 million euros per year.

Belgium: Europe's bioscience valley

Belgian companies were well represented at the international biotechnology get-together.

Around sixty Belgian biotech firms were present in Washington for the Bio International Convention. The leading global get-together for biotechnology firms draws 2,000 companies and 18,000 participants. The cream of the sector, of which Belgium is at the cutting edge, were there to showcase their activities, forge partnerships or organise financing. UCB, GSK Biological, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Galapagos, Delphi Genetics, Eurogentec, Imec, Cardio3 Biosciences, TiGenix, Promethera... all the big names were there. Alongside them were the national universities, as well as a dozen federal and regional agencies.

Can Belgium really be called the "bioscience valley" of Europe? Did you know that the first gene was sequenced in Belgium?

Per head of population, we develop more new drugs than anywhere else in the world and, compared with the size of our population, we have the largest number of people employed in the life sciences sector. There are multiple reasons for the country's appeal. These include: its position at the heart of Europe, its infrastructure, its "open economy" and its competitive tax rates for researchers and patents.

Source : L'Echo - 29/06/11

The Walloon "Silicon Valley"

The Mons "Digital Innovation Valley" is beginning to take shape with the arrival of Google, Microsoft and IBM. Certainly evidence of progress, but, even more so, the assertion of an ambition.

Digital Innovation Valley... The allusion to the famous Silicon Valley in California, the cradle of Apple, Google, eBay and Intel, amongst others, is so outrageous that it would almost make you smile. It is clear that the Hainaut province, in which this "digital innovation valley" is located, cannot hold a candle to its American inspiration and even ranks below the Belgian average in terms of the number of "Information and Communications Technology" type companies.

"It was precisely this weakness that motivated us to establish our Microsoft Innovation Center (MIC) at the Mons Initialis park in June 2009, remarked Bruno Schröder, Microsoft Belgium's Technology Director – there are currently around one hundred MICs around the world. From amongst our 5,000 partners in Belgium, only 20% are located in Wallonia. And the deficit is greatest in the Hainaut. We therefore invested in the area, in partnership with the Walloon Region, in order to encourage young entrepreneurs who will create a more concentrated network of potential clients: it is a long-term formative approach." The desire to rectify this backwardness actually preceded the initiative by Microsoft and its partners who, together, are investing one million euros per year in the MIC. "All of this analysis is linked to Mons' status as a candidate for European City of Culture 2015, adds Pascal Keiser, director of the Technocité training centre for digital media, and kingpin of the project. The Digital Innovation Valley concept was born from the idea of associating culture and technology on a voluntary basis."

Source: Le Soir -19/06/11

New freight record for the Port of Antwerp

The Port of Antwerp handled 47.4 million tonnes of freight during the first quarter of 2011. The total volume of freight, containers and bulk liquids has outperformed the same quarter in 2008, which was already a record year.

In terms of tonnage, the volume for containers handled in the Port of Antwerp increased by 7.8% in the first quarter of 2011 compared to the same period of the previous year. Bulk also increased by 11.7%, although the best performance in this segment was steel where we saw an increase 41.8% in volume, while bulk liquids increased by 23.8%. We also noted a dramatic increase of 34.6 in the volume of oil by-products.

Antwerp handles the second largest volume of freight in Europe after Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Its market share of ports in the North-East of Europe has increased to 33.3%. Its location inland and the convenient connections with the interior of the country offer indisputable advantages. The Port of Antwerp is located at the heart of the European network of motorways, inland waterways and railways, making it the ideal base for European distributors.

www.portofantwerp.com

Wallonia already has eight Smart Work Centres

What exactly is a "Smart Work Centre"? Henri Fischgrund, designer of Axis Park, a business centre located beside the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, is clear: "What we are currently experiencing is not evolution, it's a revolution."

A revolution which is leading to the emergence of the super-equipped ("smart"), customised ("work") work station, installed in an environment offering numerous services ("centre"). Seven of these Smart Work Centres are already up and running in Wallonia, and an eighth one has just opened on the outskirts of Brussels.

A Dutch concept

The idea comes from the Netherlands, where there are around one hundred such centres, thirty of which are in Amsterdam. The principle is simple: the companies purchase office time, which is loaded onto a payment card. The credit available can be used to simply rent a workstation, a meeting room (small or large), a standalone office or services (photocopying, telephony, catering, etc).

The target? "The 30 % of commuting personnel who live within the greater outskirts of Brussels and who struggle every morning to get to a traditional work station", responds Henri Fischgrund, the person responsible for importing the concept and the first to install it in Axis Park. Why not just stay at home to work? All you need is a mobile phone and an Internet connection, right? "Not at all. Managers know that productivity falls when staff work from home. The Smart Work Centres offer an environment entirely centred on work. "

Subscribers to the network can reserve online and set up in whichever centre they choose, which presupposes that the services on offer and the quality of such services are all the same."

The operators of the eight Smart Work Centres (six public, two private; a ninth is due to open in Mons, with five others under development in Flanders) therefore signed a charter. The rates are also standardised (10 euros per hour or 5 euros per hour with a minimum of 1,000 hours).

www.smartworkcenters.be

Source: L'Echo - 18/06/11

Two Belgians named European Inventors of the year

Without humans, there would be no creativity. It was to reward human creativity that the European Commission, the European Patents Office (EPO) and the Presidency of the European Council decided to award the European Inventor Award. On 19 May, 5 prizes for best European inventor of the year were awarded in Budapest in 5 different categories. Of the 5 winners, 2 are Belgian.

Anne Lambrechts, who presented her innovation in the "Industry" category, received an award for the invention of a technique which enables steel wire elements to be mixed with concrete, a development which contributes to the construction of stronger buildings, to reducing construction costs and which opens up new

architectural possibilities. This technique has been applied in the new Gothard tunnel in Switzerland, for example.

The steel wire element is produced and sold under the name Dramix® by the Belgian company Bekaert, which employs 28,000 people all over the world and achieved total turnover of 4.5 billion euros in 2009.

In the "Research" category, Christine van Broeckhoven and her team took the prize for their contribution to neuropathological medicine. Christine Van Broeckhoven's work mainly concerns neurodegenerative diseases of the brain, particularly Alzheimer's disease, frontal temporal lobar degeneration, Parkinson's disease and bipolar disorder. While it is not yet possible to cure Alzheimer's disease, drugs applying Van Broeckhoven's research are currently undergoing clinical trials and appear promising.

C. Van Broeckhoven works in a laboratory at the Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie (VIB: Flanders Institute for Biotechnology) where over 1,200 scientists from around sixty countries carry out scientific research into the molecular foundations of life.

www.epo.org/news-issues/european-inventor.html

A Marshall Plan for the waterways of Wallonia

Waterway transport is both economical and environmentally friendly. The Walloon government wants to encourage it and invest 450 million euros between now and 2015.

450 million euros will be invested in priority projects over the course of the next five years. The Walloon government hopes to continue with a further investment of 300 million between 2015 and 2020. By that time, a major proportion of the Walloon waterway network will have a gauge of at least 2,000 metric tons, which will fully integrate it in the European network.

Order needed to be imposed on the waterway network. The gauges are not standardised: certain waterways can cater for 9,000 metric tons, while others can only handle a maximum of 300 metric tons. All that should change if the intentions are followed up by action to reverse the existing transport breakdown: in Wallonia, 13.3 % of freight is transported by boat, 12.9 % by railway and 73.8 % by truck.

Source : Le Soir - 21/5/2011

The Belgian construction sector returns to growth

After several difficult years, the construction sector is returning to growth in 2011. This is the conclusion expressed by the Construction Confederation during the presentation of its 2010-2011 annual report. In 2010, the sector only just managed to avoid going into the red. It should on the other hand return to growth in 2011 (+1.8%).

"The Belgian economy has recovered well following the crisis", stated Johan Willemen, President of the Construction Confederation. "The balance sheet for the construction sector is also better than anticipated". Compared to the average achieved by the Belgian economy (+2.1%), the construction sector remained sluggish in 2010 (+0.3%). In fact, last year, the progress recorded in renovation and in civil engineering only just managed to offset the drop in activity in new construction. In 2011, renovation and civil engineering are experiencing similar progress. Moreover, civil engineering can count on the revival of activity anticipated as the 2012 municipal elections draw near. But the main driver of growth in 2011 is the construction of housing authorised in 2010.

The construction sector is a source of jobs: by 2020, it will provide 30,000 new ones. The improvement of the energy performance of buildings will remain an important catalyst for the future growth of the sector, as are the housing and infrastructure needs of an ever increasing population.

www.confederationconstruction.be

Wallonia: a creative land

The winners of the "Boost-Up" awards, aimed at the Walloon creative industries sector, have been announced. These awards aim to give a helping hand to help companies progress from prototype to market.

This is the first time that a call for proposals has been directed at creatives in this way. It is really the creative "industry" that we are referring to, as the economic aspect is central to the Boost-Up awards. Indeed, it should be remembered that, for several years now, culture and creativity have been considered, by UNESCO in particular, as industries with great economic potential and as highly important in terms of employment.

Choosing the winners was not an easy task. Nevertheless, the jury decided to award prizes to six projects which best fulfilled the required criteria, namely: offer a concrete and innovative prototype, which is both viable and profitable; a proposal with a certain amount of added creative or cultural value which will generate economic or employment benefits.

Diversity was a key factor, which was also reflected in the final six winning projects selected. Not only do they come from the different Walloon provinces, they are also representative of the different disciplines making up the creative industry.

We expect that you will come across these names a lot in the future! The prize winners were:

Emmanuel Gardin – KrizalidStudio: www.krizalidstudio.com

Gauthier Desplanque and Nicolas Verraver – NG-Design: www.ng-design.be

Thibault Léonard and Thibault Colot – PrimentoEditions: www.lepetitlitteraire.fr

Denys Delporte – Denys Delorgue: www.denysdelorgue.be

Geneviève Levivier – A+ZDesign: www.apluszdesign.eu

Jérôme Crahay – Sit On Design: www.sitondesign.be

www.creativewallonia.be
