

Activity Report

2020

**Belgian  Chambers**

Federatie van Belgische Kamers van Koophandel  
Fédération des Chambres de Commerce belges  
Verband der Belgischen Handelskammern  
Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce



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### ACCREDITED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN BELGIUM

Beci – Chamber of Commerce of Brussels	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel Antwerpen-Waasland
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie du Brabant wallon	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel Limburg
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie du Hainaut	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel Mechelen-Kempen
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Liège-Verviers-Namur	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel Oost-Vlaanderen
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie du Luxembourg belge	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel Vlaams-Brabant
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de la Wallonie Picarde	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel West-Vlaanderen
Industrie- und Handelskammer Eupen-Malmedy-St.Vith	

### ACCREDITED BELGIAN-LUXEMBOURG CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE ABROAD

Arab-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce	Belgian Luxembourg Romanian Moldovan Chamber of Commerce
Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce	Belgo-Chilean Chamber of Commerce
Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce	Belgo-Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce for Russia & Belarus	Benelux Chamber of Commerce in China (Beijing, Shanghai, Pearl River Delta)
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Barcelona	Chamber of Commerce Canada-Belgium-Luxembourg
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Congo	Chamber of Commerce Europe-Central America
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Côte d'Ivoire	Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture Belgium-Luxembourg-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain	Chamber of Commerce of Belgium and Luxembourg in Spain
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Ireland	Dutch Chamber of Commerce for Belgium and Luxembourg
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Japan	French-Belgian Chamber of Commerce in North of France
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Morocco	German-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Russia	Pakistan-Belgium-Luxembourg Business Forum
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Turkey	Portuguese-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce
Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam	
Belgian-Luxembourg-Polish Chamber of Commerce	

### ASSOCIATE BELGIAN-LUXEMBOURG CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE ABROAD

Belgian-Armenian Chamber of Commerce	Belgo Peru Chamber of Commerce
Belgian Vietnamese Alliance	

### OUR PARTNERS





## FOREWORD

Defining 2020 depends heavily on the eye of the beholder. On the one hand, Covid-19 forced us to cancel many events: there was no General Assembly or BLCCA Academy as we know them, playing their vital role in strengthening contacts between our members. The issuing of certificates of origin suffered a setback after years of uninterrupted growth, and the demand for ATA carnets plummeted. There was no study tour to gain inspiration from foreign chambers, nor could the European Parliament of Enterprises bring entrepreneurs closer to the EU institutions.

On the other hand, we saw an enormous leap forward in the online issuing of certificates of origin, partly thanks to the new version of DigiChambers. The first online contact days with customs attachés was successful, and strengthening our bilateral chambers network was high on the agenda. We have also seen how Chambers helped businesses thoroughly prepare for the consequences of Brexit. More than ever, we focused on our core activities: coordinating the issue of certificates of origin and ATA carnets by chambers, promoting their multifaceted role and numerous activities, and providing our members with an (online) platform to get and stay in touch with each other.

The pandemic put the question of the relevance and added value of many companies and organisations to the test. And we can proudly say that the chambers passed it with flying colours. From the very first day of the crisis, they were ready to guide companies through many pitfalls: the chambers added FAQ pages on their websites, made coronavirus contact points available, informed their members in every possible way about support measures, developed roadmaps to allow companies to continue working and launched regular surveys to enable decision-makers to take the right measures for businesses.

But what makes us even prouder is that the chambers managed to keep their other activities going as well: their export office, training sessions and networking events kept going, but in a digital environment. Our chambers reaped the benefits of the investments they have been making in digital tools for many years, and in the areas where it had not yet happened, they were able to adapt quickly.

Do chambers come out of this period unscathed? Of course not. They too had to cancel many activities, organizing many of their online events for free while feeling the consequences of the sudden decline in international trade. But our chambers put the interests of companies whose activities are the core of our economy above their own interests. And of course, their members will benefit the most.

It is only a gut feeling, but I am deeply convinced that businesses belonging to a chamber will sail through this crisis with fairer winds than others. The provided services, information, advice and network make companies stronger and more resilient. Isn't it fair to say that companies that are not part of a Chamber in these times are negligent?

**René Branders**  
**President**





# CHAMBERS' NETWORK

## OUR MEMBERS

13

Chambers of Commerce in Belgium that look after the interests of their members and strive for an environment in which free enterprise is encouraged as a source of prosperity and well-being.

33

Belgian Chambers of Commerce abroad that help companies in their internationalisation and are committed to the promotion of our commercial and economic relations abroad.

## OUR INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

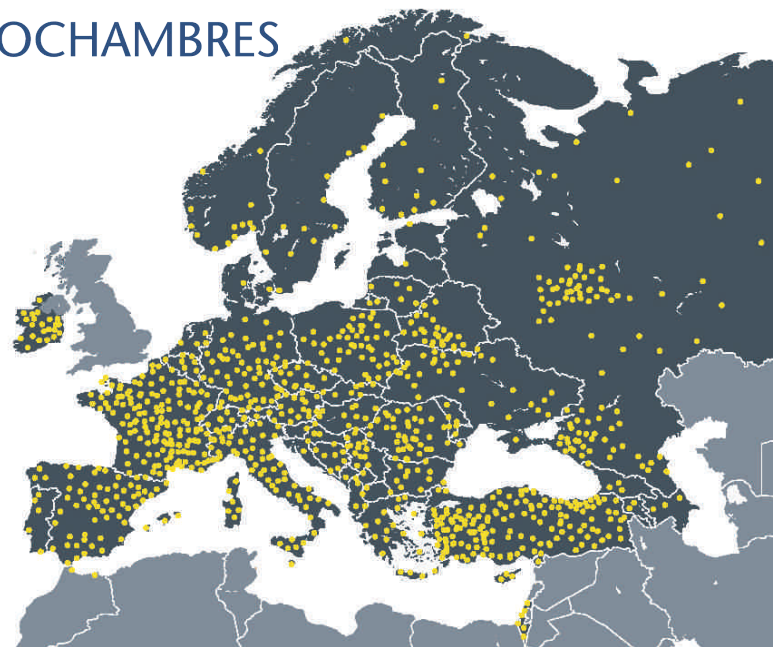
### ICC - WORLD CHAMBERS FEDERATION

- Is the voice of business on the international scene.
- Believes in open, fair and free trade as the basis for prosperity and peace.
- Unites and connects a network of 12,000 Chambers of Commerce around the world.
- Coordinates the issuance of ATA carnets and the accreditation of certificates of origin worldwide.



### EUROCHAMBRES

- Unites 1,700 national, regional and local chambers of commerce in 43 European countries
- Represents the interests of more than 20 million companies to European decision-makers in Brussels.







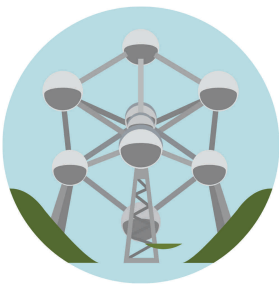
## STRONGER, CLOSER, TOGETHER



More than any other business organization, Chambers of Commerce are trusted partners: for their members, for the government, for the business world. Without trust, there would be no certificates of origin, no ATA carnets and no digital certificates.



Through our **accreditation program**, we have defined a number of principles that Chambers must follow in order to assume their role. Annual monitoring guarantees that the Chambers respect these principles. Does the Chamber fulfill its core functions? Is its corporate governance up-to-date? What about its financial independence and political neutrality? No significant deviations were noted in 2020 either.



On 9/09, the BLCCA Accreditation Board granted the **Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Russia** the status of accredited Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce abroad. Having its office in Moscow, the Chamber is well connected to the Russian market and complements the Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce for Russia and Belarus, which is based in Brussels and maintains contacts with Belgian and Luxembourg companies doing business with Russia.



The biggest event on our network calendar is the **BLCCA Academy**, where bilateral and local chambers meet, create contacts and strengthen existing ones. The pandemic did not allow us to meet physically, but the online version was well attended.

Our first day was dedicated to the relationships between chambers and members. During the second day, more than 250 speed dating sessions took place between participants.

*"It was very interactive and I could notice that our chamber is not the only one struggling a lot at the moment."*

**PARTICIPANT  
(BILATERAL CHAMBER)**



*"I have met a lot of people in a short period of time. As a newcomer to our Chamber's international business team, it is extremely fascinating to build up your contacts abroad so quickly. And, given the Covid situation, to get very quick feedback on what is happening in all countries today."*

**PARTICIPANT (LOCAL CHAMBER)**

*"I was impressed by how resilient the Chambers are in these difficult times and by the new creative ways they are providing value to their members."*

**PARTICIPANT (LOCAL CHAMBER)**



The **activity calendar** that we had drawn up for 2020 was quite intensive: information sessions, workshops, network meetings and training courses of all kinds. And then covid-19 struck.

Activities were initially postponed, then gradually transformed into online training and meetings. As the crisis continued and staff became more familiar with the available online tools, the number of online activities grew.

The end result for 2020? A full agenda of webinars, workshops and online contact sessions. Often shorter than the physical meetings of the past, but perhaps for that very reason sometimes more intense and more efficient.

Here is a snapshot of these events:

- Training sessions on ATA carnets and certificates of origin
- DigiChambers workshops
- Meetings with bilateral chambers on the impact of covid-19
- Training on facilitating online meetings
- Workshop on new business models
- Webinar with students of the Karel de Grote Hogeschool
- Business Contact Days with the Belgian customs attachés



The Belgian-Luxembourg Chambers of Commerce abroad are a fantastic tool for companies that are active abroad or want to explore new markets. Unfortunately, they are still insufficiently known.

The new brochure **Conquer the world with the Belgian-Luxembourg Chambers of Commerce abroad** clearly positions the bilateral chambers and gives an overview of the array of services they offer, from practical support over knowledge sharing to full-fledged business development.

With the UK's imminent exit from the EU on 31/12, all chambers stepped up a gear. Extensive FAQ lists, webinars of all kinds, **Brexit** helpdesks and dedicated teams. Chambers spared no efforts to prepare and guide companies as well as possible, even though the uncertainty persisted until the last moment. And on top of that came the advocacy work: supported by figures and surveys, the chambers examined the bottlenecks and how well prepared businesses and governments on both sides of the Channel were, so that the appropriate support measures could be taken.





In the fight against covid, Chambers rolled up their sleeves. More than ever, they were the voice of business in this worst post-war crisis, informing companies of all existing support measures and doing everything they could to ensure that businesses could continue to operate.

When the covid-19 crisis broke out in March 2020, the **Antwerpen-Waasland Chamber set up an Industry Task Force** at the request of the Antwerp University Hospital and in cooperation with the University of Antwerp, essenscia and Port of Antwerp. We linked the needs of our care institutions with the hundreds of manufacturing companies and logistics providers in our region.

The solutions poured in: a waste disposal company supplied heat sensors to measure fever in crowds, a brewery supplied hand gels, a lingerie manufacturer started stitching splash-proof aprons, ... In the end, more than 120 free donations were made, which indirectly saved many lives.



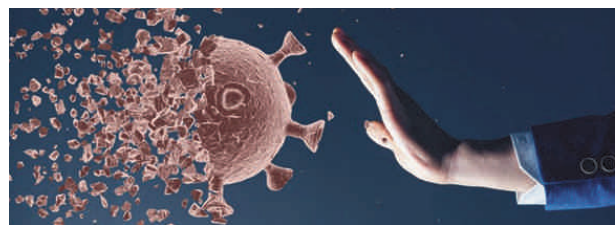
Wij willen onze leden maximaal ondersteunen en adviseren in deze moeilijke periode. Onze dienstverlening blijft gegarandeerd en we organiseren [online updates](#) om u zo goed mogelijk te informeren over de huidige ontwikkelingen.

Voka ontvangt heel wat vragen van ongeruste ondernemers over de concrete aanpak van deze crisis. Wij vatten de antwoorden op de meest gestelde vragen voor u samen. Heeft u ook een prangende vraag? Stel ze aan onze [taskforce ViaVoka](#) en wij behandelen uw vraag zo snel mogelijk.

During the pandemic, **CCI Luxembourg Belge** took a central role in its province in terms of advice, information and support for businesses. A dedicated phone number and email address, [coronavirus@ccilb.be](mailto:coronavirus@ccilb.be), were set up. On this email address, the chamber put at the disposal of companies a multidisciplinary team of advisors to deal with their wide array of questions.

Immediately, the CCI's communication was also adapted, with a **daily newsletter** informing business owners of all the provisions and measures taken by the Federal and Walloon Governments, as well as other subjects useful to business life in the Covid-19 period.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis, the **ViaVoka first line advisory service of CCI Oost-Vlaanderen** has expanded considerably. We helped more than 600 entrepreneurs with various questions about essential travels, support measures, safety & work organisation, the use of quick testing, etc. Members are also kept proactively informed of new government measures via the Corona Flash.







Our **ReAction** scheme switched its focus to the COVID crisis. Our staff members informed, advised and guided entrepreneurs in their questions during these hard months and in their difficulties facing of the economic crisis.

Our newsletters informed the members of **CCI Brabant wallon** of the required actions, aid available, and health measures to be put in place while meetings with advisers enabled businesses to develop a strategic vision of the crisis.

The **Chamber of Commerce of Mechelen-Kempen** launched a **Covid-19 hotline** on March 4th, 2020. The idea was to help and advise our members through a permanent point of contact for all questions, and it was successful: last year, our business advisers helped 2,384 companies with one-to-one advice. Our hotline 800 30 232 is, and will remain the one-stop shop for all questions on entrepreneurship in 2021.



To continue its role of facilitating networking during the COVID crisis, **CCI Liège-Verviers-Namur** devised the **Discar E-Trophy**, an inter-company car competition on PlayStation (Gran Turismo), divided into 5 rounds (5 weeks) and involving 30 companies.

Each race was commented and broadcast live on Twitch. More than 3,000 spectators in total followed this exciting challenge that made anonymous people compete against media personalities.

E-gaming fully meets the 3 objectives pursued:

- to promote companies through new communication channels
- to encourage new encounters through affinity-based networking
- to federate teams thanks to a recreational activity outside office hours, respectful of the environment and totally safe in terms of health

Following the March 2020 lockdown, **IHK Eupen-Malmedy-St. Vith** quickly established a database, structured by municipality and by product, of companies in East Belgium that offered a delivery and collection service.

Thanks to the excellent cooperation with the local press, an awareness campaign called **Kaufen auch Sie weiter lokal** was launched, both on the radio and in the print media. The IHK was the only business support organisation in the German-speaking Community to have massively supported and helped the trade, hotel and catering sectors via this campaign, during the entire period of the first lockdown.



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK Government introduced a **furlough programme** to support employers and workers. Therefore, for almost a year, the **Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain** has been assisting many BLCC members with the appropriate legal advice (changes to employee arrangements, necessary contractual documentation, etc).

This helped and is still helping many members take advantage of the enormous UK government financial assistance, including a number of members who otherwise would not have financially survived.





Due to COVID-19 the **Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Spain** is organising all its activities online and is experiencing a significant increase in the validation of **digital signatures** valid in Belgium, allowing any citizen and/or company interact with the Belgian administration without having to travel to Belgium.

The **Belgian Vietnamese Alliance** had meetings with Viettrade, the Vietnamese embassy and the regional trade agencies to stay connected, and continued to help its members in their business with Vietnam.

We are now preparing a **digital roadshow** and a digital economic mission.



**Voka - Chamber of Commerce West-Flanders** asked the federal and Flemish authorities to quickly develop clear guidelines and support measures. Since 13 March 2020, a strengthened team of experts monitors developments and helps members with advice and lobbying to request or adjust measures.

We also set up the 'Safe at Work' platform, where companies can find information and tips on coronaproof working. We also adapted our offer: via webinars and livestreams, we could immediately respond to the rapidly changing reality and inform our members instantly.

On several occasions, the Chamber invited various Flemish ministers to see with their own eyes the impact of the coronavirus in companies and, at the same time, the resilience with which they continue to operate.

**Voka - Chamber of Commerce Limburg** set-up a single point of contact with staff members to answer all covid-related questions. In addition, a **call center** proactively detected the needs of our members through various call actions. Furthermore, our offer was digitised by means of webinars and hybrid sessions thanks to infrastructure investments.

In addition to online seminars and individual coaching by experts, **CCI Hainaut** has developed 2-minute **video clips** on tips and tricks related to the business management. Clear, short, precise and complete: mission accomplished. Our structural partners continue to offer this programme; for us, it is a proactive way of promoting them.



SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE... ?



The **Belgo-Chilean Chamber of Commerce** scaled up its communication efforts. We created a monthly newsletter and a modern and more user-friendly website, and we implemented an all-in-one CRM platform that helps us build and grow the community through events and memberships, and other digital tools.



**2893**

vragen omtrent corona werden beantwoord

**3887**

individuele bedrijfsdossiers werden behandeld

**225**

on- en offline netwerkactiviteiten werden georganiseerd

**16061**

ondernemers en medewerkers namen deel aan netwerkactiviteiten

**518**

on- en offline opleidingen werden georganiseerd voor ondernemers en medewerkers

**8250**

ondernemers en medewerkers namen deel aan opleidingen



After setting up a digital platform and a single e-mail address for all COVID information, accessible to members and non-members, **CCI Wallonie Picarde** wanted to end the year on a positive note by offering an 'Advent calendar' to its members.

Each day, 2 '**good news vignettes**' helped close the year on a smile, with presentations of new members and gifts 'from our members to our members'.



**Beci - Chamber of Commerce of Brussels** decided, from the beginning of the crisis, to monitor the economic evolution of its region through regular survey among members, in cooperation with the National Bank of Belgium. The results led to support measures, both at federal and regional level. In addition, Beci has accelerated the digitalisation of all its processes, particularly in the context of the **Centre for Enterprises in Difficulty**, which has been able to provide concrete assistance to entrepreneurs in these difficult times.

From day 1 until today the **Benelux Chamber of Commerce in China (chapter Shanghai)** provided visa and travelling advice, community support, mental support and official information to its members.

We were the first among all European Chambers in Asia to organise a webinar on 12/02. We collaborated with the German Chamber for **charter flights** that have allowed Benelux residents to return to China where they work.



While intensifying the interactions with ambassadors from Central American countries for comments on the evolution of the economic and business environment and relevant projects for Belgian companies, **EURACEN** used the relatively calm period to prepare the **digital transformation process** of the Chamber.

This ensures a better, faster and more efficient communication both in terms of quantity and quality with all our stakeholders, especially with companies, entrepreneurs and decision makers on both sides of the Atlantic.



The president of the **Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Ireland** is now more regularly **contacting personally** each of our business and senior members to ensure they stay safe and keep well.

By organising online events with speakers from Ireland and Belgium on different topics, we were able to give something of value to our members.



Sustainability has evolved enormously and is rapidly becoming a basic prerequisite for business. Without a sustainability policy, a company will soon no longer seem relevant for customers, suppliers, staff or job-seekers.

Sustainable entrepreneurship has always been in the DNA of the Chambers of Commerce but is now more prominent than ever because businesses and society cannot afford to ignore it. As such, sustainability helps to proactively address risks and become more resilient against future challenges or **future proof**.

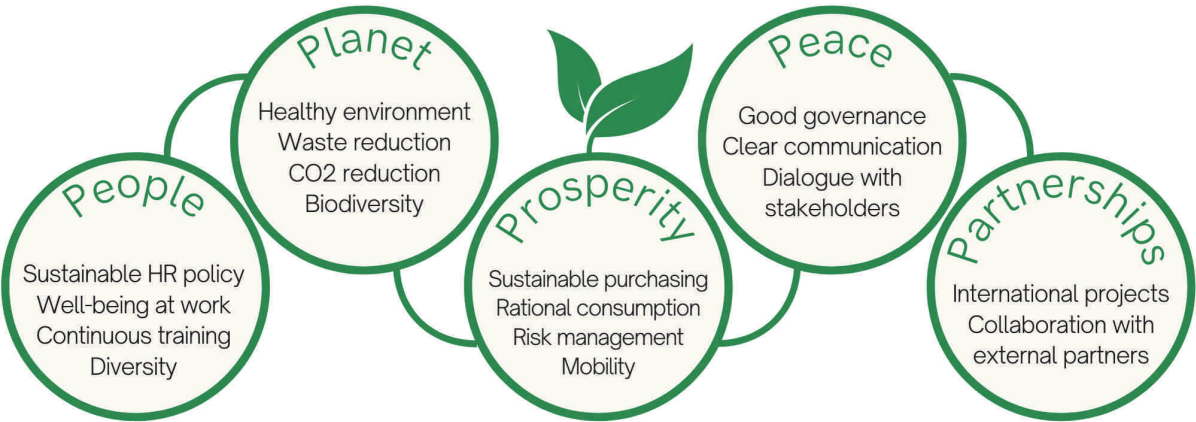
In the last year the Belgian Chambers' approach of sustainability has broadened and deepened. In the beginning, it was still called "Corporate Social Responsibility" or CSR.

From 2008 to 2014, the Chambers in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia (at the instigation of the Federation and the PPS Social Integration) developed and organized **Quadrant Learning Networks** bringing together business leaders to integrate CSR into company strategy and draw up an action plan. The starting point was the triple bottom line, finding a balance between the economic, social and ecological pillars.

With the ratification of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) in September 2015, the United Nations provided for the first time a universal framework and an Agenda 2030 on sustainable development based on 5 Ps (people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnerships).



To reach the SDGs, the contribution of the business community is of the utmost importance and within these pillars, there are several themes that are certainly relevant for business leaders. For the Belgian Chambers of Commerce, the SDGs upgrade their focus on sustainable business to a **whole new level**.



*"Sustainable development is no longer a luxury or a desire, it is an urgent necessity! Companies have understood that, and so have Chambers of Commerce. And even more so because this commitment can strengthen their position vis-à-vis their partners, customers and suppliers, because it is a matter of being irreproachable, proactive, innovative and committed to your objectives!"*

**BERNADETTE THÉNY**

**GENERAL MANAGER CCI LUXEMBOURG BELGE**







*"The economy of the future will be climate neutral, circular and socially inclusive. The Chambers of Commerce want to contribute to that transition."*

**PETER VAN BIESBROECK,**

**GENERAL MANAGER VOKA – CCI VLAAMS-BRABANT**

#### How do the Belgian Chambers encourage and support businesses in their efforts to become sustainable?

- via free first-line advice on sustainability topics such as the environment and climate, via information sessions and company visits and also via the organisation of learning trajectories and customised guidance. For example, a learning network on sustainable entrepreneurship (East Flanders Chamber), a Plato CSR trajectory (Antwerp-Waasland), or a training course on Resilience coaching (Beci)
- by offering specific tools such as the Voka SDG roadmap with an SDG brainstorm and the development of an action plan (Oost-Vlaanderen), a manual tool for setting up a stakeholder dialogue tailored to SMEs (Mechelen-Kempen) and a guide for organising sustainable events (Beci)
- through articles in the chamber magazines on sustainability topics with good practices from companies

#### What are the Chambers doing to become more sustainable themselves?

- The Flemish Chambers all participate in the VCDO and each developed its own action plan. In 2020, the Federation also decided to participate. It will implement an action plan in 2021
- The following pages contain a selection of SDG actions undertaken by the Chambers in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia. It is a wide range of actions that can certainly be a source of inspiration for others. These actions require a sustained effort and we want to thank all the Chambers.

With the **Voka Charter on Sustainable Entrepreneurship**, Voka has translated the sustainable development goals to the business context and offers a programme whereby companies contribute with an action plan to the realisation of the various SDGs.

After evaluation by an external evaluation committee, they can also be rewarded with an **SDG Pioneer certificate by Cifal Flanders**, recognized by the United Nations. CIFAL Flanders is part of the UNITAR training centres and is therefore an important partner for the Chambers.



In 2020, the Walloon Chambers launched their own programme "le certificat CCIW en développement durable" based on the VCDO. Their Flemish counterparts provide assistance during the launching phases.

But other European Chambers are equally interested in the VCDO. We therefore want to examine how the VCDO methodology can best be disseminated internationally via the European and international chamber networks. The Belgian-Luxembourg Chambers of Commerce abroad have a role to play too in placing sustainability on the agenda of our companies.



Chambers use the SDGs not only for drafting action plans, but also as a critical reflection framework for future-oriented business strategies and **sustainable business models**.

Circularity and transition are important catalysers to leverage the companies sustainability actions to achieve a SDG Champion level.. In doing so, they will have to be able to demonstrate that they have initiated a pilot project around transition and ideally around circular economy.



## CHAMBERS ACT ON SUSTAINABILITY



"We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment."



To reduce the digital gap and give everyone the chance to develop digital skills, **Chamber Limburg** formats PCs it no longer uses and donates them to social projects or schools in need of equipment.



At **CCI Limburg**, food surpluses are no longer thrown away. They are collected by the volunteers of Zonder Honger naar Bed, a charity organisation.



In order to help employees with their search for childcare during school vacations, Chamber **West-Vlaanderen** has set up the "Kennedy Kids" campaign, in which chamber employees and staff members of the neighboring intermunicipal company, Leiedal, volunteer to look after children. But family members and grandparents can also contribute. Game boxes can be purchased from Cokido, a community of after-school care providers,. Parents and children are very enthusiastic about this initiative, and it creates a nice dynamic within the Chamber. This project was chosen as an innovative practice by the Institute for Equality between Men and Women.

CCI **Wallonie Picarde** encourages healthy eating among its staff through the purchase of a soup machine and a weekly delivery of fruit.



In close collaboration with industrial companies, CCI **Antwerpen-Waasland** helps secondary schools to professionalise their STEM training and support by obtaining a European quality label "STEM School Label" to solve the shortage of technical and scientific profiles on the labour market. In compact working groups, schools and companies then work together to improve these issues. After this project, schools and companies remain structural partners so that their STEM curricula can match with the latest insights from the industry.





CCI **Oost-Vlaanderen** is committed to increasing diversity in its statutory bodies. Between 2019 and 2020, the percentage of women in the Chamber's Board of Directors increased from 18% to 30% and in the Management Committee from 5% to 35%.

Women entrepreneurs and executives face their own challenges including work-life balance, the glass ceiling and insufficient access to funding. The Chambers **Mechelen-Kempen**, **West Vlaanderen** and **Luxembourg belge** offer them a tailor-made coaching program where they can exchange experiences, learn from each other and be inspired.

Together with some of its larger members, the **Antwerpen-Waasland** Chamber launched a diversity charter under the heading "Entrepreneurs choose colour", in which they commit to concrete actions to attract more diversity in a broad sense of the word: cultural, ethnic, but also in terms of sexual orientation and gender balance. The charter has now been signed by more than 60 company managers. A first commitment is that they themselves follow a training on diversity culture.



## Planet

"We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations."



CCI **West-Vlaanderen** and De Blauwe Cluster prepared a white paper showing their vision of a possible resilience strategy to be developed by the Flemish government. This strategy should offer an answer to the major current social challenges and transformations. They focused on additional investments in water-related infrastructure, the blue economy and the maritime sector.



For the Chambers, the organization of events and training is an important lever for sustainable consumption and production.

- **CCI Brabant wallon** and **CCI Hainaut** work with local suppliers during their events.
- **Chamber Mechelen-Kempen** is developing a sustainable purchasing policy for catering at events and training courses, because this is where their ecological footprint is the largest. In its sustainable purchasing policy charter, the Chamber is committed, together with its suppliers, to minimize and continually improve the environmental, economic and social impact of its catering at events and training courses. It also commits to sustainable (zero) waste management for all its activities. Reducing waste and environmental impact simultaneously means reducing costs and emphasizes the environmentally friendly and innovative image of the Chamber. The Chamber is also making a clear statement:

"The ultimate challenge is to become by 2025 the benchmark for 100% zero waste, carbon neutral, fully circular, animal and human friendly, ... events and training."



With the carbon footprint tool of CCI **Vlaams-Brabant**, companies can calculate how much greenhouse gas they emit, draw up an action plan and monitor their emissions. But the Chamber also started using the tool itself. Since 2018, the Chamber has been making a biennial calculation including the emissions of activities that take place outside the Chamber's premises but are carried out on behalf of the Chamber. For example, the emissions caused by printing and recycling brochures that the Chamber sends to its members. Transport and raw materials had the biggest impact on the carbon footprint, and in its action plan, the Chamber therefore focuses specifically on these sources of pollution.

By signing the 303030 charter initiated by **Beci**, the City Climate Challenge partners commit to sharing their resources, know-how, advice and innovations to reduce the Brussels-Capital Region's carbon emissions by at least 30% by 2030. They aim to have a real concrete, measurable and objective impact on Brussels' CO2 emissions. Together they are setting up various cooperation projects on energy, waste management, mobility, buildings..... The ultimate ambition is for Brussels to become climate neutral by 2050.



In the combat against ocean pollution, several chambers are restricting the use of microplastics by purchasing reusable drinking bottles, glass water bottles and installing water fountains to provide filtered tap water.



Chambers contribute to guaranteeing and increasing biodiversity in their immediate surroundings and their members'. When renovating its building, the Chamber **Limburg** paid attention to biodiversity in the patio and the roof terraces by installing a green roof and a beehive.

CCI **Vlaams-Brabant** organised a free webinar for companies focussing on biodiversity on industrial sites, with 21 external participants.



## prosperity

"We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature."

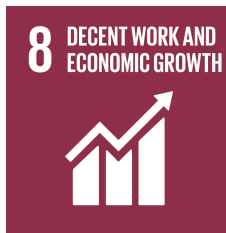


CCI **Hainaut** is renovating the roof of its building in Charleroi to save energy.

The environment and energy department of CCI **Luxembourg belge** has regular meetings with the sustainable development department of the Province, which is located in the same building. This reduced energy costs significantly

In order to reduce electricity consumption, **Oost-Vlaanderen** installed motion sensors on its ground floor.

Chamber **Antwerpen-Waasland** has switched to LED and buys green electricity.



Chamber **IHK Eupen-Malmedy-St. Vith** is actively involved in the training and integration of low-skilled youth and participates in the steering committee of several projects. The Chamber is also a member of the board of directors of the *Dienststelle für Selbstbestimmtes Leben – Office pour une vie autodéterminée* (Agency for self-determination) where persons with disabilities or in need of assistance are assisted to participate fully in society. As co-manager of the employment agency of the German-speaking Community, the Chamber also promotes the integration of job-seekers into the labour market.

In order to increase employee involvement and to evaluate their psychosocial wellbeing, Chamber **Mechelen-Kempen** conducted a survey of Chamber staff via the online tool Wellfie. Based on these results, the Chamber defined an action plan that focuses on an individual competence matrix, values, connectedness and health.



In its Master Plan 2.0, **CCI Limburg** will start with a fundamental and sustainable renovation of its building, using various sustainable techniques in the areas of water management, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and cooling, lighting and electrical systems. Materials will be reused to manufacture furniture and in rooms that will be refurbished. Attention is also paid to 'the new way of working' with different spaces created according to the employees' needs for concentration, communication, teamwork and breaks, to promote well-being.

In its new office in Aalst, **CCI Oost-Vlaanderen** commits to sustainability by installing a heat pump, charging stations and a sustainable office infrastructure.

The digitalization of services will continue and become part of "the new normal." Several Chambers will therefore make smart use of physical (at the Chamber or on site), blended, hybrid and digital forms of training so that companies and their employees can choose that formula that best suits them.

**Beci** organizes individual coaching through "resilience coaching" that allows companies to identify opportunities by integrating sustainability and circularity into their activities through sustainable concepts such as crowdsourcing, co-creation and biomimicry.



Chambers support entrepreneurial organizations (Chambers) in less privileged countries by sharing their expertise:

- The **Walloon Chambers** participate in Archipelago, a European project that focuses on job creation in West and Central Africa through dual learning and the strengthening of local business organisations. In collaboration with APEFE (Association pour la Promotion de l'Education et de la Formation à l'Etranger) and a number of local chambers of commerce, a training course in dual learning - professional integration is being set up in four regions of Senegal. The Walloon Chambers are developing entrepreneurship training and helping to implement new services for young businesses and potential entrepreneurs.
- **Voka** collaborates with Entrepreneurs for Entrepreneurs and Exchange. Chamber employees work as volunteers on business projects in Africa. An employee of the Chamber of Commerce **Mechelen-Kempen**, for example, participated in a project to support start-ups in Rwanda by preparing them for an investment pitch. An employee of CCI **Oost-Vlaanderen** went to Malawi for Exchange to carry out a feasibility study for a dairy company. Not only the Chamber encouraged this initiative but various East Flemish entrepreneurs are also assisting the company with advice and assistance.

Some Chambers focus on the integration of migrants into the Belgian labor market. For example, Chamber **West Vlaanderen** is involved in two projects: Jobroad, a project to help migrants find work faster and more efficiently, and Palim, a European pilot project around testing an innovative integration model.



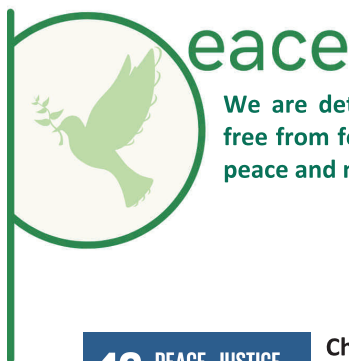


**Chambers Antwerpen-Waasland, Eupen-Malmedy-St.Vith, Liège-Verviers-Namur and Hainaut** collected funds, medical and protective equipment for hospitals through their members to support them during the covid crisis.

The Chambers' actions in the field of sustainable mobility are widespread and varied:

- **Beci** set up a pop-up mobility store in its building, an experimental exhibition space to test mobility alternatives offered to Brussels-based companies. During six months, visitors could discover and test a wide range of innovative mobility products and services, ranging from intelligent parking management, shared mobility, intelligent data management, navigation, micro-mobility, to urban logistics, charging points and drones.
- **CCI Liège-Verviers-Namur** carried out a mobility scan for every employee and is gradually switching to hybrid or electric cars in its fleet. It also installed electric charging stations available for both employees and customers.
- **CCI Luxembourg belge** purchased electric bicycles.
- **CCI Limburg** investigated the possibility of a bicycle leasing system.

CCI **Liège-Verviers-Namur** took part in the "Défi Mobilité des Entreprises" organised by UWE, with actions to raise awareness and promote alternative mobility. The Chamber also encouraged other building tenants to take part. And the Chamber came in 3rd out of 50 participating companies.



**We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.**



**Chamber Vlaams-Brabant** published its second sustainability report with its own initiatives and those of its members, using SDGs as a compass. All actions offer a sample of concrete measures and show the importance of a thorough sustainability policy. The Chamber hopes that it will also inspire other Chambers and businesses to take action themselves.



**"We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people."**



Collaborating with other organisations and entering into partnerships is in the DNA of the Chambers at the local, regional, national and international levels. They join forces with other stakeholders (governments, business organisations, partners) to strengthen entrepreneurship and the services provided by Chambers in a sustainable manner.



# EXPORT FORMALITIES

## CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN

Rules of origin determine the "nationality" of a product. The country where the product was wholly obtained or underwent its last substantial processing or reprocessing determines the origin. The concept may seem simple at first glance, but global production and supply chains often make it complex to determine the correct origin.

**401.689**

*Certificates of origin issued in 2020 by 13 Belgian Chambers of Commerce, a decrease of 1.7% compared to 2019.*

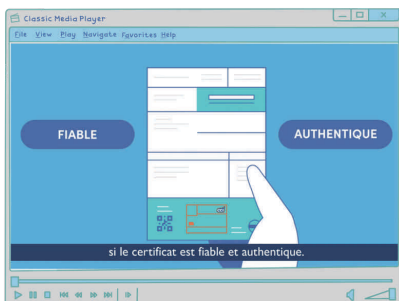
**94.8%**

*Of the COs were issued online via the DigiChambers website.*

The Belgian Chambers of Commerce issue non-preferential certificates of origin on behalf and under the supervision of the FPS Economy. These certificates can be requested by foreign customs authorities or within the framework of documentary credits.

### DIGICHAMBERS 2.0

The preparations took a lot of time, but the result is extremely satisfying. The new version of DigiChambers, DC2 which was launched on February 3, 2020, is more user-friendly and visually appealing. It also offers more possibilities for integration with users' ERP systems via an API. A video was also produced to highlight the advantages of DC2: for users, but also for customs authorities abroad who want to verify Belgian certificates of origin.



### PARTNERSHIP WITH FPS ECONOMY

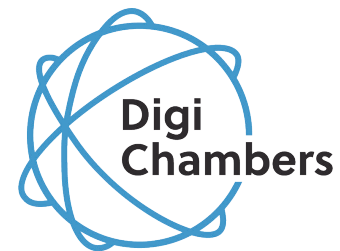
Under the heading "Strengthening the competitiveness of Belgian companies in the global economy: creating the conditions for a competitive, sustainable and balanced functioning of the goods and services market in Belgium", the Federation and the FPS Economy have been working together for more than 20 years to improve the international competitiveness of Belgian companies. From looking for further simplifications in the process of issuing certificates of origin to informing companies about the

benefits of the recent EU-Vietnam free trade agreement, from raising trade barriers in third countries to representing the interests of Belgian exporters in the Brexit negotiations, the FPS Economy and the Chambers of Commerce consider of the utmost importance that Belgian companies are well informed and thoroughly prepared.



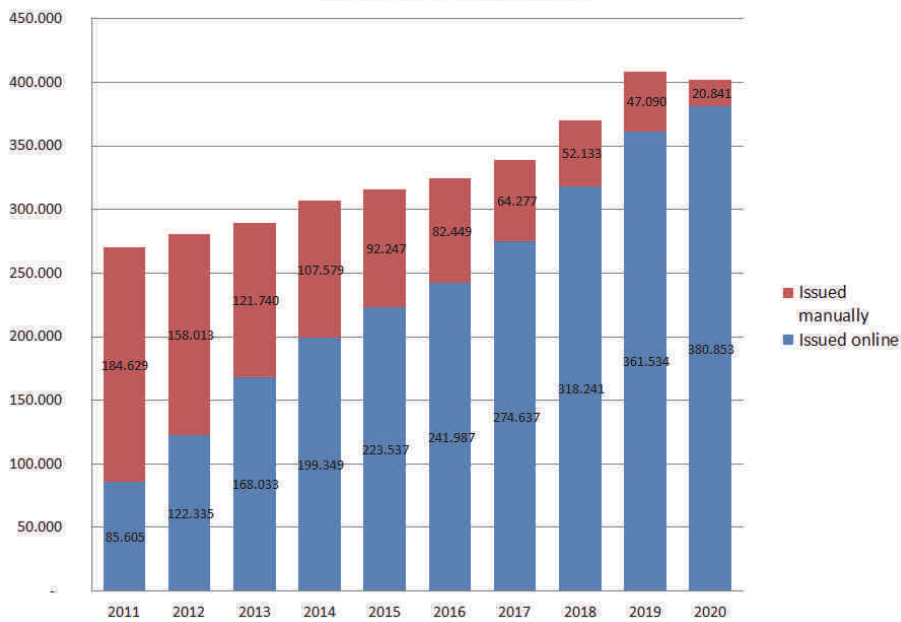
## DIGITALIZATION

Digital issuance advanced rapidly in 2020. From 88.4% in December 2019, it nearly reached 97% in December 2020. There was an initial jump with the launch of DC2, followed fairly quickly by a second jump due to measures taken against covid-19. The ambition remains to achieve 100% digitization, a target some chambers reached in the past months. More than half of the chambers reach steadily at a digitization rate of 99% and above.



your certificate of origin online

Certificates of origin issued



Issuing certificates of origin is not a formality. It is subject to strict rules. Thanks to compulsory regular training of chamber employees and an annual audit of each chamber, the Federation and the FPS Economy ensure that the issuing process is carried out correctly.

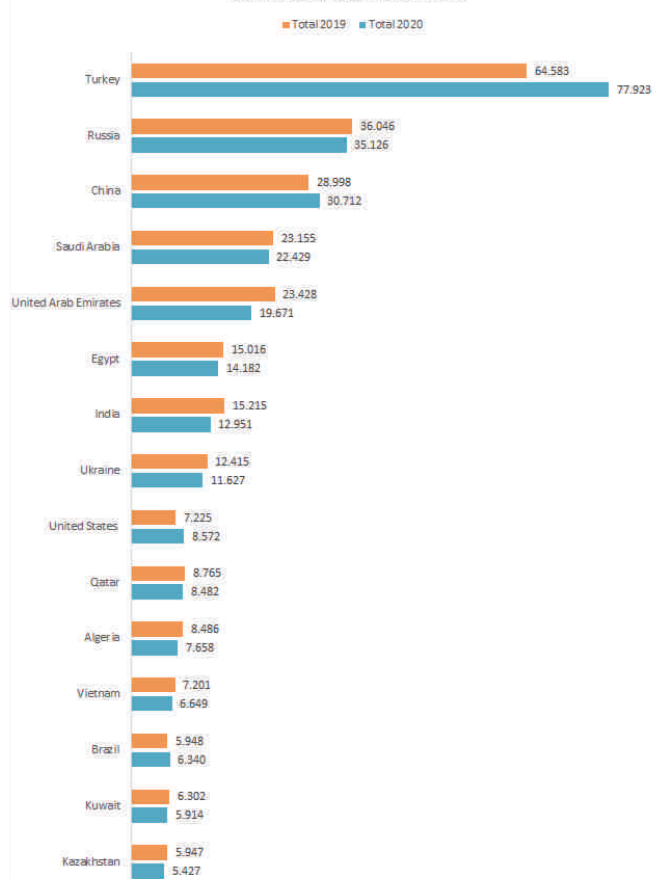
## MAIN DESTINATIONS

The top three destination countries for certificates of origin in 2020, as in previous years, were Turkey, Russia and China. They accounted for 19%, 9% and 8% of all COs issued, respectively.

Despite the overall decline in COs, the issuance for four countries in the top 20 was still higher than in 2019: Turkey (+21%), China (+6%), the United States (+19%) and Brazil (+7%). The strong growth for the United States has been going on for several years, and in 2020 the country was among the top 10 destinations for the first time.

However, when interpreting the figures, we need to underline the fact that the number of COs issued for a particular country does not necessarily equate a proportional growth or decline in trade with that country. Other factors, such as the impact of trade policy measures also come into play and in some cases have a higher impact.

Countries of destination 2020





## ATA-CARNETS

**€ 73.202**

*Import duties, VAT, and penalties paid by the Federation on ATA carnets*

**454**

*claims on ATA carnets handled by the Federation (including 346 new disputes)*



**Passport for goods**

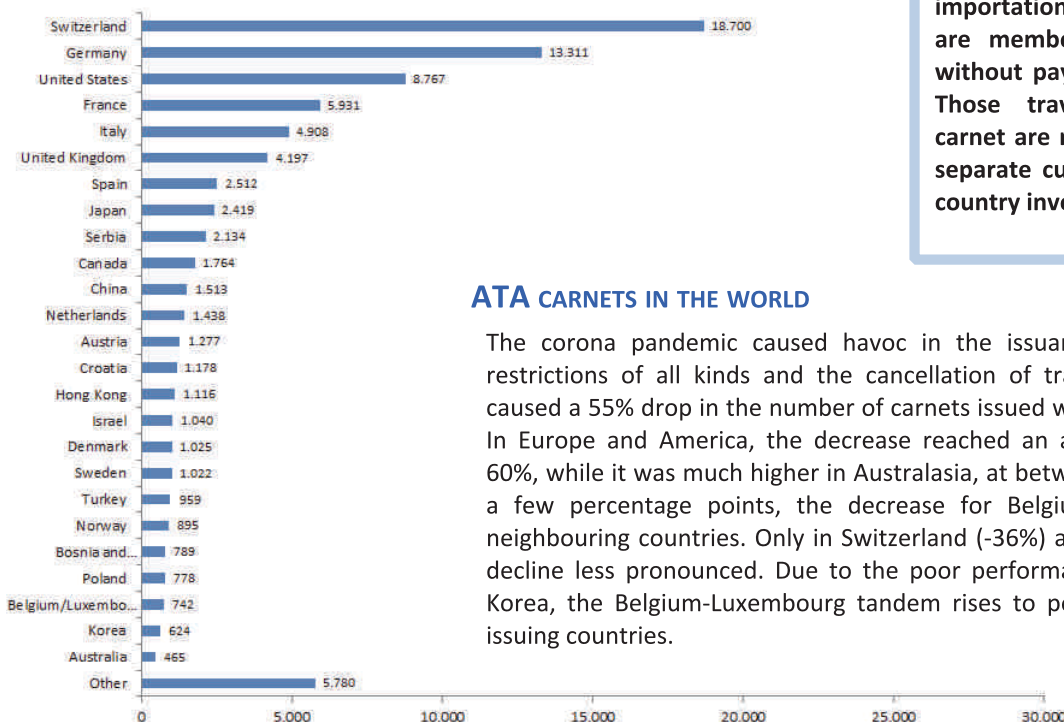
**€ 49 MILLION**

*Value of the goods covered by delivered ATA carnets (-55% compared to 2019)*

**741**

*carnets delivered by the Belgian and Luxembourg Chambers of Commerce (-57% compared to 2019)*

**Total number of ATA carnets issued worldwide (2020)**



The ATA carnet system was created to simplify temporary imports at an international level. The carnets enable fast and smooth temporary importation into the 78 countries that are members of the ATA network, without payment of duties and taxes. Those traveling without an ATA carnet are required to go through the separate customs procedures of each country involved.

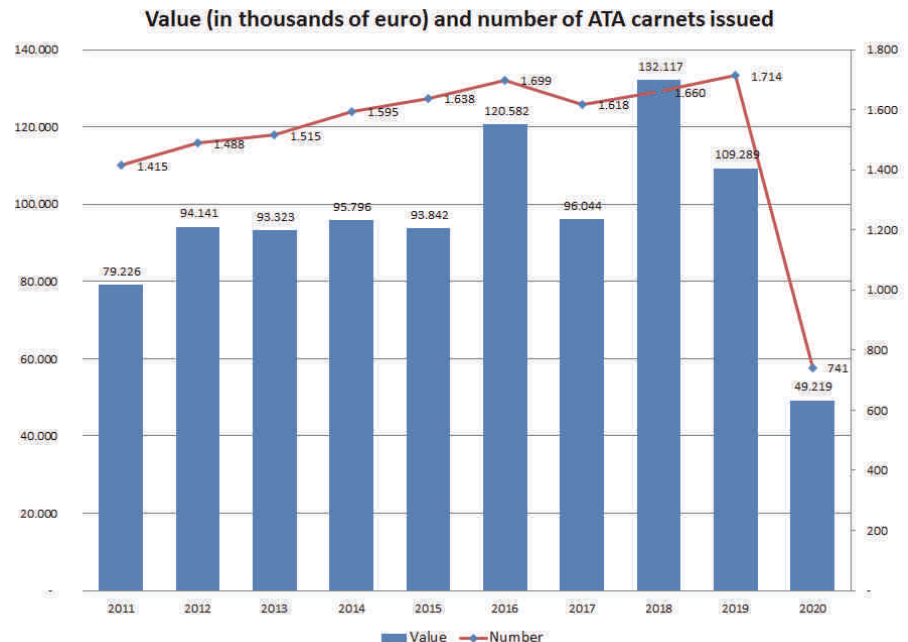
### ATA CARNETS IN THE WORLD

The corona pandemic caused havoc in the issuance of ATA carnets. Travel restrictions of all kinds and the cancellation of trade fairs and major events caused a 55% drop in the number of carnets issued worldwide compared to 2019. In Europe and America, the decrease reached an average of between 50 and 60%, while it was much higher in Australasia, at between 70 and 85%. Except for a few percentage points, the decrease for Belgium is the same as in our neighbouring countries. Only in Switzerland (-36%) and Germany (-48%) was the decline less pronounced. Due to the poor performance of Australia and South Korea, the Belgium-Luxembourg tandem rises to position 23 in the ranking of issuing countries.





An ATA carnet is valid for up to one year and can be used for multiple travels. Carnets can be used by companies traveling with professional equipment as part of a foreign project, by companies wishing to show trade samples or prototypes to their customers or by exporters participating in a trade fair or exhibition.



## ATA CLAIMS

The Federation is the national guaranteeing organization for ATA carnets in Belgium and Luxembourg. It guarantees to the Belgian and Luxembourg customs authorities all foreign carnets entering the territory of the BLEU. It guarantees to the foreign customs authorities all ATA Carnets issued in Belgium and Luxembourg.

Claims handled by the Federation	Opened by BE/LUX customs on foreign carnets	Opened by foreign customs on BE/LUX carnets
New claims	231	115
Import duties, VAT and fines paid	€ 48.584	€ 24.618

To issue ATA carnets, we invested eight years ago in an online application used by the clients, the chambers and the Federation. Until recently, the management of claims still ran on a stand-alone application, but in 2020 a switch was made to a Swiss online system that allows for an easier exchange of documents between the Federation, chambers in Belgium and the foreign guaranteeing associations. Switzerland issues the most carnets worldwide and therefore has a great deal of experience in handling disputes.





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### FEDERATION OF BELGIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

**President:** M. René BRANDERS

**Honorary President :** Dhr. John STOOP

**General Manager:** Dhr. Wouter VAN GULCK

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Johann LETEN - Gedelegeerd Bestuurder Voka - KvK Limburg

Philippe BARRAS - Président des Chambres de Commerce & d'Industrie de Wallonie

Olivier WILLOCX - Administrateur délégué Beci - CCI Bruxelles

### BOARD MEMBERS

#### Chambers of commerce in Belgium

Patrice BAKEROOT - Directeur Alliantie - Voka vzw

Bernard CORNELUS - Directeur CCI Wallonie Picarde

Theo DE BEIR - Bestuurder Beci - CCI Bruxelles

Joëlle EVENEPOEL - Secrétaire Générale Beci - CCI Bruxelles

Volker KLINGES - Directeur IHK Eupen-Malmedy-St. Vith

Tom LAVEREN - Algemeen directeur Voka - KvK Mechelen-Kempen

Luc LUWEL - Gedelegeerd Bestuurder Voka - KvK Antwerpen-Waasland

Geert MOERMAN - Gedelegeerd Bestuurder Voka - KvK Oost-Vlaanderen

Bert MONS - Algemeen Directeur Voka - KvK West-Vlaanderen

Benoit MOONS - Directeur CCI Hainaut

Christophe NAA - Directeur CCI Liège-Verviers-Namur

Céline SQUELART - Directrice CCI Brabant wallon

Bernadette THÉNY - Directrice Générale CCI Luxembourg belge

Peter VAN BIESBROECK - Algemeen directeur Voka - KvK Vlaams-Brabant

Eric VAN IMSCHOOT - Administratief directeur Voka - KvK Antwerpen-Waasland

#### Belgian-Luxembourg Chambers of commerce abroad

Levent APAYDIN - President Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Turkey

Guy BULTYNCK - President Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture Belgium-Luxembourg-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific

Patricia DE BACKER - Directeur French-Belgian Chamber of Commerce in North of France

Sonia DEVERGNIES - Project Manager & Head of Communication Arab-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce

Bernard DEWIT - President Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce

Maximilien LEMAIRE - Président d'honneur Chambre de Commerce Belge et Luxembourgeoise de Côte d'Ivoire

Marc VAN AUDEKERKE - Director Debelux Keulen German-Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce (Cologne office)

Koen VANVINCKENROYE - President Belgian Luxembourg Romanian Moldovan Chamber of Commerce

Luc WAEGHE - Vice President Chamber of Commerce Europe-Central America

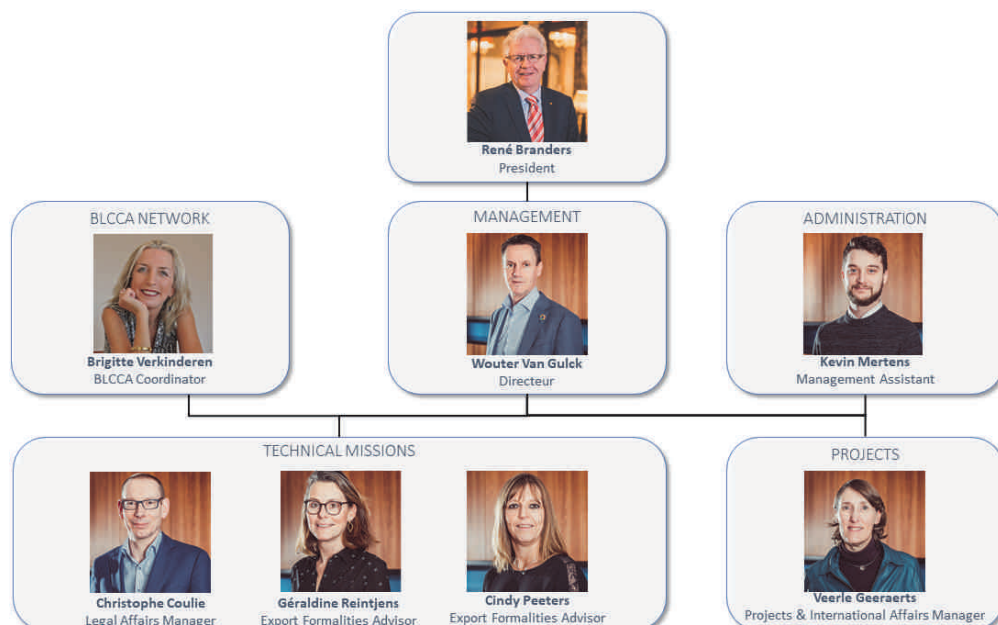
## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CCI | KVK)

Name	Chamber of commerce	Role
René Branders	Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce	Président
Johann Leten	Voka - Kvk Limburg	Gedelegeerd bestuurder
Luc Luwel	Voka - KvK Antwerpen-Waasland	Gedelegeerd bestuurder
Céline Squéart	CCI Brabant wallon	Directrice
Philippe Barras	CCI Wallonie	Président
Peter Van Biesbroeck	Voka - KvK Vlaams-Brabant	Algemeen Directeur
Olivier Willocx	Beci - CCI de Bruxelles	Administrateur délégué

## STEERING COMMITTEE (BLCCA)

Name	Chamber of commerce	Role
René Branders	Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce	Président
Patricia De Backer	French-Belgian Chamber of Commerce in North of France	Directeur
Sonia Devergnies	Arab-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce	Head of Communication
Bernard Dewit	Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce	President
Jacques Glorieux	Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce	Vice President
Maximilien Lemaire	Chambre de Commerce Belge et Luxembourgeoise de Côte d'Ivoire	Président d'honneur
Cindy Tereba	Chambre de commerce de Luxembourg	Director International Affairs
Paul Scheynen	Pakistan-Belgium-Luxembourg Business Forum	Représentant en Belgique
Marc Van Audekerke	German-Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce	Director
Petra van Bouwelen	Voka - KvK Mechelen-Kempen	Manager Int. Business
Koen Vanvinckenroye	Belgian Luxembourg Romanian Moldovan Chamber of Commerce	President
Dominique Verleye	CCI Brabant wallon	Int. Relations Manager
Olivier Willocx	Beci - CCI de Bruxelles	Administrateur délégué

## FEDERATION TEAM 2021



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