

## **An interview with Mrs. Fabienne L'HOOST, Director General of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA)**

### **Can you provide an overview of the key outcomes from the economic missions in 2024?**

The economic mission to Norway, held from June 16th to 19th, was a notable success. Led by HRH Princess Astrid, the delegation consisted of 450 participants from various sectors, including renewable energy, life sciences, and the circular economy. This mission was instrumental in forging new partnerships and resulted in the signing of 18 agreements. These accords underscore the mutual interest and potential for cooperation between Belgium and Norway, particularly in areas like the blue economy and sustainable technologies.



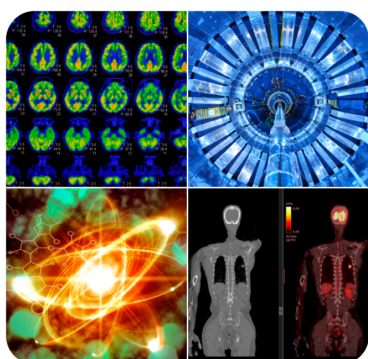
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The most recent mission to Brazil, which took place from November 22nd to December 1st, was aligned with Belgium's strategic focus on fostering international collaboration in high-potential sectors. The mission emphasized renewable energy, agriculture, and transport/infrastructure—areas where Belgium's expertise significantly contributed to and benefited from Brazil's dynamic market. By leveraging these sectors, we strengthened our economic ties and explored new avenues for growth and innovation. Over 300 participants registered for this mission, illustrating the important Belgian presence and interest in Brazil.

### **How has Belgium's trade landscape evolved in recent years, particularly in light of global economic trends?**

The global economic landscape has seen considerable shifts, and Belgium has adeptly navigated

these changes. Despite a general slowdown in global merchandise trade, as reflected in a 1.2% decline in 2023, Belgium's trade performance has remained robust. Our country continues to be a major player in international markets, ranking 12th in exports and 14th in imports. This resilience is a testament to the strength and adaptability of Belgian businesses and their ability to maintain high levels of trade activity even in challenging times. For those interested in a more detailed analysis, the full report on *World trade* and *Belgium trade* can be accessed on our website.



BELGIAN  
**NUCLEAR MEDICINE**



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### **Could you highlight a specific sector where Belgium's innovation is making a global impact?**

Belgium has made remarkable strides in the field of nuclear medicine, positioning itself as a global leader. Our nation's unique infrastructure, including the Belgian Reactor BR2, plays a crucial role in producing medical radioisotopes, which are indispensable for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures worldwide. Moreover, the innovation and expertise demonstrated by Belgian companies and research institutions in this sector significantly contribute to the advancement of global healthcare solutions.

For those interested in an in-depth analysis, the sectoral publication on nuclear medicine, detailing the major players and federations, is available on our website. Additionally, recognizing the increasing importance of defence in the current global context, we are preparing a comprehensive sectoral publication on Belgian Defence. This publication will provide insights into the industry's key stakeholders and emerging trends and will be available by the time this article is published.

### **What are the future plans for Belgian economic missions?**

Looking ahead, we have set our sights on two prominent economic missions for 2025. In the spring, we plan to explore opportunities in India, a market known for its rapid growth in sectors such as clean tech, life sciences, and defence. Later in the year, our focus will shift to the West Coast of the United States, particularly San Francisco and Los Angeles. These missions, also led by HRH Princess Astrid, aim to bolster Belgium's presence in these key regions and foster partnerships that align with our strategic interests in technology, innovation, and sustainable development.