

# BELGIAN LUXEMBOURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN TURKEY

NEWSLETTER



**Belgian-Luxembourg  
Chamber of Commerce  
in Turkey**

**Türk Belçika Lüksemburg  
Ticaret Derneği**

• INTERVIEW.....	2
• BLCCT EVENTS.....	3
• WEBINARS.....	4
• NEW SERVICE.....	5
• NEW MEMBERS.....	6
• MEMBER VISIT.....	6
• NEWS   COVID-19 UPDATES .....	7-8
• NEWS   GENDER EQUALITY IN BELGIUM.....	9
• NEWS .....	10
• UPCOMING EVENTS.....	11

# INTERVIEW

**Mr. Haegen, to get to know you better can you please inform us about your background? Where did you grow up, what did you study in college?**

Basically, I grew up very close to Ghent, in a village called Merelbeke. I studied in Flemish – Dutch at the named College van Melle who was very near to our place where we lived. At mid age I left for a French speaking school called College de Godinne. Afterwards, in order to finish my school degree, I went through a special school management system called le Grand Jury. Mainly this system able you to study your last 3 'standard school years' in 1 year and to reach University. University that I started at Louvain-La-Neuve, in French with some up and downs. And actually, I started my 1st company at 21, without a final University degree.

**It's stated in your biography that you have been working at BTMCo for a long time. Can you please tell us about your journey as the founder and the managing director of the company?**

After I sold my Belgian company & a full year trip in Africa, my wife & myself took the decision to live in Turkey and see what we could achieve, so BTM has been created in April 2006. The aim of BTM was at that time to distribute European products to the Turkish Shipbuilding Industry. The market was going well, we were successful as a new small company keeping in mind that it was a single person company, means without much needs as well as the fact that I had to learn the core business and the language. But again, soon after, new opportunities show-up through actually the 2008 World crises. Instead of leaving or closing the company as many did in our Industry, BTM remained, showed it will to be there and become a real player in the future. So new dealerships could be settled with European brands as well as US & Asian but the main fact is that BTM reputation grow due to its constant presence. Today we have in Turkey several activities, from dealerships & sales to technical service & spare parts, pipe & fittings as well as grinding & painting facilities & onboard installation teams. We have also expanded internationally with offices in Spain & Morocco and finally we have opened our own Workboat Shipyard.

**Can you give us your overall thoughts on the Turkish Shipbuilding Industry as a Belgian & Turkish entrepreneur?**

The Turkish Shipbuilding Industry became in about 10 years' time a European leader. It has increased their capacities not only in the numbers of yearly build vessels but mainly in their capacity to build very high technological vessels. Therefore, I'm not really concerned about the market evolution. Keeping in mind that the exchange parity keeps the workmanship costs quite low, means Turkey has attractive prices. People are hardworking and we saw during this Covid-19 pandemic that the yards were proceeding further & finally, the sea is the future. Fish farms are needed, wind farms are needed, islands are built and so on. All this keeps me confident in the market as well as Turkish builder role.

**How did BTMCo got affected by the Coronavirus and its impacts? What are your plans on compensating for your loss?**

First of all, we took strong measures for the office employees by closing the company and settle a remote working system. For the factories or onboard & onshore workers, several measures were taken as well such distances as well as additional buses that picks the workers to / from home. So yes, all this impacted indeed the company with as mean result the lockdown of sales & postponing of several projects. How to compensate? Being a world crisis, the possibilities are limited. There is no single market that can compensate another one. We took the resolution not to fire any of our employees within any of our companies in 2020 but had to reanalyze our priority investments. Some investments will be hold on, cash flow will be kept a reasonable level and probably in September we will update ourselves.

**SERGE VAN DER HAEGEN**

**BLCCT Member  
Founder & Managing  
Director of BTMCo Ltd.**



**Can you tell us about the future of BTMCo Ltd., are there any upcoming plans?**

Some re-adjustments have to be done due to the pandemic & economical crises. We still have plenty of projects & developments that we want to realize, all a matter of timing & to find the right persons. West-Africa development is something on which we had to make a hold-on and depending of the situation we hope to restart it in 1 or 2 years. We still would like to produce by our own some wooden vessels, such 24m Gulet, in order to manage them on the South Coast. Timing is not right at the moment but we already have the business plan ready. There are really plenty of possibilities national & international wise but probably the 2nd half of 2020 will be used to consolidate BTMCo administration structure. The timing is right for this.

**It seems that you enjoy experiencing around the world travelling. Can you tell us a bit about your journeys in India or Africa?**

I wish that everyone could travel as much as I could do during my teenager years & twenties. Traveling as a backpacker, open minded, able you to meet people, learn cultures, way of living, way of thinking, way of analyzing subjects that are similar from Europe to Asia or Middle East. I was 17 & 18 years old when I travelled for 1,5 years from Belgium to India, through Turkey – way how I learned Turkey, as well as South East Asia. Loving India, I went there several time, spend between 1 to 2 years over there. Amazing country, culture, history that needs time to be understood. Later, end my twenties I travelled with my to-be wife in Africa for a good year, totally different from Asia but unforgettable moments for sure. What I learned, especially at such a young age, is inexplicable, you need to live it. Even today I cannot explain the feeling-sensation & impact it had on me being teenager but for sure it affects me since then on my daily life. And I promised to my kids that once they finish school, if they want, what I hope, I'm ready to sponsor them a whole year travel.

# BLCCT EVENTS

## THE SECOND EDITION OF THE CEO BREAKFAST: ECONOMY TALKS SERIES

The CEO Breakfast: Economy Talks Series was held with the participation of our guest speaker Kerim Müderrisoğlu, CEO of Rebul Cosmetics on January 29th, 2020.



## INTERNATIONAL CHAMBERS WORKING LUNCHEON

The BLCCT Chairman of the Board Levent Apaydın has joined 'International Chambers Working Luncheon' at the Austrian Consulate, Istanbul on 14 February. Ambassador Mr. Christian Berger, Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey has given a brief presentation at the event.



## THE FIRST CHAMBER CORNER OF 2020

The first Chamber Corner Event of the year organized by International Chambers in Istanbul on 27th February at Radisson Blu Hotel, Şişli. Mr. Murat Yeşildere, Egon Zehnder Istanbul's senior partner attended the event as the guest speaker.



## BUSINESS LUNCHEON: HEDGING IN TURKEY

Business Luncheon entitled "Hedging in Turkey: Risk Management for Belgian and Luxembourg Companies and Investors" was held with the participation of our guest speaker Fabrizio Casaretto on 12 March.



# WEBINARS

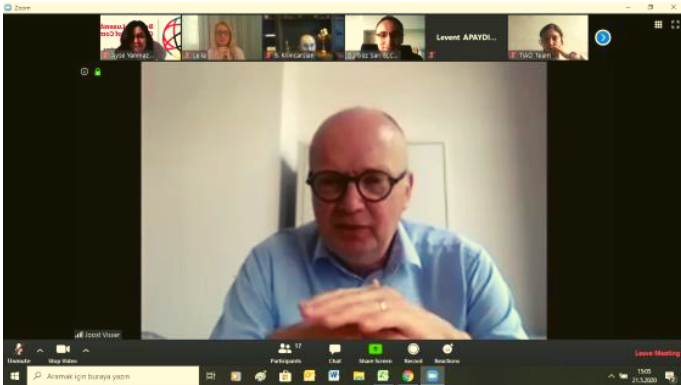
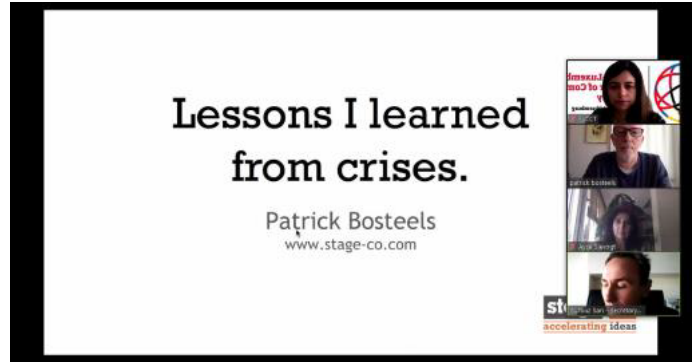


## ZOOM WEBINAR: PERSPECTIVE FOR PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AFTER COVID-19

Our first zoom webinar which issued the topic “Perspective for Pharmaceutical Industry after Covid-19” was held on April 15, 2020 via the Zoom platform. Our alternate member of Board and Group CEO of TFL Pharma Şerhan Şimşek attended the event as our guest speaker.

## WEBINAR: WHAT I LEARNED FROM PREVIOUS CRISES AND HOW TO CONTINUE

Our second webinar entitled “what I Learned from Previous Crises and How to Continue” was held with the participation of a BLCCT Board Member and Co-Founder of Stage-Co Patrick Bosteels on May 6, 2020.

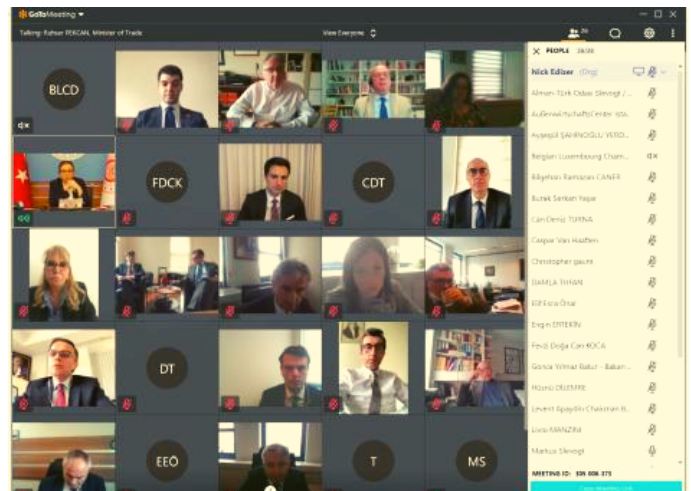


## CONNECTS WEBINAR: BEING SUCCESSFUL IN A POST-CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS WORLD

Connects Webinar titled “ Being Successful in a post-Coronavirus business world was held with the participation of CEO of the TIAO Mr. Joost Visser on May 21, 2020.

## EU BILATERAL CHAMBER PRESIDENTS VIDEO CONFERENCE WITH THE TURKISH MINISTER OF TRADE RUHSAR PEKCAN

The BLCCT Chairman of the Board Levent Apaydin has joined the EU Bilateral Chamber Presidents Conference on “Customs Union Upgrade”. Her excellency the Minister of Trade Ruhsar Pekcan has made a speech about the Covid-19 Crisis and the Turkey EU Customs Union Upgrade at the conference.





# **NEW SERVICE**

## **THE DIGITAL B2B MATCHMAKING PLATFORM: CONNECTS**

At Belgian – Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Turkey we work every day to help you develop your network and increase your visibility in the business world in Belgium, Luxembourg and Turkey.

We are proud to announce that we joined to CONNECTS, a business matchmaking platform supported by all chambers of commerce of Belgium and Luxembourg. We provide our members with a free access of CONNECTS for this year.

If you have more question about CONNECTS and would like to be on the Connects platform please contact us via [info@blcct.org](mailto:info@blcct.org).



**Connects can help your company to survive and leverage your business activities during and beyond the COVID 19 crisis by:**

- Helping SMEs to continue buying, selling and connecting
- Providing SMEs with a larger pool of trusted companies to do business with
- Helping SMEs reach out to Chambers for local knowledge and personal introductions

# NEW MEMBERS AND MEMBER VISIT

We are glad to announce that KA Research Limited and Portakalbahcem.com have become new corporate members of the BLCCT! We wish our new members a great success with a continued growth of our cooperation.



The BLCCT Secretary General H. Gürbüz Sarı and Vice-Chairman of the Board Tuğrul Şeremet paid a courtesy visit to the General Manager Turkey of Barry Callebaut and a member of our Chamber of Commerce Neslihan Nigiz Ulak, and had a mutual exchange of opinions about potential future projects and collaboration.

# NEWS

## COVID-19 UPDATES

THE NORMALIZATION PERIOD | TURKEY 

- The usage of the mobil application developed by the Ministry is recommended strictly to the people. The application provides people with the information on the level of coronavirus risk regarding their instant locations. It reached 5 million 600 thousand users in its first day of launch.
- Tourism, one of the vital sectors in Turkey, has been affected by the coronavirus severely. To prevent any further damage, Turkey decided to slowly and cautiously start the vacation season for both domestic and foreign tourists. Hotels will open up their gates if they receive the appropriate certificate from the Tourism, Health, Transport, and Agriculture ministries. According to the certificate system, Hotel rooms will be left empty for 12 hours, there'll be quarantine areas in hotels and the hotels will be given a maximum occupancy permit of 60%.
- Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Interior decided on requirements for the opening of shops as of May 11 for textile, clothing and marketplaces.
- Gradual normalization of all hospitals starting from June 1 and admission of regular patients.
- Weekend curfew restrictions will be lifted as from June 1.
- Universities will return to their normal academic calendar as of June 15.
- The upcoming academic year will start early, on August 24 to compensate for the lost time of previous educational period.

# NEWS

## COVID-19 UPDATES

### THE NORMALIZATION PERIOD | BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG

#### BELGIUM

- Belgium entered the second phase of pandemic period by reopening the economy with the start of June. Within the scope of normalization process, hairdressers have reopened their businesses, and museums, zoos, and libraries accepted visitors for the first time since the federal government imposed strict restrictions on social life.

- Businesses in the non-food sector have also started serving again. However, new visitor rates of these businesses are not very cheering. "In the first two weeks of reopening, the number of people visiting stores has been 40% lower than usual," Comeos CEO Dominique Michel stated. Especially the stores located in malls encountered harsher turnover rates, some up to 70%.

- The food sector has also been hit hard by the coronavirus. The cafés were closed on March 14 and some are not expecting to reopen up soon either. The new rules for reopening requires rearranging café interiors to allow for proper distancing and many more. For this reason the federation fears that plenty of bars and restaurants will be unable to meet the required criteria and will decide not to reopen.

- As of 1 July Belgium will lift the travel restrictions on 15 countries.

- Brussels public transport system launched a contactless payment system to prevent the usage of metro cards.

#### LUXEMBOURG

- Like other countries, Luxembourg has also entered the stage of normalization. Within this framework, restaurants, cafés, gyms and bars will re-open; primary schools will restart.

- Prime Minister Xavier Bettel announced on May 25 that businesses in the hospitality sector could reopen from Friday, 29 May.

- National statistics service Statec announced that in the first trimester of 2020, Luxembourg's gross domestic product decreased by 0.2% compared to the same period last year. When contrasted with the previous trimester, it slumps by 2.9%. Also it's stated that due to the pandemic 1 billion euro has been decayed from the social security funds.



# NEWS

## GENDER EQUALITY IN BELGIUM

The Global Gender Gap 2020 Report states that 30.7 percent of companies' board of directors are women in Belgium. While this ratio is still well below 50 percent, it's among the highest rankings, with over 1/3 ratio, when compared to the other countries.

According to the Gender Equality Index reported in 2019, with 71.1 out of 100 points, Belgium ranks 8th in the EU.

### Belgium's scores in different domains:

#### Work

Belgium's score in the domain of work is 74.1, showing progress of 3.1 points since 2005 (+ 0.3 points since 2015). The gender gap in the sub-domain of participation decreased.

#### Money

Belgium's score in the domain of money is 88.3, showing progress of 7.0 points since 2005 (+ 0.8 points since 2015), with improvements in the economic and financial situations of women and men.

#### Knowledge

Belgium's score in the domain of knowledge is 71.3, a 3.2-point increase since 2005 (+ 0.2 points since 2015). Belgium moved one position forward, to rank third in the EU in the domain of knowledge. There are improvements in both attainment and participation, and segregation.

#### Power

Belgium's score in the domain of power is 55.2, with an increase of 15.4 points since 2005 (+ 1.8 points since 2015). Belgium introduced a legislative quota for 33 % of women on company boards, which supported a rise in the share of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies from 6 % to 31 %.

#### Health

Belgium's score in the domain of health is 86.3, with no change since 2005. Self-perceptions of good health slightly increased from 70 % to 71 % for women and from 76 % to 78 % for men between 2005 and 2017.

#### Violence

Belgium signed and ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in March 2016.

# NEWS



## BELGIUM AT FOREFRONT ON 'SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENTS'

Febelfin, the Belgian financial sector federation, announces that The Belgian 'Towards Sustainability' label for sustainable and socially responsible financial products is the most comprehensive in terms of product offers, with 410 investment, insurance and savings products.

More than 175 billion are managed accordingly with the 'Towards Sustainability' quality standard in total, out of which more than 50 billion euros come from Belgian individual savers and investors.



## LUXEMBOURG MADE HEADLINES WITH NEW PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY!

From 1 March 2020, public transport in Luxembourg, including the trains, trams and buses, would be free. Government Spokesman Dany Frank stated that this new policy aimed to decrease the usage of private vehicles. Thus, acting positively on both the carbon emission rates and the traffic congestion issue around the nation. The cost of this innovator policy is estimated to be around 41 million Euros annually.



## NEW FIGURES SHOW THAT AIR QUALITY IN BRUSSELS 'NOW MEETS EU STANDARDS'

Brussels Minister for Environment Alain Maron stated that Brussels's air quality levels now meet demanded EU standards but not yet those of the World Health Organisation. It is understood that more improvements are needed to meet higher health standards, nevertheless there's still a general positive trend. The air quality levels are mainly measured according to the the levels of pollutants commonly linked to the widespread use of diesel-powered vehicles such as nitrogen oxide (NO2) and of fine particles.



## BELGIUM ATTRACTS FOREIGN INVESTORS | FOCUS ON BELGIUM

According to Ernst & Young (EY)'s annual report on the attractiveness of each country as an investment location, Belgium ranked fifth in this European ranking, behind France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain.

The country is attracting more new foreign investment than ever before. Of the 267 projects registered in 2019. The sales and marketing sector topped the list with 105 projects, followed by manufacturing with 60 projects and logistics with 51 projects. These three sectors accounted for more than 80% of foreign investment in Belgium in 2019.

Geographically, Wallonia and Brussels have never done so well, with 64 and 76 investment projects respectively in 2019. Despite a decline compared to 2018, Flanders remained by far the region that attracted the most foreign investment in Belgium.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## WEBINAR: The Current Customs Regulations and Procedures After Covid-19

The BLCCT will organize a webinar with our corporate member  
ÜNSPED Customs Consultancy on July 2, 15.00-16.00 (UTC +3)

## PANEL ON GENDER EQUALITY

The BLCCT will organize an online panel on gender equality on July 9, 17.00 (UTC+3) with our panelists Ms. Pauline Lahaye, Second Secretary of Embassy of Belgium in Turkey, Ms. Neslihan Nigiz Ulak, the General Manager Turkey of Barry Callebaut and a member of our Chamber of Commerce, and Ms. Özlem Gökçe, Chairman of the Turkish-Belgium Business Council at DEIK and a member of our Chamber of Commerce.



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