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PRESS RELEASE

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Regional distribution of Belgian imports and exports of goods and services

At the end of 2021, before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, international trade had rebounded in all three regions and exceeded pre-pandemic levels almost everywhere.

Brussels: full recovery of exports in 2021, partial comeback of imports

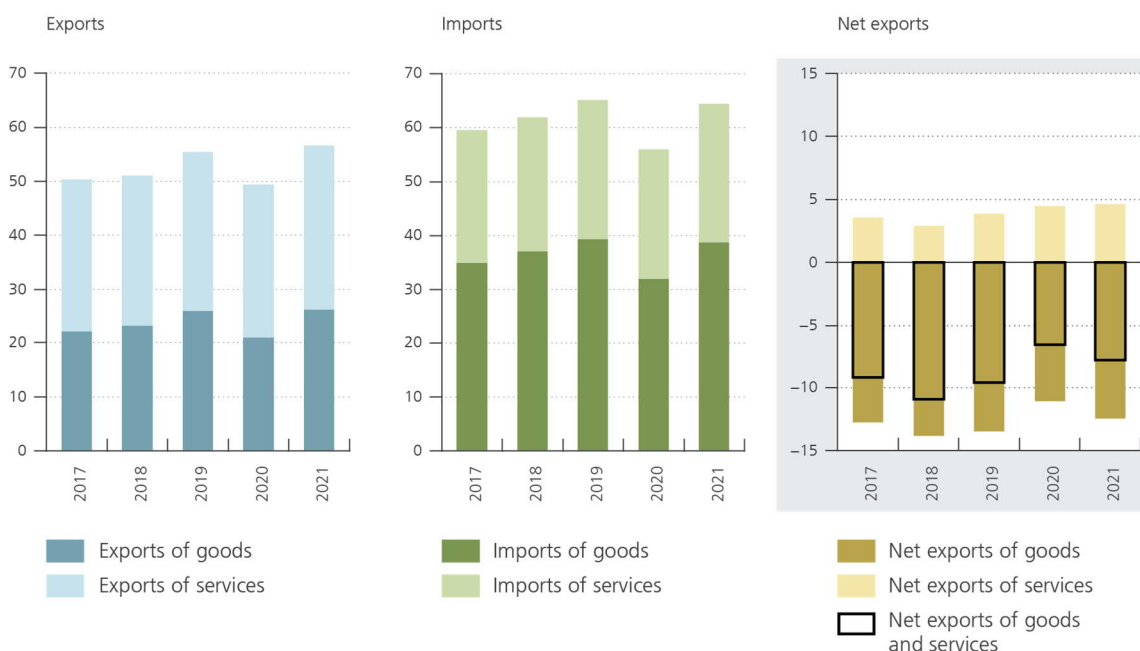
After declining sharply following the health crisis in 2020 (-10.9%), total exports for Brussels recovered in 2021 (+14.5%), thus exceeding their pre-pandemic level. The fall in total imports recorded in 2020 (-13.9%) was largely, but not entirely, offset in 2021 (+15.0%).

International transactions in goods by the Brussels industry grew strongly in 2021, reaching a higher level than in 2019. On the other hand, exports and imports of both goods and services by companies dealing in trade slowed between 2019 and 2021. International transactions in services by companies active in financial activities developed in a particularly favourable manner between 2019 and 2021.

Net exports of goods and services are structurally negative in Brussels. The negative balance widened again in 2021 (- €7.8 billion compared to - €6.6 billion in 2020) but remained above its pre-pandemic level.

TOTAL EXPORTS, IMPORTS AND NET EXPORTS FOR BRUSSELS, 2017-2021

(in € millions)



Source: NAI.

Flanders: very dynamic recovery of both exports and imports in 2021

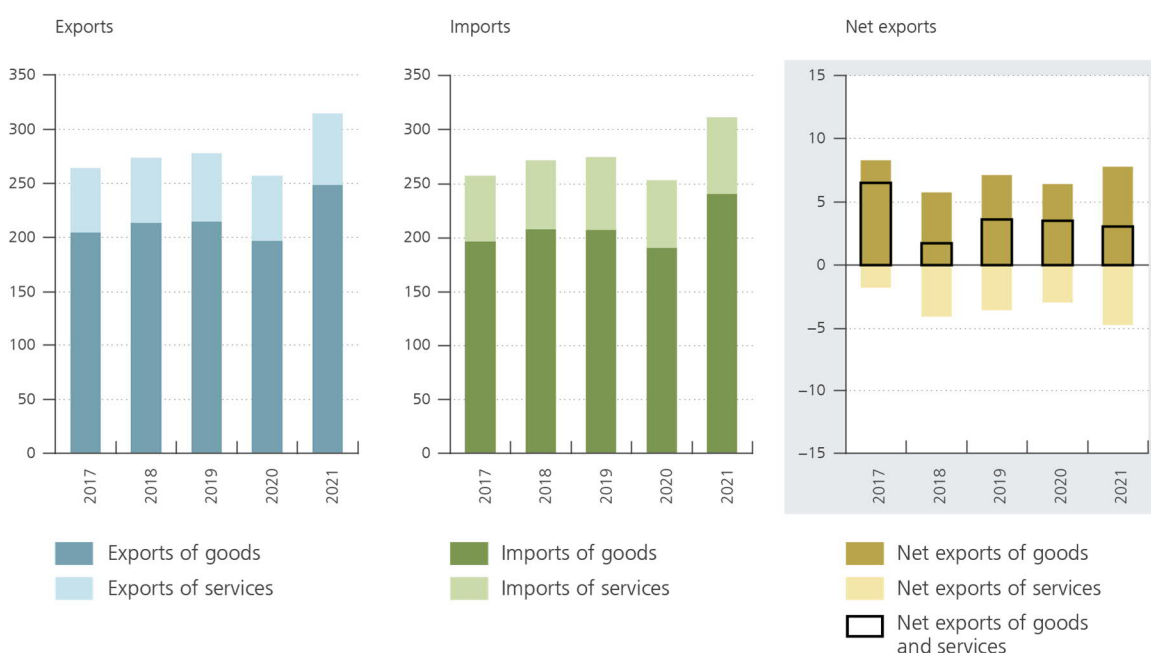
In Flanders, both exports and imports made a full recovery in 2021 (+22.4% and +22.9% respectively), after contracting in 2020 due to the pandemic (by -7.5% and -7.6%, respectively). Thus, in 2021, Flemish exports and imports were well above their 2019 level.

The recovery extended to trade in both goods and services. International trade in goods developed largely favourably between 2019 and 2021, mainly driven by the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, metalworking and trade. In Flanders, growth in trade in services was mainly driven by industry.

Total net exports fell slightly in 2020 compared to 2019 (to €3.5 billion) and continued to decline in 2021 (to €3.1 billion).

TOTAL EXPORTS, IMPORTS AND NET EXPORTS FOR FLANDERS, 2017-2021

(in € millions)



Source: NAI.

Wallonia: full recovery of imports and exports in 2021, following a limited decline in 2020

Walloon exports fully recovered in 2021 (+10.6%) following a relatively limited decline due to the health crisis in 2020 (-3.4%). Imports also made a full recovery in 2021 (+14.9%), despite a more marked contraction in 2020 (-7.8%). Both flows exceeded their 2019 level.

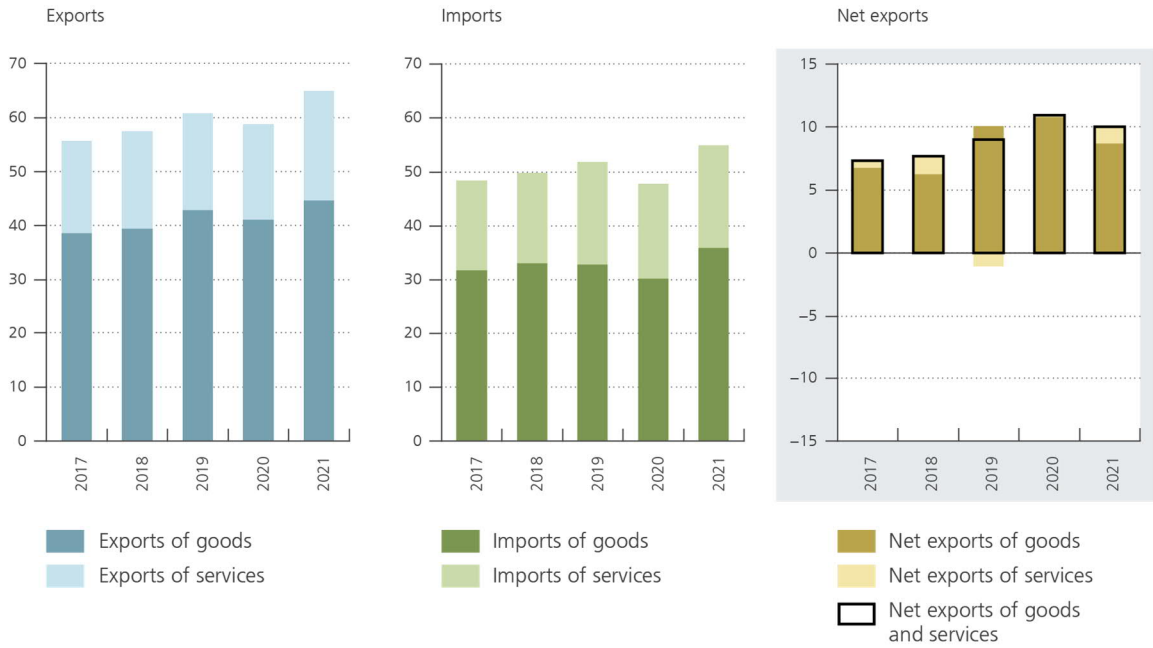
In terms of exports and imports of goods, growth between 2019 and 2021 was mainly driven by companies active in trade. Walloon industry - led by the chemical and metalworking industry - helped support the recovery of imports. On the exports side, however, the pharmaceutical industry weakened the recovery.

In Wallonia, growth in exports of services between 2019 and 2021 was mainly driven by transport and financial activities. The lack of a full recovery of foreign tourism (Belgian citizens going abroad) kept imports of services below their 2019 level.

Total net exports rose sharply in 2020, reaching €10.9 billion, the highest level since the start of the series in 1995. In 2021, the balance fell to €10.0 billion.

TOTAL EXPORTS, IMPORTS AND NET EXPORTS FOR WALLONIA, 2017-2021

(in € millions)



Source: NAI.

KEY VARIABLES FOR THE REGIONAL BREAKDOWN OF BELGIAN IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES

	In absolute numbers (in €million)	Share of each region in the total for Belgium (in %)	Share of goods and services (in %)	Percentage change compared to the previous year (in %)			Average annual growth rate (%)
	2021	2021	2021	2019	2020	2021	2012-2021
Exports of goods and services							
Brussels	56 671.1	13.0	100.0	8.8	-10.9	14.5	2.8
Flanders	314 704.1	72.1	100.0	1.6	-7.5	22.4	4.4
Wallonia	64 947.5	14.9	100.0	5.8	-3.4	10.6	2.8
Belgium	436 322.7	100.0	100.0	3.2	-7.4	19.4	3.9
Exports of goods							
Brussels	26 349.8	8.2	46.5	11.4	-19.3	25.6	1.1
Flanders	248 899.5	77.8	79.1	0.5	-8.2	26.1	4.4
Wallonia	44 693.6	14.0	68.8	8.7	-4.2	8.8	1.5
Belgium	319 942.9	100.0	73.3	2.6	-8.6	23.3	3.6
Exports of services							
Brussels	30 321.3	26.1	53.5	6.5	-3.4	6.4	5.0
Flanders	65 804.6	56.5	20.9	5.7	-5.3	10.2	4.7
Wallonia	20 253.9	17.4	31.2	-0.6	-1.7	14.8	6.5
Belgium	116 379.8	100.0	26.7	4.9	-4.2	10.0	5.0
Imports of goods and services							
Brussels	64 462.1	15.0	100.0	5.1	-13.9	15.0	0.9
Flanders	311 644.7	72.3	100.0	0.9	-7.6	22.9	4.8
Wallonia	54 934.3	12.7	100.0	4.0	-7.8	14.9	2.8
Belgium	431 041.1	100.0	100.0	2.0	-8.7	20.6	3.8
Imports of goods							
Brussels	38 773.0	12.3	60.1	6.1	-18.8	21.0	-0.6
Flanders	241 135.1	76.3	77.4	-0.2	-8.1	26.3	4.5
Wallonia	36 017.1	11.4	65.6	-1.0	-7.7	18.9	1.2
Belgium	315 925.2	100.0	73.3	0.6	-9.6	24.7	3.3
Imports of services							
Brussels	25 689.1	22.3	39.9	3.5	-6.3	7.0	4.2
Flanders	70 509.6	61.3	22.6	4.6	-5.9	12.6	6.1
Wallonia	18 917.2	16.4	34.4	14.0	-8.0	8.1	7.7
Belgium	115 115.9	100.0	26.7	5.8	-6.4	10.5	5.8
In absolute numbers (in €million)							
	2019	2020	2021				
Net exports of goods and services							
Brussels	-9 574.6	-6 577.7	-7 791.0				
Flanders	3 601.5	3 514.0	3 059.4				
Wallonia	8 979.9	10 939.4	10 013.2				
Belgium	3 006.8	7 875.7	5 281.6				
Net exports of goods							
Brussels	-13 436.4	-11 048.5	-12 423.2				
Flanders	7 140.6	6 429.0	7 764.4				
Wallonia	10 047.1	10 798.7	8 676.5				
Belgium	3 751.3	6 179.2	4 017.7				
Net exports of services							
Brussels	3 861.8	4 470.8	4 632.2				
Flanders	-3 539.1	-2 915.0	-4 705.0				
Wallonia	-1 067.2	140.7	1 336.7				
Belgium	-744.5	1 696.5	1 263.9				

Source: NAI.

Technical note

The regional breakdown of Belgian imports and exports of goods and services is prepared in cooperation with the NBB and the regional statistical authorities. This press release contains preliminary regional figures for 2021, as well as revisions for 2018, 2019 and 2020. These figures are consistent with the October 2022 national accounts.

Only imports from and exports to foreign countries are covered by these statistics. Trade between the regions is therefore excluded.

Foreign trade figures for imports and exports of goods per region have been published on the National Bank of Belgium's website on a monthly basis since data year 2002. These figures – both national totals and regional shares - differ from those published in the framework of the national and regional accounts according to the ESA 2010. At the national level, the figures differ for conceptual reasons (including different treatment for the transit of natural gas and electricity and flows related to contract work, repairs and triangular trade). Differences in the regional shares stem from the different methodological principles used for the regional breakdowns.

For a detailed description of the applicable methodology, please refer to the publication entitled "Regional breakdown of Belgian imports and exports of goods and services: [Methodological note](#)", available on the website of the National Bank of Belgium.