2017-10-23

PRESS RELEASE

The economic importance of the Belgian ports - Flash estimate 2016

To meet the demand for rapidly available indicators signalling developments in value added and employment at Belgian ports, the National Bank of Belgium has since 2006 published a flash estimate based on the annual accounts filed up to the end of August. It is issued just over six months prior to the publication of the annual study containing exhaustive statistics on the ports' results.

Note: The figures for 2016 are estimates produced by means of statistical techniques. Consequently, the final figures, which will be published in spring 2018, might be slightly different.

Communication
National Bank of Belgium Ltd.
boulevard de Berlaimont 14
1000 Brussels
phone + 32 2 221 46 28
www.nbb.be
Company's number:
0203.201.340 – RLP Brussels

TABLE 1 DIRECT VALUE ADDED AT FLEMISH PORTS, THE LIEGE PORT COMPLEX AND THE PORT OF BRUSSELS

(millions of euros - current prices)

	Maritime cluster[1]		Non-maritime cluster		**Total**	
	2015 *	*2016 e*	2015 *	*2016 e*	**2015 ***	***2016 e***
Antwerp	3,772	*3,682*	7,194	*7,103*	**10,966**	***10,785***
Ghent	313	*331*	3,483	*3,507*	**3,796**	***3,838***
Ostend	187	*179*	326	*328*	**513**	***507***
Zeebrugge	577	*578*	401	*418*	**978**	***996***
Liège port complex	27	*26*	995	*1,132*	**1,022**	***1,158***
Brussels	21	*23*	751	*701*	**772**	***724***
DIRECT VALUE ADDED	4,897	*4,819*	13,150	*13,189*	**18,047**	***18,008***

Source: NBB.

TABLE 2 DIRECT EMPLOYMENT AT FLEMISH PORTS, THE LIEGE PORT COMPLEX AND THE PORT OF BRUSSELS

(full-time equivalents)

	Maritime cluster		Non-maritime cluster		**Total**	
	2015 *	*2016 e*	2015 *	*2016 e*	**2015 ***	***2016 e***
Antwerp	27,544	*27,485*	33,372	*33,352*	**60,916**	***60,837***
Ghent	2,671	*2,885*	25,169	*25,187*	**27,840**	***28,072***
Ostend	1,855	*1,815*	3,171	*3,144*	**5,026**	***4,959***
Zeebrugge	6,007	*6,026*	3,289	*3,306*	**9,296**	***9,332***
Liège port complex	319	*337*	7,470	*7,439*	**7,789**	***7,776***
Brussels	421	*360*	3,798	*3,676*	**4,219**	***4,036***
DIRECT EMPLOYMENT	38,817	*38,908*	76,269	*76,104*	**115,086**	***115,012***

Source: NBB.

e = estimates

* the minor differences compared with the figures previously published are due to additional improvements.

[1] Two clusters are considered: the maritime cluster and the non-maritime cluster. The maritime cluster, which includes branches of the ports themselves, and whose existence is essential to them (management and maintenance, shipping, transhipment, affreightment, storage, dredging, fishing, maritime services, etc.). The segments that do not have an immediate economic link with port activity which exhibit a close interdependence with it are known as "non-maritime" and include the segments of industry, wholesale trade, transport and logistic services.

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Comment

Overall value added generated in the Belgian ports, considered as a whole, remained stable in 2016. But half of them recorded a reduction in their value added. The sharpest decline was in the port of Brussels with -6.2%. This contraction nevertheless needs to be set against the exceptional rise in 2015. Likewise, the chemicals and shipping companies sectors in the port of Antwerp were not able to repeat the excellent results of 2015 and exerted a downward influence on the total value added generated in the port. The same trend could be observed for the metalworking industry and dredging sector in the port of Ostend. On the other hand, the port of Liège poste very health growth in its value added largely due to the energy and fuel production sector . Value added also increased in the port of Zeebrugge, partly thanks to the cargo handlers and in the port of Ghent as well, under the influence of the metalworking industry and the trade sector. However, the findings from these estimates should be considered with caution because mergers and acquisitions can skew the statistics.

After falling for several years, employment in the Belgian ports kept up its momentum, albeit at a much slower pace. Employment contracted significantly in the port of Brussels where job numbers dropped in several sectors, including trade and road transport. In the port of Ostend, the downturn in the metalworking and dredging sectors largely explains the job losses. On the other hand, employment rates remained virtually stable in the ports of Antwerp, Liège and Ghent. Employment in the Liège port complex declined slightly in the construction sector. In the port of Ghent, job creation in the cargo handling sector and the metalworking industry, due to takeovers among other things, largely offset the losses in the car manufacturing industry. In the port of Antwerp, a number of job losses were noted in the shipping agents and forwarders sector. Thanks to the cargo-handling sector, the port of Zeebrugge was able to post an increase in employment. However, as was the case with value added, mergers and restructuring call for these initial estimates to be treated with caution.

Cargo traffic was up by 3.1% in 2016. The ports of Ostend and Ghent recorded very strong growth rates of 10% or more, while the ports of Antwerp and Brussels reported lower rates of 3%. After a year of decline, traffic in the Liège port complex picked up again, with an increase of just under 6%. Over the same period, traffic in the port of Zeebrugge declined by 1.3%. Among the Flemish sea ports, Antwerp was the only one to have enjoyed growth in the volume of containers transshipped. By contrast, in the case of dry bulk, all the Flemish maritime ports with the exception of Antwerp reported higher numbers. As for liquid bulk, the ports of Antwerp, Ghent and Ostend saw their figures improve, while numbers were down in the port of Zeebrugge. Conversely, roll-on roll-off traffic in this port once again posted strong growth in 2016. Roll-on roll-off traffic is also on the rise in the port of Ghent but it has contracted in Antwerp.

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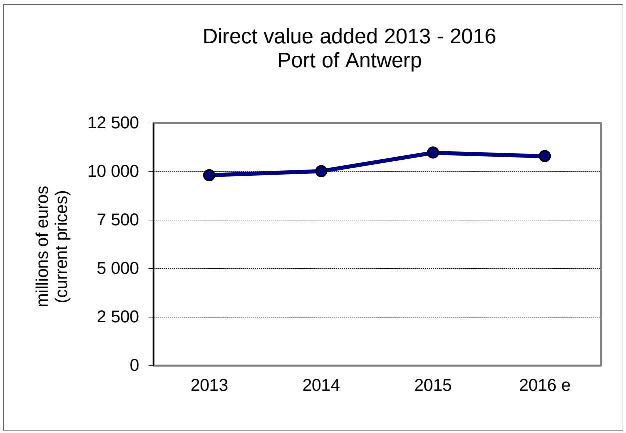
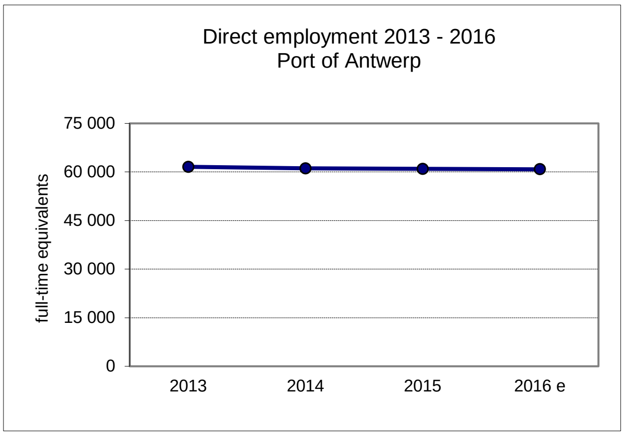
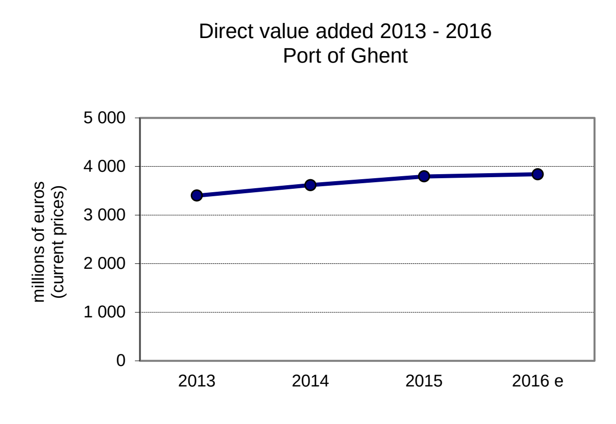
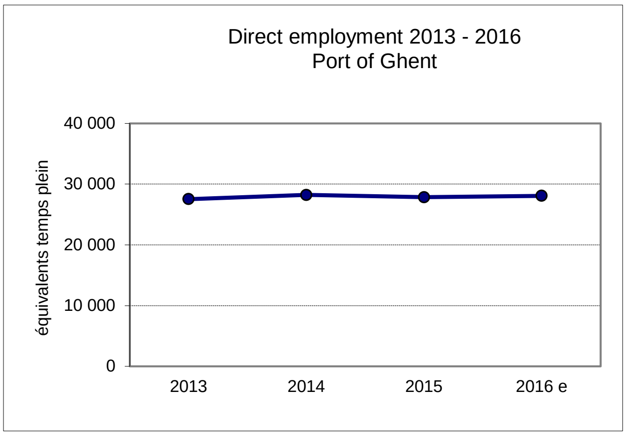
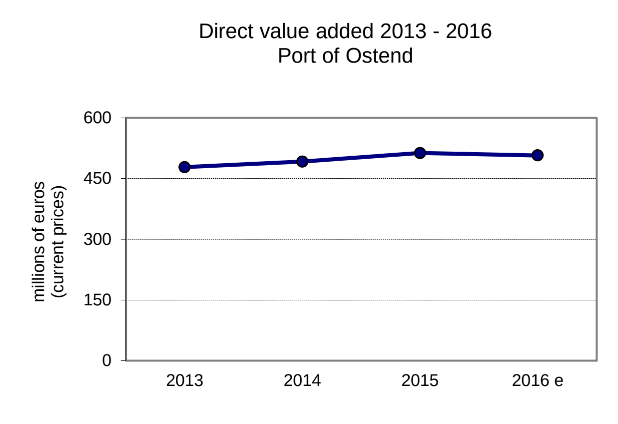
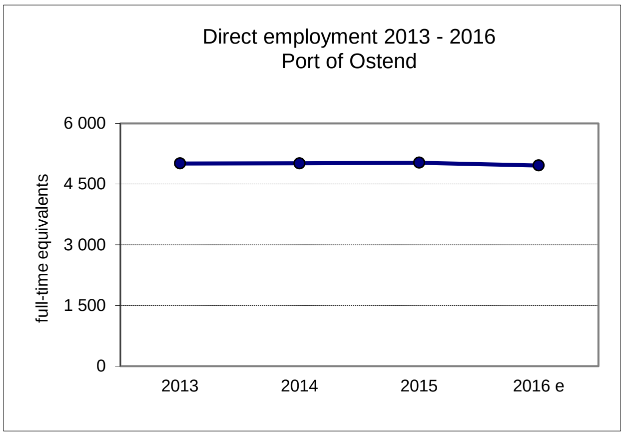

Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Port of Antwerp
millions of euros
(current prices)
12 500
10 000
7 500
5 000
2 500
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

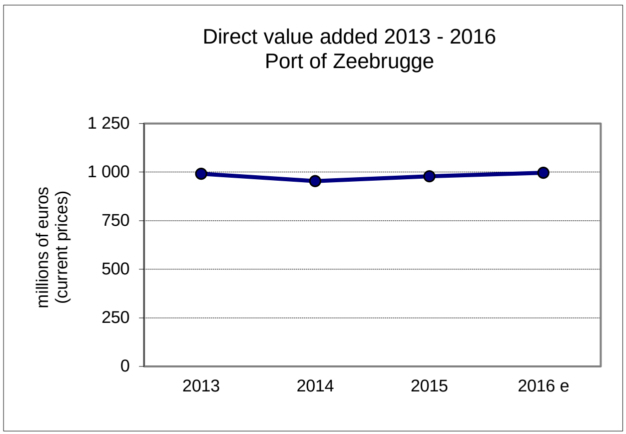

Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Port of Antwerp
full-time equivalents
75 000
60 000
45 000
30 000
15 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

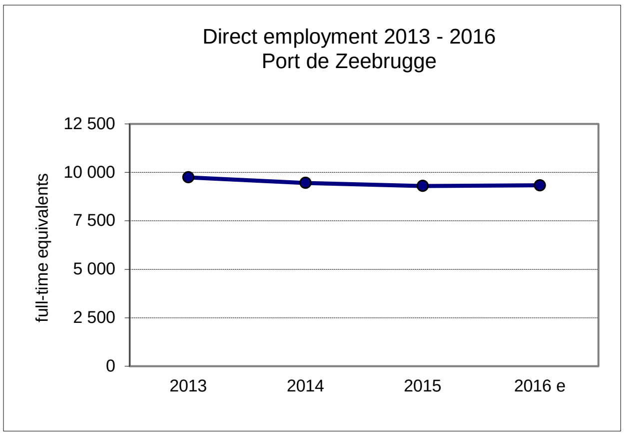

Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Port of Ghent
millions of euros
(current prices)
5 000
4 000
3 000
2 000
1 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

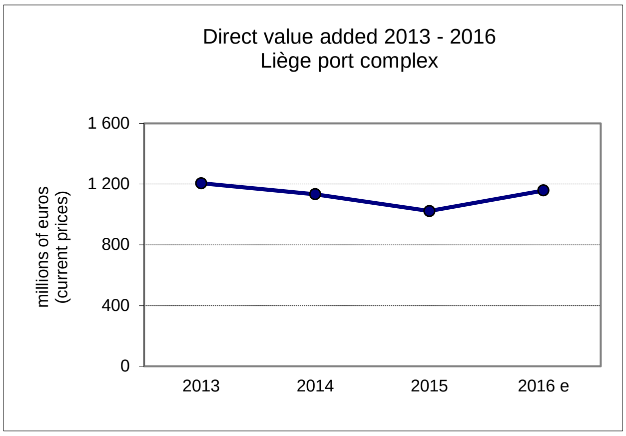

Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Port of Ghent
équivalents temps plein
40 000
30 000
20 000
10 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

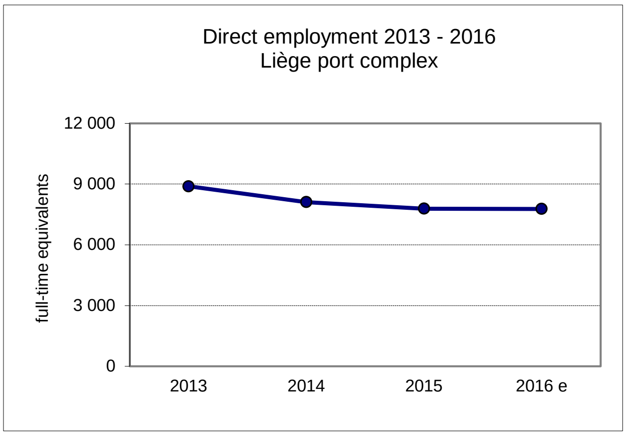

Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Port of Ostend
millions of euros
(current prices)
600
450
300
150
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

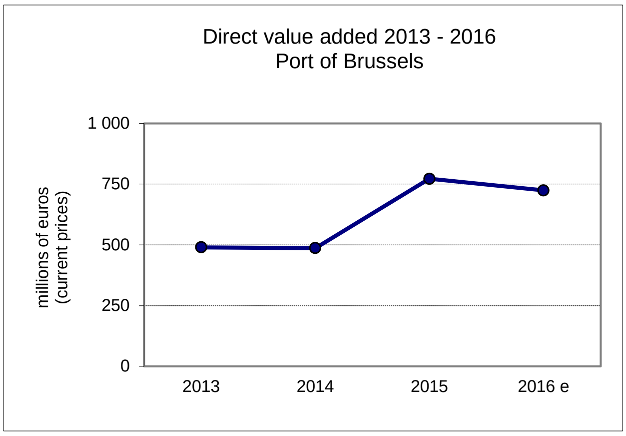

Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Port of Ostend
full-time equivalents
6 000
4 500
3 000
1 500
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

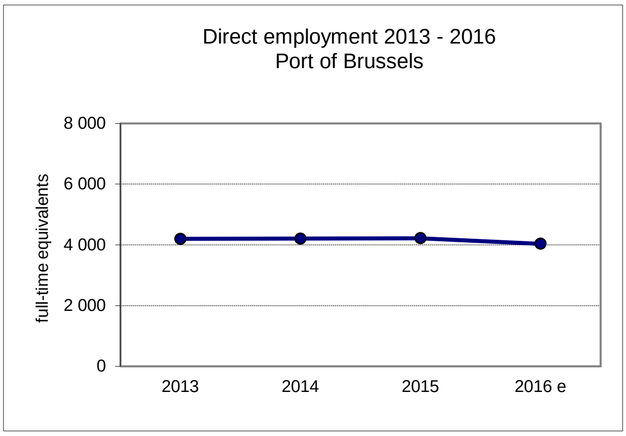

Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Port of Zeebrugge
millions of euros
(current prices)
1 250
1 000
750
500
250
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

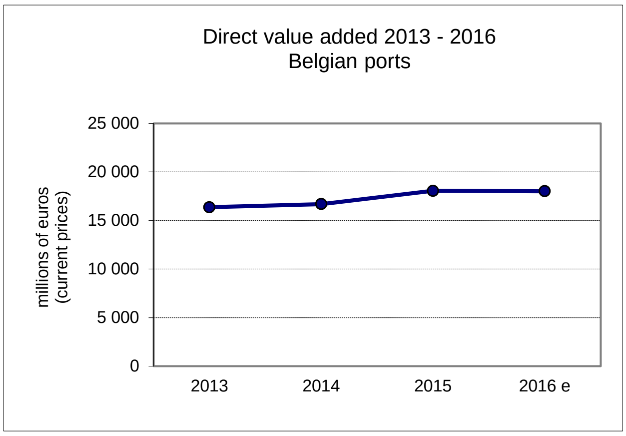

Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Port de Zeebrugge
full-time equivalents
12 500
10 000
7 500
5 000
2 500
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e


Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Liège port complex
millions of euros
(current prices)
1 600
1 200
800
400
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e


Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Liège port complex
full-time equivalents
12 000
9 000
6 000
3 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e


Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Port of Brussels
millions of euros
(current prices)
1 000
750
500
250
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e


Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Port of Brussels
full-time equivalents
8 000
6 000
4 000
2 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e


Direct value added 2013 - 2016
Belgian ports
millions of euros
(current prices)
25 000
20 000
15 000
10 000
5 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

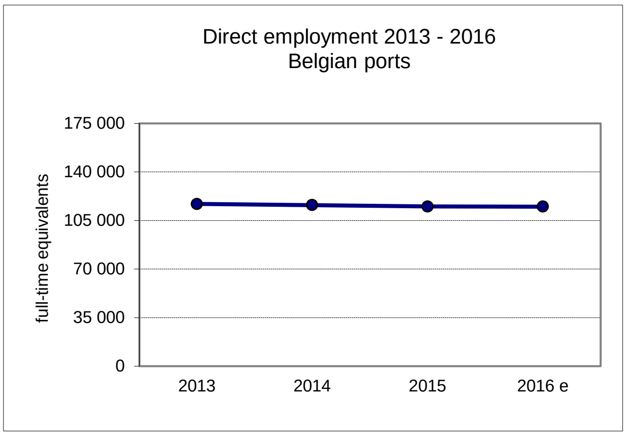

Direct employment 2013 - 2016
Belgian ports
full-time equivalents
175 000
140 000
105 000
70 000
35 000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016 e

TABLE 3 CARGO TRAFIC IN THE BELGIAN PORTS

(in thousands of tonnes; change is expressed as a percentage)

	Antwerp		Ghent		Ostend		Zeebrugge		**Flemish ports**		**Change from**
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	**2015**	**2016**	**2015 - 2016**
Containers	113,295	117,910	258	133	0	0	15,625	14,445	129,177	132,488	+2.6
Roll-on/roll-off	4,654	4,569	2,079	2,114	0	0	13,451	14,352	20,183	21,035	+4.2
Conventional general cargo	10,005	9,804	3,564	3,701	43	29	1,174	1,496	14,786	15,030	+1.6
Liquid bulk	66,685	69,245	3,721	5,429	29	91	6,754	6,032	77,189	80,798	+4.7
Dry bulk	13,786	12,642	16,740	17,710	1,223	1,344	1,315	1,488	33,064	33,184	+0.4
CARGO TRAFIC	**208,425**	**214,170**	**26,362**	**29,087**	**1,295**	**1,464**	**38,318**	**37,813**	**274,400**	**282,535**	**+3.0**
Change from 2014 to 2015		+2.8		+10.3		+13.1		-1.3		+3.0	

Liège	14,605	15,462	+5.9
Brussels	4,364	4,480	+2.7
Belgian ports	**293,369**	**302,477**	**+3.1**

Source: Port authorities.