

# Welcome from Lesley Batchelor OBE, FIEEx (Grad) - Director General, Institute of Export & International Trade



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Belgium's strategic location means it enjoys a pivotal position in international politics and economics. Often referred to as the crossroads of Europe, the European Union, NATO and some 1,400 international non-governmental organisations are also headquartered there. For these and several other reasons Belgium is an attractive destination for UK exporters. This Doing Business in Belgium Guide will help prepare UK businesses who are looking to trade with this key European market.

British products enjoy a good reputation in Belgium and there are great opportunities for British businesses in the biotechnology, environmental technology, ICT and transport & logistics. Belgium's proximity to the UK is also a great advantage with good transport links which offer the possibility of getting there and back for meetings within a working day.

Belgium consists of two very distinct cultural regions, Flanders (Dutch speaking northern half) and Wallonia (French speaking southern half), and an officially bilingual capital, Brussels. With this in mind, it is often best to speak English in Belgium, even if reasonably fluent in French, Dutch or German, as this maintains neutrality, although this will vary according to location. In Brussels, English is widely spoken and is a preferred language of business.

Owing to the bi-cultural nature of the country, the Belgians have a flair for compromise and negotiated settlements which means that decisions can take a while as they have to go through a process of compromise and debate if they are to be accepted. With this in mind, business meetings are usually conducted formally, are likely to be structured and efficient and for a pre-set agenda to be followed.

All in all, Belgium has the potential to be a valuable market for British businesses and the Institute of Export & International Trade can help guide you through the intricacies of doing business in this fascinating country through our education programmes, training and practical support, our helpline and one-to-one assistance with paperwork.

Why not contact us and find out how you can join?

Good Luck!

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