

Belgium's largest ever trade delegation travels to the UK

The 3 day event, from 9 to 12 May, was attended by the British Embassy Brussels and Belgium's Economic Mission to the United Kingdom, led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid.

Belgium's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the economic mission to the UK as "one of the most important ever organised". The UK is Belgium's largest non-EU trading partner and among the top 5 investors in Belgium. In 2021 Belgium was the seventh largest buyer of UK goods, and the sixth largest supplier of goods to the UK.

Over 400 participants and 214 companies and organisations (including sector federations, universities and chambers of commerce) were on the trade delegation. These included:

- Federal Energy Minister: Tinne Van der Straeten
- Walloon Minister for the Economy and Foreign Trade: Willy Borsus
- Flemish Minister-President: Jan Jambon
- Flemish Minister for the Economy: Hilde Crevits
- Brussels Secretary of State for Foreign Trade: Pascal Smet

Minister for Europe and North America James Cleverly received the delegation. Bilateral meetings were held between the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Kwasi Kwarteng and Federal Energy Minister Tinne Van der Straeten, and Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change Greg Hands and the Minister-President of Flanders Jan Jambon.

These meetings and the signing of a partnership agreement between Agoria, Belgium's technology federation, and the UK's Energy Industry Council underline the importance of energy as a key driver for UK-Belgium cooperation and follow on from the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Energy in February 2022.

Secretary of State for International Trade Penny Mordaunt met the Belgian business community at a lunch organised by the Federation of Belgian Businesses (FEB-VBO) and the Confederation of British Industry.

Nine other Memoranda of Understanding were signed and 2 major Belgian investments in the UK inaugurated – an integrated waste-to-energy site for the Indaver company in Rivenhall, and the construction of a brand-new research and development facility for the Belgian pharmaceutical company UCB in Windlesham.

In addition to strong and vibrant economic and business relations, the UK and Belgium share common values and close historical ties. Princess Anne and Princess Astrid laid a wreath at the Edith Cavell Monument in London in tribute to the British nurse who pioneered the development of healthcare in

Belgium.