

MAGAZINE OF THE BELGIAN-LUXEMBOURG/THAI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# CONNECT

2019 ISSUE 3

## Building Bridges

TSAB IN BELGIUM

## Out of the Abyss

BELGIUM'S DIVER HERO

## 20 Years in Thailand

KATOEN NATIE

## Brusselite Deep Down

EU'S HEAD PIRKKA TAPIOLA

## Ambassador of Flavors

MUDAENG ACADEMY

## Magical Travel in Thailand

MAE HONG SON, TRANG & NAN

## Green Giants

WALLONIA'S CHEMICAL INDUSTRY



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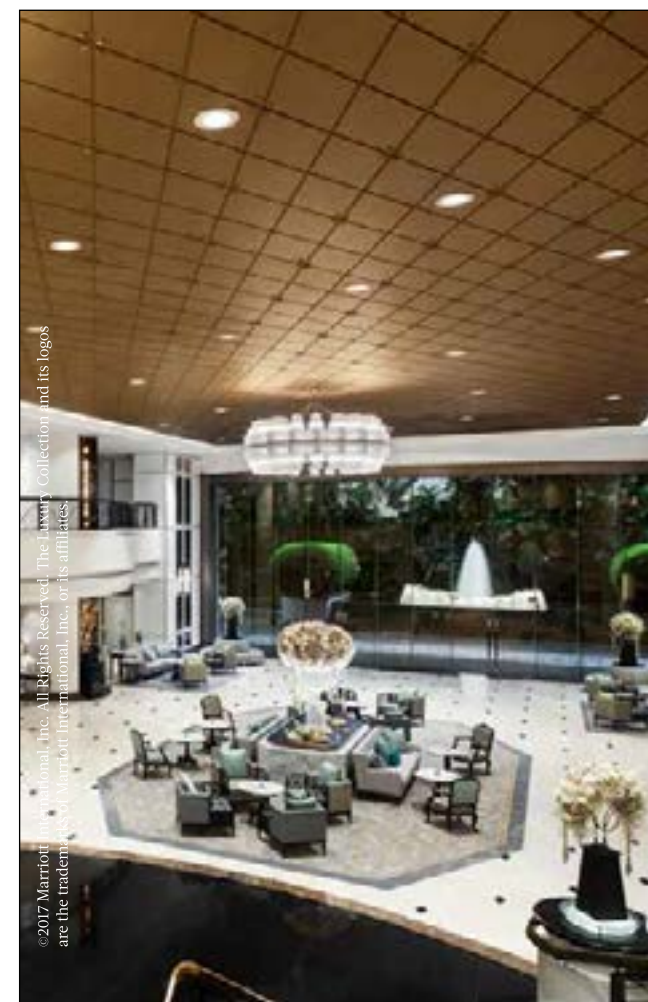
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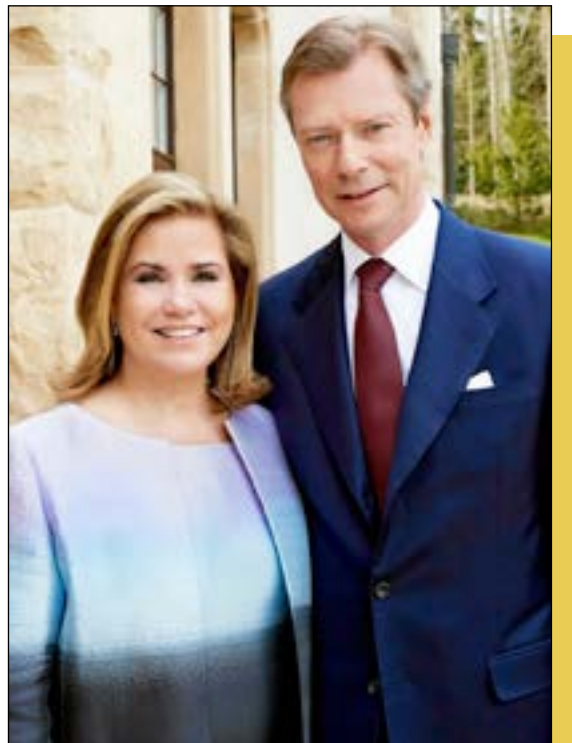




*His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun*



*King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of the Belgians*



*Grand Duke Henri and Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg*

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Magazine of the Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai

Chamber of Commerce

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Printing: Cyberprint Group Co., Ltd.

Publisher: BeluThai

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# A Message from Belgium's AMBASSADOR



“

*The support we received from BeLuThai  
has been second to none.*

”

Last year when writing these lines, the 150th Anniversary events were ongoing, the best was still to come. Together with the Belgian-Luxembourg / Thai Chamber of Commerce and the Chao Phya Abhai Raja Siammanukulkij Foundation, we put together a series of economic, cultural, political, academic and social events whose success was, when it comes to joint programing and reaching a large variety of people, unprecedented. This, however, has only been made possible thanks to the support and the trust of you all.

Looking back at last year's programme and looking ahead to this year's activities, one needs to think of what we achieved and what we would like to develop further. Among the achievements, I believe we strongly contributed to developing the image of Belgium in Thailand, we also managed to extend our networks and to bring even more Thai and Belgian people together.

The Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs has therefore

been a key partner and I would like to express my gratitude to Permanent Secretary Busaya Mathelin and Ambassador Manasvi for their continuous support. When it comes to economic, cultural and academic diplomacy, we could count on the assistance of FIT, AWEX and HUB Brussels as well as on the support of International Vlaanderen and Wallonie-Bruxelles International.

Our networks, however, have also been developed with the help of less institutional actors. Several Associations have played a key role and this result wouldn't have been achieved if it wasn't for the excellent co-operation we have with the Belgian Club of Thailand, with the Vlaamse Club Pattaya, with the Union des Francophones belges à l'Etranger or Vlamingen in the Wereld. Our outreach would not have been the same without the assistance of our soon to be officially appointed Honorary Consul in Chiang Mai. His excellent work prompted us to work further on the appointment of a new one in Phuket.

As you know, Thai authorities have identified the education sector as a key component for the development of the country and they have added this sector to the list of the twelve industries to be developed in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). Education was also a component of the mission the EEC Office brought to Belgium in April 2019. These last months, my team and I have also been focusing on the extension of our networks with universities and alumni. The launch of the dual degree agreement between KU Leuven and Thammasat University in early 2018 has, I believe, been a precursor. Earlier this year, Belgian University Colleges visited Thailand, further contacts were also established with the VLURH, with ARES and with some of their universities in Belgium. In Thailand, we established or deepened our relations with, among others, the following universities: Assumption, Chulalongkorn, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, NIDA, Pitsanulok and Thamassat. I'm proud to say that some of their most distinguished academics and students are part of our alumni network.

Together and whilst continuing bringing Thai and Belgian people together, we will in the coming months focus on bringing more Thai Alumni and Belgian Business people together.

In assisting us expanding these networks and bringing more Thai and Belgian people together, the support we received from BeLuThai has been second to none. Last March and in recognition of the services rendered, I had the honour and the privilege to bestow upon Dr. Sutharm Valaisathien, its President, the Cross of Commander in the Order of the Crown. I also believe it is fair to say that the kingpin of this excellent cooperation with our Chamber has been its Executive Director, Philip Coates. I hereby would like to express my sincere gratitude for all he has done.

A new board has now been elected, a new Executive Director will soon take his duties. I'm convinced we will continue working hand in hand, with the Board and with all BeLuThai members, to the development of the image of Belgium in Thailand, to the extension of our networks and to connecting even more Thai and Belgian people.

*Philippe Kridelka  
Ambassador of H.M. the King of the Belgians*





# A Message from Luxembourg's AMBASSADOR

*Moiën,  
Sawasdee Krub,  
Welcome,*

It is indeed my great privilege and pleasure to thank the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Thailand for its important work in promoting and intensifying the already important business relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and Belgium and Luxembourg. As a newcomer to Bangkok, I have experienced first-hand

the important work that BeLuThai does on a daily basis and my warm thanks and congratulations go to its President, Dr Sutharm Valaisathien and our Executive Director, Philip Coates, and his team.

2019 is an important and exciting year for Thailand. All the friends of Thailand around the world will follow the coronation of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun and I am confident that the economic and social development of the Kingdom will greatly benefit from this new era. I am also confident that following the general elections of March 24 and the appointment of a new European Commission following the

European elections in May, Thailand and the EU will further deepen their partnership. As a result, negotiations on the Thai-EU free trade agreement should resume and all partners aim at a timely conclusion.

As chair of ASEAN, Thailand plays during this year an important role in strengthening the relations between the two trade blocks. As founding member of the European Union, Luxembourg has always been a keen supporter of forging a strategic partnership between our two organizations. Strengthening our cooperation can only be fruitful for our countries and our citizens.

Finally, this year is important because it marks the 60th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between Thailand and the Grand Duchy and I believe the celebrations and meetings being organized in this context in both our countries will contribute to take full advantage of the vast opportunities in all sectors.

Thanks to its longstanding commitment BeLuThai will remain the indispensable partner for Belgian and Luxembourgish businesses already active in Thailand or exploring possibilities to enter this important market, for many of them a gateway to the larger Asean markets.

*Jean-Paul Senninger  
Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*



“

*As chair of ASEAN, Thailand plays during this year an important role in strengthening the relations between the two trade blocks.*

”



# EXCITING TIMES

*Message from the Thai Ambassador to Belgium,  
Luxembourg and the European Union*

*Sawasdee Krub!*

It gives me great pleasure to convey my greetings and warmest wishes to BeLuThai, its members, and readers of CONNECT magazine. I am delighted that BeLuThai and CONNECT continue to play a catalytic role in promoting and strengthening Thailand's relations with Belgium and Luxembourg at the business level.

This year will be an exciting time for Thailand, as ASEAN Chair, just as much as it will be for Belgium and Luxembourg as founding members of the European Union. ASEAN and the EU are on the verge of elevating its relations to a strategic partnership and are actively working on an ASEAN-EU FTA. I hope that we can witness substantial progress on these two fronts, with Thai-Belgium and Thai-Luxembourg serving as a strong foundation.

I am heartened that the Foreign Minister of Thailand met with the Foreign Minister of Belgium early 2018 to launch the 150th anniversary of Thailand-Belgium friendship. In the same year, the Prime Minister of Thailand and the Prime Minister of Belgium also met in Brussels and discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral trade and investment ties. Prior to that, HRH Professor Dr. Chulabhorn visited Belgium in October, while HRH Princess Lea visited Bangkok in September of the same year. Also, parliamentary delegations from Thailand and Belgium exchanged visits. These high-level visits and contacts provide a very conducive environment for closer economic, academic, and cultural ties, which I hope members of BeLuThai will leverage on.

In 2019, Thailand and Luxembourg will celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations. This will provide an ideal opportunity for both sides to further develop the relations and explore prospects for enhancing economic ties. In this regard, the Foreign Minister of Thailand met with the Deputy Minister / Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg in January, while I also had the privilege to meet with the incoming Luxembourg Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Ambassador Jean-Paul Senninger before his departure to take up his assignment in Bangkok. Both meetings underscore a tremendous opportunity for investment, including in the area of innovation and financial sector where Luxembourg has the cutting edge. I hope that we can follow through with concrete activities and initiatives to achieve these goals, with BeLuThai playing a pivotal role.

I am confident that BeLuThai and its members will continue its outstanding commitment to fostering closer ties between us and look forward to an active and successful year ahead for BeLuThai.

*Khop Khun Krub,  
Manasvi Srisodapol,  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand*





# OUT BOX *of the*

## Dr. Sutharm Valaisathien meets ED Philip Coates

*When the President and the Executive Director of BeLuThai meet, it's time to reflect on the past and the present.*

*It's time to think out of the box.*

The meeting room in Sathorn City Tower is cool and relaxed. This is what you would expect when BeLuThai's President, Dr. Sutharm Valaisathien, and the Executive Director (ED), Philip Coates, meet.

Dr. Sutharm has been involved since BeLuThai was shortly founded 27 years ago, knowing all the ins and outs of the Chamber. His praise is worth more than anything else. "The last three and a half years have seen a dramatic change. Everything has changed and in a far better and broader perspective," Dr. Sutharm says.

"Time flies," Coates adds. "When I started as an ED three and a half years ago, BeLuThai was still a relatively small organization". The starting point for Coates was 2015, when a series of events were organized by the Chao Phya Abhai Raja Siammanukulkij Foundation to celebrate the relations between the two Royal Families. One of these was a business forum organized together with Assumption University and honored by the presence of HRH Princess Marie Esméralda of Belgium. A highly professional event attended by 100 entrepreneurs and 100 selected students. "I wanted to make the event professional, have a real structure, a tangible goal. Deliver a calling card of what BeLuThai stands for".

### Three Pillars of Success

For Coates, being an ED has always been a part-time job. He has other businesses to take care of.

"Initially, my dream was to increase the number of members dramatically. But very quickly I realized that it's not that simple. You get some new members, but you also lose some. And there just aren't that many large and SME Belgian and Luxembourg companies enough to join the Chamber."

When you see BeLuThai now, it is a dynamic, modern chamber, consisting of about 110 corporate and individual committed members.

"The challenge is that BeLuThai is still a relatively small chamber. It's hard to dramatically grow because Belgium is a country of SMEs," Dr. Sutharm admits. "That's why we think outside the box. We don't copy. We innovate."

Coates' strategy has always been based on three pillars. The first is business development - everything that has to

do with business, with and for our Members - the second being education, i.e. closer cooperation with leading universities, well-known academic institution, alumni and the Thai Student Assembly in Belgium and last one focusing on charitable work, our CSR project (Corporate Social Responsibility). Today, the focus is growing with Thai companies doing business with Belgium and Luxembourg. "By law, a Chamber is a non-profit organization - it is, therefore, a social responsibility to give back. I feel strongly about this," Coates says.

It materialized about 3 years ago, when BeLuThai started supporting the Foundation for Slum Child Care in Bangkok, a foundation taking care of the weakest in our society, small children in the heart of Bangkok.

### Networking Is Important

The aim of BeLuThai is to support market access and investments in Thailand for companies from Belgium and Luxembourg. It also serves as a channel to voice views and interests of companies towards the government of Thailand, as well as to other business organizations in this country.

BeLuThai takes pride in the fact that it works hard to really understand its members, to know the true story behind their businesses. This allows the Chamber to connect like-minded professionals so they can share their ideas, generate new opportunities and find tangible solutions to long existing problems.

"We also work closely with other 38 foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand which joined together under the name of Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand supported by several Working Committees with the President Council monthly meeting to regularly update on business/legal issues to address all issues of concern to the respective



*In March 2019, Dr. Sutharm received an award for the efforts he has made for the countries that BeLuThai represents.*

*The recognition is very high: Cross of Commander in the Order of the Crown.*

authorities in a single voice. There are joint efforts, on-going networking with various government authorities including the Labour Department, the Revenue Department, the Immigration Division, various major Ministries in charge of business development. We also have an excellent relationship with the Board of Investment and with the EABC (European Association for Business and Commerce)," Dr. Sutharm says. "Our resources are limited. That's why it's beneficial for the chambers to do more networking in cooperation with other Chambers. Together we are stronger and able to deliver wider offer to our Members."

A Chamber like BeLuThai needs also veterans like Dr. Sutharm, whose CV is as long as an average novel. He's been one of the driving forces of International Legal Counsellors Thailand (ILCT) for decades. He's been a visiting lecturer of business law to various faculties of law in Thailand. He also has a number of publications under his name, works as an Honorary Consul of Chile accredited by the President of the Republic of Chile back in 1978, bestowed Decoration, Praised and Complimented from the Chilean Authorities, and - last but not least - is the current President of BeLuThai, possibly the longest President of BeLuThai.

"You dig your own grave," Dr. Sutharm jokes. And he clearly likes digging. This is another strength of this gentleman, full of experience - his relaxed charm.

What Dr. Sutharm brings along are all the contacts and legal expertise you could hope for. But it's also his personality, the ease of doing business, that makes a difference. He would be a great asset for any Chamber.

### Gala Underlining Success

One clear success for BeLuThai has been the annual Gala Dinner. "We started the Gala Dinner in 2016. It's been growing every year. In 2018, we had over three hundred guests," Coates explains. "Our Gala is one of the



Highlights of the year where our Members can be proud of bringing guests."

The other big events worth mentioning have been the 150 Years of Friendship and Trade between Thailand and Belgium, the Thai-Belgian Bridge celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2018, and the 60 Years of Smurfs.

For BeLuThai, it's been three and a half years of growth, not only in the number of Members but also in exposure, quality and services. But for Philip Coates, there are even bigger things waiting. He will leave his position as the ED after the 2019 Gala.

Coates: "Right now I'm working on a new project in Thailand and another one in Hong Kong. I will stay as a Member of BeLuThai, Member of the Event Committee and continue to support our efforts in education and CSR". "I wish to thank the Board and Members for the wonderful journey we did together. But a very special thank you goes to Dr. Sutharm for his great support. And to my capable and most reliable Executive Assistant, Khun Salinthip (Milk) Rodtassana for her countless efforts and great dedication to our Chamber the past extensive years."



# CAPITAL OF BUSINESS

*Brussels is one of Europe's main business centers. It has the ideal location and superior infrastructure.*

Brussels furthers its claim as 'capital of Europe' not only by the presence of major international institutions - the European Commission and other EU administrations, NATO, SHAPE and nearly 100 of the world's most important business and trade NGOs - but also because it sits on the cusp of Western Europe's two dominant cultures, the Germanic and the Latin.

## *Corporations Call it Home*

Brussels is one of Europe's most important business cities, with some 1,700 international corporations operating Europe-wide from the capital, including global entities such as IBM, Toyota and Coca-Cola, and a large community of SMEs.

Brussels offers an easy access to Belgian's logistics centers for exports to other European markets. Boasting a comprehensive and up-to-date infrastructure, the country is an excellent transit and distribution point for the rest of Europe.

Moreover the Brussels-Capital Region, like the many international institutions it hosts, is unaligned and neutral in its strategies and actions. Open to all the European Union's member states, it offers an unbiased and unrestricted access to all of Europe.

## *Excellent Infrastructure*

The Brussels-Capital Region also earns accolades from international studies that confirm the enthusiasm of individual investors. In the latest Mercer 'Quality of Living' survey, Brussels comes 22nd of 221 cities worldwide in terms of 39 factors important to the growing community of expatriates. These include the presence of international schools, housing availability, and leisure activities.

According to the Union of International Organisations, the city is also the world's second most important conference centre.

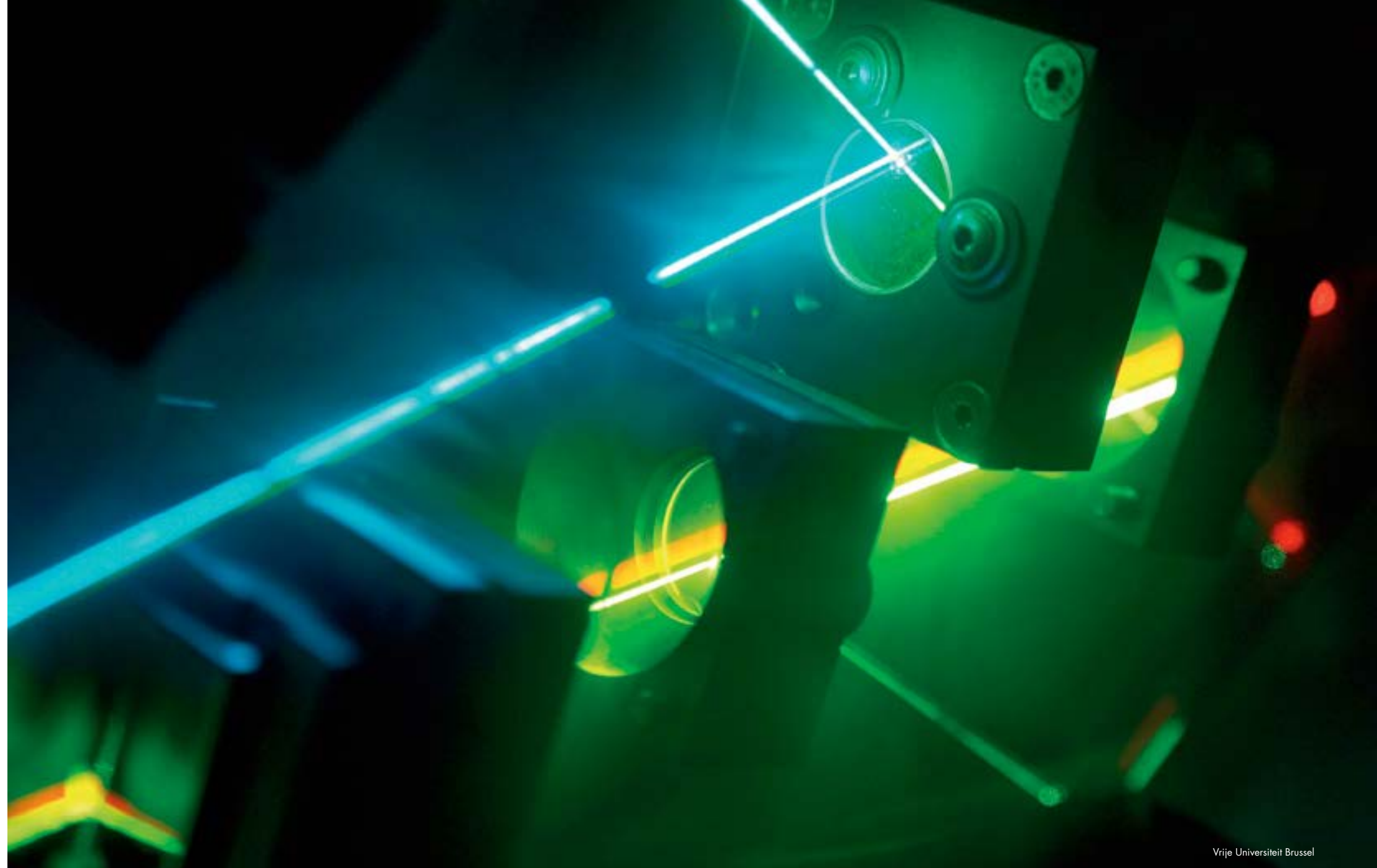
Belgium rates N° 13 in this year's list of the 'World's Most Reputable Countries.' Country RepTrak™ is a global analysis of more than 34,000 ratings collected from more than 27,000 consumers in the G8 countries. It confirms the link between country reputations and economic outcomes.

Countries are assessed in terms of four criteria - reliability, reputation, attractiveness, respect - as well respondents' perception of such aspects as traveller safety, natural beauty and welcoming attitudes.

The Ernst & Young Globalisation Index issued in advance of the 2013 Davos Summit of the World Economic Forum ranked Belgium World Number Four in terms of the openness of its economy.

Developed in conjunction with the Economist Intelligence Unit, the E&Y index draws on a comprehensive understanding of the underlying drivers for globalisation in terms of five main criteria: openness to trade, capital flows, exchange of technology and ideas, labour movements, and cultural integration.

The Ernst & Young consultancy also attributes Belgium's rating in international studies to a high level of education, a low incidence of corruption, the innovative skills of Belgian industry, and the administrative simplicity of launching or winding up a business.



Vrije Universiteit Brussel



*At the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Dr. Lien Smeesters, researcher at B-PHOT Brussels Photonics team led by Professor Hugo Thienpont, developed a laser scanning technique that allows fast and accurate detection of hazardous substances such as acrylamide and aflatoxins in food such as potatoes, nuts, cereals and corn.*

## *Unparalleled R&D Incentives*

The Brussels-Capital Region draws on the R&D resources of three universities, numerous other educational institutions, and multinational corporations. In total it fields a scientific and researcher workforce of nearly 16,000 specialists. The Region's innovation potential is enhanced by the synergies of a series of administrative and scientific institutions: the Scientific Policy Council (CPS), the Agoria organisation, "Research in Brussels" (RIB) and Impulse (Brussels Enterprise Agency). Particular target areas of expertise include the ICT, healthcare, security and transport sectors.

The FNRS scientific research fund of the Wallonie-Brussels Federation also helps shape research strategy and provides support to individual institutes and teams of researchers.

In a recent study, the Deloitte consultancy firm concludes that Belgian R&D incentives are unparalleled in Europe. Various investment deductions and tax credits exist for research and development activities.

## *Extensive Tax Relief*

In the case of patent income, companies established in Belgium can deduct 80% of income from royalties and income deemed to be sourced from patented intellectual property. Companies established in the country, acting as the principal in a centralised business model, can also apply an 'excess accounting profits' ruling. Moreover, provided they meet certain conditions, researchers working in Belgium can also recover up to 75% of the withholding tax on their professional income, resulting in an average effective tax rate of 25%.

The resultant costs to employers are cut significantly, giving them a major advantage over competitors in other western European countries.

Deloitte has found that none of the other countries investigated have such an advantageous in-built system. Under the notional interest deduction system, companies and branches established in Belgium are entitled to deduct an interest expense, in connection with qualifying equity.



## BUSINESS

# BELGIUM EXCELS IN LOGISTICS



Belgium is the third best country in the world when it comes to logistics. This was confirmed by the 'Logistics Performance Index 2018' published by the World Bank. The country performs particularly well in timeliness, international freight traffic and logistics competence.

Logistics is a collective term for everything related to the organisation, planning, management and execution of a flow of goods. Every two years the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranks 160 countries based on their logistics efficiency. During this process the World Bank considers aspects such as the quality of customs, infrastructure, international transport services, timeliness and the competence of employees.

This year, the only countries to beat Belgium were Germany and Sweden. Our country also achieved third place in 2014, but dropped down to sixth place two years ago. The increase this year is mainly due to excellent performance related to timeliness and international transport (first place) and competence (second place). Our performance is somewhat lower in the area of customs and infrastructure.

Belgium's strong position could be an advantage in attracting new foreign investments.



## Flavours of Belgium

In the Country of Lutosa, we are driven by our Passion for Potatoes.  
Our strong and personalized collaboration with our Partners allow us to offer  
Belgium's finest potato delicacies to the world.





# WALLONIA GREEN GIANT

*Wallonia is a frontrunner in Europe's  
bid to clean up its chemicals industry.*

*By Emma Portier Davis*

**H**eavy industry among the world's biggest polluters. Finding sustainable, clean working methods has become a necessity for many governments, notably Wallonia's.

The region has a long history as a centre for industry, especially steel, glass and chemicals. Even today, Belgium ranks number one globally in terms of the size of its chemical industry per capita. Jobs in the industry total 26,400. In terms of trade, the industry accounts for more than a third of exports: €15.2 billion.

Meanwhile, the industry faces enormous scrutiny and increasing regulation on the environmental front as governments seek to tackle climate change and pollution. And in a world where resources are increasingly scarce, industry is obliged from a regulatory point of view as well as economically to go green.

"Ecology and economy are both sides of the same coin," says Véronique Graff, managing director of the Walloon government's Greenwin cluster, a working group comprising government officials, academics and industry stakeholders dedicated to green chemistry. "You don't want to hack down the tree you're sitting on."

When Ernest Solvay developed his eponymous ammonia-soda ash process to produce sodium carbonate – a component in a range of industries from glass-making to paper production – this was just one of the first steps to put the region's industry on the map.

From the development of one of the world's wealthiest multinational companies, the region is now gaining recognition for its development of green chemistry along with crucial investments, in accordance with internationally recognised standards.

## **Green's Not New**

Green chemistry is nothing particularly new. It's based on 12 principles developed by Paul Anastas from Yale University about 25 years ago when he worked for the US Environmental Protection Agency. It's about minimising the use of energy, cutting back on raw material use and reducing waste. These 12 principles have been adopted by Unesco and other supranational organisations such as the EU, which has dedicated funding for research and

development in the field.

The European Commission, the EU's executive, has also set up a programme of regional demonstration models to promote the development of green chemistry and allow the EU to showcase technologies and processes to the rest of the world.

## **Encouraging Circular Economy**

In 2016, Wallonia was one of six regions selected from 28 applicants to be a 'model demonstration region.' This means it receives funding (in 2016, it was awarded €245,000) and advisory support from the European Sustainable Chemicals Support Service.

The aim is to encourage investment in sustainable chemical production in Europe and to contribute to the development of a circular economy where materials are fed back into the production system rather than winding up as polluting waste.

"Supported by the authorities, Wallonia shows the way for green chemistry," says Frédéric Druck, chair of industry association Essenscia. "The selection of the region as a demonstration model underlines the immense potential of our region for the development of green chemistry."

There are several features that make Wallonia such a hub for the chemicals industry. Aside from its historical greatness, it maintains sizeable steel and pharmaceutical industries, which have funded much research into the development of chemical skills.

With a North Sea coastline and its central position in Western Europe, Belgium as a whole has also been a big draw for the major players in the oil industry.

Though Belgium represents only 2% of Europe's population and 3% of its gross domestic product, it is the continent's sixth largest chemicals producer. Thanks to already strong investment over the years in the chemicals industry, the region is home not only to a range of international industrial players but also to a flourishing academic sector dedicated to developing highly skilled chemicals workers. Added to that, says Graff at Greenwin, is the local work ethic. "People in Wallonia are highly skilled professionals. They are committed hard workers. We are easily approachable people. Walloons are really friendly, which

helps a lot in multiple partnership projects and business relations."

In short, she says, "Wallonia is a land where technological innovation is part of her DNA. We have been excellent manufacturers and dynamic – though discreet – entrepreneurs." This predilection for technological innovation is what Graff says will spur on the development of the region into a world-class example of sustainable, clean industry. "Natural resources are clearly limited and climate change is an additional factor that can only boost the transition to a new way of undertaking business," she says. "The transition to a greener economy is a global phenomenon and Wallonia has strong assets to play her part in that transition."

The Walloon government set up Greenwin, a partnership, or cluster, between companies, research centres, universities, business associations and the government, to assist in particular with priority industrial fields that offer a high rate of return on investment and drive the region's international presence. According to Essenscia, which represents 750 companies or about 95% of the sector's turnover, greenhouse gas emissions per tonne of product have fallen 77% in the past 20 years.

Its goal is to advocate for a fair emissions trading scheme and to help companies meet energy-efficiency targets without jeopardising profit. Such a scheme is a platform on which heavy polluters can trade emission allowances with other companies, incentivising reductions in climate-harming gases. While advocating for an optimum economic advantage, the association says the

industry has seen an increase of just 31% in energy use since 1990 while production has tripled. The use of coal in energy-intensive industries has been phased out completely, while petroleum as a fuel has been reduced to 1%. About 99% of petroleum used by the sector has been converted into higher-value materials, meeting a goal of the circular economy. More recently, the use of highly contaminating nitrogen and phosphorous emissions have decreased by almost 80% since 2001.

For the government, these are all steps in the right direction. "Conventional industry is clearly part of our past but thanks to these innovation clusters, Wallonia is ahead of the game and building her future with confidence and lucidity," says Graff at Greenwin.

For the future, the industry remains ambitious. According to Graff, a primary goal is supporting universities and research centres with a view to developing international partnerships and European projects. This goal will largely depend on the European Commission's Horizon Europe R&D programme, which will be the successor to the Horizon 2020 programme and will have €100 billion of funding up for grabs for research and innovation programmes across the EU. This, says Graff, is "clearly our main playground to achieve that target".

Also on the funding front will be the development of foreign innovation clusters to allow for the launch of bespoke funding programmes. As for Essenscia, Druck states an ambitious, albeit fairly simple-sounding goal: "We have to stay at the top."

## WALLONIA'S RISING STARS

### **AGC Europe**

A global player in the production of glass, its R&D department is turning an industry that's one of the heaviest in terms of production of greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants into one that is energy efficient and pursues the circular economy. The company results from the acquisition by Japan's Asahi Glass of Belgium's Glaverbel, which was once the biggest glass producer in the world.  
Web: [agc-glass.eu](http://agc-glass.eu)

### **Realco**

Makes enzyme-based hygiene solutions, including the removal of biofilm contaminations for businesses, medical applications and for households. Realco is based in the Science Park in Louvain-la-Neuve and following its listing on the Euronext stock exchange in 2006, it has opened an office in the US. Using enzymes that are 100% biodegradable, the company is able to stick to its goal of developing sustainable business practices.  
Web: [realco.be](http://realco.be)

### **Vinventions**

Sells wine closure solutions globally while striving to minimise its carbon footprint, enable recycling and produce corks and caps that are safe, clean and regulatory-compliant. The company, a world-class leader in this sector that punches above its weight as an enterprise with just 550 employees, aims to use natural raw materials and plans to use only glue-free sustainable wine closures for still wine by the end of 2018, thus meeting a goal of the 12 principles to cut down on solvent use.  
Web: [vinventions.com](http://vinventions.com)

### **Galactic**

A biotechnology firm that specialises in lactic acid fermentation and provides natural solutions to the food, feed and cosmetics industries among others, with a strong emphasis on green chemistry. The company started operations in 1994; by 1998, it was the world's second largest producer of lactic acid and lactates, exporting to more than 40 countries. The company has achieved economic success while maintaining its vision to develop solutions that are best for nature and mankind.  
Web: [lactic.com](http://lactic.com)



# SMART VISA

*Attracting Talent through  
the Smart Program*



## ► *Strengthening the Economy with the Brightest Minds*

At its core, the Thailand 4.0 vision is about people and skills. The Thai government understands that it needs the world's brightest minds if it is to fulfil its vision of a technologically competitive Thailand. It is for this reason that the country is committed to attracting talent from all over the world to live and work in one of the region's most vibrant economies.

For anyone relocating to another country, a smooth transition into the new working environment and territory

is essential. The Thai government fully comprehends this fact and is actively taking steps to make each skilled expat's arrival in Thailand as comfortable as possible. To this end, Thailand Board of Investment (BOI), in consultation with other related government agencies, has launched the Smart Visa Program with the purpose of attracting foreigners who will complement or add to Thailand's targeted industries, comprised of next-generation automotive, smart electronics, affluent medical and wellness tourism, agriculture and biotechnology, food for the future, automation and

robotics, aviation and logistics, biofuels and biochemicals, digital, medical hub industries, arbitration services, human resource development in science and technology and environmental management and renewable energy. Setting it apart from other visa options, the Smart Visa includes a number of exclusive privileges that are truly unique in Thailand, superseding anything available with any type of non-immigrant visas previously issued by the Thai government. This move signals the Thai government's genuine commitment to opening its doors to foreign talents, entrepreneurs, corporate executives, and investors looking to launch a business venture or to work in Thailand.

## ► *New Program; New Privileges*

Unlike other types of visas previously issued, the key privileges exclusive to the Smart Visa include a validity of up to 4 years, an unlimited number of re-entries, and a 1-year mandatory check-in period with the immigration. The latter replaces the 90-day reporting required with all other visa types. However, the most significant privilege is that the Smart Visa itself also doubles as a work permit, meaning that its holders do not need to apply for a separate work permit in order to work legally in Thailand.

As the family is an integral part of Thai cultural heritage, it is hardly surprising that this is an area also covered by the Smart Visa. Spouses and children of Smart Visa holders will also be granted the automatic right to stay in Thailand for the duration of the visa's validity, while spouses are also entitled to work without the need of a separate work permit.

The Smart Visa is classified into four sub-categories, each of which is designed to cater to different types of expats. Identified by the initials T, I, E and S, the four sub-categories are available to Talents, Investors, Executives, and Startups, respectively. While the conditions for obtaining each category of visa varies, all applicants must have their technical or professional qualifications verified and certified by the designated certifying bodies, which will be determined according to the type of applicant and the industry in which the applicant is engaged. The specific conditions of each category of applicant is detailed in the following paragraphs.

To be considered eligible for the E (Executives) classes of Smart Visa, the applicant must be employed by a company in Thailand with an average income of at least 200,000 baht per month and not less than one year remaining on his or her contract. While for Smart T (Talents) visa requirement, the applicants must be employed with an average income of no less than 100,000 bath per month or 50,000 bath per month in case of having contract with a startup or being retired experts. The applicant's employer must also be certified by relevant agencies as being engaged in one of the targeted industries. A vetting of the applicant's educational and professional background will focus on ensuring expertise in the relevant area of the targeted industry for T class applicants, and a minimum education level of a bachelor's degree plus 10 years of relevant work experience for E class applicants. Alternatively, if employed by Thai government agencies, a certification of having expertise in targeted industries is acceptable.



## THAILAND BOARD OF INVESTMENT

I (Investor) class applicants must be investing a minimum of 20 million baht in technology-based companies or venture capital companies or 5 million baht in startups or incubator/accelerator programs in Thailand in the targeted industries, and will be obliged to maintain this level of investment throughout the entirety of the Smart Visa validity period. Relevant government agencies will determine whether the business in which the applicant is engaged falls into the category of one of the targeted industries.

As for startup (S) entrepreneurs, the applicant must have a saving/deposit account with a balance of at least 600,000 baht which has been held for at least 3 months at the time of application. An additional 180,000 baht balance applies for each spouse and child accompanying the applicant on the visa. If a business in Thailand is not yet to set up, The applicant must also be either participating in an incubation, accelerator or similar program, or receiving joint venture funding or having concrete plan for startup business in Thailand. After an applicant is granted an S class Smart Visa, he or she must establish a company in Thailand within 3 months or one year depending on a case by case basis. In all cases, the activities in which the applicant is engaged, regardless of whether they are pre-incorporated or incorporated, must be endorsed by relevant government agencies.

## ► *Easy to Apply with the Integrated Service*

All of the qualification certification and related paperwork required for processing a Smart Visa application is handled and facilitated by the the Smart Visa Unit in One-Stop Service Center for Visas and Work Permits (OSS), a specialized unit under BOI, located at Chamchuri Square Building in central Bangkok. The BOI's Smart Visa Unit will relay the applicant's information directly to the certifying bodies and other related agencies, meaning that the applicant does not need to physically travel between designated government agencies during the application process. If the applicant meets the qualification criteria, the Smart Visa Unit will issue a letter of qualification endorsement, which the applicant can then use to apply for a Smart Visa. The time required for the entire process – excluding visa applications – takes approximately 30 days. It should be noted that the BOI itself is not the authoritative figure in the matter of visa issuance and other immigration-related consideration. Rather, the BOI is the endorser of the applicant's qualifications as a potential Smart Visa holder. Other immigration and customs laws and regulations stipulated by other government agencies still apply.

Thailand encourages all foreigners with the qualifying technical or professional skills to come to live and work in Thailand where your talent will be appreciated and you can make a real difference by contributing to the fulfillment of our vision of an innovation-driven Thailand 4.0. Thailand is looking forward to welcoming you.

► *For further details about the Smart Visa privileges, conditionality and application process, please visit [www.boi.go.th](http://www.boi.go.th) or register at [smart-visa.boi.go.th](http://smart-visa.boi.go.th)*





# Flanders in a Nutshell

**F**landers is the Dutch-speaking northern portion of Belgium. It is one of the communities, regions and language areas of Belgium. The official capital of Flanders is Brussels. It has an independent regional government, and the government of Flanders only oversees some cultural aspects of Brussels life.

Flanders has figured prominently in European history. During the late Middle Ages, cities such as Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp and Brussels made it one of the richest and most urbanized parts of Europe, weaving the wool of neighboring lands into cloth for both domestic use and export. As a consequence, a very sophisticated culture developed, with impressive achievements in the arts and architecture, rivaling those of northern Italy.

Belgium was one of the centers of the 19th century industrial revolution but Flanders was at first overtaken by French-speaking Wallonia. In the second half of the 20th century, however, Flanders' economy modernized rapidly, and today Flanders is significantly more wealthy than its southern counterpart, and in general one of the most wealthy regions in Europe and the world.

Geographically, Flanders is generally flat, and has a small section of coast on the North Sea. Much of Flanders is agriculturally fertile and densely populated. It touches France to the west near the coast, and borders the Netherlands to the north and east, and Wallonia to the south. The Brussels Capital Region is an enclave within the Flemish Region.

## Region of Beer, Culture, and Smurfs

There are plenty of reasons for a tourist to visit Flanders. Who will not be tempted by its culinary craftsmanship, its beers, chocolates, waffles or fries?

Belgium is a beer-lover's paradise. And that's not just its proud inhabitants talking. Even UNESCO agrees: it added Belgian beer to its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. And that's a well-deserved title, because people of Flanders take their beer seriously.

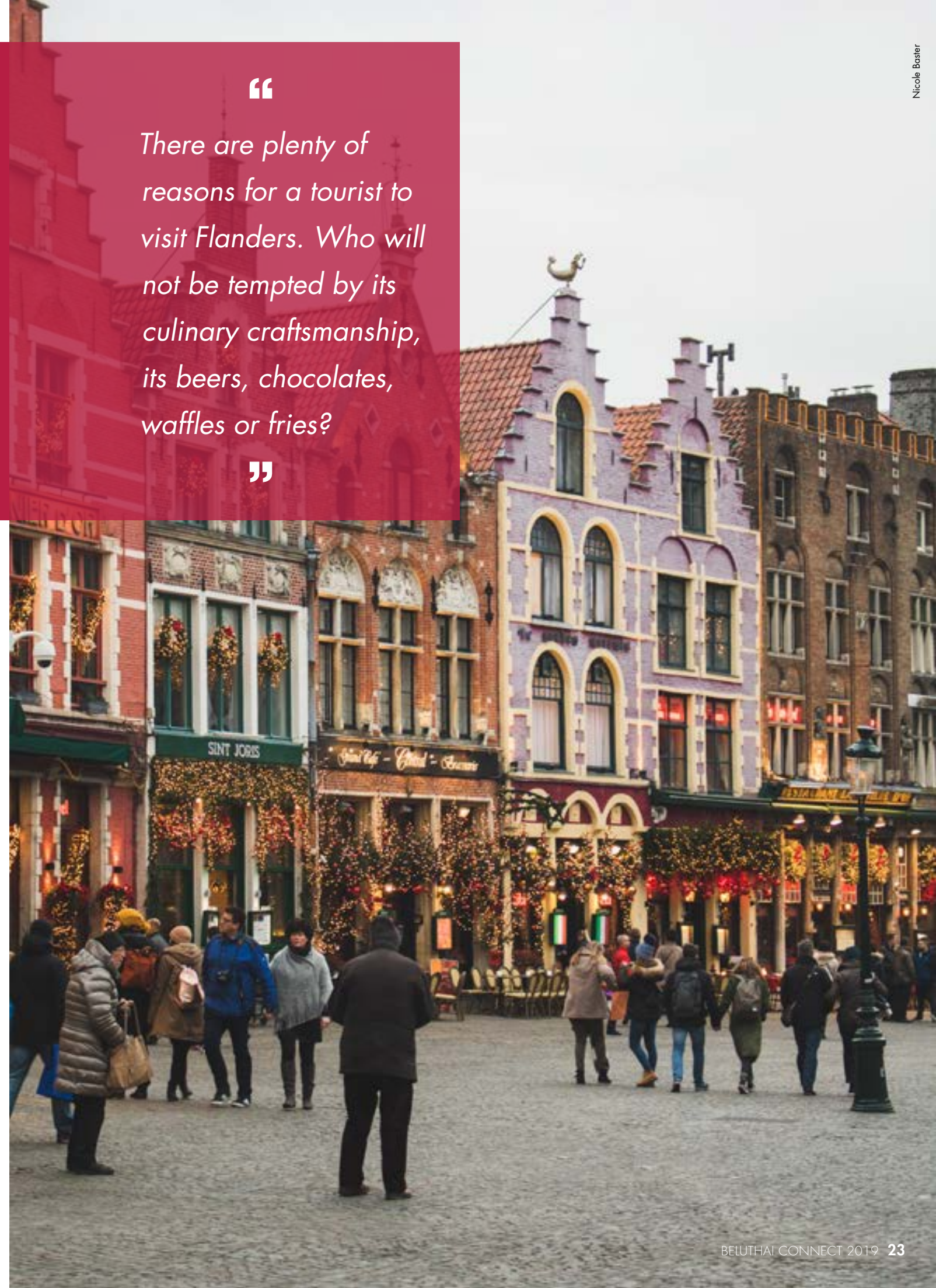
The country has an unparalleled reputation for its specialty beers, ever since the Middle Ages. Up to this day, the enormous quality is met by an unmatched quantity: there are more than 1.500 original Belgian beers. That includes, among others, Belgian ales, raspberry or cherry beer, wheat beer, Flanders 'Old' red and brown, Abbey beer, lambic, gueuze and – the grandest of them all – Trappist.

Flanders has also a deep and rich cultural heritage that goes back hundreds of years. The region has a multitude of world-class museums, galleries, and art centers and a wealth of art events throughout the year. With artists including Peter Paul Rubens, Jan Van Eyck and James Ensor, as well as sculptors and photographers, art lovers will find plenty to immerse themselves in on a trip to Flanders.

“

*There are plenty of reasons for a tourist to visit Flanders. Who will not be tempted by its culinary craftsmanship, its beers, chocolates, waffles or fries?*

”







“  
Belgium is a beer-lover’s paradise.  
And that’s not just its proud inhabitants talking.  
Even UNESCO agrees.”



Peyo (aka Pierre Culliford), who is the father of the Smurfs, was born in Brussels. When he created the Smurfs in 1958 he never thought these little blue creatures would become a worldwide success of which we are still talking today.

Right now, Flanders Fields are in the focus. From 1914 to 1918 Flanders Fields was a major battle theatre in the First World War. A million soldiers from more than 50 different countries were wounded, missing or killed in action here. Entire cities and villages were destroyed, their population on the run. Ypres and Passchendaele became worldwide symbols for the senselessness of war.

Today, the peaceful region still bears witness to this history in monuments, museums, cemeteries and the countless individual stories that link it with the world.

Whether you come to Flanders to try the food, to experience the culture or to enjoy shopping, visits to cities like Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent or Bruges are a must.

#### *Flanders Stands for Exports*

According to the World Trade Report, Belgium – including Flanders – is one of the top 15 exporting countries in the world. Its exportation per capita is among the highest worldwide. To put this in perspective: Flanders is responsible for 83% of Belgian exports and imports.

Flanders offers a unique blend of advantages and opportunities to businesses looking for a strategic location for a new project, in any shape or form. Thousands of foreign companies are already benefiting from these assets.

#### *Central Location*

Flanders can be found at the very center of Europe’s most prosperous region. The purchasing power of its residents and those living within 500 km of the region makes it a prime business location.

As such, Flanders takes center stage within a megalopolis stretching from the London region to the Netherlands, Belgium, and parts of Germany and France. This area is home to no less than 60% of Europe’s purchasing power and covers one of the world’s highest concentrations of people, money and industries.

In short, there’s just no better place than Flanders to prepare your business plans or start up your business activities in order to reap the rewards of commerce in the European mainland, the Middle East and Africa.

#### *Brussels, the Heart of Europe*

Brussels, the capital of Flanders (Belgium), is home to numerous international corporations and intergovernmental decision-making organizations, such as the EU and NATO. It can easily be considered Europe’s lobbying capital as well: more than 3,800 diplomats are

#### *Brussels by numbers*

- over 10,000 lobbyists
- 700 professional associations
- 400 organized interest groups
- 150 international consulting firms
- 150 law firms specializing in European law
- 30 chambers of commerce
- over 1,000 accredited journalists
- representation of over 220 regions and federal entities
- 1,300 European HQs or subsidiaries of foreign companies
- 61% of companies base their public affairs office in Belgium or employ lobbying firms based in Brussels.

*From 1914 to 1918 Flanders Fields was a major battle theatre in the First World War. Ypres and Passchendaele became worldwide symbols for the senselessness of war.*

active in the city – a number that is only surpassed by New York City. It is also the world’s second international conference center by number of events, and the second largest center for advocacy after Washington DC (US).

#### *World-renowned Knowledge Centers and R&D Initiatives*

To the World Economic Forum and many other international spectators, Flanders ranks among the world’s elite when it comes to R&D and innovation.

Flanders is a top 5 knowledge region in Europe and home to world-famous knowledge institutes and universities. Its strategic research centers – imec, VIB, Flanders Make and VITO – are known the world over. In close partnership with Flanders’ universities – KU Leuven, UGent, Antwerp University, VUB and UHasselt – and the global business world, they contribute to the realization of a sustainable future.

Flanders ranks in the top 15 worldwide when it comes to “company spending on R&D”, “availability of the latest technology” and “capacity for innovation” (WEF Global Competitiveness Report 2016-17).

#### *Europe’s Logistics Hub*

Flanders’ excellent infrastructure offers a one-of-a-kind array of advantages when it comes to setting up European logistics or distribution activities.

The seaports of Antwerp, Zeebrugge, Ghent and Ostend are the perfect ocean-going gateways for the fast handling of goods to and from anywhere in the world.

Shipping by air? Brussels Airport, Antwerp International Airport and Ostend-Bruges International Airport have you covered.

Even further, the road, rail, waterway, and pipeline connections of Flanders are among Europe’s densest – ensuring fast connections with the European hinterland.

Flanders’ connectivity is well-praised by the Financial Times Intelligence’s list of “European cities and regions of the future 2016-2017.” Furthermore, the Prologis or World Bank Logistical Performance Index confirms our logistical supremacy in Europe and the world.

#### *Affordable Logistics Space Abounds*

Thanks to lower inbound transport costs, advantageous rental prices for warehouses and attractive fiscal conditions, supply chain costs in Flanders are very competitive. According to fDi Intelligence, prime rent in Belgium – and Flanders – is one of the lowest in Western Europe.

#### *4th Most Productive Workforce*

The workforce of Flanders is multilingual, highly-educated, and loyal. It’s also the 4th





“  
True to the  
region’s  
no-nonsense  
culture, setting up  
a subsidiary in  
Flanders is  
fast and easy.”

most productive labor force in the world, thanks to its diverse culture and the close proximity of top-ranked universities and educational institutions.

Flanders’ educational system is internationally renowned. Especially in math and sciences, Flanders boasts excellent results. Our engineering training programs are very practice-oriented.

Each year, many multitalented and multilingual engineers graduate from universities of Flanders, offering unique capabilities for cross-cultural collaboration and problem-solving (WEF).

#### *Labor Costs Competitive*

The government provides companies and employees with the right employment framework, significant reductions in social security contributions, different types of labor incentives and appealing labor schemes. These include temporary unemployment and flexible working hours. In this way, the effective labor costs are highly competitive compared to other locations throughout Europe.

#### *Effective Corporate Tax Rate Only 26.7%*

Flanders offers companies financial and tax incentives that are found nowhere else in the world. Effective corporate tax rates are significantly lower than statutory rates. Thanks to unique measures like the notional interest deduction (NID), companies using their own capital to finance their activities can lower their effective corporate tax rate to an average of 26.7%.

#### *Support for R&D Projects*

For the R&D of innovative products and processes, the government of Flanders awards generous grants and subsidies (up to a rate of 75%). According to Deloitte (US), Flanders even offers the best R&D related incentives in Europe.

The result is heavily reduced employment costs, which give Flanders-based companies a major advantage over competitors in neighboring countries when it comes to attracting talent.

In addition, Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (VLAIO) offers a one-stop-shop for non-refundable grants in direct support of R&D programs.

#### *High Quality of Life*

Low cost, high quality; this is what makes Flanders one of the top locations for businesses and their employees. It’s a safe and affordable region with a rich cultural heritage and one-of-a-kind art-de-vivre.

Flanders is also home to various international schools and offers some of the

*Easily accessible and centrally located, the Port of Antwerp is key to Flanders’ renowned chemical industry. The port houses five oil refineries and four steam crackers.*



highest-quality health care services in the world.

#### *Ideal Test Market*

Situated at the crossroads of three major cultures — Germanic, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon — the people of Flanders are open to all sorts of influences. In addition, international business cities like Antwerp and Brussels have thriving expat communities. This, and the high purchasing power, makes Flanders the ideal test market for innovations and new products.

#### *Office in a Splash*

True to the region’s no-nonsense culture, setting up a subsidiary in Flanders is fast and easy. You have a one-stop registration process, no government approvals, and the company should be up and running in less than 10 days (except for certain registration and publication formalities, which may take 2 to 4 weeks after incorporation).

There is also no public register of share ownership, and no formalities regarding share transfers, other than the registration of the transfer in the company’s share register.

#### *Antwerp: Europe’s Largest Chemical Cluster*

Easily accessible and centrally located, the Port of Antwerp is key to Flanders’ renowned chemical industry. The port houses five oil refineries and four steam crackers. With over 300 different chemicals and 500 chemical companies it has the most diverse portfolio in the world. A state-of-the-art pipeline network facilitate product interchange.

Antwerp is the largest chemical cluster in Europe, and the second largest worldwide. Companies benefit from this cluster configuration as it enables them to integrate their activities with those of other companies – e.g. suppliers – in a stable business environment.

The British chemical concern INEOS will be funneling a whopping 3 billion euros into the expansion of its local chemical plant, which represents the largest chemical investment in Europe of the past two decades. The pinnacle of the investment is an ethane gas cracker, one of the largest in the world, and the first one on the European mainland in twenty years.

By 2022, INEOS will build a brand-new propane dehydrogenation (PDH) plant and an ethane gas cracker. These will be deployed to turn propane and ethane into propylene and ethylene, respectively. Both are used as primary materials for chemical products central to numerous sectors, including automotive, construction, clothing, cosmetics, personal hygiene, pharmaceuticals, electronics and packaging.

On top of this, chemical juggernaut Borealis (Austria) is channeling 1 billion euros into the construction of a new propylene factory in Flanders. The site of this investment, which further puts the region’s chemical industry on the map, will be the Port of Borealis’ Flanders-based project is one of the largest investments made in the European chemical industry in the past decade. The new plant will mainly produce propylene, the raw material for sturdy plastics that will be used to make all kinds of packaging, garden furniture, straws and car parts.

#### *Need assistance?*

Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) offers a variety of professional tools, services and expert resources that will have you up and running as soon as possible. FIT offers locally-tailored support confidentially and free of charge



#### *FIT Bangkok*

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(F) +66 2 108 1817  
[www.flandersinvestmentandtrade.com/invest/en](http://www.flandersinvestmentandtrade.com/invest/en)





# LUXEMBOURG FIRST TO OFFER FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

*Once you are inside the Grand Duchy, all public transport will be free from March 2020.*

Even though public transport is already cheap in Luxembourg, the country's growing affluence has resulted in it having the highest rate of car ownership in the European Union, with 622 passenger vehicles per 1000 inhabitants.

This love affair with the car, combined with a large number of cross-border commuters, has created a growing problem of traffic congestion, particularly at peak hours. Some 200 000 people crowd into the country each working day from abroad. Congestion times are among the highest in Europe, with each driver spending on average 30 hours stuck in traffic jams every year according to recent data.

This might seem little compared to Bangkok or other major cities in South-east Asia, but deemed by the government a serious problem to quality of life and competitiveness of the country. As a way of making good on a pledge to solve the traffic problem and get people out of their cars, the government's decision to scrap tickets on its public transportation system is probably hard to beat.

Be it buses, trams or even rail services entering the country's territory from abroad, once you are inside the Grand Duchy, all public transport will be free from March 2020.

However, cutting costs for commuters is not deemed enough. Quality of service is seen as key to changing long-standing habits. The government's plans are therefore extensive and stretch beyond the country's borders to neighboring France, Germany and Belgium. The overarching plan includes funding to upgrade trans-border links

and to invest in park-and-ride schemes on both sides of the border. Some 300 km of cycle route are also being laid out, as well as moves designed to further encourage car sharing by commuters.

The aim is to support economic development in the whole area that has Luxembourg as its economic center. The plans to double capacity of rail routes to France alone will cost some 620 million euros as investments in public infrastructure stand the current budget at 4.4% of GDP well above the European Union's average of 2.9%.

One sign of change is already very visible: a new tram system was opened in December 2017 and links the center of Luxembourg City to the business and EU institutional district of Kirchberg. Initial take-up of the new service is good, with passenger numbers exceeding projections. The tram network will be steadily expanded over the next five years to link the major activity and population centers of the capital. The tram has also redefined the image of public transport often identified with crowded busses.

# ENHANCE YOUR BUSINESS



**BUSINESS  
CONSULTANTS  
& DEVELOPMENT**



**SEARCH FOR  
DISTRIBUTORS-PRODUCT  
PLACEMENT**



**ORGANIZATION OF  
CORPORATE EVENTS**



SOLVAY

# HYDROGEN PEROXIDE ALL AROUND US

*Hydrogen Peroxide is an essential product that is all around us. We hardly even notice it. But Solvay does.*



**H**ydrogen peroxide: we have to give credit to the French for having found a much more pleasant name to this uninspiring, almost scary-sounding product: “oxygenated water” (“eau oxygénée”). Sometimes Chemists are responsible for their poor reputation due to little attention for good marketing judgement.

After the Second World War, Solvay gradually diversified its famous sodium carbonate business into other new ventures, notably PVC, practically inventing the “plastic bottle” concept. This process results in large volumes of hydrogen.

This well-known gas had lost its appeal following dangerous use in balloons and Zeppelins. This caused dramatic explosions and many victims.

Instead, Solvay decided to put it to safer use, and this resulted in the production of hydrogen peroxide, which is nothing else than a molecule of water with a second atom of oxygen (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>).

## First Sold as Disinfectant

At first hydrogen peroxide was sold in pharmacy as a disinfectant. But the business picked up through many applications, Solvay becoming a global leader. In 1987, the first Solvay factory in Thailand was established at Map Ta Phut. In 2012, this was followed by adding a second and a new type: a “mega plant.” It was the largest of its kind in the world with an overall capacity of over 30 times the first Thai factory.

The answer to the success lies in the powerful properties and environmental benefits of the combined hydrogen and oxygen atoms forming this “oxygenated water.” After use it just decomposes into water and oxygen, while for example popping that bottle of Champagne would emit 10 grams of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Industrial recognition of hydrogen peroxide started with textile bleaching. It was also replacing harmful chlorine in pulp and paper bleaching and water treatment. The process to make polyurethane for the huge coating industry also moved to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> feedstock. More recently, its bactericide derivatives are used as disinfectants for the agriculture,

aquaculture and food industry, as well as for aseptic packaging. When purified to “5 nine” levels, hydrogen peroxide it is used as a cleaning agent in electronic chip making fabs.

The inherent environmental merits of “l’eau oxygénée” are at the core of its success. This essential product is all around us in our daily lives without us noticing. Its overall sustainability will continue to make this compound ever more practical.

## Aqualisan Helps Shrimp Farming

In Thailand, Solvay recently developed Aqualisan®, an environmentally friendly water conditioning solution for shrimp farming industry. This product is a derivative of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>.

Roughly 5 million tons of shrimp are farmed every year across the globe, mostly in China and Southeast Asia. The majority of the world’s farm raised shrimps comes from small to medium sized family-run farms scattered across rural low income areas, where the risk of water pollution and disease outbreaks in ponds can be substantial.

Due to their small structure, a single disease outbreak could entirely wipe out a family’s source of income. Many farmers don’t have the expertise to diagnose problems or find the right solutions.

Adding to these challenges, the world is trending towards higher food safety requirements and increased environmental protection monitoring, raising the bar for these independent farmers.

Solvay has recognized the need for an efficient solution that is safe for shrimp disease management and thus consumer health, as well as the environment yet powerful enough to fend off disease and protect farmers’ livelihood.

Delivering good results, however, requires a level of expertise. To ensure that farmers achieve the best possible results, Solvay guides them through the process. This additional service to local communities is a fundamental part of Solvay’s approach.

In the future, Solvay’s solution may transform also the farming environments of other aquatic species such as fish and crab.



**AQUALISAN** อควาลิแซน

A premium, effective and environmentally friendly water conditioning solution from Belgium

MADE IN THAILAND for Thai shrimp farming industry



**SOLVAY**

asking more from chemistry®



# HUB of ART

The legacy of Jan van Eyck, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens can be found in Flanders' art cities.

Visit Flanders

Since the medieval period, Flanders has been an inspirational force for the Flemish Primitives, Renaissance and Baroque art. In the 15-17th centuries, the Flemish masters were the most influential artists on the planet: Jan van Eyck, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens.

You can discover their legacy in the many prestigious museums in Flanders' art cities. These might not be the only spots where you can witness their genius, but they are the perfect places to discover this vast legacy.

Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Ghent, Leuven and Mechelen are Flanders' art cities. Here you'll stumble upon immense treasures of arts and heritage.

Antwerp, for instance, is the home of the grand master Peter Paul Rubens. The impressive Rubens House, where he used to live and work, is turned into a museum in his honour. The stately cathedral of Our Lady also holds some of his masterpieces, combined with work of top contemporary artists such as Jan Fabre.

Listed on UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Bruges has the best-preserved example of a medieval city centre, with its bell tower leaning over the wide-open market.

In Ghent, you'll find three imposing towers in the heart of the city. One of those, St. Bavo's Cathedral, is the home of 'Adoration of the Mystic Lamb', Flemish master Jan van Eyck's most famous creation.

Brussels, the capital of Europe, offers an overwhelming wealth of heritage, with over 80 museums, the King's Palace and packed with history and culture.

## Mechelen and Leuven Worth a Visit

Mechelen and Leuven may be lesser known cities in Flanders but contains many stunning gems worth discovering.

With the majestic St. Rumbold's Cathedral as a highlight, picturesque Mechelen is one of the region's most underrated historic cities. St. Rumbold's Tower is a soaring 15th-century cathedral, 318 feet (97 metres) and more than 500 steps high.

Leuven, one of Europe's oldest university cities, will be a surprise as well. Centuries-old monuments such as the famous Gothic town hall go hand in hand with modern buildings to form a vibrant backdrop for the city life.

The case is clear: whichever city you travel to in Flanders, you'll be welcomed with open arms and able to discover for yourself the treasures that make this region so unique.



Clockwise from above left: **Brueghel:** Massacre of the Innocents (c. 1565), British Royal Collection; The Peasant Wedding (c. 1566) Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. **Rubens:** The Entombment (c. 1612) John Paul Getty Museum; Le Chapeau de Paille (c. 1622) National Gallery, London. **Jan van Eyck:** Portrait of a Man in a Turban (1433) National Gallery, London.

Opposite: **Jan van Eyck:** Adoration of the Mystic Lamb (c. 1430), St. Bavo's Cathedral





## SPECIAL SECTION

# KATOEN NATIE THAILAND 20 YEARS OF INNOVATION

**K**atoen Natie has been in Thailand for 20 years. It's been a memorable ride for the company. Katoen Natie Thailand thanked its partners for their continuous support with the Conference 'Eastern Economic Corridor: a Bridgehead in Transformation,' and a Customer Appreciation Night. The festivities ended with a Family Day to tribute the more than 850 people in Thailand for their daily commitment and dedication.

### Growth Continues

Katoen Natie is showing a continued growth in Thailand. Since 1998, Katoen Natie has built a profound local expertise

in the chemical, automotive and consumer goods sectors.

With a total investment of 9 billion baht over the past 20 years, Katoen Natie Thailand has developed 5 warehouse and packaging platforms, and manages as many on-site logistics platforms at customer's manufacturing plants. Today, the local industry is considering Katoen Natie as the expert in building and operating those platforms to international standards.

In 2018, Katoen Natie invested over THB 450 million to create, among other developments, a new platform in Map Ta Phut, Rayong and additional space at an existing platform in Pluak Daeng, Rayong. All these investments

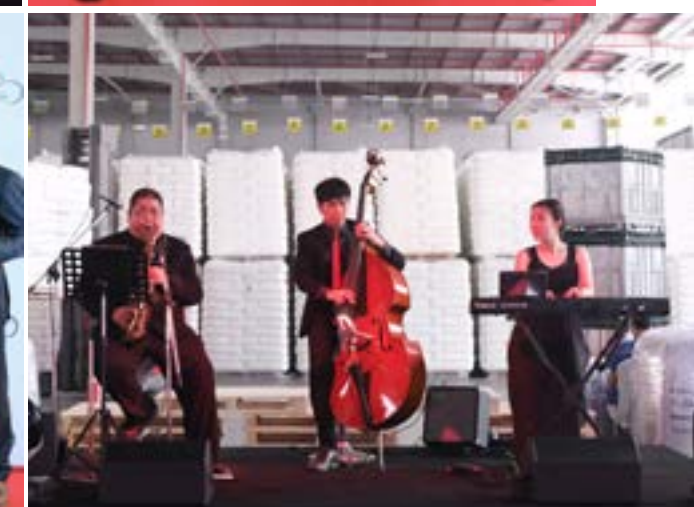
are done to further support the growth of their customers in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) area, the beating heart of Thailand's modern industry. Katoen Natie is confident that the Thai economy is continuously developing and has a stable potential. This is demonstrated by the development of the domestic infrastructure system and the development of the logistics system to connect to different economic regions.

Katoen Natie Chairman & President Fernand Huts adds: "Katoen Natie Thailand is the most beautiful jewel of the Katoen Natie group. Even better, with Map Ta Phut and Pluak Daeng, we have the two most beautiful jewels in the worldwide operations of Katoen Natie. Twenty years ago, we had no strategy to go internationally, until long-term partners Covestro and Dow brought us here. Once we had a bridgehead, we could convince other customers."

"Today we operate more than 60 customers in our 400,000 square meters of state-of-the-art warehouses and 76 silos. We thank all our customers for the trust they put in Katoen Natie. The business developed because of the hospitality, the warmth, the efforts and the dedication of our Thai people."



From left: Dr. Kirida Bhaopichitr (Thailand Development Research Institute); Ms. Duangjai Asawachintachit (Board of Investment); Dr. Pailin Chuchottaworn (Ministry of Transport); Mr. Fernand Huts (Katoen Natie); H.E. Mr. Philippe Kridelka; Mr. Surasak Charoensirichote (Rayong Government); Mr. Karl Huts (Katoen Natie)





# KATOEN NATIE THAILAND

## 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



## FERNAND HUTS SMOOTH OPERATOR

*CEO and Chairman Fernand Huts is both surprised and happy about how well the operations in Thailand have been growing. Life couldn't get much better for Katoen Natie in the Land of Smiles.*

**“W**hen we started, we didn't think it would go this smoothly and fast. We didn't have a strategy or plan for this,” Huts admits. The growth happened because of the customers, the support of the minister, and also the Board of Investment (BOI).

“Here in Thailand, everything went well. We could buy more land, have a new warehouse, develop organically. We have grown together with the Thai economy, especially in Map Ta Phut and Rayong. Sometimes, as a Chairman, you get these problems piling up on your desk. But here in Thailand, none of these happened.”

The relationship between Belgium and Thailand has always been excellent. There is a positive story to tell. “Our histories have always been without tension, whether we look at it politically, economically or socially. The two kingdoms have always been in good terms. I think it's important that we have not had bad events in the past.”

### *Learning the Tricks First*

In the beginning, the challenges are always the same. You have to learn the culture. “As a company you have to adapt to the culture and environment. And I can tell you that Thailand is very different from the rest of the world. From the moment you get on the Thai Airlines, you are in a different world, another culture,” Huts explains. “In the beginning, you fall, and then you get up again. Sometimes

you hurt yourself, and you think you are European or Belgian. And we have done it. We have adapted to the Thai way of doing things.”

Katoen Natie employs many Belgians in Thailand, some married, some not. “What I can say is that none of my management is asking to go back. They say that it's fine to extend their stay. They like the environment, they like the Thais.”

Every company has its own challenges. For Katoen Natie it's their diverse workforce. “HR is important, because we have invested a lot into the people, including training. And sometimes we send them to Belgium. One challenge is that the Thais are so used to living in Thailand that they get a little clumsy. They are not used to the Belgian climate. They are not used to our eating. So, we still have to look for better ways to send the trainees to Belgium,” Huts says.

Once you are a name, once you have a brand, everybody knows you. You start getting invited by every insider of the business community. “Doing business in Thailand is a matter of trust. When you arrive, no one knows you. But after 20 years the business community knows you. What is even more important is that the business community knows that we are a reliable company, that we are doing a good job. We bring added value to the customer.”

### *Feeling at Ease in Thailand*

“I like Thailand a lot. Normally, I go to countries where we have lots of problems. But when I'm here, there are no problems.”

Huts' last visit was when the King of Belgium visited Thailand a few years ago. “It was a fantastic festivity. When I'm here I always feel at ease. It's not difficult because Thais are good-humoured, they always try to make you feel good. They are very charming people.”

“Why not come here? There are worse places in the world,” Huts laughs.





TOURISM

# MAE HONG SON LOOP

Story and photos courtesy of Tourism Authority of Thailand

The mountainous and largely forested province of Mae Hong Son offers plenty of scenic beauty and outdoor activities. Its rural charm is blended with a refreshing laid-back vibe and ethnic diversity.

Mae Hong Son can be visited year-round. But the best time is during the cooler months of November to January.

Mae Hong Son can be accessed from Chiang Mai. While daily flights and bus services are available, a popular option is to travel the Mae Hong Son Loop tour route by rented car or motorbike.

The TAT's 'Cruising through the Cave' picture of Tham Lot in Mae Hong Son won a 2018 PATA Gold Award in the Travel Journalism – Travel Photograph category.

The Mae Hong Son Loop is a journey of some 600 kilometres that starts and finishes in Chiang Mai, and it can be taken in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.

The Loop can be done in three to four days. It passes through picturesque countryside, taking in places like Mae Chaem on Thailand's highest mountain Doi Inthanon, the riverside town of Mae Sariang, the market town of Khun Yuam and the popular town of Pai.

## BACKPACKER'S PARADISE

In earlier days a sleepy and somewhat remote Shan town, Pai lies on the banks of the Pai River and is today known for its fun and chilled-out new-age scene, often being compared somewhat to Bangkok's backpack mecca of Khao San Road. There are guesthouses and fancier hotels, restaurants, cafes, handicraft shops, bars and a choice of activities on offer like rafting, tubing, trekking and cycling as well as hot springs to enjoy.

Among local sights to visit around Pai is the Memorial Bridge across the Pai River which was built by the Japanese during World War II and is a 'must-see' photo op for mostly Thai visitors. This is located about nine kilometres from town and is near Pai Canyon, another attraction and an area of eroded red sandstone with gullies and ochre-coloured ridges dotted with pines. As well as the main viewing area, side trails lead off into the Canyon and surrounding woodlands which can be good for birdwatching.

About five kilometres from town is Ban Santichon, offering a traditional Chinese village experience complete with clay houses, eateries serving Yunnan cuisine like pork hocks with buns and steamed black chicken with Chinese herbs, Chinese tea tasting, pony riding and the chance to dress up in traditional Yunnan attire.

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# THAILAND'S MAGIC ROUTE

## PHOTOS

1. THAM LOT
2. GREAT HOLY RELICS PAGODAS, CHIANG MAI
3. YUN LAI VIEWPOINT
4. WAT PHRATHAT DOI KONG MU
5. SU TONG PE BRIDGE
6. POI SANG LONG TRADITION

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For early risers, the nearby Yun Lai Viewpoint is a spot from which to watch the sun rise.

## BRIDGES AND CAVES WORTH A BREAK

A sight in Pai that is not so well known to tourists, but is worth the visit, is the bamboo bridge, namely Kho Ku So, which translates into the Bridge of Merit. Around eight kilometres out of town, this bamboo bridge pathway stretches for over 800 metres across rice fields and leads to the bamboo temple. It was built by locals for the monks who previously had to walk for some six kilometres to the village to get food.

On the section of the Mae Hong Soon Loop between Pai and Mae Hong Son town, Tham Lot makes for an interesting side visit. About 10 kilometres off the route, this is a huge cave system once inhabited by prehistoric man, where ancient clay pottery and

carved wooden coffins have been found.

If bamboo bridges happen to be your thing, there is another one to see between Pai and Mae Hong Son town. This one being the picturesque Su Tong Pae, the Bamboo Bridge of Faith and Success in the village of Kung Mai Sak, some 13 kilometres north of the city. This 500-metre-long bridge crosses the Sa-Nga Stream and a rice field to link the village and a hillside temple thus allowing the monks to go out for morning alms.

While in the area, the border village of Ban Rak Thai (literally meaning 'the love Thailand village') can be visited as well. The village was settled by former Kuo Min Tang fighters from Yunnan province in China, after the communist takeover of that country. There is Yunnanese Chinese food to enjoy and Chinese tea shops, as well as the enchanting scenery of the surrounding valley and hills.





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## THE SWITZERLAND OF THAILAND

Nearby is the Pang Ung, Pang Tong Royal Development Project where the picturesque scenery has been called the 'Switzerland of Thailand.' Pang Ung used to be an illegal opium planting area until an initiative of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej saw the area and its people transformed into a place that now grows various types of produce like avocado, persimmon, Chinese pear and Chinese bayberry.

Just outside of Mae Hong Son town is Wat Phrathat Doi Kong Mu, a hilltop temple affording panoramic views of the city and surrounding countryside, while in town itself is Wat Chong Kham, which has appeared in advertising campaigns for the province. Wat Chong Kham is close to the location of the nightly Mae Hong Son Walking Street market that operates from October to February and which is worth exploring for some great local food and locally-inspired gifts to take back home.

For those visiting in November and early December, the Bua Tong Blossom Festival in Mae Hong Son's Khun Yuam district is a chance to see the mesmerising sight of the area's hills and valleys blaze into bright gold as the Dok Bua Tong or wild sunflower is in its blooming season. Held alongside the Festival is a local market selling local arts and crafts and farm fresh produce.

There are nationwide festivals such as Songkran and Loi Krathong. But there are also local festivals and traditions reflecting the local beliefs and customs in Mae Hong Son. These include the Chong Phara tradition of making merit in the Shan style at the end of Buddhist Lent or Ok Phansa in October and the Poi Sang Long novice ordination tradition during March or April.

While the Mae Hong Son Loop can be done in three or four days, various side trips can be added to spend as much time as desired meandering through the region. Some suggested places include Huai Nam Dang National Park near Pai, where in the early morning during the winter months a mystical-looking sea of mist can be observed from the viewpoint at Doi Kiew Lom.

At Doi Inthanon, the Great Holy Relics Pagodas of Phramahathat Napamathanidol and Phramahathat Napaphol Bhumisiri can be visited to pay homage, while the Doi Inthanon Royal Project research station with its flower garden and nursery makes for a great lunch stop.

**M**AE HONG SON is one of the 55 secondary destinations the Tourism Authority of Thailand is promoting through the "Amazing Thailand Go Local" campaign. The aim is to spread more tourism revenue into rural areas and grow community tourism in a responsible and sustainable manner, while also evening out seasonality and weekend/weekday travel flows.

## DOING BUSINESS IN THAILAND ?

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# QUAINT & WILD NAN

Story and photos courtesy of Tourism Authority of Thailand

**N**an province in Thailand's North is a wilderness enthusiast's dream. Tranquil forests cover its breathtaking valleys and steep mountains.

Nan prides itself on nature and, in 2018, received a commendation from His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun as the No. 1 ASEAN Clean Tourist City. The recognition followed Nan being awarded the No. 1 ASEAN Clean Tourist City Standard 2018-2020 at the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2018 earlier in that year.

Lying 700 kilometres north of Bangkok, much of the province is wilderness, and the remainder is rural focusing on rice and fruit cultivation. There are also cultural and historical sights worth visiting.

Nan town is quaint and the capital of the province of the same name. It has little more than 20,000 people making it a rather small provincial capital. It is an old

city, though, dating back to the 14th century when the first known community settled on the banks of the Nan River.

For many centuries, the remote region pretty much kept to itself with few visitors in and out. But it was influenced by kingdoms in the region, first and foremost Sukhothai. It was also at times under the control of Lanna, Burma and Siam, and greatly influenced by them all, while keeping its own identity.

A diverse collection of hill tribes also populates the tranquil province including Thai Khoen, Thai Lue, Thai Puan, Thai Yai and Thai Yuan giving the region great cultural diversity although many have assimilated into the larger community.

## Cultural Sites and Temples

The temples and historical district of the Nan city offer many places to visit. Nan's Old Quarter dates back to the height of the Lanna kingdom in the 14th century. A tram tour is the best way to see the sites with tickets sold at the Tourist Information Centre across from Wat Phumin. The guided tour takes in another 14 temples as well as historical sites.

Located opposite to Wat Phrathat Chang Kham, also known as the Elephant Temple, and near Wat Phumin, this building was originally a royal pavilion and where the former Royal Governor would work. It

was renovated and named the National Museum of Nan in 1974. The natural light and open spaces make it feel like a home. It is divided into a "living" section about tribes that currently live in Nan, and another section about the ancient aspects of the province.

Exhibits include Lanna-style Buddha images and other valuable ancient artefacts, and old everyday household items used in centuries past. It is a good place to learn how people lived in the old days. And if museum and history happen to be your thing, there is a couple of old teak houses to visit around Nan including Nan Noble House (the House of Chao Fongkham) and the Residence of Chao Ratchabut.

The province's most famous temple was built in the late 1500s and restored between 1867-1875, which was a century after Thailand retook the province from the Burmese who conquered it in 1558 and left the town nearly deserted. Wat Phumin is known for its ancient murals painted by the Thai Lue artist group including the famous Krasip Rak (whispering love) mural most photographed by many Thais. The temple is also known for its unique cruciform Ubosoth and the glittering golden principal Buddha images facing North, South, East and West.

For anyone who has an interest in temples, there are many others to visit in Nan town including Wat Phrathat Chae Haeng, one of the oldest temples in the city; Wat Si Phan Ton, known for its golden main hall; and Wat Phrathat Khao Noi on a hilltop offering panoramic views of Nan town and the surrounding hills to name but a few.

## National Parks and Long Border

Nan is home to six national parks, and the Luang Prabang Range that marks the border with Lao PDR – Thailand's longest border with its neighbour that is not marked by the Mekong River – is wilderness and part of Lao PDR's Nam Phouy National Biodiversity Conservation Area. One and two-day treks into the national parks can be arranged by some Nan-based travel agents. Overnight stays include camping under the stars and forest canopy.

Villagers in the area call the Doi Phu Ka Basin in the Park the heart of magical Nan province. The number of tree varieties are so numerous the Park is frequented by Thai botanists, as several tree types are very rare. The steep mountains and rivers mean the Park has several waterfalls and a few caves that can be visited.

For views and hiking this park can be perfect. After a night of camping under starlight and maybe

## Photos

1. Sao Din Na Noi
2. Wat Ming-Muang
3. Wat Phrathat Chae Haeng
4. Residence of Chao Ratchabut





seeing a meteor shower (check with the National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand for the forecast), hike to Pha Hua Singh (Lion's Head Cliff) and take in the panoramic view of the forests and the river below.

Villagers here mine rock salt from the wells and boil it in a traditional and sustainable fashion. They have been doing it the same way for centuries and visiting the village is like stepping back in time. Located in the northeast corner of Nan province in an out-of-the-way place, it's worth visiting for a couple of days with accommodation available in the village.

Another natural attraction worth visiting is Sao Din Na Noi, offering magical landscape of soil formation into strange shapes. Geologists assume that it might be aged around 10,000 – 30,000 years and was once the bottom of the sea. There have been discoveries of stone bangles and ancient axes, which are currently preserved at Nan National Museum.

### *Spicy Fish and Star Fruits*

The Nan River flows from north to south through the province and is an important tributary to Thailand's Chao Phraya River that flows through Bangkok then into the Gulf of Thailand. It is also an important source of fresh fish in Nan province.

Floating restaurants offer some of the local delicacies, including Yam Pla Sio Thot Krop (spicy

crispy fried fish), Tom Yam Pla Kot (spicy catfish soup), and Pla Nuea On Thot Kratiam (deep fried fish with garlic). Meals are very affordable and for a little extra some of the restaurants offer pillows and mattresses for stargazing and relaxing after dinner.

Like many Thai provinces, Nan has seasonal fruits in abundance including lychee, som sithong (juicy oranges) and ma fai chin (Chinese star fruit).

Tourists visiting Nan on the weekend may want to drop by Kuang Mueang Nan Walking Street. Each Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening, in front of Wat Phumin, local food stalls offer a wide range of local specialities, and there are also stalls selling locally-made crafts.

### *Getting There*

Nan is easily reached with a flight to the airport in Nan town. There are daily flights from Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport, and there are four flights a week from Chiang Mai. Buses from Bangkok's Mo Chit Station take about 11 hours. From Chiang Mai, the bus journey takes a bit less than six hours. Hiring a taxi or renting a car are other options.

Accommodation in Nan ranges from the rustic to the posh. The national parks offer camping and some have bungalows. The province also has boutique resorts and very good hotels. Most accommodation is in or near Nan town.

Camping at Doi Samer Dao



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# CAKES & OTHER TREATS

*The southern Thai town of Trang isn't making big headlines. But it's a culinary paradise worth a visit. Story and photos courtesy of Tourism Authority of Thailand*

It's the administrative centre of a far-flung province, where life moves as slowly as latex drips from the local rubber trees. Tourists tend to pass through on their way to offshore islands like Ko Muk with its sea caves, or the Ko Phetra National Park.

At first glance it seems there's little reason to stay in Trang Town. It can't boast ancient temples, the beaches are some way off and the town centre is modern, practical and bustle-free.

But it's worth taking a second look, especially if you're one of the growing groups of people who delight in seeking out Thailand's unique and tasty dishes. For foodies, Trang is a five-star destination where the Chinese, Muslim and Thai traditions have clashed, coming to a culinary compromise. There are a thousand tastes to enjoy.

## Start Your Day with Pork

Get up early in Trang – for breakfast is the best meal of the day. The locals are not content with a bowl of rice porridge. Breakfast is a hearty affair and best enjoyed at one of the bustling local pork and dim sum shops. At last count, there were over 70 of these in town.

You'd think pork restaurants would be an anomaly in Thailand's Muslim south. But restaurants like the famous "Trang Mu Yang" are packed every morning. These shops are easily found. Just look for the pigs' heads for sale outside the nearest food place, then go in and squeeze onto a table.

The dining protocol changes little from place to place. Once seated, you're presented with a tray of dim sum to



*Above: Trang's noodle shops do a brisk lunchtime trade.*

*Opposite: With Trang being a coastal province, seafood is a popular ingredient alongside the town's famous pork.*







*This page: There are many dim sums to try, stuffed with anything from pork to quail eggs.*

*Opposite: In Trang's Khiang Chuan Chim noodle bar, locals enjoy their lunch while surrounded by the stars of Europe's football leagues.*

*The sponge cakes of Trang come in many colours and flavours including orange, coffee, pandan and butter, and a famous three flavour cake.*

*Kuay-Tiew, dry or served in a rich stock is as popular in Trang as it is all over Thailand.*



choose from. The tasty steamed parcels contain anything from ground pork to quail eggs or tofu. These are all washed down with Chinese tea. But the pork, or Mu Yang, is the star of the breakfast table. After being marinated for several hours with a range of Chinese herbs, spices and honey, pigs are cooked whole during the night. The result is a sweet and crispy meat with the rich belly fat being most popular with diners.

The pork is so famous that it's celebrated in an annual pork festival every September where the town's chefs share the secrets of their marinades.

**K**hanom Chin, fermented rice noodles served with fish curry sauce, is popular all over Thailand. But in Trang this dish comes into its own thanks to the abundance of local seafood and amazing coconuts. The dish is another breakfast staple, and at restaurants like Khun Poom by the city park you can help yourself to as much curry as you can handle, as well as large plates of crispy local vegetables and pickles.

The night market by the city hall is another good place to try Khanom Chin as well as other rich muslim-style curries such as Massaman or Kaeng Kari Pla.

### **Pink Noodles Worth a Try**

Kuai Tiao is as easy to find in Trang as it is in the rest of Thailand, and there are many vendors in the city selling noodles made using family recipes. The vibrantly pink Yen Ta Fo is popular in the town, and as well as the fermented soybean paste that gives the dish its vivid colour. The noodle bowls are full of the local seafood such as tasty

squid and crab.

A good place to try one these famous noodle dishes is the family-run Khiang Chuan Chim Restaurant on Visetkul Road, where you can enjoy your lunch and be kept up to date on the European football leagues by the sports-mad owner.

One thing that shouldn't be missed in Trang is the famous Kopi coffee. Black, strong and sweetened with sugar, this coffee helps you start the day with a kick. It is often served with sweet deep-fried bread called Cha Kui or Pa Tong Ko donuts.

Kopi is served all over Trang, but remember to order it by name, rather than asking for generic coffee to be sure you get the real deal.

### **Don't Miss the Cake**

If you are sweet-toothed, consider ending your day with a slice of Trang's famous cake. This soft sponge delicacy comes in a range of colours and tastes – orange and coffee being the best sellers. The cakes are baked with a hole in the middle like a European Bundt cake, and they are made without baking soda or preservatives.

Trang's baking tradition stretches back a century when a Chinese immigrant called Kook Ming started making cakes in a home-made oven. He gradually refined the recipe to suit local tastes and the cakes have been selling like hot cakes ever since.

There's even a cake festival in the town held every August.





## LUXEMBOURG SPACE JOINING FINANCE

*Planners in the Department of Economy and investors believe that the space sector has the potential to become one day the next pillar of economic growth in the Grand Duchy.*

The launch of the Luxembourg Space Agency in September 2018 has to be seen as an important step into that direction and its mission is to foster collaboration between key players in the space industry and accelerate the emergence of innovation-driven businesses.

The Luxembourg Space Agency builds on the country's deep understanding of the legal and infrastructure requirements for space entrepreneurs to achieve their commercial ambitions. Under the authority of the Ministry of the Economy, the agency is therefore collaborating with leading national academic, research and business organizations and communities as well as other public institutions within Luxembourg's extensive ecosystem of public- and private-sector stakeholders.

For more than three decades, Luxembourg has been at the forefront of commercial and cooperative initiatives that have shaped a vibrant space economy. Its greatest success has been the creation in 1985 of the government-supported SES (Société Européenne des Satellites), today the world's largest commercial satellite operator. The rise of the company was based on the then risky investment premise that space-based technology would transform television and worldwide communications. The investment has reaped dividends. Still a transformative actor in the industry the company is valued at over 8 billion euros.

Further space-related services and businesses have developed alongside SES, and today commercial space activity accounts for nearly 2% of GDP, among the highest ratios in Europe.

The Luxembourg Space Agency will carry out its mission through a network of partners that bring the skills, expertise and capabilities for the Agency to meet all the needs of commercial space entrepreneurs. This strategy based on multiple-stakeholder partnerships is designed to create an attractive and supportive ecosystem for space companies to grow and thrive.

Starting in the 2019 academic year, the University of Luxembourg will offer an interdisciplinary space master's

degree markedly different from programs at other institutions. It will provide participants from an engineering or scientific background with additional technical expertise in fields needed to support Luxembourg's space industry, along with a strong foundation in business.

To fund space innovation, the Luxembourg Space Agency is establishing with other partners a venture capital vehicle to be established as a reserved alternative investment fund, with financial backing from the public sector as well as private investors. The Luxembourg Space Fund targets an initial 100 million EUR in capital, its goal is to provide equity funding for new space companies with groundbreaking ideas and technology.

Aside from attempts to carve out a greater role in the commercialization of space, priority areas identified by government planners include green tech, health tech, building on its strengths in logistics, as well as information and communications technologies.

The challenge of future-proofing the country's economy is big. The financial services sector directly accounts for about a quarter of Luxembourg's GDP, with the number even higher when you factor in the supporting role it plays for other industries. The information and communications sector accounts for around 8 per cent. By way of comparison, the space and satellite sector accounts for just close to 2% of GDP.



*HRH The Grand Duke and The Emperor of Japan during the State Visit in Japan in November 2017*

## LUXEMBOURG AND BELGIUM JOINT SPACE ODYSSEY

*Belgium and Luxembourg signed a joint declaration in January 2019. In it, the two countries commit to collaborate on the development of an international framework for the exploration and utilisation of space resources.*

"The space economy is growing rapidly, and it is important to start working now on international rules to allow the full and orderly development of the huge potential this sector offers," Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Kingdom of Belgium, says.

"The Grand Duchy is firmly committed to supporting the competitiveness of the commercial space industry in Europe," Etienne Schneider, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, adds.

### *First Target: the Moon and Asteroids*

Due to technological developments and the arrival of new players, there is growing political and commercial interest in the use and exploitation of space resources.

In the initial stages, the exploitation of space resources is set to involve the moon and near-earth asteroids. These contain many resources that could be exploited, such as water, aluminium, cobalt, iron and manganese. Water is particularly useful as it can be used directly by humans, as well as a propellant for future space missions.

Luxembourg is a pioneer in the exploration and utilization of space resources through its SpaceResources.lu initiative. The Grand Duchy offers a legal framework recognising that space resources can be used and establishing a process for the authorisation and supervision of corresponding activities. Belgium also has a long tradition of legal, technical and economic expertise in the space sector. Belgium has signed five United Nations space treaties including the 1979 Agreement governing the Activities

of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

Belgium, Luxembourg and other European and non-European States are working within the scope of UNCOPUOS (UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) to develop an international framework for the exploitation of space resources. Sharing the view that the promotion of private investment in the promising sector of the exploration and use of space resources require the development of such a framework, the declaration signed today is formalising the intention of both countries to bring this about.

*Below: Etienne Schneider, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Kingdom of Belgium.*

*Bottom: The surface of the 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko comet as seen from the Philae lander.*



*Jean-Pol Schrauwen / ISA*



*European Space Agency (ESA)*





## BLUE ELEPHANT GROUP MASTERCHEF NOOROR SOMANY STEPPE

**A**ward-winning and internationally acclaimed Chef Nooror Somany Steppe, through the world renowned Blue Elephant Group, which she founded with her husband, Karl Steppe, and Thai partners in Brussels in 1980, plays a significant role as an ambassador in promoting the best of Thai cuisine and Thai culture throughout her frequent travels abroad - on numerous occasions as a special, invited guest chef of Thailand's Foreign Ministry and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. She has staged Thai Food Festivals throughout the world including the UN Headquarters in New York, the Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, creating a lavish gala dinner for 400 guests at the World Economic Forum 2018 in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, the first Thai woman and chef to have staged a Thai Food promotion in Iran, amongst many others.

Master Chef Nooror has established her name not only for her

original and historical knowledge of Thai cuisine, but also for her ready-mixed recipes of Thai sauces, curry pastes and powders, which are presently produced and exported to over 30 countries.

At present there are 6 branches of Blue Elephant Restaurants located in major cities throughout Europe, Middle East and Asia. Each restaurant is decorated in a true Thai style and serves the best in Thai cuisine, allowing its foreign customers to fully experience an authentic taste of Thailand.

The latest addition to the Blue Elephant restaurants in Thailand is the trendy "Thai Brasserie by Blue Elephant" opening at Central Festival Phuket – serving Thai cuisine exquisitely prepared from local fresh ingredients, organic foods and products from the Royal Projects.

Presently, Chef Nooror continues to create new Thai dishes using the Royal Project products and ingredients, and travels worldwide with the pride of showcasing Thailand in her capacity as one of the country's foremost women chefs.

Last but not least, one of many hats worn by Chef Nooror, is helping the underprivileged in the society in her role as an ambassador of the Queen Sirikit Centre Breast Cancer Foundation (QSCBC) in Thailand. Her contribution to this very worthy cause is creating and serving every year a special, health-inspired "Pink Ribbon Menu" at Blue Elephant Restaurants in Bangkok and Phuket throughout the month of October – a month dedicated to raising awareness of breast cancer – and more importantly, donating part of the proceeds from sale of this special menu to benefit breast cancer patients at QSCBC.



  
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# PERFECT MIX

*Luxembourg is having its own unique mix of cultures and lifestyles. It's not just the world's second largest domicile of investment funds anymore.*

Located between France, Belgium and Germany, Luxembourg has long defined itself as combining both German and French cultures and lifestyles while not being rooted in either one, but cultivating its own unique mix. The traditional openness is best reflected in Luxembourg's multilingualism. French and German are the country's administrative languages, alongside Luxembourgish, and English is widely used especially in the business and financial community and even throughout the administration.

More than half of the adult working-age population in Luxembourg speak three or more languages, one of the highest proportions in the European Union according to Eurostat. Unlike countries like Switzerland or Belgium, where different languages are mainly confined to their particular regions, most Luxembourgers are able to switch seamlessly between languages on a daily basis. This fluid way in which Luxembourgers switch between languages can seem confusing at times. The country's parliament, the Chambre des Députés, for instance, debates issues in Luxembourgish but tables legislation in French.

Luxembourg's non-native population has soared in recent decades, with foreigners now making up 48% of the total compared with 13% in 1961. This growth has been driven by the development of the economy and the financial sector – Luxembourg is the world's second largest domicile of investment funds after the US – as well as a growing presence of multinational companies and EU institutions among them the European Investment bank and the European Court of Justice. This influx has further amplified Luxembourg's multilingualism, making it more attractive for businesses that want to use the country as a platform for doing business in Europe.

## Star-studded Cuisines

No surprise, restaurants in the Grand Duchy, whether they are relaxed family restaurants or gastronomic palaces, reflect the country and its diversity offering a fabulous mix of cultures and flavors. The cuisines of the world's cultures mingle with local produce to create a rich and varied culinary offer.

Indeed, Luxembourg is the country with the highest number of Michelin-starred restaurants in proportion to its population. Alongside its many starred chefs the country is proud to be home to Léa Linster, the only woman ever to have won the coveted 'Bocuse d'Or' award.

While in Luxembourg, the valley of the Moselle with its many gastronomic specialties and delicious local wines is a must for visiting gourmets.

## Truly European University

The University of Luxembourg embodies the European idea using French, German and English as main languages, well over half of its student body being international students. This multilingual environment makes it easier for students from all over the world to come to study in Luxembourg and to quickly settle into society. Also, the bilingual disposition of the diplomas is an added value that distinguishes them from other unilingual diplomas.

The programs are either bilingual or trilingual (French, German, English) or entirely held in English. Moreover, some bachelor and master programs are of bi- or even tri-national nature.

Research, especially in IT, biomedicine, European law and science of education, is approached in a very interdisciplinary manner and is a main focus of the university, contributing to its popularity. Adding to it, the collaboration with a variety of financial institutions and businesses facilitates the students' transition into the professional world.





Luxembourg is a cosmopolitan idyll with around 600,000 inhabitants, half of which are made up of more than 170 nationalities. The three official languages of Luxembourgish, German and French - with English spoken by almost everyone in the country - make the country an unparalleled multilingual and cultural (adopted) home.

Five regions share the 2,600 km<sup>2</sup>, of the small country with borders to Germany, Belgium and France and offer citizens and visitors a great variety of recreational opportunities with a very good infrastructure.

With one third of the country covered with forest in combination with dramatic rock formations and watercourses that carve their way not only through the countryside but also through the capital, Luxembourg's landscape creates a harmonious interplay of nature and architecture.

New technologies are part of the long-term project "Smart City", such as the world's first and only virtual travel tour "Urban Timetravel", digitise the unique landscape and bring Luxembourg's eventful history to life in a fascinating way.

The concept of the new exhibition stand at ITB enables guests to get to know multiple aspects of the travel destination and its innovative technologies in a relaxed and inviting atmosphere:

Urban Experience - Luxembourg City, Esch-sur-Alzette and other cities and towns in the Grand Duchy regularly host music

and cultural festivals. Attractive shopping possibilities, including established designer boutiques as well as young designers from the region, alongside a budding bar and club culture, contribute to the style and dynamism of the capital.

Short distances allow most people to walk, cycle or use public transport, which has a positive impact on the quality of life. From March 2020, the use of buses, trains and the tram will be free, encouraging more and more people to reduce the use of cars. Tourists can already enjoy free public transport with the Luxembourg Card, as well as free and reduced access to many attractions nationwide.

Culinary Delights - Local wines and Crémants from the Moselle River are known beyond the country's borders and are proudly served in local restaurants. The density of Michelin-starred restaurants is unparalleled in international comparison and many restaurants receive a high rating in the Michelin Guide and Gault&Millau guide. Specialties from all over the world can be found in the Grand Duchy and the local cuisine and pastries delight even the most discerning gourmets.

Outdoor Activities - With its exceptional rock formations, lush forests, barrage and bathing lakes, the wild and romantic nature make Luxembourg a paradise for active holidaymakers and families alike. Hundreds of hiking trails, certified routes, water sports and theme parks mean the offer is boundless for all

ages, hikers, mountain bikers and campers.

Culture - Cityscapes and landscapes are characterised by historical as well as modern architecture: palaces, castles, abbeys, historic industrial sites and the old town of Luxembourg City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are joined by 21st Century architecture designed by nationally and internationally renowned figures. You can admire and discover several centuries of history. Museums and galleries make aesthetes' hearts beat faster, while the Philharmonie concert hall, the Conservatoire and theatres delight demanding culture fans.

### 25 Years of World Heritage

On 17 December 1994, UNESCO declared the "Old Quarters and Fortifications of Luxembourg" a World Heritage Site. The end of 2019 will mark its 25th anniversary with such a title.

The Luxembourg City Tourist Office offers a variety of ways to get to know the cultural sites, such as guided historical walks or the 9.5 km UNESCO bike tour. Themed exhibitions, lectures and events for adults and children will complement the existing programme this year and next.

For the main jubilee year in 2020, the UNESCO Commission, together with the city and its partners, has created a varied programme to both preserve and develop World Heritage as an

essential part of Luxembourg for citizens as well as guests from all over the world. An overview of the offer can be found on [www.visitluxembourg.com](http://www.visitluxembourg.com) and [www.unesco.lu](http://www.unesco.lu)

### European Capital of Culture

Luxembourg is European by nature, especially in its border regions. Esch-sur-Alzette is the largest city and capital of the south of Luxembourg which borders France and is well-suited for the title of European Capital of Culture 2022.

Today, more than 120 nationalities live in the old industrial heart of Europe, giving a glimpse of the continent's future. The mix of different cultures and the change from an industrial society to a knowledge society is already a reality.

At the same time, when developing the infrastructure - for example the creation of the University of Luxembourg campus and creative industries such as the "Creative Hub" 1535 - the country ensures respect for history.

The current application of Luxembourg for the admission of the south of the country, which is characterised by historical industrial culture and biodiversity, to the UNESCO programme "Man and the Biosphere", is also in line with the series of measures taken.

# MEET *the* UNEXPECTED

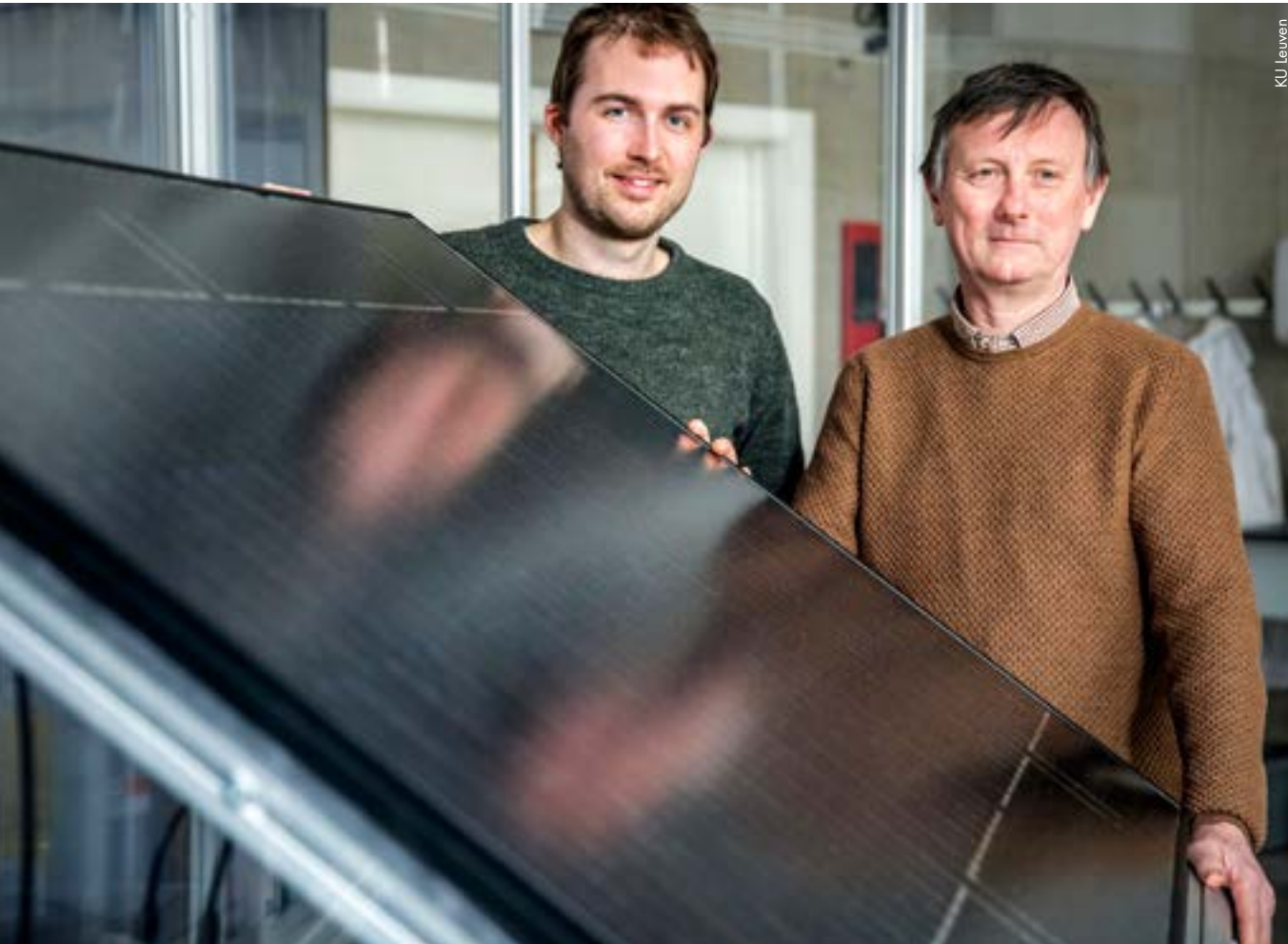
*The only Grand Duchy in the world has a lot to offer for tourists.*



## BREAKTHROUGH

# SOLAR PANELS MAKING HYDROGEN AND OXYGEN

*A team from the KU Leuven have made a promising technological breakthrough. They have designed a solar panel that produces hydrogen and oxygen directly from the air and sun.*



**A**fter working on it for 10 years, a team of researchers from the KU Leuven, led by Professor Johan Martens, has designed a photo-voltaic panel which, in addition to electricity, produces impressive yields of oxygen and hydrogen.

“Since announcing the news, I’ve been getting enquiries from all over the place,” Martens laughs.

The process consists of capturing the water contained in the air via the panels. Then, by a chemical process, the water is converted into oxygen and hydrogen. “With a panel measuring one square metre, we can produce an average of 250 litres of hydrogen per day in Belgium,” Martens explains. “At this level of production, this is already almost profitable. In Spain, we could get it up to 350 litres a day.”

According to Professor Martens, this new panel design could be used at the neighbourhood, building or community level. “It would be too expensive, not to mention too dangerous, to install a fuel cell and hydrogen tank in every home.”

Like natural gas, hydrogen must be stored safely. So the idea is to provide a shared fuel tank and fuel cell for an entire community. Everything is well protected to avoid accidents.



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## TOURISM WALLONIA'S YEAR OF WATER

*Wallonia's tourist agency has chosen water as its theme for 2019, developing a network of regional cafes and brasseries to promote local producers.*

Alex Vasey

Wallonia's tourism agency is planning to attract tourists with a series of events that put the region's lakes, rivers, spas, canals, mills and waterside communities in the spotlight. "Wallonia: Land of Water" was chosen as the theme following a number of surveys and research into what tourists are seeking when they visit the region.

The offering will be split into three broad sections. "On the Water" gathers activities such as kayaking, boat cruises and swimming. "By the Water" is a showcase for walks, cycling, attractive towns and waterfront restaurants and accommodation. And "The Benefits of Water" is all about relaxation, wellbeing and good food.

Among the regional highlights are the thermal baths of Spa, local fish recipes like escavèche de Chimay, industrial heritage such as boat lifts, dams and water mills, as well as traditional regattas and family water parks. ([wallonialandofwater.com](http://wallonialandofwater.com))

### Local Specialities in Focus

Step into many a cosy cafe or bistro, and you'll discover a host of local drinks and dishes ready to tempt you. Since 2011, Wallonia's tourist board has been promoting rural commerce via the Bistrot de Terroir network ([bistrotdeTERROIR.be](http://bistrotdeTERROIR.be)), with a focus on good quality

produce and cooking.

Now it has a makeover to further spotlight regional specialties and local producers in collaboration with the Walloon agency for sustainable agriculture, Apaq-W. Throughout the region you will find the "Bistrot de Terroir" sign and a variety of rustic and quality food and beers from the simple to gastronomic.

Diners at participating addresses are invited to question their hosts about the best local produce and regional specialties. Owners have signed up to serve as ambassadors for the network.

To obtain the label, an establishment needs to satisfy certain criteria. Their drinks list must include at least five local products among their non-alcoholic beverages and beers, wines and spirits.

On the food menu, there must always be at least one local dish, and they must use at least 10 regional products from the following: charcuterie, condiments and spice, snails, foie gras, cheese, fruit and vegetables, eggs, bread, potatoes, dairy produce, fish, syrups and honey, meat and poultry. They must also mention the producers who supplies them with the specialties. In return, they receive publicity via the label's promotional tools, Facebook and a mobile app.

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## THAILAND AND LUXEMBOURG

# 60 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS



SIP / Uli Fiehlitz



A special limited edition commemorative stamp and a concert by the renowned Luxembourg pianist Nicolas Leydenbach will be the most visible signs in June celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

One might be surprised that it was not until 1959 that these two old nations established formal diplomatic relations.

After gaining its independence in 1815, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg did not create at once its own diplomatic service. As the King of the Netherlands, until 1890, also was Grand Duke of Luxembourg, the Dutch diplomats were invested with representing the Grand Duchy's interests. Only in 1867 did the Luxembourg government appoint its first own non-resident ambassadors to Berlin and Paris.

After 1890, when the crown of the Grand Duchy passed to Grand Duke Adolphe and the country's own dynasty,

this diplomatic cooperation continued and was later formalized in a treaty on diplomatic cooperation as well as a treaty on commercial and consular cooperation with Belgium in 1964.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Luxembourg has to be seen as the formalization of previous friendly and good relations. One proof of these longstanding friendly relations is certainly the state visit by His Majesty King Bhumibol to Luxembourg in 1960, the first in a row of official visits and contacts involving the Royal Houses and officials of our countries.

Today Bangkok is home to Luxembourg's largest Asian embassy covering not only the Kingdom but also the neighboring countries of Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The other Asian embassies are located in Beijing, Tokyo and New Delhi.



SIP





# THAILAND / BELGIUM 150 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

On the auspicious occasion of the 150 years of Friendship and Trade between Thailand and Belgium, The Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium and The Chao Phya Abhai Raja Siammanukulkij Foundation have jointly organised a series of prestigious events.

## THAI-BELGIAN BRIDGE DECORATION



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Ambassador of the King of the Belgians





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and memorable  
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"The success of the  
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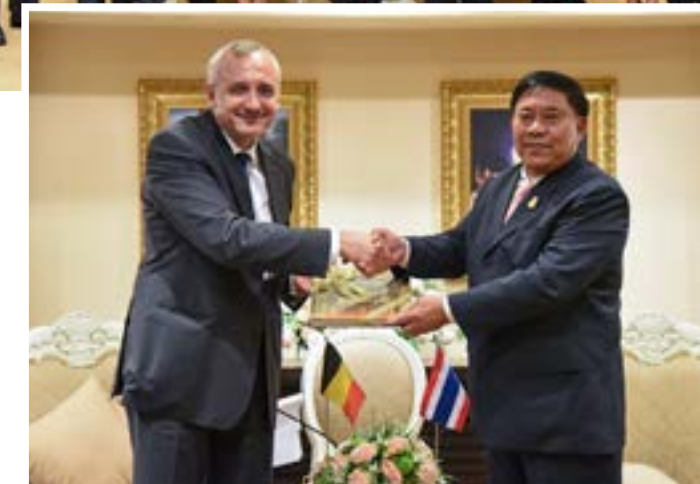


## 150 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

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## MEETING BANGKOK METROPOLITAN ADMINISTRATION







## 150 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP BTS INAUGURATION WITH HRH PRINCESS LÉA OF BELGIUM



## 150 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP THAI-BELGIAN BRIDGE LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF HRH PRINCESS LÉA OF BELGIUM





## ADVERTORIAL

# WE HAVE NOT REGRETTED OUR CHOICE FOR A SECOND

By Richard Green

Choosing a school for your early years child is a big responsibility. If you also throw into the mix moving to a new and unfamiliar city for some families it could be overwhelming. Thankfully, good advice and having a practical can-do attitude meant that new arrivals to Bangkok, Michael and Magalie Tytgadt, have chosen the best fit school for them and their children.

### Where are you from?

We are originally Belgian; we grew up in the Flemish lowlands near the North Sea.

### What brought you to Thailand?

Our family business manufactures industrial laundry equipment and systems. You would see our machines in the laundries of luxury hotels, hospitals, airlines, railway companies, factories and independent industrial laundries that cater for these organisations.

In the second half of 2016, we began to look for potential new partnerships for our business to reduce manufacturing costs and open up new markets. This led to us acquiring a German competitor, a manufacturer based in Pathum Thani, North Bangkok in 2017. In August 2018 we moved to Bangkok to run this new business. So far it has been a difficult but exciting challenge although we are determined to make this work.

### Why did you choose Harrow Bangkok for your children?

We have three young children: Louis who's 1, so not yet at school, Henry who is 3 and in Nursery class and Elisa who is 5 and in Reception.

We visited lots of schools in early 2018 and quickly realised how congested Bangkok can be. It was clear that we needed to live close to the school or the children would have a long commute on a school bus. It would also make our day to day life simpler.

We also need to be at our factory every day so didn't want our commute to be a burden. This meant that, ideally, we needed to be close to Pathum Thani.

Given our European roots we were inclined towards a French or British school so searched for these kinds of schools in the North of Bangkok. We found Harrow International School Bangkok which seemed to fit the bill; in the right area, British curriculum, Early Years right through to Sixth Form and well established.

At first, I did wonder how my children would fit in with the Thai population at Harrow Bangkok but it's been fine. And the housing community where we could live adjacent to the school seemed a little quiet but the extensive and candid experiences of existing Harrovians who live there convinced us it would be the right choice for us. Also, we realised that we are different from most expats as we are

not planning to be here short term- our stay in Thailand is open-ended - and we intend to integrate with the Thai communities. We have not regretted our choice for a second.

### What do you like about Harrow Bangkok?

We like the 'British spirit' at Harrow Bangkok. Anchored in European values, the British have the highest sense of public spirit. We are impressed by the engagement and organisation of activities during and after school hours and, especially for us, those that involve parents. It gives us the opportunity to see how our children are being integrated into the class.

The school lake is also a great bonus for the school where they do some water sports like sailing, kayaking. Hopefully, soon there'll be more activities on it like windsurfing...

We have also appreciated the patient and respectful attitude of the teachers towards our children and us. They are very understanding of our wishes as Europeans as well as them adapting to the Thai context.

And we are very happy to be living in the compound near the school as the children can cycle safely to and from school.

*The Tytgadt family are fully integrated into their home and school community; Henry and Elisa are thriving in their 'school-within-a-school' mixing with expat and Thai students and Louis can soon join too. The outstanding exam grades and top worldwide university destinations of Harrow Bangkok graduates mean it's the ideal place for them for the long haul.*

*All teachers and staff in the Early Years Centre – the EYC - at Harrow Bangkok are highly qualified, experienced and passionate about providing the very best for every child. The EYC is a purpose-built centre designed for learners aged 18 months to 5 years old. Their state-of-the-art facilities include 3 playgrounds, numerous outdoor shared learning spaces, a soft play room, a music room, dining room, Thai Studies room, adventure playground and splash play areas. The school's 35 acre garden campus gives children room to grow and soon getting there will be even easier with Harrow Bangkok's private access road.*

Visit [www.harrowschool.ac.th](http://www.harrowschool.ac.th) to find out more about the school and to book a personalised tour.





# BUILDING BRIDGES

*Poppy organizes and motivates fellow Thai students in Belgium.  
She's the current President of "Thai Student Assembly in Belgium".*

# TSAB

THAI STUDENT ASSEMBLY IN BELGIUM



PIYADA DAOWADUENG

*BeluThai supports the activities of TSAB and will give support to students seeking Internships in Belgian companies in Thailand or Belgium.*

*TSAB Members are also invited to join the Thai Belgian Alumni Group and Alumni events organised by H.E. Philippe Kridelka at the Belgian Ambassador's Residence in Bangkok.*

“

*“We are rather small. But we are doing the best we can. We help, care, and always support our friends.*

”

Piyada ‘Poppy’ Daowadueng is a talented 30-year-old from Kalasin. She is a Ph.D. student in Applied Economics, majoring in cost accounting, at the University of Antwerp. Poppy did her Masters in Accounting and Finance at the University of Southampton in England. Before that, she did her Bachelor degree of Business Administration in Accounting at Khon Kaen University in Thailand.

After graduating with a Master’s degree in the UK in 2013, Poppy still wanted to continue for the doctorate. “The main reason that I chose to study at the University of Antwerp is because of my supervisor. Professor Dr. Ann Jorissen, is famous, and also specialized in accounting. She was a president of European Accounting Association (EAA) from 2013-2015 and a member of the IFRS Advisory Council from 2015-2017.” Poppy explains. “This way I would receive much more knowledge and research experience in accounting.”

### *Motivator and Coordinator*

As the current president of TSAB, Poppy’s main duty is to support the members. “When I find interesting events, I will let the members know about them. I also try to motivate them to attend. I am a coordinator of sorts. I’ll do whatever I can to organize TSAB’s activities. It gave me satisfaction when I saw my friends happy with the activities we organized.”

Whether it’s selling drinks at the Thai Festival, having meetings and outings, or organizing the Sports Day, Poppy will be there. “What I have learned from TSAB is how to work with others, how to organize events, and how to motivate and support other people. Building a Team!”

Poppy also admits that she couldn’t do everything alone. That’s where having lots of friends comes in handy. “Even our society is rather small, we are kind of lucky because our members always support us. They always join our activities. The TSAB committee is all about teamwork. We collaborate very well in running our society.”

Meanwhile, “I have introduced TSAB to the Royal Thai Embassy, the Office of Science and Technology (OSTC), the Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber of Commerce, and the Union of Thai Students in Europe. I hope these organizations will continue to support us.

### *Language Is One Obstacle*

Poppy admits that studying in Belgium is very different from in Thailand. The courses are in English, and this is one of the major obstacles for many Thais. “I had to study very hard in order to understand what the professors explain,” Poppy laughs. “In the beginning, my life here was very difficult because I don’t speak nor understand Flemish. I had to do everything by myself. I also had to go to the City Hall to make the official documents, and all the documents were in Flemish. I didn’t even understand what people were saying. Fortunately, my course was in English. So, I was able to communicate with the others.”

Poppy knows what it takes to live in a foreign country. The problems newcomers are facing are common. That’s why TSAB as a community is important for all Thais studying in Belgium. “I want to try to get more Thai students to join our community. They can and will find Thai friends here, and they don’t have to feel lonely all the time. I also

hope our members will attend and enjoy activities TSAB organizes. We are rather small. But we are doing our best. We help, care, and always support our friends.”

### *Belgium Has High Standards*

In Belgium, the education system has very high standards. There are several famous universities like KU Leuven, Ghent University, Vrije University of Brussels, or the University of Antwerp that sets a very high standard for all Ph.D. students. “I study very hard to pass each Ph.D. module. I spend almost all my time just studying.”

Despite all the challenges, Poppy wants to encourage Thais to study in Belgium. There are hurdles, like everywhere. But the challenges are there to be overcome. “Many people still think that studying in Belgium is in Flemish or French. In fact, there are several courses in English, being ideal for international students. Most of the Belgians always welcome international students. So, if you are looking for a high standard university with reasonable tuition fees, Belgian universities are a good choice.”

Even before graduating, Poppy has received a scholarship from the faculty of Business Administration and Accountancy, Khon Kaen University. In the future, she will



work there as an accounting lecturer.

TSAB and studies take almost all of Poppy’s time. But when she finds some extra time, it’s well spent exercising, taking photos, and meeting with friends.

*The Thai Student Assembly in Belgium and their president Piyada ‘Poppy’ Daowadueng recognise the contribution of BeluThai, and especially Philip Coates: “This kind of help is indispensable for any small organization.”*





# CONNECTING THAI STUDENTS

*Thai Student Assembly in Belgium (TSAB) organizes events. It also offers an essential forum for all Thai students in Belgium.*

Prior to 2017, Thai students in Belgium only had a few occasions to meet each other, mainly during the events organized by the Royal Thai Embassy in Brussels. There were occasional meetings with the ambassador, ministers, or selling drinks during the local Thai festival.

Thai Student Association in Belgium (TSAB) was officially established in 2017, after a meeting organized by the Office of Science and Technology (OSTC) at the Royal Thai Embassy.

In the meeting with the OSTC, Thai students had a chance to present their studies as well as their life experiences in Belgium to the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology. In addition, there was an opportunity to host an academic conference for Thai students in Europe. This academic conference became the first event that the group organized under the Thai Student Association in Belgium.

The first meeting of TSAB was organized in December 2017 in Liege. The main purpose of that meeting was to form a team coordinating the Thai Student Academic Conference (TSAC) in Brussels in May 2018. This event received various positive reviews.

Since then, the association has organized various events

to meet with the members. These events have been organized in different cities in Belgium. The name of TSAB was also recently changed to Thai Student Assembly in Belgium, still keeping the original acronym.

## Membership Growing

In November 2017, Mr. Wisarut Junprung, a Ph.D. student in Applied Biological Sciences (Aquaculture) from Ghent University, was elected as the first president of TSAB. He stayed in the position until July 2018.

In July 2018, Mr. Junprung stepped down from his position because his studies in Belgium ended. In the following election in July 2018, Miss Piyada Daowadueng, a Ph.D. student in Applied Economics (University of Antwerp), was elected to be the second president of TSAB.

The number of members is still not big but growing. Both sexes are well represented. There are also several educational levels, including Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. level students.

Facebook: [thaistudentassociation.be](https://www.facebook.com/thaistudentassociation.be)

Line: TSAB

Email: [thaistudentsinbelgium2018@gmail.com](mailto:thaistudentsinbelgium2018@gmail.com)





# BUSINESS BREAKING NEW GROUND IN SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

*The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is the center of sustainable finance.  
It's also home to the only green exchange in the world.*

Uli Felitz



The idea of sustainability is firmly rooted in the concept of sustainable development. It was defined in the United Nations Brundtland Report entitled “Our Common Future” (1986), where sustainable development is defined as the type of development that meets the needs of today’s generations without compromising the ability of the next ones to satisfy their own needs.

This threefold definition links economic, social and environmental concerns that must be taken into consideration in parallel, if progress is to be made over the long haul.

## Thailand’s Record-breaking Haze

The last 19 years included 18 of the hottest on record, making extreme weather the new normal. In 2018 alone, the reality of climate change hit home in numerous ways: many countries continued to break heatwave records, others struggled with floods and drought, and even the thickest parts of the Arctic began to melt.

Thailand’s capital, Bangkok, is choking on smog and toxic haze, and its residents have witnessed in 2019 an unprecedented spell of especially soupy air. Bangkok, which was until some years ago a rare place in Asia where the air had gotten cleaner, witnessed pollution on January 30 of over 200 micrograms per cubic metre on the World Air Quality Index (AQI), prompting the government to clamp down on heavily polluting vehicles, deploying police and military to inspect factories and incinerators, shutting 400 schools to protect children, and even deploying cloud-seeding planes to force rain and clear the air.

## Sustainability Requires Sustainable Financing

Climate change is having a profound and lasting impact on human health, the environment and the economy. The consequences of climate change are global in scale and will affect all of us and the future of our children.

Sustainable development is a worthwhile objective. There will be no sustainable development without sustainable financing for development. In combating climate change, the economy and finance are inextricably linked.

Only a shared and collective response as agreed in the Paris Agreement and articulated around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can succeed in combating the effects of climate change.

About \$7 trillion of annual investment in energy, transport,

buildings and water infrastructure is needed over the next 15 years if we are to limit the planet to 2 degree Celsius. Mobilizing private investment for sustainable projects is clearly a necessity and a priority. The Paris Agreement acknowledges that finance has to play a key role in the transition to a low carbon and climate smart future.

## Private Capital Quickly Needed

Public state budgets alone will not be able to shoulder the enormous task to meet the needs of the transition that we are facing. Only combined funding and financing from the public and the private sectors will allow us to do so.

The private sector needs to take the lead to scale up these funding and financing gaps. We are witnessing a paradigm shift is underway for development finance institutions, institutional investors and private shareholders.

As we struggle to grasp the magnitude of the change, there is a clear and unequivocal call for action for financial systems be aligned and the leading international financial centers rise-up and take the lead to ensure these changes happen in order to be better equipped to deal with climate risk and sustainable development.

An unprecedented level of international private capital needs to be mobilized over the coming years for us to be in a position to meet the needed investments.

The momentum around sustainable finance has the benefits of putting on the table the opportunities offered by the management of long-term social, environmental, and economic criteria. Countries around the world are acknowledging the critical role of sustainable finance in driving a sustainable future for the planet. Sustainable finance contributes to value creation, which improves economic efficiency, increases prosperity and inclusion, and ensures that the planet continues to thrive.

## World’s Only Green Exchange

Luxembourg is a leading financial centre and gateway serving the global economy, enjoying a steady AAA credit rating and experiencing a yearly average GDP growth rate of 3.5% over the past five years, with a 4% growth in 2018.

One of the top three EU financial centres next to London and Frankfurt, with over 140 international banks and about 80% of worldwide private equity and venture capital, alternative investments structured in Luxembourg totaling more than 700 billion

EUR. AuM, Luxembourg is the second largest investment fund industry in the world as well as the largest investment fund centre in Europe (with 4,3 trillion EUR AuM and over 61,000 cross border fund registrations in 70 markets worldwide).

But it doesn’t stop here. This tiny country is also the world’s leading centre for securities listings (over 40,000 listed and tradable securities from about 3,000 issuers from more than 100 countries are listed at the Luxembourg Stock Exchange) and home of the first and only green exchange in the world.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is one of the world’s best performing countries in terms of international benchmarking. It is fully committed to transforming itself and assisting other markets in their transition to a sustainable global economy. Luxembourg has already cemented itself as the leading international centre for sustainable climate finance.

Thanks to a tried and tested toolbox of investment vehicles, widely considered the most adaptable in the European marketplace, Luxembourg-layered funds have proven particularly effective in projects requiring blended financing from both public and private investors.

## LGX Has Over Half of Green Bonds

Sustainable and Climate Finance is also a clear strategic direction for the Luxembourg Stock Exchange (LuxSE), which launched the Luxembourg Green Exchange (LGX), the first and only platform exclusively dedicated to green, social and sustainable securities in 2016.

From the world’s first ever green bond issued by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and listed in Luxembourg in 2007, LGX has now reached more than 130 billion euros in volume. The LGX has a 50% market share of green, social and sustainability bonds listed worldwide.

Today the Luxembourg Green Exchange (LGX) is playing a leading role in further driving sustainable finance forward. LGX admits green, social and sustainable bonds and also, since 2018, sustainable and responsible investment funds, abiding by recognized transparency standards.

The platform of choice for leading multilateral development banks, LGX has also recently received the Green Bond Pioneer Award from Climate Bond Initiative (CBI). Thanks to this platform, investors can freely access the documentation of the green or sustainable products and thus make well-informed investment

decisions. It ensures a framework of information for guiding investors and allows for comparability.

Green bonds today represent still only about 1% of the overall debt market, and there is still lack of clarity around the total assets devoted to sustainable and responsible investment. Scaling up is urgently needed. LGX’s fix is simple: providing the right infrastructure and integrity for the market to flourish.

## Luxembourg Sustainable Finance in Figures

- Leading Exchange for the listing of over 280 sustainable financial instruments: among the green, social and sustainable bonds and SRI funds already displayed on the Luxembourg Green Exchange (LGX)
- European market share of about 40% of responsible investment funds in Europe
- Over 61% of assets in microfinance investment vehicles worldwide are Luxembourg domiciled funds (11 bn USD)
- Over 61% of AuM in European impact funds are domiciled in Luxembourg
- 45% of AuM in environment strategy funds in Europe are domiciled in Luxembourg
- 57% of AuM in social strategy funds in Europe are domiciled in Luxembourg
- Around 42% of AuM in remaining ecological investment strategies are domiciled in Luxembourg
- Blended finance funds or PPP structures domiciled and managed in Luxembourg exceed 6 billion USD AuM; these blended funds or PPP structures invest in diverse sectors such as microfinance, renewable energy and energy efficiency, forestry and sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and conservation

*LStock market data: Green finance*

*Photo: Road between the villages of Meysembourg and Angelsberg, in the centre of the country - Naturpark Mëllerdal*



# OUT OF THE ABYSS

*Ben Reymenants is one of the unsung heroes of the Tham Luang cave rescue in Thailand's north. For him, saving the Wild Boars football team and their coach was a miracle.*



**M**y diving career started in 1991. After I moved to Egypt a few years later, I became a 'technical diving instructor'. This way I could teach diving down to 100 meters of depth using helium gas mixes.

I had heard so many good things about Thailand, so I decided to become a diving guide volunteer here, using a local decompression chamber. It was very interesting to treat divers that had decompression sickness. I studied diving and hyperbaric medicine, becoming a board certified hyperbaric technologist. Later I became the manager of a number of decompression chambers throughout Thailand, a job I did for nearly a decade until the tsunami hit Phuket.

In Phuket, I helped out identifying corpses for a few weeks and then went back to Belgium to write dive training manuals. However, I missed the sun and the beach and returned back to Thailand, starting my current Blue Label Diving business in Phuket in 2008.

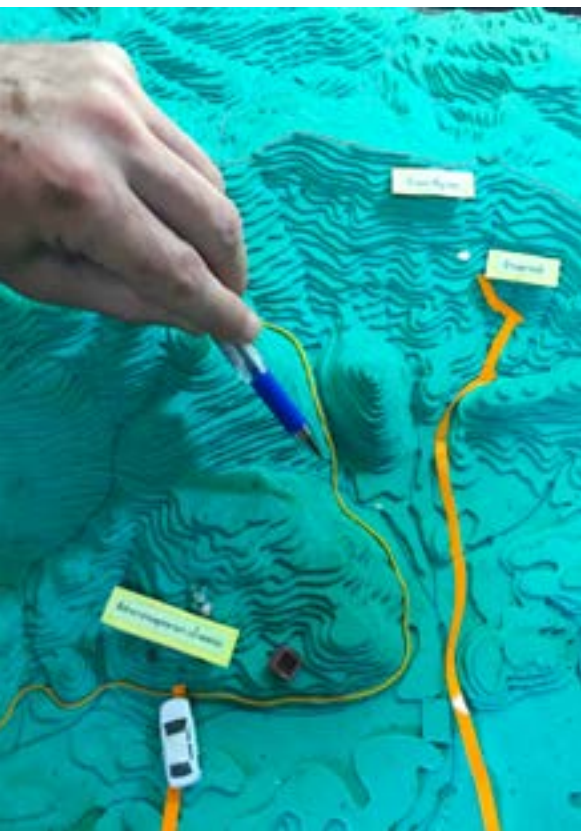
## ***Raging Water Made Me Lose Hope***

I heard about the Tham Luang case and the trapped junior football team from a post on Facebook and the news. Friends tagged me, hinting I should go and help. It was actually Craig Challen, later playing a major role during the operation, who emailed me. He was contacted by the international cave rescue organisation. He suggested I had more experience in Thai caves since I was in the country with all my equipment.

But then I heard the Thai Navy was at the site, and Rick Stanton and John Volanthen also had just arrived. They are very experienced cave explorers, so I thought there were already enough cooks in the kitchen.

After another message from a fellow technical instructor, who was already in Tham Luang, I decided to join the rescue efforts. I heard that the cave was now fully flooded, and the communication between the Thai navy and the





two British cave divers didn't go so well. That's why I was asked to come over and support the Thai Navy SEALs.

I had just packed my dive gear to go on a holiday with my wife to the Philippines, so I booked a flight to Chiang Rai instead. A few hours later I was on the plane with two cylinders, a rebreather and the rest of my dive gear. The airline actually had me pay excess luggage for this.

I was picked up from the airport, got a special permit and was driven to the cave. When I entered it was like a factory. Thousands of people were running around. Tents, generators, press, TV stations, and everything else was submerged in ankle deep mud. But it wasn't until I entered the cave that I realised the gravity. I was looking at brown water raging out of the cave, and I immediately lost hope.

### The SEALs Were Great

The Thai Navy SEALs were actually really great. They were a cheerful bunch of super fit young guys, big smiles and always busy, hauling tanks, ropes and supplies in and out of the cave. Unfortunately, they were only equipped with basic diving equipment suitable to diving in open ocean, not in a cave environment.

Me and my colleagues gave them basic instructions on how to follow line, take redundant air supplies, use reserves in their gas supplies and so on. My buddy Maksym Polejaka, an ex-legionnaire, prepared the military rebreathers for the Navy SEAL doctors who went in after the kids were found.

Basically, there were two groups, the two British divers assisted by two British cavers, and then there were the Thai Navy SEALs supported by an international team of cave diving instructors, all expats living in Thailand. Maksym and I were taking the lead and laying ropes all the way. The SEAL divers followed and laid cylinders along those ropes.

The cooperation between the international team and the Navy SEALs was great. But the cooperation with the British divers was nonexistent. This was a shame really.

But maybe it was because they were invited by a different governing body than us.

### No Plan at First

There was no plan in the beginning. Every day we had to go back to the drawing board as conditions changed, and we progressed further into the cave. Once the kids were found, Dr. Richard Harris and Craig Challen were flown in. Richard Harris had done rescue training in Australian caves using the stretchers.

Maksym and I ran out of rope and gas a few hundred meters before the Pattaya beach. The two British divers came immediately after us and covered the last stretch to the boys. We never saw the boys. After the British divers found the boys they sort of voted us out of the cave, and that was it for us.

The kids were dressed in wetsuits and equipped with a full face mask. For the underwater part they had an oxygen cylinder strapped to them and floated through the submerged parts. While they were in the dry parts, they were placed on a foldable stretcher and carried to the next sump. Each kid took roughly two and a half hours and more than 20 divers to cover the nearly 3 km to the exit of the cave.

### "First Days Most Challenging"

The most challenging moments of the rescue mission were the first days. Getting through the rapids and climbing over the rock piles to get to Camp 3, while hauling all the diving gear along, was incredibly exhausting. We later learned that the atmosphere in the dry passages had low oxygen levels and high levels of carbon dioxide. Without knowing this, I was just thinking that I was getting too old for this stuff.

The actual technical diving started after Camp 3. Finding the way upstream in zero visibility conditions, dragging big bags of rope, took its toll. We got stuck several times,

entangled in wires and cables left behind. We were also uncertain if we were going in the right direction. And we naturally didn't know if the kids were even still alive.

I would never have pushed through this cave if it wasn't for the boys or the Navy SEALs. It was way too dangerous.

### "Saving the Boys a Miracle"

It was an absolute miracle that all the boys were eventually saved. Having the conditions we were facing at first, there was very slim chance the boys would have been found or would have made it out alive.

Then, the unexpected happened. The rain stopped the pumps did their work, and the massive team effort made it possible that, against all the odds, the kids and their coach got out alive. Two hours after the last kid was rescued, one of the pumps broke and, within 6 hours, the entire cave system flooded again. Only months later, the navy seals could get access again to recover the tons of equipment left behind in a hurry.

I haven't been in touch with the Wild Boars football team after the operation. They have been bombarded with interviews and press, so who am I to go and see them? However, if they would want to meet the team that laid the line, of course, we'd happily go and have a friendly chat – without cameras.

I love Thailand, and even more so after the cave rescue. The amount of volunteers and charity I've seen was really heartwarming. I used to be a mountaineering and skiing

instructor. But I prefer palm trees, beaches and flip flops.

### "Complacency Kills"

I love cave diving and exploring. The big blue has always attracted me, especially unexplored areas. Knowing that you are the first human to enter a room or passage makes you feel very humble.

In Phuket, we specialize in technical diving. Basically, we train divers to go places where very few people have gone before: deep caves, wrecks, and so on. I've been running this business with my wife Simone for the last decade.

It is hard to define a cave diving specialist since there are so many different kinds of caves. But I feel I have a reasonable understanding of the dangers and how to train people to safely explore this environment.

I've explored some very deep caves and I'm still alive, so I reckon I must be on the right path. To survive, you need training, the right attitude, discipline, and must also not let your ego get in the way. You need to turn around when too

many red flags go up. My advice for those planning to start cave diving is to go through proper training with proper equipment. Get some help from experienced divers, and dive various cave systems.

Complacency kills, so always stick to the main rules. If it feels wrong, it is wrong. Turn around, and come back another day."

“

*Then, the unexpected happened. The rain stopped, the pumps did their work, and the massive team effort made it possible that, against all the odds, the kids and their coach got out alive.*

”



# Chic Tranquility



Above: Managing Directors Jo D'Hondt, Phirchawees Boonyassatian and Rudy Maes, with Valerie Maes

Fulfill your holiday desires at Diamond Resort Phuket, located just 5 minutes away from bustling Boat Avenue, the hottest Catch beach club, and picturesque Bangtao Beach.

**R**elax and unwind in new and stylish rooms or indulge in sunbathing by the Olympic length pool. You can find it all here.

Diamond Resort is a newly opened holiday destination that offers serenity and complete relaxation. Here anyone can enjoy all the comforts of home in a chic and peaceful setting with a variety of room types to suit every travel style. The rooms can comfortably accommodate families, couples, or groups of friends. The suites feature a complete range of modern amenities from everyday personal care to ironing sets and fully-equipped kitchens. A special bonus is that every room has a balcony, and a number of rooms offer pool access and mountain view.

With lush tropical gardens and tranquility surrounded by mountains, Diamond Resort is a unique destination where guests can enjoy first-class facilities such as the Olympic length swimming pool, European Infuse Restaurant, sauna, and fitness room. For guests' convenience, the resort provides free shuttle service that operates within the Bangtao area running every hour.

Guests can enjoy a unique culinary experience created by the talented chef from Belgium at Infuse Restaurant. Here the menu is complete with honest-to-goodness home-style meals and features juicy burgers, delicious pizzas, authentic Thai dishes, and real European tastes. Gusto Francese pizza and Smoked Salmon salad here are highly recommended.

Everyone is welcome to visit Diamond Resort and its Infuse Restaurant. Don't forget to check the website and social media for special promotions and more info.

## Diamond Resort Phuket

Phone: +66 76 609 542

Web: [www.diamondresortphuket.com](http://www.diamondresortphuket.com)

Facebook: Diamond Resort Phuket

106 Soi Chergtalay 14, Srisoonthorn Road, Chergtalay, Thalang, Phuket 83110



Antonie Polfliet, Managing Director

# Kamala's Jewel

*The Bell Pool Villa Resort Phuket is an ideal spot for anyone looking for privacy, scenic views and white sands.*

**S**ituated on the west coast of Phuket alongside the Andaman Sea, only 30 minutes from the Phuket International Airport and a quick 2 minute free shuttle ride to Kamala beach. Each villa has a beautiful 360 degree tropical rainforest and scenic mountain views.

Widely regarded as one of the best beaches on the island, Kamala beach is a sweeping 2.5km stretch of beautiful white sands and crystal clear blue waters.

The Bell Pool Villa Resort consist of 16 individual Private Pool Villa units of varying sizes, all surrounded by a lush, tropical forest. Complete privacy is the key for all villas, which makes them ideal for romantic couple getaways, private honeymooners, families or even bigger groups.

In-villa spa treatments can be ordered with the butler all day long to be enjoyed in full privacy by the pool. Private yoga sessions are also on offer for both beginners and experts.

The property was designed with privacy in mind, catering to those couples, families and groups, who appreciate the serenity and calmness.

The Bell offers a mix of Thai and international dishes for breakfast. The all-day in-villa dining menu carries a number of local, asian and international dishes, together with a complimenting array of soft drinks, cocktails, wines and other beverages.

For those, who want master the art of the Thai culinary delights, resort's local chefs offer extensive, multi-course, private cooking classes.

On top of all the other luxuries, The Bell Phuket is planning also to start using Ask AVA. This new digital concierge service will bring hotel grade services to the vacation rental market via a cutting-edge platform and the involvement of local experts."



## The Bell Pool Villas

Phone: +66 (0) 76 279 914

Email: [reservation@thebellphuket.com](mailto:reservation@thebellphuket.com)

Web: [www.thebellphuket.com](http://www.thebellphuket.com)



# PILOT PROGRAM TACKLING LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

*To tackle the problems of English language teaching in Thailand, the University of Leuven and Khon Kaen University have set up a rare pilot project in north-eastern Thailand.*

*by Raf Erzeel, Assistant lecturer of English, the University of Leuven*

It all started with a casual conversation with Mr. Piyapak Sricharoen, Minister at the Thai Embassy in Brussels, about the problems with the level of English in state education in Thailand. This eventually led to a promising project of cooperation at an academic level.

At the University of Leuven, an optional course was set up in the Master of Multilingual Communication, called 'English in Thai Education and Society.' During the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, two selected students (Elien Prophète and Lennert Wollants) were taught about Thai culture, education and economy, the structure of the Thai language, intercultural communication and the pedagogy of English as a foreign language.

At the end of January 2019, these two students and I went to Khon Kaen to teach English at Khon Kaen University and at three primary schools.

Over the course of two weeks, we taught a total of 24 hours at the Faculty of Education of KKU. This consisted of 6 hours of academically oriented seminars on the importance of pronunciation and the use of authentic materials in teaching English as a second language. The remaining 18 hours focused on proficiency-focused practical studies. We taught our classes for groups of up to 15 first-year undergraduates.

The level of English of these students was quite heterogeneous: a few students had fairly good skills overall, but the majority struggled with pronunciation and grammar.

Apart from our work at the university, we were also given the opportunity to go to three primary schools. Ms. Siriporn Supanimitwisetkul, Minister-Counsellor at the Thai Embassy in Brussels, had brought me into contact with Ms. Ubolrut Hanpanit, the regional supervisor for English in primary education. She asked us to provide English activities on three consecutive mornings in three different schools (Ban Nonmuang, Ban Thum and Ban Ped), for children between the ages of 8 and 11.

The size of the groups (55 - 150) and the infrastructure did not make our task the easiest, but we did our best to make the activities as meaningful as possible. It was abundantly clear that the children knew very little English and needed explanation (and often translation) for the simplest questions.

The enthusiasm of the pupils was heart-warming, however, and our efforts were clearly appreciated, both by the children and by the staff and head teachers of the primary schools.

We were always extensively and formally welcomed. Each of the schools had had a big banner specially made for these 'English Activities - Belgium-Thailand Friendship.' After our activities, we were offered lunch and given presents.

The two Belgian master students were assured that,



*Elien Prophète, Dr. Nuchwana Luanganggoon, Raf Erzeel and Lennert Wollants*



*Raf Erzeel, Elien Prophète, Lennert Wollants and Ubolrut Hanpanit with teachers at Ban Ped primary school.*



*Raf Erzeel, Lennert Wollants and Elien Prophète with first-year students at the Faculty of Education of KKU.*



Khon Kaen University

should they return to Thailand, they would certainly be offered jobs as English teachers.

The apparent lack of good English skills in Thai state education was the biggest incentive in setting up the entire project in the first place, and our experiences in the primary schools and partly also at university only confirmed the need for more contact with English. The two master students could experience first-hand how limited the English language skills of primary school teachers are, both productively and receptively. As a result, many teachers avoid using English in class, a practice that obviously does not contribute to better English language skills in the pupils.

The experiences in Thailand were undoubtedly also a useful practical application of intercultural communication for the two students. They could experience in practice what they had been taught in theory during the first semester. As such, not only the teaching element, but also their free time in between matched perfectly with the course and with the Master in Multilingual Communication in general.

There are clearly a number of future opportunities to continue and expand the academic cooperation between the University of Leuven in Antwerp, and the Faculty of Education of Khon Kaen University.

I had the opportunity to meet prof. Nuchwana Luanganggoon, Deputy Dean of the faculty, and head of International Relations affairs. She is willing to welcome us

again next year and hopes that there will be opportunities for joint research projects.

At our campus in Antwerp, there are a number of researchers who are willing to set up projects with KKU, e.g. concerning vocabulary acquisition in English. We are also looking into the possibility of offering a few Thai students of the Faculty of Education the opportunity to come and study English in Antwerp for a semester. This would turn this project into a proper exchange programme, ensuring its viability for the longer term.

Both joint research projects and an agreement on Thai students coming to Antwerp should be consolidated within a few months.

I'm confident that, after this initial project, there is a bright future for the cooperation between the University of Leuven and Khon Kaen University.

This project would not have been possible without the moral and practical support of the Thai Embassy in Brussels (especially Mr. Piyapak Sricharoen, Ms. Siriporn Supanimitwisetkul and Mr. Roongruk Chanprasert), the former and current campus deans (prof. Hendrik Kockaert and prof. Henri Bloemen), my colleagues Paul Pauwels and Priscilla Heynderickx, Ms. Ubolrut Hanpanit and the whole Faculty of Education at KKU. I wish to thank all of them for their help. A big thank you also goes to Thai Airways for offering a free ticket to Bangkok.







## HEAD OF THE EU DELEGATION TO THAILAND BRUSSELITE DEEP DOWN

*Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola believes in free trade and European values. He is still in love with Brussels, where he used to live as a diplomat.*

The EU Delegation is located in central Bangkok, within a walking distance from BTS Ploenchit station. It has about 100 staff members, and the feeling inside the building is calm and business-like.

Ambassador Pirkka Tapiola heads the delegation from his light and modern office. He formally assumed his functions at the end of 2017, when hopes for the long-promised elections were high. Still, the atmosphere is largely optimistic.

The EU Delegation cannot choose sides, but works based on the values and interests: underpinning the European Union. Its goal is to improve the bilateral relations between the EU and Thailand. “The EU and Thailand have had a close and strong relationship over thirty years, but it could be even closer,” Ambassador Tapiola says.

There are occasional issues between the European Union and Thailand. But the relations are largely friendly. The EU hopes to see the formation of a government that reflect the will of the electorate. It also stands ready to work with a democratically elected government in order to build a deeper relationship with the Kingdom.

### *EU Is for Free Trade*

In general, the EU is hoping that the conditions for resuming negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Thailand will soon be there. The Union supports free trade and a rules-based international trading regime, because these enable a level playing field, lower prices for consumers and a greater choice of goods and services. However, negotiating an FTA is a long process. “Free trade brings more growth and products to all. It’s a win-win for all parties,” Tapiola explains.

The EU already has an FTA with a number of countries, including other ASEAN members Vietnam and Singapore. It is also negotiating on trade with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, and is negotiating an investment protection agreement with Myanmar (Burma). These agreements may be building blocks towards a fully-fledged EU-ASEAN region-to-region FTA.

For the EU, ASEAN as a region is crucially important. The region is culturally diverse, and the member countries vary in many ways. “The approach has to be tailor-made for each country,” Tapiola says.

### *Cooperation with Chambers Important*

The EU Delegation has almost 100 people in Bangkok. It’s one of

the larger EU diplomatic presences in Asia, which tells something about Thailand’s importance. “We have about ten people focusing only on trade, a field traditionally very important for us,” Tapiola says. “I am also committed to intensifying the Delegation’s cooperation and synergy with EABC (European Association for Business and Commerce) as well as with bilateral chambers of commerce.”

“I am looking forward to strengthening EU-Thailand relationship in all aspects, including the political partnership, trade, cooperation, environment, climate change, democracy, good governance, human rights, and cultural diplomacy, as well as working on regional cooperation.”

### *Craving Thai Food*

Pirkka Tapiola was born in Helsinki. He is multilingual and multicultural career-diplomat. A true professional

Throughout his life he has lived in many countries, including the USA, Russia, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova – and Thailand, as well as Finland, France and Latvia inside the EU. He has naturally spent a long time in Brussels, which is also the capital of the EU, and feels himself Bruxellois. He is multilingual and multicultural career-diplomat. A true professional.

Understandably, Tapiola considers Brussels home. “While I love Bangkok, I miss Sunday walks along the quaint streets lined with antique shops near the Sablon, in Brussels. Brussels is also a fabulous city to eat, with many world-class restaurants,” Tapiola admits.

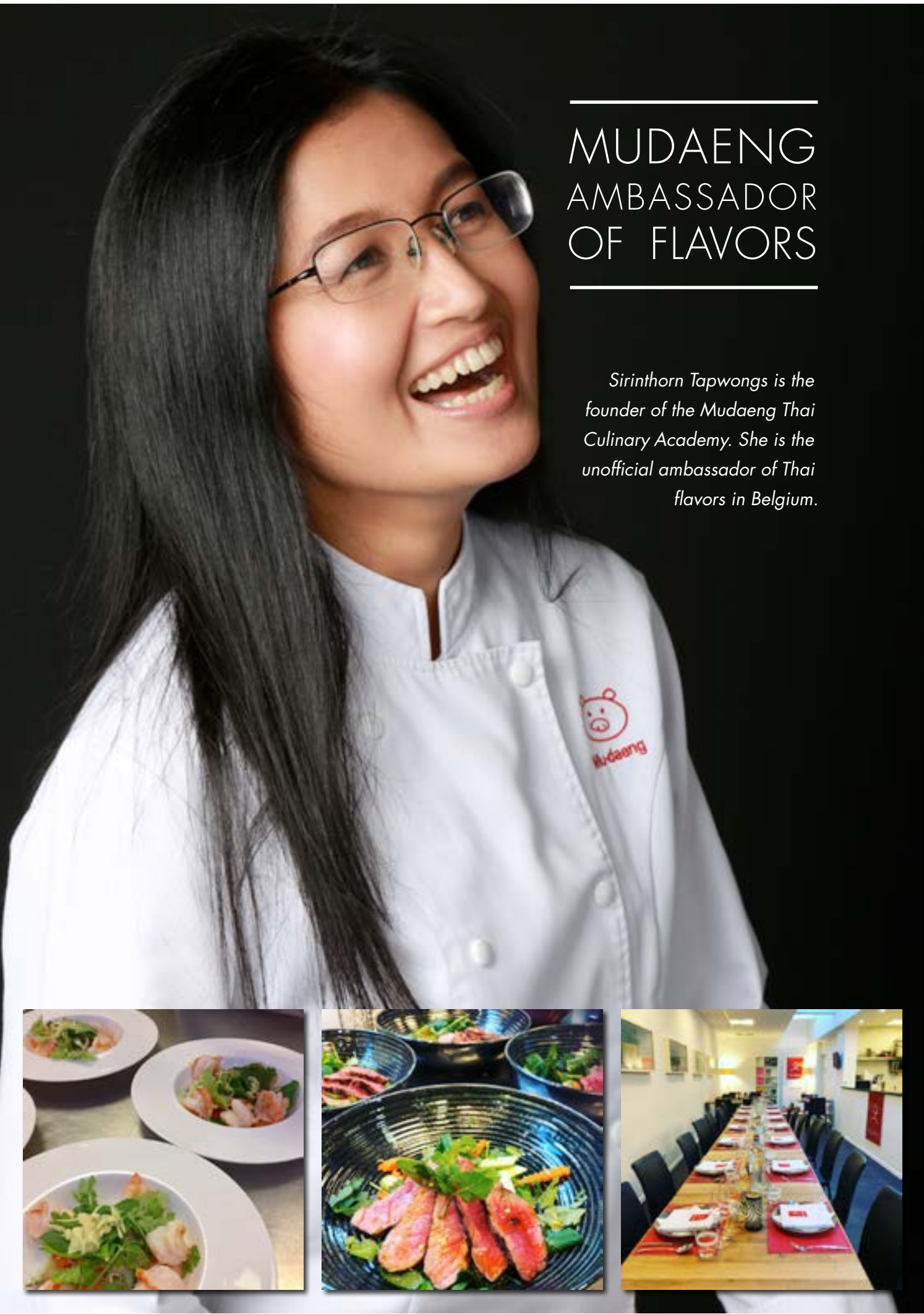
Bangkok is of course very different from Brussels. But there are also similarities. One thing is clear: both cities are wonderful places for a great meal. “I am interested in food and cuisines, and I love Thai food, and am not afraid of spices. I really like to explore the local options here.”

Tapiola, who moved here for the first time in 1998, when he served a few years as Deputy Head of Mission at the Finnish Embassy. Since then, the country has changed in many ways, mostly in a positive direction. The economy is booming, and Bangkok has become very affluent. “But, I do at times miss the old Bangkok I know, with fewer shopping malls and high-risers,” Tapiola says. “On the other hand, the traffic is better, and the city now has two great airports.”

Tapiola lives in central Bangkok with his wife Olga and 14-year-old son Samuel.







## MUDAENG AMBASSADOR OF FLAVORS

*Sirinthorn Tapwongs is the founder of the Mudaeng Thai Culinary Academy. She is the unofficial ambassador of Thai flavors in Belgium.*



The nickname of Sirinthorn Tapwongs makes perfect sense. Mudaeng means red pork or red piglet. It's also a widely known Chinese recipe, a dish eaten the world over.

Mudaeng is the Thai founder of the Mudaeng Thai Culinary Academy in Schilde. She learned the profession at the world famous Mandarin Oriental Hotel (MOH) in Bangkok, graduating from the Professional Thai Chef Program. Only ten out of about ten thousand applicants are chosen for this prestigious program.

### *Sky's the Limit*

Mudaeng was born in Maha Sarakham, in the northeastern part of Thailand, where she grew up with her parents and a younger brother. Her family had limited means, and paying for a higher education wasn't easy.

Mudaeng was ready for the challenge. After high school she started the Hotel Hospitality Management Program at Silpakorn University International College in Huahin. After that she went to Bangkok to go through apprenticeships at a number of international hotel chains like Sofitel, Hilton, and NH-hotels.

After being accepted to the MOH, Mudaeng was ready for more. "I thought that becoming a professional Thai chef would open the doors to the world for me," Mudaeng says.

And it did. The training program at the MOH is famous. It's also one of the greatest references for Thai cuisine in Thailand and beyond. MOH gives students an opportunity to work at some top hotels. It also gives experience serving at prestigious occasions at the Royal Palace. Graduating from this program guarantees work until retirement.

But this wasn't enough for Mudaeng. "A job as Chef at the MOH actually pays well. But my aim was to become an internationally recognized chef."

### *Overcoming Challenges*

Mudaeng came to Belgium as a trainee at NH-Hoteles in Diegem, near Brussels. The drive to start something of her own was somewhat slowed down by the fact that her diploma wasn't recognized in Belgium. In order to get a diploma as a Belgian chef, she needed to learn the language first.

Not discouraged by this setback, she graduated 2 years later from a local cooking school and applied for an apprenticeship at *Hof van Cleve*, the world famous restaurant of Peter Goossens in Kruishoutem. "I wrote a handwritten letter to Mr. Goossens and got called the next day by Michaël Vrijmoed, who was a chef at Peter Goossen's restaurant at the time. After the interview with Michaël Vrijmoed, Peter Goossens and his wife, I was allowed to start."

"The next six months were hard. Neither Peter nor Michaël were easy as chefs. But I learned a lot. Not so much about the culinary side, because our cuisine is obviously quite different, but about the drive, the strive for perfection, the ambition, and the energy that motivated me to continue my journey."

### *Ideal Location*

"My partner and I had been searching for a suitable location for some time already in the neighborhood of Antwerp. After a long quest, we finally found what we were looking for in a quiet little street close to the center of Schilde," Mudaeng says.

The building had been housing a culinary magazine called *Club Saisonnier*, and a part of the building was fully equipped as a professional kitchen. Mudaeng also liked the open kitchen concept, which would suit cooking workshops well.

"This was not an optimal commercial location. But why should it be? *Hof van Cleve* achieved the highest level of culinary art at a similar location. So, finding this location, and being able to acquire it, felt like coming back home."

### *Demand Growing*

"Originally we started just with the cooking workshops but rapidly discovered opportunities for take-away meals as well. As soon as we started that, we had requests for dining in which we responded to almost immediately. Later on other activities as catering and team building exercises completed our offering. Thanks to these decisions we soon had more means to invest in our advertising and decoration of the interior," Mudaeng adds.

Demand has been steadily growing ever since then. Mudaeng actually had to expand and start using another part of the building. In one room, Mudaeng serves people who are just coming for a lunch or dinner. This room can also be rent out for "off-site" meetings for local companies like d'Ieteren, BASF, Johnson&Johnson, Voka, and EREA Energy Engineering. These are customers, who appreciate the possibility to enjoy the food in a separate room. Quite often they also like the cooking workshops as team building exercises.

"The atmosphere in those workshops is so relaxed and fun that colleagues really enjoy working together on a common project," Mudaeng reveals.

The "Petite Grande Dame" of Thai cuisine in Belgium is often solicited by the Thai Embassy to give demonstrations and help promote Thai food and ingredients.

"It's in line with our mission to promote the fine Thai cuisine to the general public. It allows me to pass on my knowledge and passion for Thai food."



# Affordable Exclusivity

*Belga is an ultimate destination for anyone interested in Belgian beers and mussels. This relatively new rooftop restaurant is ideally located at the top floor of Sofitel Sukhumvit.*

The General Manager of Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit nicely summarizes the philosophy of this hotel and its facilities. “You can immerse yourself in luxury that blends art, French sophistication and Thai culture,” Oliver Schnatz says.

All this is true. But there’s also an additional jewel in the building. Belga rooftop brasserie and bar sits on the top 32nd floor of the art deco inspired building located between Soi 13 and 15 on Sukhumvit road.

## *Stunning Views*

The entrance to Belga is both exclusive and impressive. There is a dedicated express lift taking guests to the top floor with a personalised meet and greet service.

Belga Rooftop Bar & Brasserie is a casual, chef-driven and contemporary Belgian brasserie serving famous Belgian dishes such as Moules Frites and Liege Waffle, as well as an extensive range of draft and bottled Belgian beers, wine and cocktails.

The décor combines dark wood finishes with impressive tapestries. The brasserie seats 100 inside, where Belga features an open kitchen and a copper beer tap positioned at the heart of the brasserie. Guests are invited to sample each month’s special beer poured direct from the tap.

The 94-seat panoramic terrace provides guests with stunning sunset views over Bangkok. Whether it’s the commuters passing by using the Skytrain, Benjakitti Park with its flower beds and serene lake, or the skyscrapers all over the town, Belga shows them all.





### Great Value

Nicolas Basset is the talented Head Chef with a flair for creative and innovative dishes prepared with style in the open kitchen at Belga.

Belga's policy is to get the three Belgian ingredients right. The restaurant has to be simple, flavourful and well thought of. "We realized that there was a need for a popular place with value for money. Good food, good value."

Replacing L'Appart, this new Belgian bistro doesn't stray all too far from its predecessor's French roots. Food does, however, take a more casual approach, ditching the flowery French creations for more everyday moules frites, cote de boeuf and Belgian waffles.

There is also, of course, an impressive selection of over 30 Belgian beers, featuring everything from Vedett White and Delirium Tremens to Floris Mango, Hoegaarden Rose and Leffe.

Belga has a seasonal menu in plans. The goal is authenticity, while giving customers exactly what they want.

### Hundred Beers in Sight

In some ways you could call Belga also a gastropub. This was the original idea that Belga's Manager Peter Laird got while visiting Hong Kong.

An integral part of Belga is beer. The walls are covered with colorful beer bottles from Belgium. This gives the interior a unique, quaint feeling. "A hundred beers is our target," Peter Laird laughs.

This is not just a dream. There are already over 40 Belgian beers, the biggest selection in town. Four of those are exclusive. There are also 11 beers on tap, and one that is exclusive in Southeast Asia. "Fruit beers are very popular. So are the mussels, but they are also a big challenge because they need to be imported," Basset explains.

The wines are just fantastic. A bottle of decent wine for 1,200 Baht is very reasonable in the Thai capital.

Belga opened in November 2018. But it already has loyal customer base from all over the world. "Quite a lot of our customers are Japanese. But honestly, there have been more expats than I had expected," Nicolas Basset says. "We are very attracted to this restaurant," he adds while leaning on the guardrail of the terrace, gazing into one of the beautiful sunsets of Bangkok.

It's easy to understand why. In many ways, Belga is in a category of its own.



*Belga Rooftop Bar & Brasserie is the first Belgian restaurant in Bangkok - a unique food and beverage offering. The restaurant is on Level 32 at Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit with a rooftop bar and seating.*

*Open Daily from 5pm to 1am*

*Snack Menu from 6pm to midnight*

*Dinner Time from 6pm to 11pm*





## BELUTHAI SCENE NEW YEAR EVENT 2018



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018



## BELUTHAI SCENE JOINT CHAMBERS EASTERN SEABOARD NETWORKING



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## BELUTHAI SCENE MULTI-CHAMBERS LUNCH: MINISTER OF EDUCATION





## BELUTHAI SCENE DINNER TALK WITH BEN REYMENTANTS



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# **BELUTHAI** SCENE NEW YEAR 2019





**BELUTHAI SCENE**  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019 & SPECIAL NETWORKING

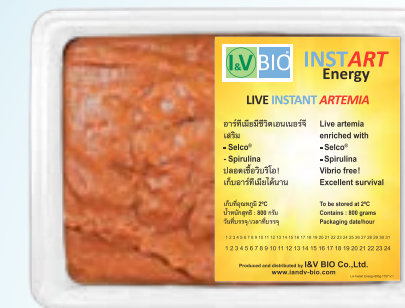


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# WHY JOIN BELUTHAI?



## Mission

The Belgian-Luxembourg/Thai Chamber of Commerce (BeLuThai) is a medium size but very dynamic Chamber comprising of over 100 members.

Economic relations between Belgium/Luxembourg and Thailand have existed for centuries. During the last decades, the number of business contacts between the Nations has grown considerably.

The aim of BeLuThai is further support market access to and investments in Thailand for Belgian and Luxembourg companies. BeLuThai also serves as platform for Thai businesses interested to develop a business in Belgium and Luxembourg. We provide information and services to our Members concerning commerce, industry, finance and investment. Moreover, we organize network events and activities relevant to Belgian, Luxembourg and Thai businesses. BeLuThai also serves as a channel to voice views and interests of Belgian and Luxembourg businesses towards the Government of Thailand, as well as to other business organizations in Thailand.

## Principles

BeLuThai focusses on three pillars:

- Business / PR / Networking
- Education
- Corporate Social Responsibility

## Business – Events – Networking

One of the main functions of BeLuThai is to facilitate introductions and help to create business opportunities that benefits all Members.

BeLuThai organizes Networking events on a regular basis, a New Year’s event, a Welcome Back and Gala Night. Throughout the year, we organize speaker evenings and join or co-organize Business Talks by other Chambers.

Through our close co-operation with JFCCT (Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand), EABC (European Association for Business and Commerce) and the Board of Trade of Thailand, our Members have access to information and a broad

network of contacts.

BeLuThai, together with the Embassy, has developed a special program to allow Thai employees of BeLuThai Members applying business visa for Belgium via a fast procedure, called Diamond Visa Program.

## Education and Seminars

BeLuThai’s aim is to provide its Members with up-to-date information. Therefore, we organize or co-organize many events with High-Level speakers to keep our Members up to speed in matters such as Legal, Infrastructure, Finance, IT, Trade Zones, BOI and many more.

BeLuThai also maintains close contacts to leading Business Schools and organizes events with them to bring the Business community closer to the next generation.

## Corporate Social Responsibility

Part of the engagement of BeLuThai in Thailand is to give back to the community where our Members live and do business. BeLuThai has chosen the Foundation for Slum Child Care. [www.fsc.or.th](http://www.fsc.or.th)

“The mission of the Foundation is to give a better life to children who are unfortunately to the very poor and troubled families. In the communities where life is such a struggle this means we must educate and work to have everyone around the children, parents included, love them and understand their needs.”

## Diamond Visa Program

A fast and easy way to get your visa for Belgium and the Schengen area, called the Diamond Visa Service. The Belgian Embassy offers the special Diamond Visa service to Corporate Members of BeLuThai with the objective to facilitate trade and investment between Belgium and Thailand. As a Member the documentation required is reduced significantly.

## Who is eligible for the Diamond Visa Service?

1. Employees of Corporate Members who need to travel to Belgium on company business;
2. Accompanying wife/husband or children of the above mentioned at point (1) members of BeLuThai;
3. Customers and/or suppliers invited for a business trip by a corporate member company of BeLuThai in the context of their professional, commercial relationship (The purpose of the journey and the link between both companies should be clearly defined);
4. Accompanying wife/husband or children of the above mentioned at point (3) customers and/or suppliers invited for a business trip by a corporate member company of BeLuThai.

# MEMBERSHIP PACKAGES

## Premier Corporate Partnership Premium

Premier Corporate Partnership are tailor-made Partnership Agreements. They are flexible, negotiable and include:

- A true Partnership
- Corporate Logo on all communication, including outgoing-emails from BeLuThai Office
- Prime placement of corporate logo on the homepage of BeLuThai website with link to own website
- Individual company profile in a special sponsor section on the BeLuThai website
- Corporate logo in all news broadcasts
- Main sponsors at all our events in 2019
- High visibility on all communication materials for all the events organised in 2019
- Logo on roll up banner, digital signage and backdrop at all BeLuThai events
- Acknowledgement at BeluThai Events
- Main sponsor of BeLuThai Gala Night
- VIP Champagne Table for 10 guests at Gala (Value at THB 100,000)
- Free access for 5 persons to the networking events organised by BeLuThai
- 2 Pages of Advertorial or advertising in CONNECT magazine
- 4 Pages of your company story in CONNECT magazine
- 2 separate news broadcast (i.e. launch of new product)

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- Corporate logo in all news broadcasts
- Main sponsors at all our events in 2019
- High visibility on all communication materials for all the events organised in 2019
- Logo on roll up banner, digital signage and backdrop at all BeLuThai events
- Acknowledgement at BeluThai Events
- Main sponsor of BeLuThai Gala Night
- 1 Table for 10 guests at Gala (Value at THB 50,000)
- Free access for 5 persons to the networking events organised by BeLuThai
- 1 Page advertising in CONNECT magazine
- 1 Page of your company story in CONNECT magazine
- 2 separate news broadcast (i.e. launch of new product)

## Premium Corporate Membership

Premium membership is a corporate membership with the following additional items:

- Corporate logo in premium position on the logo standing banner which will be displayed at every BeLuThai event
- Prime placement of corporate logo on the homepage of

- BeLuThai website with link to Premium Member’s website
- Individual company profile in a special sponsor section on the BeLuThai website
- Corporate logo with link to Premium Member’s website in all news broadcasts
- 1 separate broadcast about Premium Member (i.e. launch of new product)
- First choice for available BeLuThai event sponsorships
- VIP seating at BeLuThai events
- 5 free entrance tickets for other regular BeLuThai organized events

## Corporate Membership

Corporate membership is a standard corporate membership with following benefits:

- Opportunity to meet new business-friends or gain some new knowledge and information through various kind of events (Business Talk, Seminar, Networking, Company Visit, etc.).
- Opportunity to network with members from other Chambers.
- Your whole company is subscribed and all employees can join our events for free or at membership rate.
- You can benefit from our Diamond Visa Program, a fast track visa service for BeLuThai corporate members who regularly send employees, for business related matters, to Belgium. In principle The Royal Belgian Embassy in Bangkok will issue a multiple entry visa valid for at least one year and the visa can be issued in 2 working days only. As a member, the documentation required is also reduced significantly.
- Your company’s profile will be displayed in BeLuThai’s Member Directory on our website, with a direct link to your company website.
- You can always share your company news among members. We have Members’ news sections on website and newsletter for you with no extra charge.
- You have voting rights to vote for the Board of BeLuThai, or apply and be elected as one of the Board of Director.
- You can benefit from out Member-to-Member Benefit Program, which encourages members to prefer other members when making buying decision. There are a variety of discounts from participating members. Not only can you benefit from this program, but you can also offer some attractive discount to other members.

## Associate Membership

- Start Up Company (first year only): For company established less than 2 years
- Individual Membership (These members can’t apply, be elected or vote for the Board of BeLuThai.)





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# BREAKING NEWS



## FABER FLAGS ASIA INTRODUCES RECYCLED PET BOTTLES FABRIC

Faber Flags Asia is staying at the forefront of sustainable advertising by introducing printed soft signage and branding materials made of recycled PET bottles. Used water bottles are shredded and compressed into pellets which are used to make recycled polyester yarn. This yarn is then knitted or woven to produce fabric. One square meter of flag fabric requires approximately five PET bottles.

Help reducing the ecological footprint of your advertising campaigns by using recycled polyester fabric. Mother Earth will be grateful for it!

## VKA HEALTHCARE DREAM TEAM ALLIANCE



Archetype Group recently formed an alliance with the Belgian hospital designers VK Architects & Engineers. Named VKA Healthcare, the cooperation is an integrated team of international experts in delivering healthcare facilities and tailor-made projects.

With a comprehensive network of reliable partners, VKA Healthcare provides Asia-based clients a wide range of services from infrastructure, master planning and programming, architecture and interior design, structural engineering and MEP engineering to project and cost management.

VKA Healthcare debuted at the Hospital Management Asia 2018 in Bangkok, with the presence of the Belgian Ambassador S.E.M. Philippe Kridelka and Economical Attache for Flanders, M. Marc Devriendt.

### Celebrating French Construction Excellence

On Thursday 21st February, the French companies Archetype Group, Dextra and Saint-Gobain held a Sunset Cocktail on the 78th floor of the King Power MahaNakhon tower in order to celebrate the French excellence in construction in Thailand and in Asia. This was done in the presence of all the representatives of the French authorities in Thailand and premium investors from other countries, including Solvay Thailand – one of Archetype Group's current client for a project in Map Ta Phut industrial estate.

We are overjoyed to have celebrated our 6 years of continuous involvement in this iconic Maha Nakhon tower project, which had been a remarkable journey.



From left: Pierre-Jean Malgouyres, General Director, Archetype Group; Maarten Hoppenbrouwers, Project Leader, Mars Petcare; Eswaran Subramanian, Construction & Utility Engineering Lead, Mars Petcare; Xavier Pinchart, Managing Director, Archetype Thailand

## WEEBOON LAUNCHES WHITE-LABEL API

Weeboon launches its white-label API and now enables corporates to make a significant impact by getting their shareholders, employees and customers involved in their CSR projects.

The API provide a white-labeling feature that allows API users to create a crowdfunding platform with their branding, colors, and logo. The API also includes classic features like sharing campaigns and updates.

The goal is to provide a fundraising tool to third parties such as corporates and non-profits while simultaneously enhancing their social branding.



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