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The Brussels Enterprise Agency (BEA) is a centralised agency created in 2003 to provide companies planning to set up in the Brussels Region with free advice and consultation services. The BEA is supported by the Brussels Regional Government.
www.bea.irisnet.be

Brussels at the heart of R & D

Brussels Region is currently pushing ahead with plans to strengthen its knowledge-based economy by encouraging centers of scientific excellence with world-class R & D facilities. The region already is one of the European hot spots for scientific research, ranking in the top ten EU regions in terms of its scientific potential, according to Xavier Dehan, adviser to Benoît Cerexhe, the Brussels Region minister for the Economy, Employment and Scientific Research.

Brussels has a long tradition of scientific excellence dating back to the nineteenth century and is currently strong in the three key scientific growth areas of IT, biotech and pharmaceuticals. "Our strength comes from the fact that we have three large universities in Brussels Region as well as several business schools," Dehan explains.

In addition, the region hosts several large, modern and well equipped hospitals, including the Erasmus university teaching hospital in the west of the city "which has generated a cluster of biotech and pharmaceutical companies concentrated in the Erasmus science park," says Dehan.

Many of the city's innovative companies have been established as a result of spin-offs from university research, including seven out of the 24 biotech companies located in Brussels. "The Region knows that it has to encourage cooperation between universities and industry, and to ensure an efficient transfer of technology," says Dehan.

While recognising that Brussels has a relatively small industrial sector compared to many other European regions, the government is looking into joint R & D ventures with leading Brussels-based companies such as Solvay, Volkswagen and Sabca. "We are hoping that Volkswagen may set up a small research center at its Brussels site," Dehan says.

Aware that innovation is the motor for about 50 percent of economic growth, the new Brussels Region government is committed to increase the current budget for R & D. Over the past five years, the Region has doubled the research budget and now spends € 25 million on R & D. "We are hoping to double the amount to € 50 million by 2009," stresses Dehan.



XAVIER DEHAN



A bridge to Europe

Governments and multinationals are rapidly realising the importance of a base in Brussels to be close to the decision-making center of the European Union. Almost 70 percent of European decisions are now made in Brussels, making it vital that companies and lobbying organisations are based here. But BEA believes that organisations should also see Brussels as the ideal spot for securing contracts with European institutions based in the city.

"Almost all the main European institutions are established in Brussels, including the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee," explains Jacques Evrard, who heads BEA's International Relations Department.

continued on page 2 >



JACQUES EVRARD





SCIENCE CITY: FOC

A solid knowledge base



In Brussels, the presence of several renowned universities and 5 university hospitals makes it one of the leading cities in Europe for research and development in medicine, pharmaceuticals and chemistry. The city boasts four university campuses, all of them with programmes for turning leading-edge research into start-up companies.

Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

One of the world's foremost French-language universities, the Université Libre de Bruxelles or Free University of Brussels (ULB) has a solid reputation for ground-breaking research. The university has developed close links to five teaching hospitals in Brussels – Erasmus, Saint Pierre, Brugmann, the Queen Fabiola Children's Hospital and the Jules Bordet Institute – which allows it to carry out extensive clinical tests of new drugs and treatments. In addition, ULB research teams are active in molecular

biology, cancer treatment, immunology, pharmaceutical research and general public health.

Spin-off: cancer treatment

Aware of the need to bridge the gap between universities and business, the ULB has been involved in about 14 spin-off ventures. Created in 1999 by university researchers as a spin-off of ULB, Unibioscreen is one of the University success stories. Employing 27 people and carrying out research into the treatment of cancers, the company is based in the Erasmus science campus and works closely with the Erasmus University Hospital, located on the same site. "We work in close cooperation with several pharmaceutical companies in studying the effectiveness of some 70 different cancer treatments," a company spokesman said.

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

Created in 1970 as the Dutch-speaking university of Brussels, the VUB is based on two campuses. With an annual R & D budget of €50 million, the university has made a name for itself in innovative research, notably through its teaching programmes and training. The university has two research parks and a third one currently under construction next to the main campus. With seed capital provided by the Brussels Imagination, Innovation and Incubation Fund (BI3), the VUB has established seventeen successful spin-offs.

Spin-off: diabetes cure

As part of an international project to cure diabetes, the VUB was selected in 2002 as the base for a Centre for Beta Cell Therapy in Europe. Funded by the US Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the centre brings together clinical and research experts from seven countries. "The centre is currently looking into ways of protecting and repairing insulin-producing beta cells in patients with diabetes," a spokesman said.

Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve (UCL)

Known for its high scientific level in biotechnology research, the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, UCL, owns a biomedical campus in eastern Brussels closely linked to the St Luc hospital. The UCL research teams carry out biotechnology research in fields such as cell biology, immunology, microbiology and pharmacology.

CERIA campus

The Centre for Education and Research in the Food and Chemical Industry (CERIA) in southern Brussels carries out research and development in the fields of food safety and food production. It houses 7 institutes and 3,600 students.



➤ From page 1

"The European institutions function as a market in their own right. They put out tenders for equipment and services such as consultancy and security."

Evrard believes that companies with a Brussels base are ideally-placed to take advantage of the EU's system of public tenders and calls for proposals announced through the Official Journal. "Companies who want to tender can, of course, receive all the information by electronic mail, but it helps immensely to be present in Brussels. It allows them to meet the officials involved in the project and find out the best way to draft a proposal that better meets the EU's objectives."

Evrard adds that BEA has a central role in guiding Brussels based SMEs through the EU financial mechanisms that support scientific research and technological development. BEA's mission is to assist and support companies and researchers established in Brussels and to help them elaborate and submit their project bid. "We have a network of privileged contacts in the Commission and so can help to formulate the application," he says. BEA has already helped several IT companies, biotech firms and university research labs.

With an R & D budget of €1.7 billion available over the period 2002-2006, the European Union is one of the largest sources of finance for small and medium-sized enterprises. "Having someone in Brussels helps you to benefit from this enormous source of funding," emphasizes Evrard.



US ON R & D



The big three

Brussels' reputation as a world centre for chemicals and pharmaceuticals is largely secured by the presence of three international companies with strong R & D programmes.



Solvay – rooted in research

The Solvay group has placed Brussels at the centre of scientific innovation for more than a century. Solvay Research and Technology, based at Neder-over-Hembeek in northern Brussels, is the company's largest R & D facility. It employs some 1,100 research staff, focusing on innovation in chemicals, plastics and plastics processing. Solvay Research and Technology has played a leading role in innovative plastics recycling and in 2001 developed fuel tanks for new models of the Renault Laguna that used 40 percent recycled plastic from old fuel tanks.

Pfizer – close to the campus

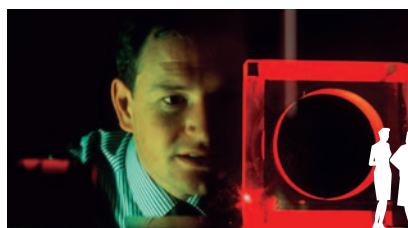
Pfizer, the global pharmaceutical company, recently moved its Belgium-Luxembourg head office to a new centre in southern Brussels. Employing 12,500 researchers worldwide, Pfizer is the world's largest pharmaceutical company, investing about € 100 million a week in research and development.

The Brussels headquarters, which employs 400 people, is situated in the university quarter. "The location is no accident. We are just across the road from the Flemish University of Brussels (VUB) and the La Plaine Campus of the Free University of Brussels (ULB)," a spokesman said.

In addition, Pfizer carries out clinical studies of new drugs at the Erasmus campus of the Free University, in western Brussels.

UCB Pharma – the potential of peptides

Founded in 1928 in Brussels, UCB has grown into a major international pharmaceutical and chemical company. Headquartered in Brussels, the company also maintains a R & D facility in Braine-l'Alleud, south of Brussels, which specialises in the development of pharmaceutical peptide products. With a reputation for state-of-the-art manufacturing, the company takes peptide development through every stage in the production process. "Our aim is to deliver the promise of peptides," a spokesman said.



Brains in Brussels

Born in Brussels in 1838, Ernest Solvay, the founder of Solvay Group, brought some of the world's greatest minds to the Belgian capital for the first Solvay conference of 1911. Almost half a century earlier, Solvay and his brother Alfred had developed a new technology for the industrial production of sodium carbonate or soda. This led to the creation of one of the world's largest chemical and pharmaceutical companies, active in 50 countries across the world.

A passionate scientist, Ernest Solvay was committed to making Brussels a centre for scientific research and innovation. He founded several scientific institutions including the Institute of Sociology in 1901 and the prestigious Solvay Business School in 1903.

His ideal was to encourage international scientists and researchers to work together for the common good. He achieved his goal in 1911 when he organised the International Physics Conference in the Metropole Hotel, inviting ten Nobel Prize winners to Brussels, including Marie Curie, Max Planck and Albert Einstein. This event led to the creation of the Solvay International Physics Council, which organises meetings of the world's most brilliant scientists.



THE BRUSSELS ENTERPRISE AGENCY

NEWS

Shops of the world

For the past 30 years, fashion buyers have been coming to Brussels to check out the trends. Every year, 620,000 professional buyers representing 250,000 stores make a trip to the Brussels Trade Mart to find out the latest fashions.

Situated on the Brussels exhibition site close to the landmark Atomium, the Brussels Trade Mart was founded in 1975. It has steadily grown over the years and now houses 1,400 exhibitors representing 8,000 brand names in a modern complex offering 165,000 square metres of display space.

Almost every big fashion name in the world has an outlet at Brussels Trade Mart. Levis, Calvin Klein and Adidas all have their stands. In addition, buyers can meet suppliers specialised in interior decoration, toys, baby goods and furniture. "This is the largest commercial meeting point for buyers in Europe," says managing director Erik Timmermans.



The Trade Mart is designed to provide a permanent business-to-business center in the heart of Europe. As well as offering display space, the Mart can provide 25,000 square metres of conference space packed with the latest audiovisual equipment. "We aim to provide a flexible infrastructure for meetings, distribution and business," says Timmermans.



Asia's biggest software group opens Brussels office

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), a global software provider based in New Delhi, announced in early October plans to open a new office in Brussels. TCS chief executive officer S. Ramadorai said: "The European Union is India's largest trading investment partner and the coming years are full of promise".

TCS, which currently employs over 20,000 people worldwide, is a subsidiary of Tata Group, Asia's largest global services and software provider. TCS provides a variety of information technology services, including systems integration, application development, consulting, infrastructure management and engineering services.

Tata also signed a joint venture with Belgian bank KBC and the Dutch Rabobank to process security transactions for retail investors and professional organisations.

London calling

The City of London is one of a number of European cities to open an office in Brussels. The organisation based in London House, rue du Trône, is one of the 170 European cities or regions represented in Brussels. "The primary purpose is to provide London with a clear voice in the EU policy process – ensuring London's interests are represented and London's expertise in urban issues is available to EU policy makers," said a London House spokesman.

Brussels attracts more and more international NGOs

"A survey conducted in 2003 by the Union of International Associations (UIA) showed that Brussels has the highest concentration worldwide of international associations, either public or private," says Ghislaine de Coninck, the general secretary of the Federation of International Associations in Belgium (FAIB). The FAIB is a non-profit making, non political association that was established in 1949 on the initiative of the UIA. Its three main purposes are to promote and defend the interests of their members; to ensure and facilitate their members' activities by creating joint study groups, and arranging administrative facilities with meeting rooms, equipment; and to establish international contacts, notably with international federations abroad. Furthermore, the

FAIB is able to provide legal information and advice to help new members set up in Belgium. They can help on legal matters, tax issues, social issues and anything else that makes the process of establishing a representative office easier.

NGO for it

The latest survey made by the FAIB cited three factors that favoured Brussels as a location for international organisations: its central location, the presence of decision-making bodies and the favourable Belgian legislation on creating non-profit-making organizations. "The legal structure for non-profit international associations offers legal security, flexibility and a privileged status," de Coninck explains. "In addition,

it allows the organisations to benefit from substantial grants and subsidies."

De Coninck referred to other important assets including a good transport infrastructure, affordable office space and a welcoming approach to new arrivals. Several NGOs have recently settled in Brussels, including the European Association for Consumer Representation in Standardisation and the European Forum for Good Clinical Practice. In addition, the United Nations opened a centralised Regional United Nations Information Centre (RUNIC) in Brussels a year ago to replace nine existing UN information centers in different European capitals, which have closed down.



China visit aims to attract companies to Brussels

The BEA recently played a major role in a Belgian economic mission to China that took place between 20 and 26 November 2004 aimed at promoting trade between the two countries. The initiative came as a reinforcement of the signing last summer of a tax agreement between Belgium and Hong Kong which could lead to a major portion of China-Europe trade passing through Belgium.

Experts say that many leading Hong Kong companies are already focusing on Belgium as an investment location following the introduction of the tax agreement. "The treaty represents a visionary approach on the part of the Belgian government, and is important both for Hong Kong companies and Belgium as an investment location," explains Werner Gysemans, manager of the Asia Pacific desk at KPMG Tax Advisers in Belgium.

The BEA operational director Bruno Wattenbergh believes that the new treaty will help to cement ties between Brussels and Hong Kong. "Hong Kong is the entry point for Asiatic markets, while Brussels is the entry point for European markets. That makes Brussels the ideal partner for Hong Kong."

He adds that a new business centre for Chinese companies is being developed in a converted factory in Schaerbeek, eastern Brussels, close to the EU institutions. "The aim of the centre is to help Chinese companies to invest in Brussels Region and put them in touch with consultants who can advise them on investing in Europe," explains Wattenbergh. "We want to show that Belgium in general and Brussels in particular are the perfect locations for a Chinese company wanting to invest in Europe."



New tax regime for the audiovisual sector

Lights, cameras, action!

More film production companies could come to Belgium following the introduction of a tax exemption regime for the audiovisual sector, which came into force last June. Under the new "tax shelter" law, companies that invest in Belgian films and other audiovisual productions can deduct 150 percent of their investment from taxable profits.

The new rules are intended to attract new potential investors, and so do not apply to existing audiovisual companies or TV producers. The producer and investor – who both have to be resident in Belgium – have to sign an agreement under which the producer agrees to spend 150 percent of the investment in Belgium.

Belgium has been trying for 20 years to modify its tax regime to favour film production and dubbing studios. The new law replaces legislation enacted in 2002, which failed to attract investors because of its complexity.



Best test market

Belgium is seen by food manufacturers and supermarkets as the ideal market to test new products, according to Chris Moris, director of the Belgian federation for the food industry Fevia. "Belgians are willing to try out new food products, whereas consumers in countries like Germany are only interested in the price," Moris says. The cosmopolitan population of Belgium is also useful for companies that want to sell throughout Europe. The French supermarket chain Carrefour recently launched several "tasting centres" in Belgian supermarkets to test its new products.



Tour et Taxis

The Tour et Taxis complex in the Brussels canal zone is one of several quarters that have been designated "Zones of Regional Interest" (ZIR) under the Brussels Region's development plan (PRAS). The Region aims to target ZIRs – sensitive urban districts often abandoned for decades – as special redevelopment zones.

The Tour et Taxis project involves a 45 hectare site occupied by a number of imposing industrial buildings. After several false starts, the site is now being redeveloped as a joint venture by property developers Leasinvest and Robelco. The aim is to create a vibrant urban district with offices, shops, housing and culture.



Office property

The office property market looks more buoyant in Brussels than in Amsterdam, according to the latest report conducted by property consultants Atis Real for the first quarter of 2004. The report noted a rise in demand for office space due to the enlargement of the European Union and the strength of the Belgian economy. Due to a surge in demand, the space take up increased sharply in 2003 to 714,000 square metres. The cost of rental office space is level with cities such as Berlin and Barcelona, and lower than Amsterdam and Luxembourg. Investment in office space surged to 1.5 billion euro in the first quarter of 2004 compared to 2.2 billion euro for the whole of 2003.



NEWS

Deep dive

The world's deepest indoor diving pool opened in Brussels last summer. Named Nemo 33, the pool is 33 metres deep and contains 2.5 million litres of water. Built at a cost of 3.2 million euro, the pool is heated by solar panels.

Berlaymont reopens

The landmark Berlaymont building in the heart of the European quarter reopened in November 2004 following a renovation costing some one billion euro. Designed in the Sixties as a headquarters for the European Union, this cross-shaped building was closed in 1991 to allow the removal of asbestos. The renovated building incorporates state-of-the-art environmental features such as rainwater collectors and heat-conserving window panels.

Committee of the Regions moves



The Committee of the Regions moved last September to a new headquarters in an office building renovated by the acclaimed Brussels firm Art & Build. The building, formerly occupied by the European Parliament, has tiers of bamboo plants growing behind a glass curtain wall. The Committee of the Regions was set up in 1994 to represent the interests of some 317 cities and regions of the European Union. It shares the building, located next to the Parc Leopold, with the EU's Economic and Social Committee.

Belgium fifth favourite country for foreign investors

Belgium ranks fifth in the world for attracting foreign investment, according to the World Investment Report 2004 published last September by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Belgium attracted \$ US 29 billion in foreign direct investment flow (FDI) in 2003, putting it

in third position in the European Union, and just below the United States, which attracted \$ US 30 billion.

While foreign investment increased in Belgium by about 100 percent last year, investment declined globally by 18 percent, with Central and Eastern Europe seeing a 30 percent drop and the United States losing about 50 percent.

Shopping malls on the rise

At least six new shopping malls are to be built in Belgium over the coming years, compared with just 40 over the past three decades. With strict planning legislation covering shopping centres, Belgium has traditionally lagged behind the rest of Europe in mall construction, with just 82.3 square metres of mall space per 1,000 inhabitants, compared with 316.8 square metres in Sweden and 505.3 square metres in Norway. But Belgian shoppers increasingly favour shopping malls because they offer longer opening hours, ease of parking and protection from the weather.

Now that planning regulations are due to be changed next year, investors are already funding new projects in Belgium, including the 9,000-square-metre Heron City on Avenue Toison d'Or in Brussels.

Ikea to open in Brussels

Ikea, the Swedish home furnishings group, is to open a new store in Anderlecht, western Brussels, in 2005. The store will create 350 new jobs in the city.

US investment patterns change

According to the latest report published by the American Chamber of Commerce in Belgium (AmCham), US direct investment in Belgium remains strong in finance, insurance and wholesale trade, but has declined in the manufacturing sector.

The report underlines the new trends in US investment patterns, with an increase of investments in research and development, particularly in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors. US subsidiaries remain an important component of the Belgian economy, with some 1,200 US companies based in the country.



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Brussels behind the scenes



A table for two

The six restaurants listed here are just a small sample of the restaurant scene in Brussels. For more information on places to eat, visit the internet site www.resto.be, which lists more than 11,000 restaurants across the country. As well as detailed information on opening times and cuisine, the site has comments by diners, links to restaurant websites and – a nice touch – the option of sending friends an invitation by email.



Brussels in three days

Take three days off to find out the secret places in Brussels. The city tourist office Brussels International has created a three-day smart card that is designed to take the strain out of sightseeing. As well as unlimited travel on the public transport network, the card gives you free entry to about 30 museums in and around Brussels. It's the ideal way to discover the seductive Gueuze Museum, the charming comic strip museum and the outstanding collection in the musical instrument museum. The card also gets you a 25 percent reduction on the bill at Chez Leon and 25 percent off the price of a ticket to the Toone puppet theatre.

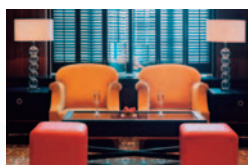
The card costs 30 euro for three days and it is for sale at tourist offices on Grand'Place and Rue Marché aux Herbes, large hotels, city museums and public transport offices. For more information, contact Brussels International, located on the ground floor of the town hall in Grand'Place.

Tel 02.513.89.40
or www.brusselsdiscovery.com



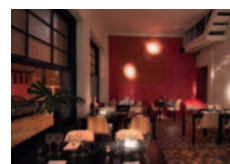
A taste of Brussels

With its increasingly cosmopolitan population, Brussels is bursting with international restaurants that offer almost all the flavours of the world in a variety of inspiring interiors. The choice is staggering, with new restaurants opening almost every day. Here are six new addresses that have already become the talk of the town.



Italy. Brussels has a long history of fine Italian restaurants offering some of the best Italian regional cooking in Europe. Loui, the Conrad Hotel's new upmarket restaurant on Avenue Louise, is the latest Italian restaurant to take the capital by storm. It features brilliantly inventive cooking by Italian chef Enrico Rondati, based on a blend of Italian and Oriental influences. Loui, 77 Avenue Louise, tel 02.542.47.77.

Asia. Asian countries such as Japan, Thailand and China have a strong presence in Brussels, especially in the downtown districts. The latest Asian sensation is Yoma, a stylish red-hued restaurant close to Place St Géry. The chef, Yoth Ondara, creates his own unique brand of fusion cooking featuring dishes such as asparagus maki sushi. Yoma, 42 Rue de la Grand Ile, telephone 02.514.64.42.



Ireland. Long a favourite with Avenue Louise office workers, Fresh Company has recently had a makeover. The food is still prepared by the gifted Irish chef Mary Fehily, but is now served in a cool modern interior. The emphasis, as always, is on inexpensive lunch dishes using the freshest of ingredients. Fresh Company, 120 Rue Lesbroussart, telephone 02.648.56.58.

France. Newly installed in a white-tiled former tripe shop, Viva M'Boma offers traditional French brasserie food reminiscent of Lyons. The cooking is plain and old-fashioned, featuring traditional French favourites like kidneys, calf's liver and lamb's brain. Viva M'Boma, 17 Rue de Flandre, telephone 02.512.15.93.

Belgium. Located in a former corner shop near the Sablon, Sister Act offers some stylish Belgian cooking in a beautiful minimalist décor. Comfortable maroon leather couches, bare wood floors and a blazing fire make this the setting for a sublime experience. Sister Act, 25 Rue de la Régence, telephone 02.503.13.78.



VOLPONI ©

Turkey in town

The artistic treasures of Turkey are unveiled in a sumptuous exhibition organised by Bozar (formerly the Palais des Beaux-Arts). Timed to highlight Turkey as the country begins formal negotiations to join the European Union, the exhibition shows that this country has for centuries straddled the boundary between the West and the East. The main exhibition, titled "Mothers, Gods and Sultanesses", looks at the role of women in Turkish society up to the end of the Ottoman Empire through a collection of 350 works from major Turkish and European collections. Until 16 January. Information www.bozar.be



All that jazz

The Museum of Musical Instruments is trumpeting its fifth anniversary with a celebration of Belgian jazz. The once-in-a-lifetime exhibition is based on a vast collection of more than 7,000 historic recordings assembled by the jazz critic and percussionist Robert Peret. The exhibition includes a fascinating selection of instruments, old photographs, books, magazines and programmes. Fans can also buy a specially-produced double CD featuring 44 historical recordings made from 1927 to 1960.

Museum of Musical Instruments,
2 Rue Montagne de la Cour, Brussels.

Until 17 April.

Telephone 02.545.01.30
or internet
www.mim.fgov.be





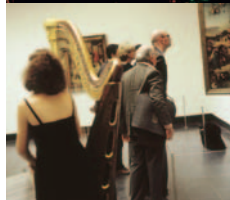
The natural heart of Europe

"Brussels is the natural heart of Europe," said Romano Prodi, the former president of the European Commission, in a recent interview with the Flemish newspaper De Morgen. The president, who returns to Italy at the end of a five-year stay in Brussels, said he would miss the city enormously.

Prodi remains convinced that Brussels is the natural capital for Europe. "Brussels is a city that symbolises dialogue between communities, nationalities and religions. It is unique, because of its linguistic and institutional diversity." He concluded: "The destiny of Brussels is to be the capital of Europe."



Stay tuned to events and find out information on doing business in Brussels
www.investinbrussels.com



Agenda

175 Years of Belgium

A major programme of events is being organized across the country in 2005 to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Belgian state. The origins of the country are to be explored in an exhibition in the Fine Arts Museum in Brussels titled "Romanticism in Belgium." Some 200 paintings, sculptures and drawings will be assembled to reconstruct the romantic ideas that were circulating in the early Belgian state. Meanwhile, a different period of Belgian history will come to the fore in an exhibition in the Africa Museum on "The colonial era." The museum is sifting through its vast collection of objects and art to present a portrait, not always flattering, of the ambitious colonial adventure begun by King Leopold II.

But the likely blockbuster of the year is a mega exhibition titled "Made in Belgium". Described as "the biggest exhibition ever devoted to Belgium and Belgian talent," it aims to cover famous Belgians from contemporary tennis stars to Nobel Prize winners. Visitors will encounter the composer César Franck, artist René Magritte, novelist Georges Rodenbach, fashion designer Ann Demeulemeester, tennis stars Justine Henin and Kim Clijsters, actress Marie Gillain, cartoonist Hergé, scientist Ernest Solvay and explorer Adrien de Gerlache. "We want to use the occasion to show that our country is modern and dynamic," said Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt. The aim is not to wallow in nostalgia, but to look ahead to the future, focusing on youth, meetings and conviviality.



Sites in the city

For the past 30 years, the Brussels regional development society SDRB has provided investors with a portfolio of potential sites and buildings throughout the Brussels Region. Founded in 1974, the organisation handles industrial sites, disused military barracks, business modules in converted factories, business parks and science parks.

The SDRB has on its books 170 hectares of business park property and about 75,000 square metres of buildings. The business parks include a former airfield in Evere, close to Brussels International airport, which has been converted into the Da Vinci science park.

The former Nestor Martin industrial site in the north of the city has been turned into a new business park and an abandoned military barracks in Etterbeek, close to the university quarter, has been imaginatively renovated as a center for small businesses.

Other major projects are currently in the pipeline, including the revamping of the Meudon industrial site in Neder-over-Hembeek and the conversion of a former bus depot in Anderlecht. In Molenbeek, the former British American Tobacco factory is being turned into the Lavoisier business center and the SAIT complex in Uccle is scheduled to become another important business center.

In 2003, more than 20 new companies moved into SDRB locations in Brussels Region, taking up a total of almost 90,000 square metres of land and almost 20,000 square metres of building space. The new arrivals included six companies in the agricultural and food sectors and four involved in printing and publishing.

At Brussels Expo

January 15 – January 23, 2005

83rd Brussels International Car Show

"Light Commercial, Recreational Vehicles and Motorcycles".

The Car Show is held in 11 halls, covering an indoors surface of about 114,000 sqm. The Brussels Motor Show, one of the most important motor shows in Europe, allows some 250,000 visitors to gather information on approximately 300 exhibitors. www.autosalon.be

January 31 – February 2, 2005

Fashion First

A brand new exhibition bringing to Brussels for the first time an unprecedented selection of competitively priced quality footwear, leather goods, leather garments, bags, travel goods and related accessories from Asia, South America, Turkey and Eastern Europe. The event is organised by Asia Pacific Leather Fair Ltd, a Hong-Kong based company. www.fashion1st.com

February 3 – February 7, 2005

Brussels Travel Fair

The 47th Brussels Travel Fair welcomes Ireland as guest of honour. www.vosvacances.be – www.uwvakantie.be

February 24 – March 6, 2005

Batibouw

The 45th International Fair for Building, Renovation and Design, with more than 1,000 exhibitors spread over 140,000 sqm. www.batibouw.com

March 18 – March 22, 2005

EURANTICA Brussels – Fine Arts & Antiques Fair

This 24th edition will welcome more than 130 exhibitors from Europe selected by a Commission of Independent Experts. This is the largest art and antiques fair in Belgium. www.artexis.com

