



Integrated Country Strategy

Belgium

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Approved: June 16, 2022

Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities	1
2. Mission Strategic Framework	4
3. Mission Goals and Objectives	6
4. Management Objectives	14

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Belgium is one of the United States' oldest allies with enduring bonds forged during two World Wars and the Cold War. As a founding member of the EU and NATO, it is at the heart of the transatlantic economic, political, and security alliances that have guaranteed our shared peace, security, and prosperity for more than 70 years. It was quick to respond to Russia's Ukraine invasion with security and humanitarian assistance, sanctions, and by welcoming hundreds of thousands of refugees. Belgium prizes multilateralism and consensus, and its moderate, practical voice is an asset for the United States in international institutions. It enthusiastically welcomed the United States' return to the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, and it remains a strong ally on a wide range of U.S. foreign policy priorities and security operations. Despite the pressures of the pandemic, Belgium remains an important economic partner; it is the 12th largest foreign investor in the United States, and the United States is the largest investor in Belgium outside of the EU.

Connections between Belgium and the United States predate both the founding of the Republic and of Belgium as a nation-state. The United States came to Belgium's rescue twice in the twentieth century, a fact that Belgians have never forgotten and that forms a lasting bond with the United States. Three American military cemeteries in Belgium are the final resting place of more than 13,500 U.S. service members who lost their lives in the two World Wars.

Economic links frame our contemporary relationship. Belgium and the United States have a robust trade relationship, with annual trade of around \$65 billion a year, generating more than 190,000 jobs and significant foreign direct investment for both countries. The Port of Antwerp is a gateway to Europe for American exports, and the United States enjoys a trade surplus (\$12 billion in 2021) with Belgium, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Belgium's pharmaceutical industry is playing a critical role in the global production and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

Security and defense play significant roles in the U.S.-Belgian relationship, with Belgium as a founding member and host of NATO. The Belgian military contributes regularly to NATO and

Approved: June 16, 2022

other international missions. A double terror attack on the Brussels Airport and metro system in 2016 focused the country on improving its domestic counterterrorism efforts but funding for both domestic security and external defense remain a challenge as Belgium must balance the competing demands of social and defense spending in a constrained budget environment. Despite that tension, the government will increase defense spending from 1.1% of GDP in 2022 to 1.54% by 2030. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the government will increase defense spending further.

From 2022-2026, the U.S. Embassy to Belgium will leverage these links to accomplish Mission Goals and Objectives that align with the President's 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance's (2021 INSSG) that calls for the United States to "recommit ourselves to our transatlantic partnerships" and emphasizes "that our vital national interests compel the deepest connection to Europe." Additionally, our Mission Goals and Objectives track with the four pillars outlined in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs' 2022-2026 Joint Regional Strategy and the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.

We will **revitalize transatlantic alliance and partnerships** through diplomatic and military cooperation with Belgium so that it can address threats to the transatlantic alliance and contribute to military operations. Also, the Embassy will build public support for the transatlantic partnership against foreign malign influence. Russia's Ukraine invasion only reinforces the need to ensure our transatlantic bonds remain strong to face the bad actors around the world who will attempt to disrupt our way of life. Second, Post will focus on **promoting deeper U.S.-Belgian commercial ties and jointly countering coercive economic practices** in international business. We will accomplish this by supporting U.S. businesses as they seek access to the Belgian market and encourage Belgian firms to invest in the United States. Belgium's evolving energy policy that focuses on energy security and reducing pollution will provide an opportunity for us to support U.S. green tech and small modular reactors (SMRs) exports. Also, the Embassy will encourage Belgium to adopt and implement laws to screen against malign investment and cooperate so international institutions do not adopt policies that hinder U.S. access to markets or reduce our security.

Approved: June 16, 2022

Third, Post will **use our strong bilateral relationship to address global and regional challenges.**

We will work with Belgium to address the global climate crisis and illicit trafficking through Belgian ports. We already have strong law enforcement relationships that we will expand and use to help Belgium disrupt transnational criminal networks. Finally, the Embassy will work with Belgium to **strengthen democracy and support human rights around the world.**

Democracy is under threat around the world, especially considering Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The United States must work with our Allies, like Belgium, to ensure our common values are maintained. We will collaborate with Belgian democratic institutions to counter the risk of increased extremism. In recent years, Belgium and other countries have experienced ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious intolerance. We will use Post's resources to reduce intolerance. Post will advance racial equity and support to underserved communities in our programming, public, and cultural engagements.

Embassy Brussels will regularly assess our accomplishments through the Department's strategic planning process, congressionally mandated reporting, and regular internal assessments.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Revitalize Transatlantic Alliances & Partnerships

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Encourage Belgium through defense cooperation and diplomatic and military engagement to improve its defense capabilities so Belgium is prepared to address hybrid and other new threats and contribute to multilateral military operations.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Increase public awareness of shared values and support for the transatlantic partnership to build resilience against foreign malign influence and support for bilateral cooperation on shared interests.

Mission Goal 2: Promote Deeper U.S.-Belgian Trade and Investment Ties, and Encourage Belgium to Effectively Counter Non-Market and Coercive Economic Practices

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Promote deeper trade, investment, and energy cooperation with Belgium, including seeking commercial opportunities for U.S. companies in Belgium.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Support Belgium's efforts to strengthen its economic tools to counter risks posed by non-market and coercive economic practices.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Collaborate with Belgium to set the standards for a 21st century economy that promotes rules-based trade, investment, and economic growth for the United States and the world.

Mission Goal 3: Leverage the U.S.-Belgian Relationship to Address Global and Regional Threats and Challenges

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Cooperate with Belgium to address the global climate crisis and ensure Belgian energy transition plans provide energy security to Belgium and economic opportunities to U.S. businesses.

- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Facilitate legitimate trade and travel between Belgium and the United States while reducing illicit narcotics, counterfeit, and human trafficking through bilateral law enforcement and counterterrorism cooperation.
- **Mission Objective 3.3:** Protect U.S. citizens' safety and serve their interests in Belgium.

Mission Goal 4: Strengthen Democracy & the Rule of Law

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Work with Belgium to strengthen democratic institutions to counter democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism throughout the world.
- **Mission Objective 4.2:** In collaboration with Belgium, use public and cultural engagements to improve cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic acceptance.

Management Objective 1: Improved and expanded USG facilities provide safe, secure, environmentally conscious, and efficient working and living space for the USG and right-sized Management and security teams provide high-level support to ICASS customer base and thousands of official visitors to Tri-Mission.

Management Objective 2: Principals of diversity and inclusion are upheld in the Embassy's hiring, programming, and external engagements.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: | Revitalize Transatlantic Alliances & Partnerships

Description: | The Transatlantic Relationship was strained in recent years because of disagreements over a variety of economic and security issues and breakdowns in communication among allies. These frayed relationships made it more difficult to convince allies to share the burden for security in Europe. In order to face the continued threats from Russia, China, Iran, terrorism, extremist groups, and transnational crime, the U.S. Embassy will work with Belgium to reinforce its role in Europe's safety and security.

Objective 1.1: | Encourage Belgium, through defense cooperation and diplomatic and military engagement, to continue investment in its defense capabilities so that Belgium is better prepared to address hybrid and other new threats and contribute to multilateral military operations.

- **Objective 1.1 Justification:** | U.S. national security objectives are dependent upon maintaining strong NATO partnerships. Belgium, a founding member of NATO and its host country, has been a reliable NATO ally and an active participant in international operations. However, while the government has plans to gradually increase defense spending to 1.54% of GDP by 2030, Belgium's defense spending levels are still below its Wales commitment. Low defense spending has led to a manpower shortage in Belgium's military, affecting its ability to respond to NATO's needs. Belgium must also continue its preparedness to face new threats such as cyber and hybrid attacks and malign influence from state and non-state actors. Belgium's Strategic Vision for Defense (2016-2030) outlines numerous programs by the Ministry of Defense that would support this objective. The current Minister of Defense plans to rebuild the Belgian military's manpower, though Belgium is not expected to meet its Wales Pledge. The Embassy has excellent relationships with the Belgian Ministry of Defense, military, and defense industry through which we will encourage Belgium to continue to improve its preparedness to address security challenges. Belgium recognizes the importance of

Approved: June 16, 2022

defense spending and the role it can play in supporting Belgium's economy through cooperation with U.S. companies to manufacture equipment for itself and other NATO members.

- **Objective 1.1 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 1.4; JRS Objective 1.1, 1.2
- **Objective 1.1 Risks:** | A premature dissolution of the current coalition government in Belgium could disrupt the current path to increase spending, manpower and capabilities to meet modern threats, including hybrid, cyber, terrorist, and extremist threats.

Objective 1.2: | Increase public awareness of shared values and support for the transatlantic partnership to build resilience against foreign malign influence and support for bilateral cooperation on shared interests.

- **Objective 1.2 Justification:** | The United States and Belgium are connected in nearly every sector, from military and law enforcement cooperation to business and education exchanges. However, Belgium's devolved political, economic, and social order creates domestic vulnerabilities that erode support for our shared policy objectives at the regional and international level. Social tensions within labor, youth, and immigrant communities exacerbate these vulnerabilities and create opportunities for Russia, the PRC, extremists, and others to spread disinformation. The Embassy will use its programs and relationships with the Belgian public and government to increase support for the transatlantic partnership. The Embassy will execute programs that produce new, and maintain existing, ties between individuals and organizations in the United States and Belgium that build on the strengths of our diverse populations. Our programs will also raise public awareness of the strong cooperation and shared values between our two nations. We will deepen collaboration to confront threats to our common values, security interests, and shared vision. We will use relationships between the Federal agencies at the Embassy and Belgian institutions to ensure Belgian government personnel maintain a positive image of the United States and continue to cooperate with U.S. agencies. This will strengthen our bilateral relationship to advance shared

interests to achieve greater security, increase economic opportunities for our citizens, and promote respect for ethnic and religious diversity.

- **Objective 1.2 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 1.5; JRS Objective 1.3, 2.1-4
- **Objective 1.2 Risks:** | Social tensions, already exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to deteriorate reducing trust in government and U.S. sponsored programs.

Mission Goal 2: | Promote Deeper U.S.-Belgian Trade and Investment Ties, and Encourage Belgium to More Effectively Counter Risks Posed by Non-Market and Coercive Economic Practices

Description: | Belgium and the United States have deep economic ties. The United States is the largest source of FDI in Belgium outside the EU and Belgium is the 12th largest source of FDI in the United States. Additionally, Belgian ports are among the largest in Europe, providing access to Europe for American goods. Belgium's openness to investment and trade also makes it susceptible to economic influence by the PRC and Russia. The PRC has made a concerted effort to invest in Belgium in recent years. Belgium's lack of investment screening laws has allowed Chinese companies to gain a foothold in Belgium. Creating economic prosperity in the United States is necessary for American national security and influence abroad. Strong trade and investment relations are a key component of the Administration's strategy to promote American prosperity. With a strong economy led by strong pharmaceutical and chemicals sectors, a deep logistics network, a position as a leading maritime hub, and with a tradition of international engagement, rule of law and transparency, Belgium is a strong trading partner.

Objective 2.1: | Promote deeper trade, investment, and energy cooperation with Belgium, including seeking commercial opportunities for U.S. companies in Belgium.

- **Objective 2.1 Justification:** | The Embassy will contribute to economic growth in the United States and Belgium by promoting trade and investment ties, advancing U.S. commercial policy and interests, promoting private sector innovation, and partnering to build a sound business environment in Belgium and throughout the world. Rules-based trade and investment is under constant threat around the world. As countries with

deep economic ties the United States and Belgium can work together to ensure rule-based commerce remains the global standard. Additionally, the EU is regularly developing economic policies that set standards for member states. The EU could set commercial, financial, competition, and environmental policies that create barriers for U.S. access to European markets. As a member of the EU and other international economic forums with economic policies that are similar to the United States, Belgium can support U.S. policies in those organizations. Additionally, Belgium will hold the EU Presidency in January – June 2024 when it will have the opportunity to drive the EU's agenda.

- **Objective 2.1 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 2.1, 2.2; JRS Objective 3.1
- **Objective 2.1 Risks:** | An uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, PRC influence, and increased protectionism within the EU could force the Belgian government to adopt protectionist policies that reduce transatlantic economic ties.

Objective 2.2: | Support Belgium's efforts to strengthen its economic tools to improve resilience in the global supply chain, protect sensitive technologies and critical infrastructure, and counter non-market and coercive economic practices.

- **Objective 2.2 Justification:** | As an open economy with strong regional governments, Belgium's federal government has few tools at its disposal to prevent investment that could pose a security risk. The government still needs to adopt and implement investment screening legislation. This provides the United States the opportunity to influence the legislation and its eventual implementation. Once the law is adopted, we will continue to provide technical assistance to Belgium when it starts to implement its investment screening law. Global actors are increasingly using economic tools to advance political and security objectives, and Belgium's awareness of such risks is growing but incomplete. While Belgium's significant state interest in key economic sectors provides fewer opportunities for malign foreign acquisitions, economic security risks persist across the public, private, and research sectors from foreign investments and the use of untrusted technology providers. We will work with Belgium to raise

awareness of economic security risks and to exchange knowledge on tools to mitigate such risks.

- **Objective 2.2 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 2.4; JRS Objective 3.2
- **Objective 2.2 Risks:** | Sub-national governments could implement investment screening laws unevenly.

Mission Goal 3: | Leverage the U.S.-Belgian relationship to Address Global and Regional Threats and Challenges

Description: | The United States and Belgium are like-minded on a range of issues, including climate, security, and economic policies. We can use that common ground to convince Belgium to act in concert with the United States, either bilaterally or multilaterally, to address these threats and challenges. The Embassy has strong working relationships with the Belgian government, civil society, press, and businesses and will leverage those relationships. As a NATO and EU member, Belgium is especially well-placed to advocate in support of U.S. policies in those organizations.

Objective 3.1: | Cooperate with Belgium to address the global climate crisis, and ensure Belgian energy transition plans provide energy security to Belgium and economic opportunities to U.S. businesses

- **Objective 3.1 Justification:** | Mitigating climate change is a top priority for the Belgium government and public. By demonstrating the U.S. commitment to the Paris Agreement and COP-26 commitments the Embassy will have credibility and the ability to influence Belgian climate policy and ensure it is effective and is applied equally to U.S. firms. Belgium is in the process of closing its nuclear power plants, which will create opportunities for U.S. firms to export goods and services to fill the gap. The Embassy has existing relationships with Belgian government, civil society, press, and businesses that will enable it to influence Belgian climate policy. Protecting America's security at home and abroad requires ensuring energy security and the diversity of supply to the United States and its European partners. With Russia's Ukraine invasion Belgium

Approved: June 16, 2022

decided to maintain two nuclear power plants while transitioning to more sustainable energy options. Belgium will need U.S. and private sector support to reduce its limited consumption of Russian energy while exploring new options. The Mission will pursue strategies in support of the EUR Regional Joint Regional Strategy Framework goal to “Strengthen the Western Alliance” that promote European energy security. We will also work to realize the potential of North America energy exports and innovative technologies to Belgium and wider Europe.

- **Objective 3.1 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 2.2, 2.4; JRS 4.1
- **Objective 3.1 Risks:** | Political evolution in Belgium and/or the United States could result in diverging climate policies.

Objective 3.2: | Facilitate legitimate trade and travel between Belgium and the United States while reducing illicit narcotics, counterfeit, and human trafficking through bilateral law enforcement and counterterrorism cooperation.

- **Objective 3.2 Justification:** | Belgian air and seaports are transit points that traffickers in illicit goods use to access the European markets. Through U.S.-Belgian law-enforcement cooperation the government has successfully interdicted record-levels of illicit trade. We need to strengthen this cooperation and determine ways to reduce the supply and demand for the illicit goods. Additionally, Belgian criminal and labor laws make it an attractive transit point for illicit activities. Embassy engagement with Ministry of Justice, Finance, Interior, and other contacts to encourage updates to Belgian laws could help reduce this attractiveness. Bilateral law enforcement cooperation with Belgium is excellent, with ongoing cooperation and joint investigations leading to interdictions and prosecutions of criminals, terrorists, and contraband. The Embassy’s law enforcement agencies have existing relationships with Belgian law enforcement that enable constant cooperation through training and supporting Belgian investigations. Additionally, U.S. and Belgian customs organizations are already working together to implement systems that will assist in interdicting illicit goods.
- **Objective 3.2 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 3.3, 3.4, 5.2; JRS Objective 2.4

- **Objective 3.2 Risks:** | Belgium is unwilling to address the legal underpinnings, such as short prison sentences and strong labor protections, that make it an attractive transit point for illicit goods and activities.

Mission Objective 3.3: | Protect U.S. citizens' safety and serve their interests in Belgium

- **Objective 3.3 Justification:** | One of the most fundamental functions of an embassy is to provide routine and emergency services to assist U.S. citizens abroad. The Embassy is the main U.S. government point of contact for many U.S. citizens living abroad. The U.S. Embassy to Belgium prioritizes their safety and convenience. Crime and terrorism remain a concern, so our consular section must ensure that it maintains steady communications and services for the American community. Additionally, the COVID pandemic and reduced visa processing in Russia placed additional burdens on our Consular Section, with only three direct hires to adjudicate both visa and provide American Citizen Services.
- **Objective 3.3 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 5.1
- **Objective 3.3 Risks:** | Brussels has a small USDH staff and a relatively high number of Americans – both residents and travelers – in its consular district. In times of crisis, it may lack the capacity to provide services needed and requested.

Mission Goal 4: | Strengthen Democracy & the Rule of Law

Description: | Democracy and the Rule of Law is under threat around the world, including in Belgium. Belgium's fragile government coalition consists of seven parties that must work together to find consensus on a range issues. If they are unable to maintain the coalition, early elections could result in a protracted period with no government, lessening Belgium's ability to support U.S. policies.

Objective 4.1: | Work with Belgium to strengthen democratic institutions to counter democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism throughout the world.

- **Objective 4.1 Justification:** | Belgium is experiencing the same trends seen in other developed democracies whereby social media fuels political polarization that strengthens the position of groups on the extreme margins of the political spectrum. There is a risk that these extremist ideologies become more mainstream. To address the risk the Embassy must engage across Belgian society in support of democracy and human rights, in Belgium and around the world. The Embassy has existing programs that created ties between U.S. and Belgian institutions and civil society that can be used to counter these trends. In addition to these programs, the Embassy will work with Belgian civil society, press, and the government to reinforce shared democratic and human rights values in other countries.
- **Objective 4.1 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 1.5, 3.1, 3.2; JRS Objective 2.1-3; E.O. 13985
- **Objective 4.1 Risks:** | Anti-democratic and authoritarian ideologies become more pervasive in the face of economic hardship, persistent migration, and further political polarization.

Objective 4.2: | In collaboration with Belgium, use public and cultural engagements to improve cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic acceptance.

- **Objective 4.2 Justification:** | The linguistic and political divide between Flanders and Wallonia makes it more difficult for the United States to work with Belgium on policy issues because the regions often have a say in issues that affect foreign policy. This divide is complicated by increasing political polarization and the strengthening of the far-right party in Flanders. The Embassy will tailor its programs to bridge this linguistic division.
- **Objective 4.2 Linkages:** | JSP Objective 3.2, JRS Objective 2.1, NSS Pillar
- **Objective 4.2 Risks:** | Public opinion against migrants and divisions within Belgium society create political divisions within the governing coalition, resulting in early elections and greater influence of right-wing extremist political parties.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: | Improved and expanded USG facilities provide safe, secure, environmentally conscious, and efficient working and living space for the USG and right-sized Management and security teams provide high-level support to ICASS customer base and thousands of official visitors to Tri-Mission.

- **Justification:** | The facilities of the campus shared by the Bilateral Chancery, Bilateral CMR, USEU Office Building, and Joint Administrative Services (JAS) can no longer accommodate the full requirements of the Tri-Mission due to substantial growth in the last ten years. Existing facilities are being utilized beyond recommend density levels and additional office space is required to accommodate current staffing levels, as well as any further planned growth. The security of the campus area continues to be problematic. There is very little setback from busy city streets, and many Overseas Security Policy Board standards cannot be met. The residential real estate market continues to be a challenge in finding appropriate staff housing for USG personnel; many employees experience lengthy waits in temporary quarters upon their arrival, which disrupts work productivity and hurts morale. In addition to space shortages, during the last decade, Tri- Mission Brussels has grown to a large-scale embassy operation without the commensurate changes to management and security staffing levels or significant operational shifts. Recent overseas presence report issued by MSS from July 2021 highlights the Tri-Mission management and security platform as understaffed - MGT around 30 positions, approximately 15 percent, and RSO carrying a 30% greater customer workload ratio than comparable posts. Management and security operations continue to be stretched in trying to do more, including an increasing VIP visits load, with fewer resources.
- **Linkages:** | JRS 5.3
- **Risks:** | The purchase of a NEC is complicated and can be fraught with local host country politics, as well as U.S. domestic politics. The site purchase ultimately must be approved

by the U.S. Congress, and the eventual construction of the NEC is subject to local host country permitting approvals. Without increased management and security personnel and resources, USEU's ability to increase staffing and programmatic activities could be detrimentally impacted.

Management Objective 2: | Principals of diversity and inclusion upheld in hiring, programming, and external engagements

- **Justification:** | *Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, signed by President Biden on his first day in office, established that affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of Government. Advancing equity requires a systematic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes, and executive departments, and agencies must recognize and work to redress inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity. Our foreign policy and the conduct of our diplomacy will reflect those principles to which we aspire: fairness, justice, and equal opportunity for all. This requires the integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into our lives, our laws, and our institutions. Our success here will determine not just our security and prosperity, but the long-term success of our democracies.
- **Linkages:** | JRS Objective 5.4, JSP 1.5, 3.2, and 4.1; E.O. 13985. The interim NSSG states that "America's ideals of democracy, equality, and diversity are a fundamental and enduring source of advantage." It further notes that "The United States must lead by the power of our example" and "we must also remember and celebrate that we are a nation of immigrants, strengthened at home and abroad by our diversity."
- **Risks:** | The success of Objective 2 is contingent upon the success of our recruitment, retention, and professional development, as well as our commitment to recognizing our diversity as a national security priority and valued asset that underscores U.S. values, promotes greater cultural, democratic, and linguistic affinity with European publics. The risk of not fully realizing this objective is that we will lack a diversity of voices and

perspectives in our decision-making and understanding of situations, which will lead to less creativity and innovation in how we approach our work and problems. Additionally, we will miss the opportunity to strengthen our workforce with new skill sets and perspectives.

Approved: June 16, 2022