

## **Narrative**

### **Belgian Economic Mission to the United Kingdom 8-12 May 2022**

#### **#BEmissionUK**

As historical partners, close friends and neighbours, Belgium and the United Kingdom (UK) share many interests and values. We are among the most globalized countries in the world with very open economies which benefit significantly from promoting free trade on the international stage. We both set the defense of human rights and democratic principles high on our foreign policy agendas. The UK and Belgium are both members of NATO.

Our economic relations are intense and deeply entwined. Today the UK is our largest non-EU trading partner and among the top 5 of investors in Belgium. In 2021, the United Kingdom was Belgium's 5th largest client and 8<sup>th</sup> largest supplier.

Belgium is committed to strengthening its ties with the UK, within the broader post-Brexit relationship between the European Union and the UK and is contributing to the promotion of the latter.

The economic mission taking place from 8 to 12 May fully fulfills these objectives and focuses on economic sectors in which our two countries can strengthen each other: logistics and ports, agri-food, life sciences and the pharmaceutical industry, cleantech, construction and architecture as well as business services. However, our economic cooperation extends beyond these fields. As for energy cooperation, there are opportunities through the development of infrastructure and sustainable energy.

The ties between our populations are also very close. More than 30,000 Belgians are living in the UK and over 18,000 British in Belgium. Many Belgians also work in the UK and vice versa.

H.R.H. Princess Astrid heading the delegation as representative of H.M. King Philip and the participation of several federal and regional ministers, together with a very large delegation of business and academic delegation, demonstrates the importance Belgium attaches to this mission and the commitment to support businesses and companies in their international projects.