



Exploring European export opportunities

Arne Maes, Senior Economist
Press presentation
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Agenda

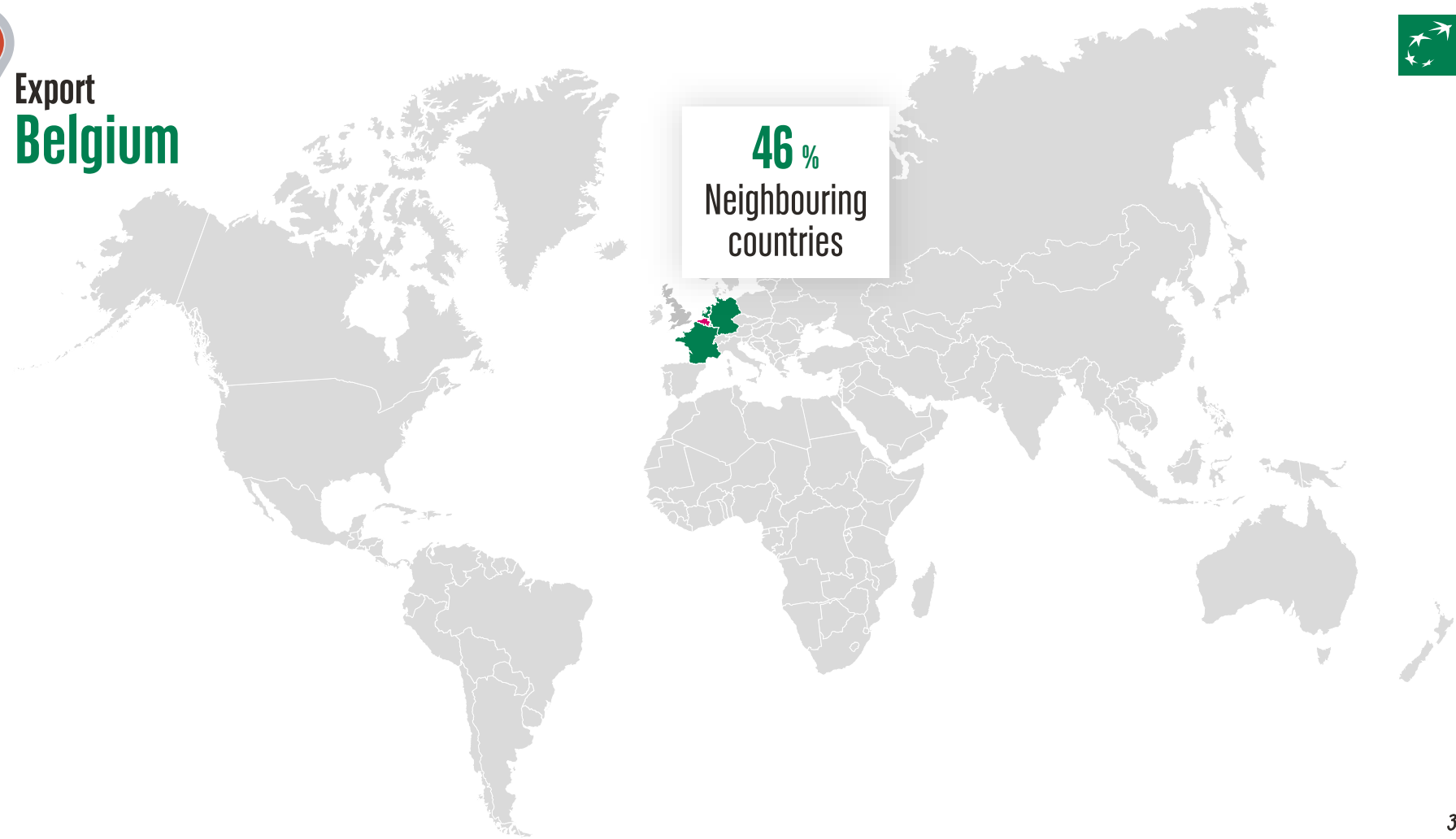
- Belgian export in a changing world
- Intra-EU Non-tariff Trade Barriers: ~~45%~~ **65% !!**
- NTB's: just another word for « regulation »?
- A way forward: sizing the export gap



Export Belgium



46 %
Neighbouring
countries

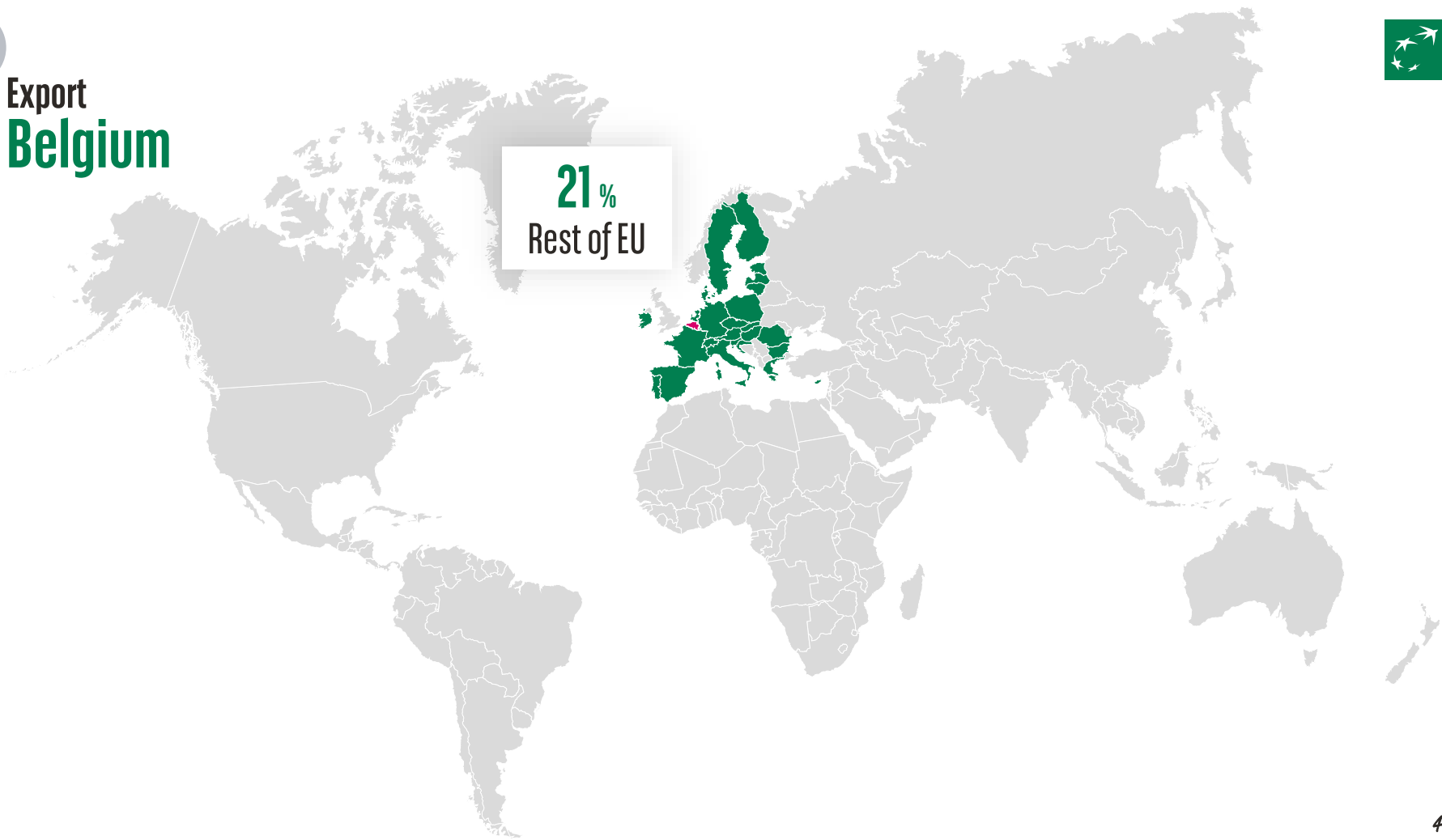




Export Belgium

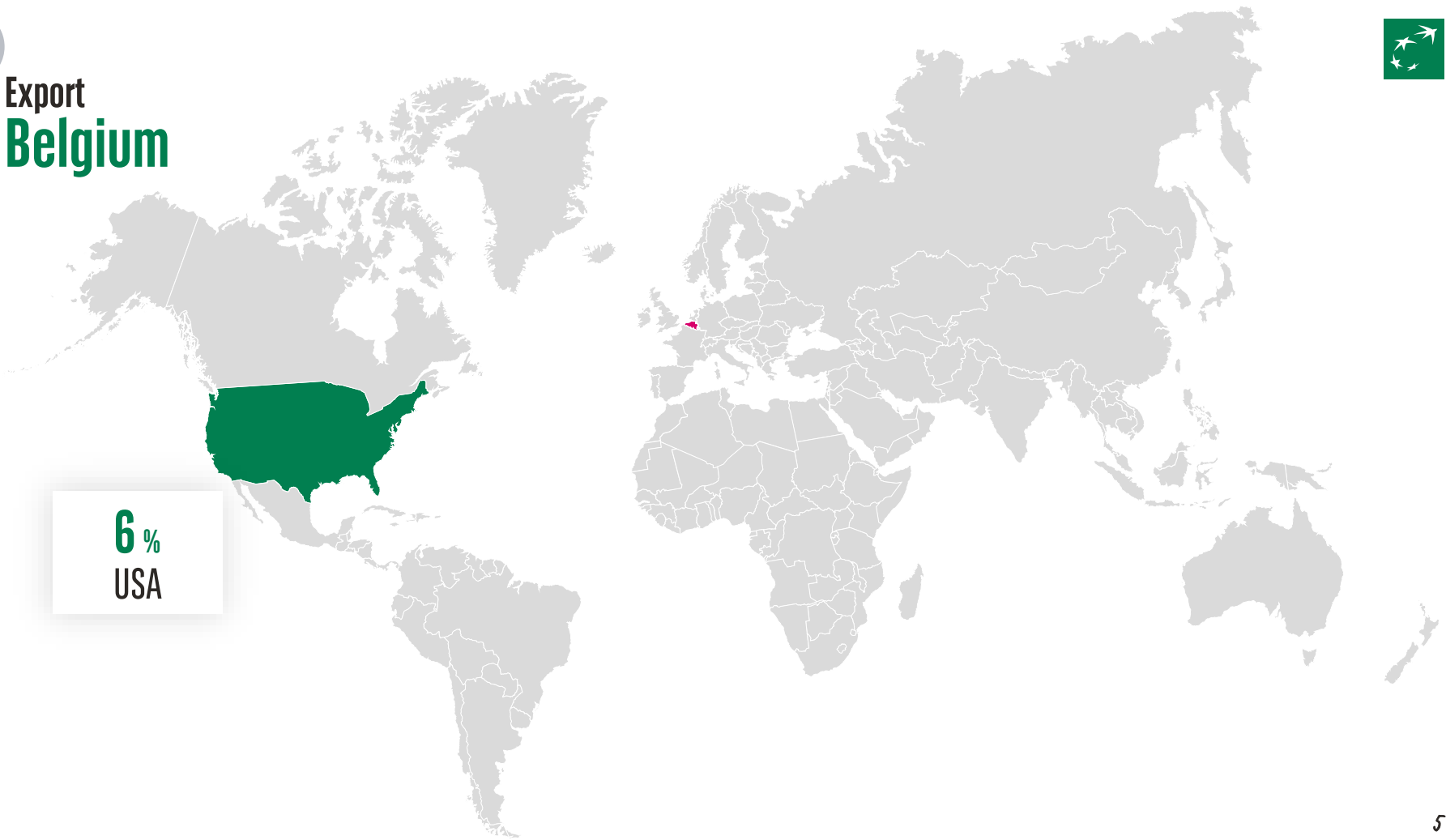


21 %
Rest of EU





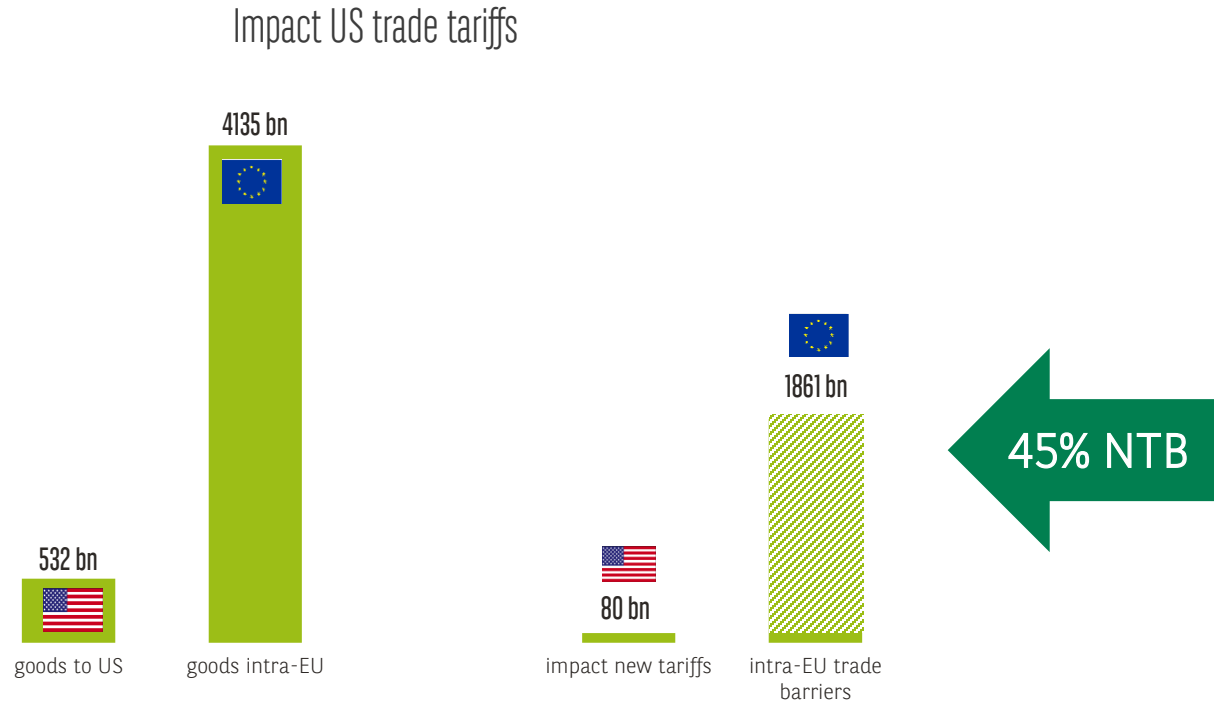
Export Belgium



6 %
USA



Unlocking EU growth? Tackle intra-EU barriers



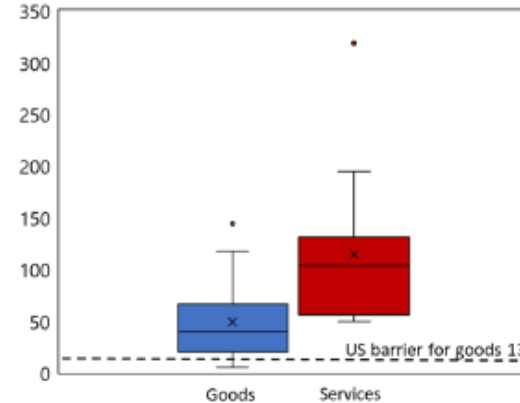


What is this 45%?

“Cutting remaining intra-EU trade barriers could raise effective market size and stimulate European firms’ productivity...”

Yet the ad-valorem equivalent of the remaining barriers constraining intra-EU trade is estimated to remain at around 45 percent for the average manufacturing sector—three times as large as the level estimated among US states...”

Figure 1.6. Estimated Intra-EU Trade Barriers in 2020
(Percent)





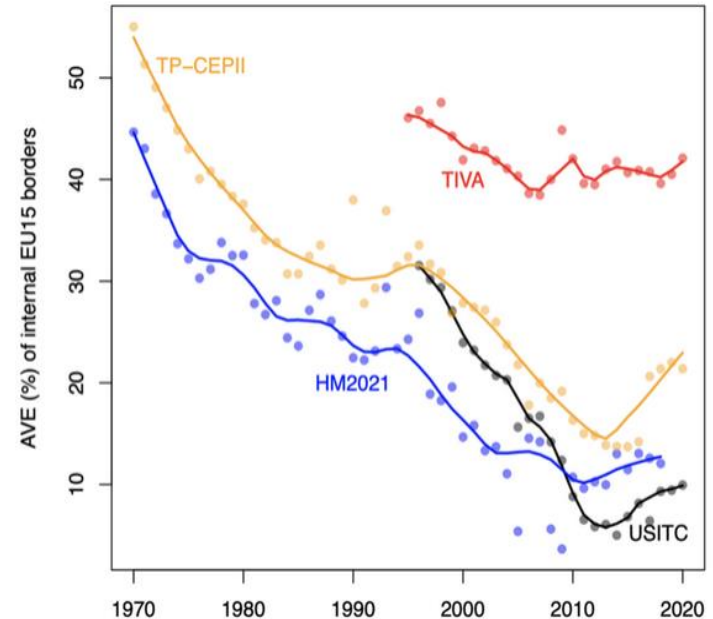
It is not a self-imposed tariff !!

No, the EU does not impose a 45% tariff on itself

Keith Head, Thierry Mayer / 13 Nov 2025

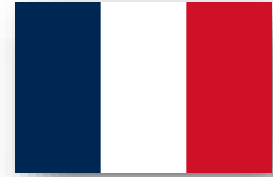
A recent paper which has gathered significant attention estimates a 45% tariff equivalent of intra-EU border costs. This column argues that this estimate is likely too high and depends on the particular dataset used and specific estimation choices. Therefore, it also vastly overstates the barriers that are akin to tariffs and could be lowered as a result of European Commission policy decisions. Instead, it argues that there are more urgent reforms with larger potential benefits, such as boosting EU innovation capacity and R&D spending.

Figure 1 The evolution of EU15 integration: Four datasets





Are these barriers...EU-regulation?





Are these barriers...excessive regulation?



Franse koeien eerst, belga © belga

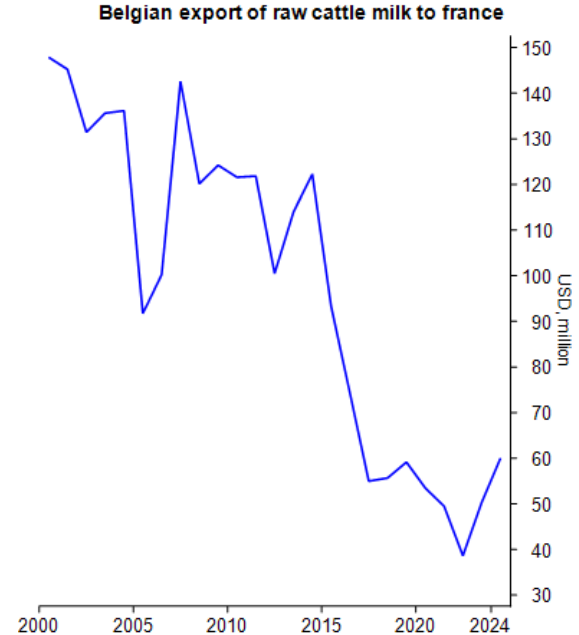
MELK MET EEN B'TJE EROP WORDT NIET MEER GETOLEREERD

+ Franse etiketten schaden melkverkoop

BRUSSEL Als een Frans bedrijf kaas maakt met Belgische melk, moet dat daar op het etiket staan. 'Gastronationalisme', vindt de voedingsindustrie.

22 juni 2017 om 05:25

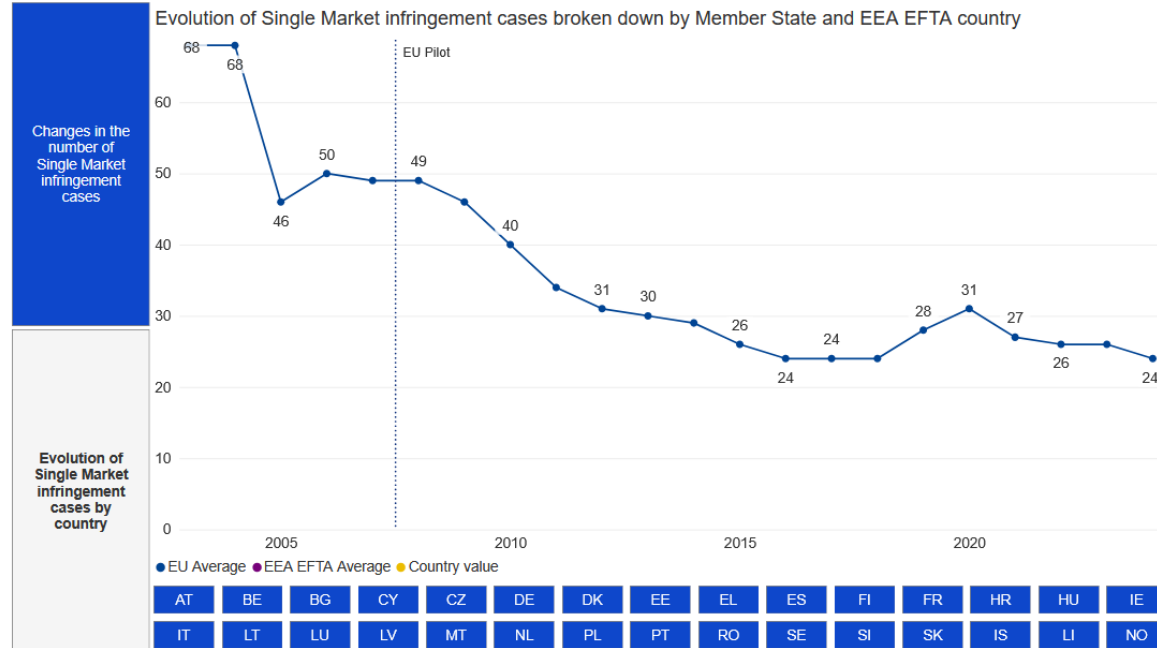
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What is the role of EU-Regulation?

Trends in the EU





Are these barriers...just differences in *tastes and colors*?



Public expenditures



Network effects



Consumer taste



In any case, it's actually **65%** according to ECB

The potential of the domestic market

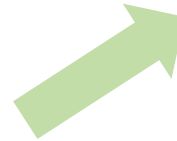
This experience underlines the power of a resilient domestic economy, strengthened by open strategic autonomy. But it also exposes how much potential Europe continues to leave untapped.

Today, despite more than 30 years of the Single Market, trade barriers within the EU remain too high in key areas.

ECB analysis finds that internal barriers in services and goods markets are equivalent to tariffs of around 100% and 65%, respectively.^[14]

Bernasconi, R., Cordemans, N., Gunnella, V., Pongetti, G. and Quaglietti, L. (2025), "What is the untapped potential of the EU Single Market?", *Economic Bulletin*, Issue 8, ECB (forthcoming). These "tariff equivalents" should be understood as measures of estimated trade frictions rather than actual policy-imposed tariffs. They reflect a combination of policy-related barriers and structural or cultural factors – such as consumer preferences and taste differences – that cannot be directly addressed through policy alone.

...a combination of policy-related barriers and structural or cultural factors – such as consumer preferences and taste differences – that cannot be directly addressed through policy alone...



Intra-EU trade opportunities for Belgium





Looking for a point of reference

HANDELSSTROMEN TUSSEN BELGIË EN DE MERCOSUR-LANDEN

Handelsoverschotten vanuit België, in miljoen euro

22 miljoen € PARAGUAY

invoer uit Paraguay 6
o.a. koper, granen, tabak,
zaden, vruchten, suiker, ...

uitvoer naar Paraguay 28
o.a. farmaceutische
producten,
landvoertuigen, ...

436 miljoen € ARGENTINIË

invoer uit Argentinië 242
o.a. ertsen, slakken, assen,
resten en afval van de
voedselindustrie, ...

uitvoer naar Argentinië 678
o.a. minerale brandstoffen,
aardolie en distillatieproduc-
ten, farmaceutische
producten, ...

1.100 miljoen € BRAZILIË

invoer uit Brazilië 1.110
o.a. ertsen, slakken, assen,
koffie, thee, maté en
specerijen, ...

uitvoer naar Brazilië 2.200
o.a. farmaceutische
producten, mechanische
toestellen en machines, ...

69 miljoen € URUGUAY

invoer uit Uruguay 80
o.a. granen, zaden, vruchten,
voer, hout, ...

uitvoer naar Uruguay 149
o.a. minerale brandstoffen,
aardolie en distillatieproduc-
ten, farmaceutische
producten, ...



A look at the data

International Trade Data (HS12) (Bilateral Trade, HS12, 6 digit, 2020-2023)

[Download Data](#)

This dataset contains information about International Trade Data (HS12). It includes data from 2020-2023 and is classified as Bilateral Trade with HS12 classification at the 6-digit level.

File Name: hs12_country_country_product_year_6_2020_2023.csv

File Size: 2.3 GB

Last Update: 2025-04-10



HOW TO CITE

The Growth Lab at Harvard University, 2025, "International Trade Data (HS12)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/YAVJDF>, Harvard Dataverse

[Copy](#)

Field Name	Description	Data Type	Notes
country_id	Numerical country identification code assigned by the Growth Lab	integer	Augmented version of UN M49 codes.
country_iso3_code	Three letter country identification code	string	Augmented version of ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 codes.
partner_country_id	Numerical country identification code assigned by the Growth Lab	integer	Augmented version of UN M49 codes. Values correspond to identical countries as country ID field.
partner_iso3_code	Three letter country identification code	string	Augmented version of ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 codes. Values correspond to identical countries as country ISO-3 code field.
product_id	Numerical product ID code assigned by the Growth Lab	integer	Product IDs are valid only within their classification. The same product IDs are used in different classifications to refer to different products.



A simple model

1. Establish a benchmark	2. Look for underperformance	3. Size the opportunity
Marketshare in non-EU	Market share per EU member state	Market share delta X EU member state import



A simple **model**: pharmaceuticals to Poland

1. Establish a benchmark

Belgium to Non-EU
 $11B / 200 B = 5,6\%$

2. Look for underperformance

Belgium to Poland
 $125M / 4B = 3\%$

3. Size the opportunity

Export gap
 $(5,6\% - 3\%) \times 4B =$
100M

Select Period

Year
average

Products Filters

Product families (HS2)
(All)

Product categories (HS4)
(All)

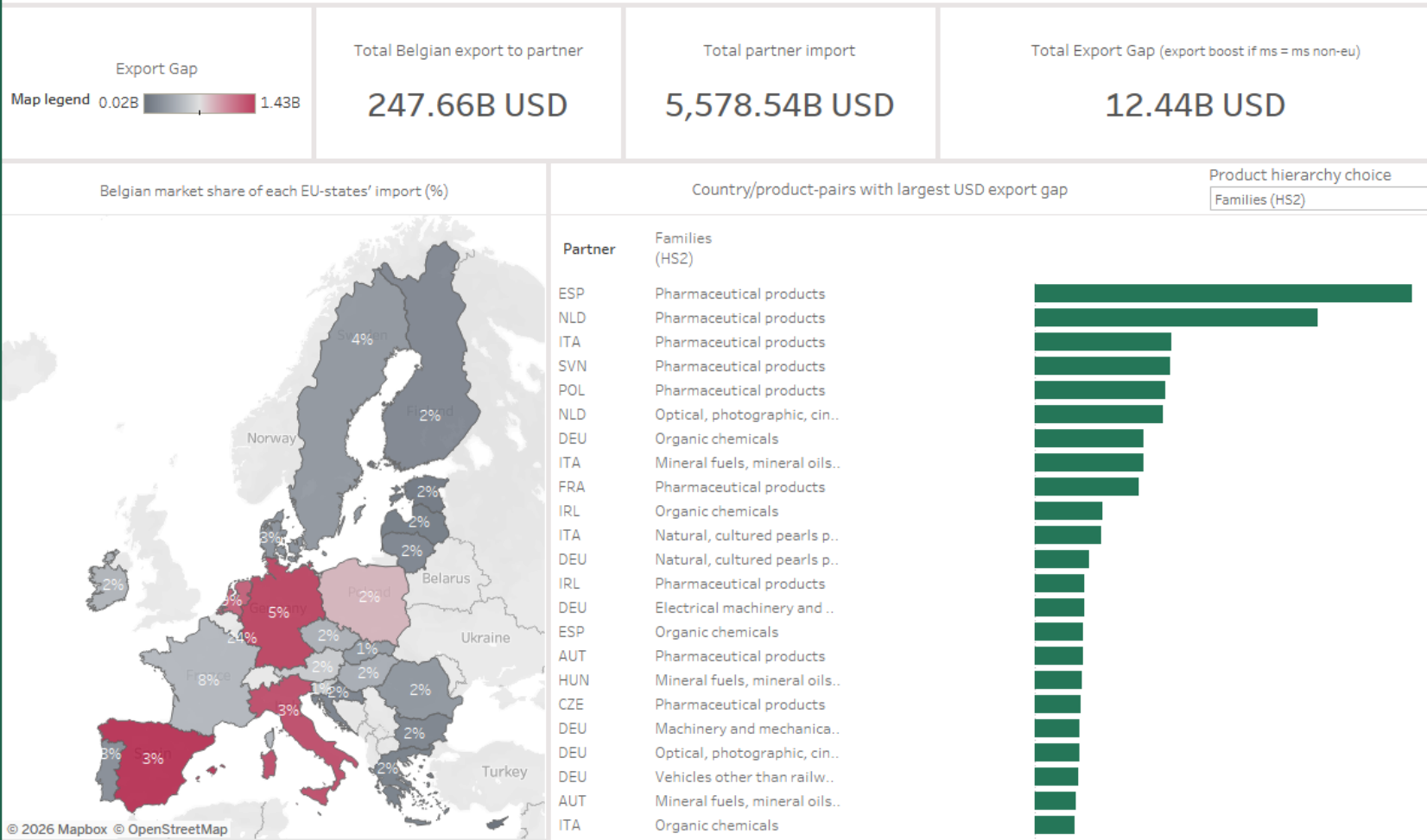
Product subcategories (HS6)
(All)

HS-classification of traded goods offers increasing level of detail from HS2 (2 digits), over HS4 (4 digits) to HS6 (6 digits)



Source: The Growth Lab at Harvard University, 2025, "International Trade Data (HS), 2021-2023", The Atlas of Economic Complexity, Harvard Dataverse. Calculations by BNP Paribas Fortis.

Closing the export gap:
Helping Belgian firms to reach their intra-EU trade potential



Select Period

Year
average

Products
Filters

Product families (HS2)
29 - Organic chemicals

Product categories (HS4)
(All)

Product subcategories (HS6)
(All)

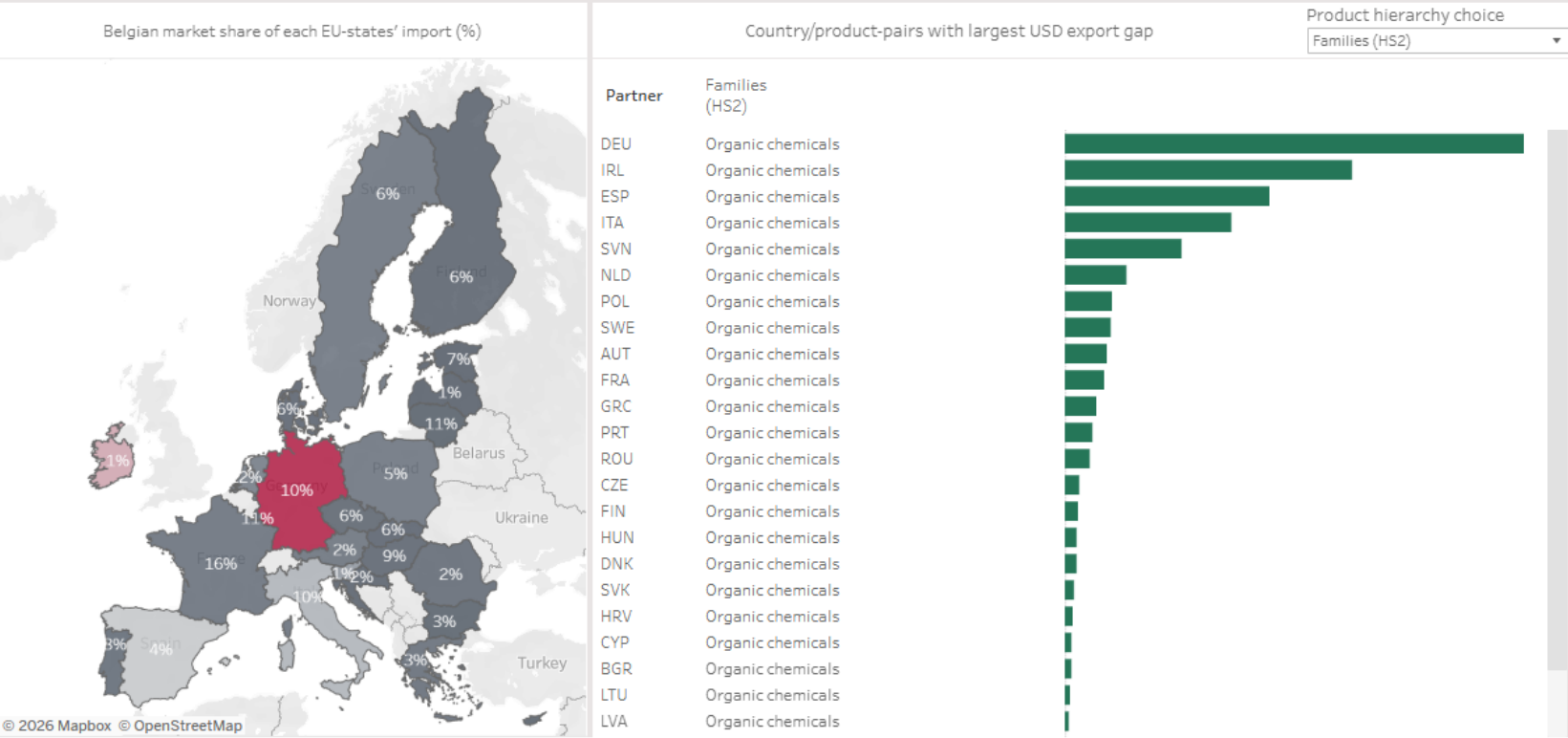
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Export Gap Map legend 0.00B 0.28B	Total Belgian export to partner 11.09B USD	Total partner import 137.48B USD	Total Export Gap (export boost if ms = ms non-eu) 0.99B USD
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Select Period

Year

average

Products Filters

Product families (HS2)

71 - Natural, cultured ...

Product categories (HS4)

(All)

Product subcategories (HS6)

(All)

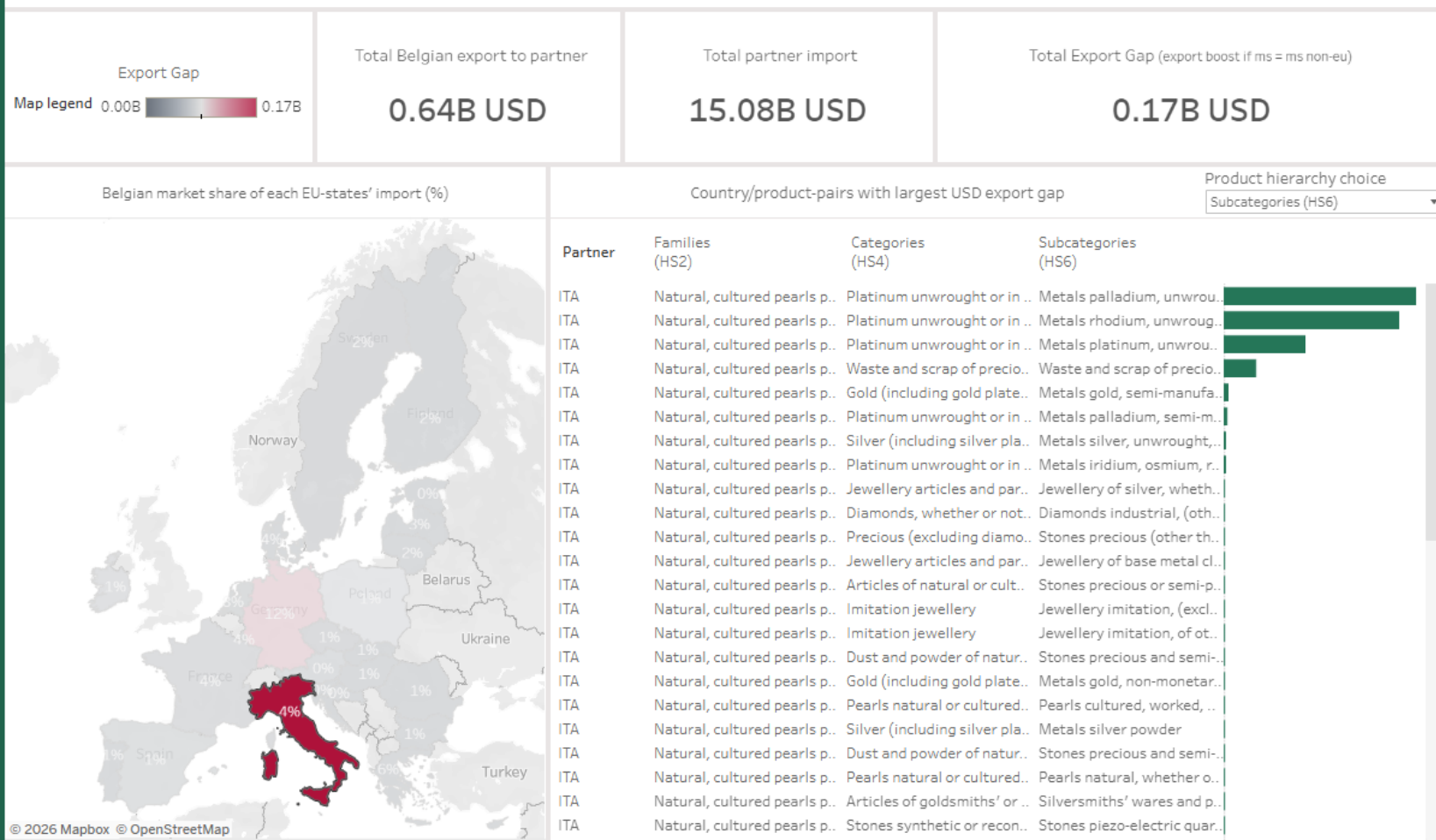
HS-classification of traded goods offers increasing level of detail from HS2 (2 digits), over HS4 (4 digits) to HS6 (6 digits)



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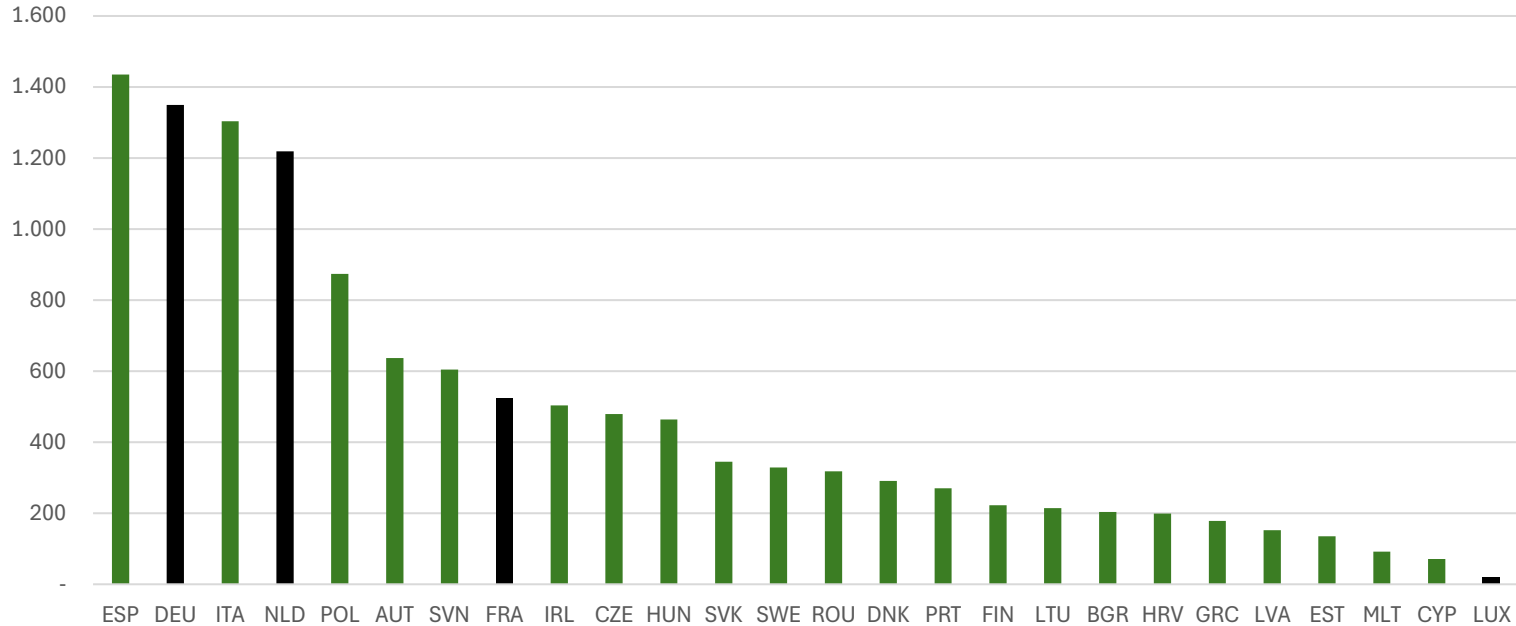
Closing the export gap: Helping Belgian firms to reach their intra-EU trade potential





The case for intra-EU trade missions

Total export gap
(M USD, average over 2021-2023)



Select Period

Year

average

Products Filters

Product families (HS2)

(All)

Product categories (HS4)

(All)

Product subcategories (HS6)

(All)

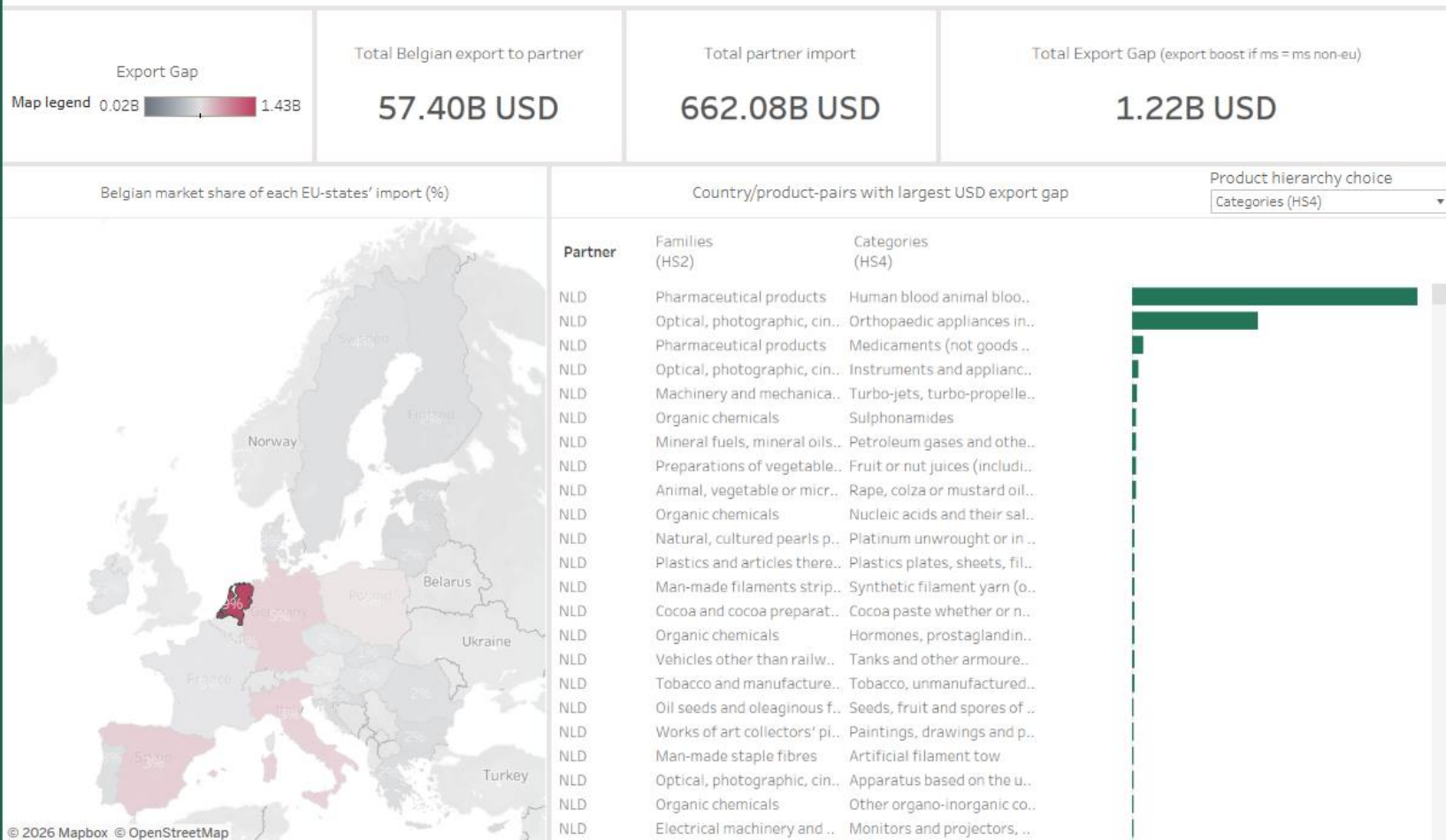
HS-classification of traded goods offers increasing level of detail from HS2 (2 digits), over HS4 (4 digits) to HS6 (6 digits)



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QUESTIONS?

ANSWERS

THANK YOU



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FORTIS**



Media Relations

Hilde Junius

hilde.junius@bnpparibasfortis.com
M +32 478 88 29 60

Jeroen Petrus

jeroen.petrus@bnpparibasfortis.com
M +32 498 32 14 94

Valéry Halloy

valery.halloy@bnpparibasfortis.com
M +32 475 78 80 97