



ERA PROGRESS IN BELGIUM HIGHLIGHTS

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of Belgium's progress in implementing the European Research Area (ERA) over the past decade.



POLICY CONTEXT

Belgium is a federal country where responsibilities, budgets and policy instruments for research and innovation have been devolved to its three Communities and three Regions, with the Federal State retaining some competences without having authority on the federated entities and the federal authority. Regulatory frameworks, strategies and actions relevant to the ERA objectives co-exist in all entities, each according to its autonomous competences. Boldly summarised: the Regions are competent for R&I for economic development as well as for research related to their competences and support research institutions, companies, organisations and programmes for these purposes; the Communities are competent for education and scientific research at universities and university colleges and for research related to their competences (culture, education, health, etc.) and are responsible for funding the higher education system, in which universities are the dominating actors; the Federal State has its own Federal Scientific Institutes active in federal matters such as space, defence and cultural heritage and is also responsible for federal tax incentives for R&D. In 2021, 81% of total government budgetary appropriations for R&D (GBARD) originated from Communities and Regions.

Key R&I policy and strategy documents setting out high-level priorities relevant to the ERA policy agenda are found in each of the federated entities and the federal authority in Belgium. They generally emphasise an increased role for R&I to address societal challenges and their governments' priorities: this is notably the guiding principle of Belgium's national and regional Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). Without


being exhaustive, the following can be cited. At the federal level, the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan for the Federal Science Policy Office emphasises open data and open science strategy and a new role for citizens in federal scientific institutions.

Flanders' ambition is to climb amongst the top five in the European Regional Innovation Scoreboard; in this region, a new innovation model is adopted, following a mission-oriented innovation policy, placing greater emphasis on participative 'quadruple helix' processes, and administrative reforms are planned in order to achieve better synergies between policy domains. In Wallonia, the Smart Specialisation Strategy provides a backbone to support R&I and new Strategic Innovation Initiatives (IIS) have been defined to operationalise the strategy, with an important emphasis on new skills for societal challenges. Efforts are continuing to reform the Walloon innovation support system. A central strategy for the Region of Brussels-Capital is its 2021-2027 Smart Specialisation Strategy with the aim to tackle environmental, social, and economic challenges through innovation, prioritising skills, digitalisation and the green transition. The Wallonia-Brussels Federation places priority on open science and harmonisation of the legal framework for research careers.



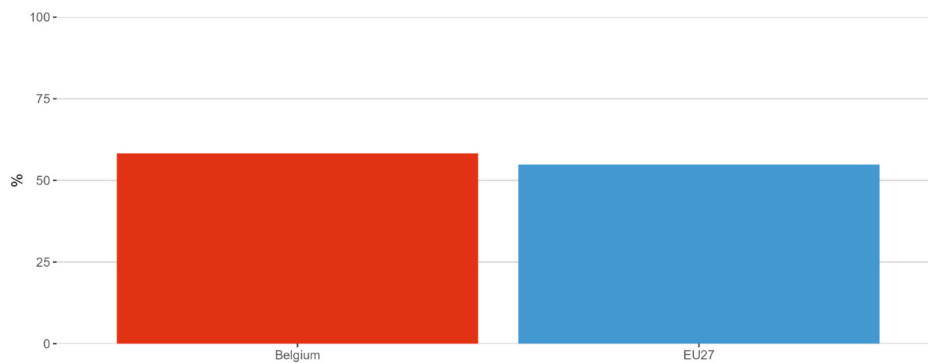
KEY TAKE-AWAYS BELGIUM



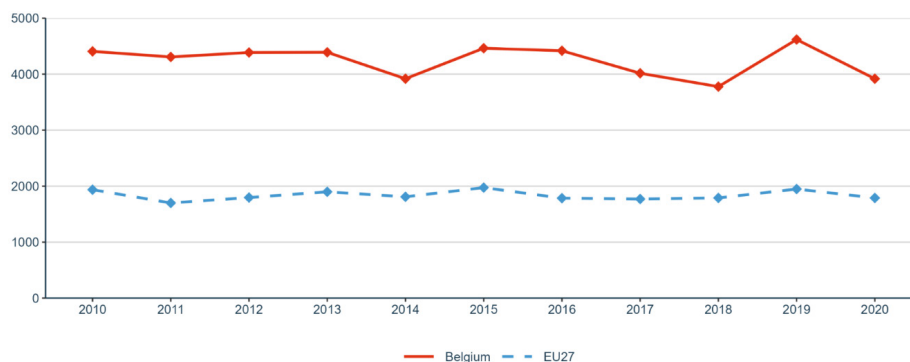
-  Belgium is an innovation leader, displaying strong R&D intensity exceeding the 3% target, with a well-endowed research and innovation system both on the public and private sides, and ample availability of human resources.
-  All Belgian federated entities and the federal authority (Belspo) put a key focus on R&I for societal challenges, including green and digital transition with mission-oriented policies flourishing. Indicators measuring knowledge valorisation and public-private linkages display remarkably high values.
-  Openness is a significant strength of the Belgian R&I system and is at the core of all strategies: the country scores extremely high on public funding for EU cooperation (twice the EU average; international co-publications with non-EU partners (6 times the EU average) and participation in EU research infrastructures; it is also performing well in terms of foreign doctoral students and publications in open access.
-  Two ERA dimensions in which Belgium is not a front-runner are: gender equality and environment-related R&I. For both, new measures are in the pipeline, notably as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD...

Sub-priority 1.3: Gender equality, equal opportunities for all and inclusiveness – Women in Digital Index in 2022



Sub-priority 2.1: Challenge-based ERA actions – R&I investments (transnational cooperation): GBARD (EUR) allocated to Europe-wide transnational, bilateral or multilateral, public R&D programmes per FTE researcher in the public sector



LEARN MORE

- [Download](#) the full ERA Monitoring Belgium Report 2023
- [Read](#) the ‘Communication on A new ERA for Research and Innovation’
- [Consult](#) the background on New ERA, the EU Pact for R&I, the EU Policy Agenda and more