



GCC & BENELUX RELATIONS

There is increasing interest to enhance the strategic economic and geopolitical relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union (EU). Within this context, a notable uptick in Benelux engagement (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg) to the GCC and its members (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) has manifested in a string of high-level exchanges and economic initiatives.



GCC

2.67 million km²
65.5 million
2.1 trillion EUR

AREA
POPULATION
GDP

BENELUX

76,657 km²
30 million
1.4 trillion EUR



BENELUX-GCC TRADE IN GOODS (2022)

(TradeMap, Eurostat)

Benelux imports from GCC:

BE €12.2 B
NL €11.9 B
LU €29.6 M

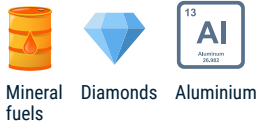
55.8%

Benelux exports to GCC:

44.2%

NL €10.6 B
BE €8.4 B
LU €124.8 M

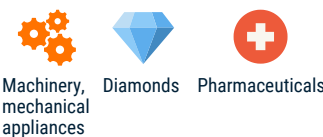
top articles:



Mineral fuels
Diamonds
Aluminium



top articles:



Machinery, mechanical appliances
Diamonds
Pharmaceuticals

28% Benelux accounted for nearly 28% of all EU imports of goods from the GCC and for 22% of EU exports of goods to the GCC in 2022.

BENELUX-GCC TRADE IN SERVICES (2021)

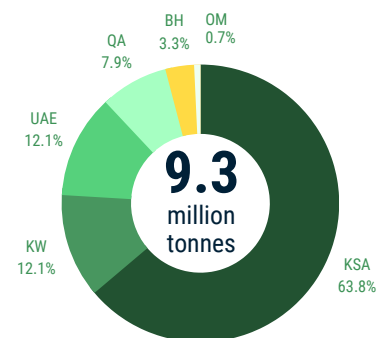
Benelux exports to GCC: 71%

Benelux imports from GCC: 29%



23% Benelux countries accounted for 23% of all EU exports of services to the GCC and for 13% of all EU imports of services from the GCC in 2021.

(Eurostat)



23% (9.3 million tonnes)

of all EU imports of oil and petroleum products from the GCC were bound for the Netherlands and Belgium in 2021.



(Eurostat)

EDUCATION

Cooperation in education between Benelux and GCC countries and their universities has been strengthening over the past few years.



733

Around 733 university students from the Benelux countries are studying in the GCC countries, mostly the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

(UNICEF)

SELECTED ROYAL VISITS

1935: King Saud visited Belgium and met with King Leopold III.



1967: Saudi King Faisal visited Belgium and met with King Baudoin.



1975: Belgium's King Baudoin visited Saudi Arabia upon King Khaled's invitation.

2006: Luxembourg's Grand Duke Henri visited Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar.



2011 and 2012: Dutch Queen Beatrix toured Qatar, the UAE and Oman.



2014 and 2015: Princess Astrid of Belgium led economic missions to Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the UAE.



2015: Dutch King Willem-Alexander travelled to Saudi Arabia to pay respects following the death of King Abdullah.

2021-2022: Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and King Philippe of Belgium visited the UAE for the 2020 Dubai Expo.



2022: Belgium's King Philippe visited Oman.



FUN FACTS IN THE BENELUX-GCC RELATIONSHIP



In 1872, the Netherlands opened its first diplomatic mission in Jeddah to facilitate the flow of Muslim pilgrims from Indonesia.



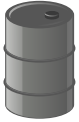
In 1926, the Jeddah-based Saudi-Hollandi Bank, a branch of the Netherlands Trading Society, became the first bank in Saudi Arabia and in 1928 it assisted in launching the Kingdom's first currency, the Saudi riyal.



In 1954, a Belgian diplomatic mission was inaugurated in Jeddah. The first Belgian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia was appointed in 1964, a year after Riyadh appointed its first Ambassador to Belgium.



In 1950, the first flights between the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia began.



In 1983, the newly formed Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) acquired *Gulf Oil* in Benelux. It is headquartered in The Hague and owns numerous gas stations across the Benelux.



The Netherlands has embassies in all GCC countries except Bahrain, which is administered from its mission in Kuwait.



Belgium has embassies in four GCC countries: Kuwait (for Bahrain), Qatar, Saudi Arabia (for Oman) and the UAE.



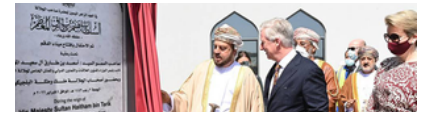
The Dutch and Belgian embassies in the GCC also serve Luxembourg.



The Dutch company, Ballast Nedam, built the causeway between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.



In 2011, Queen Beatrix made the first Dutch royal visit to Qatar.



In 2022, Belgium's King Philippe inaugurated the Port of Duqm, a joint venture between Oman and the Belgian Consortium Antwerp Port.

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