

Belgium Textile Machinery industry

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Table 1: Top 15 customers of Belgium (Exports)
US\$ Million

Country	2015	2016	2017
Germany	59.9	59.9	70.7
France	55.4	55.4	63.8
Netherlands	41.0	40.4	51.4
U.K	31.5	31.9	36.0
USA	21.5	20.8	20.6
Italy	17.8	18.8	20.9
Spain	9.2	9.6	11.8
India	7.8	8.1	8.9
Poland	6.7	7.2	9.2
China	6.8	6.9	8.9
Sweden	5.7	6.1	7.0
Luxembourg	5.5	5.3	6.4
Switzerland	4.8	5.3	7.0
Turkey	4.5	4.5	5.8
Russian Federation	3.0	3.4	4.4

Source: Belgium Foreign Trade Agency.

Belgium's central geographic location and highly developed transport network have helped foster a well-diversified economy, with a broad mix of transport, services, manufacturing, and high tech industries.

The manufacturing industry is concentrated mainly in the more heavily-populated region of Flanders in the north. Its role as a regional logistical hub makes its economy vulnerable to shifts in foreign demand, particularly with EU trading partners. Roughly three-quarters of Belgium's trade is with other EU countries.

Belgium's GDP grew by 1.6% in 2017, unemployment stood at 7.5%, and the budget deficit was 2.1% of GDP. The government has pledged to pursue a reform program to improve Belgium's

competitiveness, including changes to tax policy, labour market rules, and welfare benefits.

Textile Machinery

The machinery industry is the fastest growing industrial sector measured by employment in Belgium. During the last five years, an annual growth rate of 4.5% was achieved and the Belgian machinery industry was able to increase its EU market share by 10%. Textile start-ups in Flanders benefit not only from a welcoming business environment but also access to financing and talented workers in Belgium.

The Belgian textile machinery industry comprises of about 30 companies, reports a turnover of 1.0 billion euros and employs 4,000 persons. Its companies are active in machinery for indoor textiles



which include denim, carpet, upholstery, velvet, table and bed linen, garment textiles, technical textiles and textile finishing technologies. Belgium produces the fastest air-jet weaving machines in the world produced by Picanol. The Belgian textile machinery companies pursue technological leadership strategies.

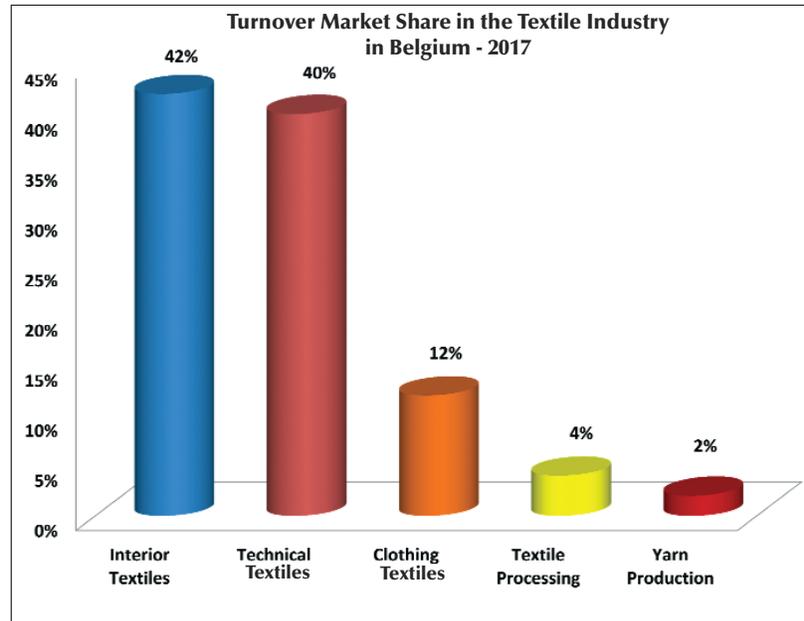
Since 2010, investments have picked up again and Belgian machinery companies are transforming themselves to accelerate their product development rate and flexibility. To position its customers in the pole, the Belgian machinery industry is strongly R&D driven. It invests 7% of its added value on R&D and employs over 10% of the total Belgian research headcount.

The industry accelerated its research efforts on energy efficiency in the last decade and achieved an average energy consumption reduction for its products of 15%.

The Belgian textile machinery industry is strongly export driven with a core of high-tech customers from EU for fast cross-sectorial product development, in addition to the main export markets being the European Union, United States, China, India and Pakistan.

Textile industry

Flanders is home to a number of cluster organizations in the textile industry, such as Fedustria and Unitex. The textile companies in Belgium produce a wide range of products, from clothing and interior textiles to protective clothing or medical textiles. A special category of



manufacturers also focuses on developing new and innovative products. The textile research centres in Belgium are involved in finding new applications for "smart materials" or in the production of special highly resistant fabrics or fabrics that change colours.

Centexbel is the major research institution of the Belgium textile industry; it is engaged in developing and promoting technological innovation and providing information and training to technological trends and new application.

Centres of the textile industry are Bruges, Brussels, Verviers, Ghent, Courtrai (Kortrijk), and Malines (Mechelen). Carpets are made in large quantities at Saint-Nicolas (Sint-Niklaas). Brussels and

Bruges are noted for fine linen and lace. Belgium is renowned for its remarkable design creativity, its longstanding manufacturing know-how and high-quality standards.

The 'Six of Antwerp' (Walter Van Beirendonck, Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene, Marina Yee en Dirk Bikkembergs), Maison Martin Margiela, AF Vandevorst, Raf Simons, Kris Van Assche, Anna Heylen and other designers have put Belgium on the world map.

References

- ❖ Belgium Economy Profile 2017.
- ❖ Symatex: Belgium Textile Machinery Association. ♦

