

ACTIVITY REPORT 2020 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL QUALITY AND SAFETY



FPS Economy, S.M.E.s, Self-employed and Energy

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Responsible publisher:

Séverine Waterbley

Chair of the Board of Directors

Rue du Progrès 50 – 1210 Brussels

Internet version

184-21

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Foreword

Dear reader,

You will find below the activity report of the Directorate-General Quality and Safety for the year 2020.

The year 2020 was undoubtedly unusual. The outbreak of the coronavirus crisis has had a major impact on our operations. You will therefore notice many references to the coronavirus crisis in this document.

At the start of the first “lockdown”, inspections were suspended in a number of sectors. At the same time, there was an enormous need for mouth mask controls and support for importers and buyers of these articles, 7 days a week from early in the morning until late at night.

Mandatory teleworking has made us discover that a large part of our work can also be done remotely. The far-reaching digitalisation of our operations ensured that our activities not only did not come to a standstill, but continued normally “as if nothing had happened”. Thus, our customers hardly noticed any impact on the quality of our services.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the commitment and solidarity shown by our employees.

Those who were momentarily less busy have taken over tasks from others who were overworked.

Employees who could not telework showed a sense of duty by coming to the office, even if it was not always easy.

It should also be noted that many worked more hours as they would do during the normal office hours.

I am therefore very proud of what our employees achieved in the past year and would like to thank them for their efforts.

Chris Van der Cruyssen
Director General a.i.

1. Our mission within the FPS Economy

Our directorate-general has defined its mission on the basis of the mission and vision of the FPS Economy. In our daily activities, we continually ask ourselves: Are we assisting the companies and in particular the SMEs? Are we protecting consumers? Are our actions as efficient and effective as possible?

Companies shall comply with consumer protection regulations. Nevertheless, we are fully aware that there is no such thing as zero risk and that all regulatory and executive measures should be taken based on the principle of proportionality.

The mission of the directorate-general can, therefore, be summarized as follows: **“Ensuring a competitive and balanced operation of the technical goods and services market, by regulating, authorizing, enforcing, investigating and coordinating”**.

1.1. Vision

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety strives to be a **reliable partner** for all its stakeholders. It communicates transparently with all parties involved. In its actions, it pays **specific attention to consumers and businesses, particularly SMEs**. Its initiatives must be supported by all parties involved and should be as simple and practical as possible. Its employees excel in technical and scientific knowledge; their impartiality makes them the ideal point of reference for questions concerning the application of legislation. We take great pride in carrying out our work professionally and with high quality. By continuously improving our quality system, we contribute to the excellence and consistency of the operation of E6 and the FPS.

1.2. Goals

Based on the mission and vision of the directorate-general, the following six strategic objectives were set:

- Ensuring a regulatory framework that takes into account the needs of stakeholders, reflects the current state of the art and allows for innovation.
- Efficiently applying and monitoring the regulations in our jurisdiction. Focusing the available resources on those services and products and their suppliers that pose the greatest risk to consumers or to fair competition.
- Strengthening the role of the directorate-general as a key Belgian player within the European framework of technical regulations.
- Standing out by technical and scientific knowledge.
- Increasing the confidence of the economic operators, users (including consumers) and organisations in the single market for goods and services through communication about our activities.
- Being an organization where motivated employees like to work.

2. Overview of our activities and statistics

2.1. Promoting a sustainable and competitive economy

We support companies in their innovation efforts, so that they can deliver high-quality products and services. In order to do this, we use conformity assessments, knowledge transfer and an efficient and effective standardisation policy.

Accreditation of conformity assessment bodies

BELAC, the Belgian national accreditation institution for conformity assessment bodies, has continued its activities on a legal basis and in accordance with the recognized requirements and criteria at European and international level (Regulation EC 765/2008, standard ISO/IEC 17011:2017 and the related documents of EA, ILAC, IAF and FALB). BELAC was able to maintain its status as signatory of the international recognition agreements between the accreditation bodies of EA, ILAC, IAF and FALB. It also participated actively in the activities of these organizations.

The total number of accreditation certificates amounted to **589** at the end of 2020. In 2020, 26 new customers were registered, with mainly testing (37%), inspection (22%) and medical (19%) activities. 22 new certificates were issued, of which 41% in testing and 27% in inspection activities. BELAC also continued to make considerable investments in the introduction of a training programme adapted to its needs.



A better framework for standardisation activities

The FPS Economy is the supervisory authority of the Bureau for Standardisation (NBN), to which it pays a grant for the performance of tasks of general interest. The supervision in the context of the agreement signed in 2018 between the NBN and the FPS Economy allows a better justification of the use of the allocated resources.

In addition, the FPS Economy also provided financial support for 23 pre-standardisation projects in order to contribute to the development of standards for which scientific knowledge had to be developed. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the system of Standards Antennas was carried out. The system raises awareness among SMEs and informs them about the importance of standards and standardisation. It will lead to a reform of the system to better justify the awarded grants and to better meet the expectations of SMEs. The first phase of the reform, which concerns reporting, was implemented in 2020.

Status-quo in the number of applications for recognition as a contractor

The number of applications for recognition as a contractor increased slightly in 2020. It amounted to 3,864, which represents an average of 322 requests for advice per month. 3,725 applications were submitted by Belgian companies and 139 by foreign companies, mainly from neighboring countries (66 from the Netherlands, 22 from France, 17 from Germany and 6 from Luxembourg). The total number of accredited contractors remained stable in 2020 at 10,500.

Construction products: constant consultation and increasing number of inspections

The Building Regulations Department is the competent authority for implementing the European regulation (EU) 305/2011, which sets harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products.

So far, the scope of some 450 harmonised standards has been studied. These standards are divided into 35 product categories for which 32 product lists have already been published on the [website](#) of the FPS Economy (you can find them under the question “How can I check the compatibility of the product with the scope of the harmonised standard?”). No product list has yet been published for the 3 other product categories, as the corresponding harmonized standards are still awaited.

The department is also in charge of the notification of notified bodies to the European Commission. In 2020, one body, namely COPRO, requested an extension of its scope. Eleven bodies (AIB Vinçotte, APRAGAZ, BCCA, Certipro (department of VITO) , GAZ.BE, INISMa, PROBETON, SGS-Cebec, VITO, WGRGENT, BBRI) had their scope updated as a result of the release of a new version of the standard or the extension of the accreditation period.

The Building Regulations Department also takes part in the market surveillance for construction products covered by a harmonised technical regulation. It carries out checks either on the basis of complaints or proactively. In 2020, 11 formal complaints were registered: 7 were closed following an exchange of information by mail and 4 are still being processed. The proactive market surveillance campaigns illustrates how regulations are followed in a certain sector. A total of 199 companies were visited.

Table 1. Proactive market surveillance campaigns for construction products

Proactive checks	Number
Smoke detectors	51
Electric cables	34
Individual heating appliances	17
Load bearing structures	47
Floor coverings	65
Natural stone	54
EPDM membranes	34
Facades: insulation elements	58
Glass (EN 1279-5)	10
Facades: cladding elements	44
Fire detection and fire alarm systems	1
Preparations and mixtures art 31 and 33 Reach	79
Reactive checks	5
Market analysis – Product codes (*)	60

(*) Market analysis for the purpose of developing lists of harmonised standards for each product area, to be published subsequently on the website of the FPS Economy.

Source: FPS Economy.

In total:

- 199 companies were visited;
- 127 man-days were worked.

The innovation bonus, a support for innovative processes

The innovation bonus gives companies the opportunity to reward their creative employees with a bonus that is completely exempt both from taxes and social security contributions. The FPS Economy approves applications from companies on the basis of the innovative nature of the projects. In 2020, the FPS Economy carried out 1,684 applications within an average period of 5 working days, of which approximately 95 % were approved - in 15 % of the cases additional information was requested. In 2020, more than 300 companies benefited from the exemption of innovation bonuses.

Optimisation of the monitoring of sand extraction in the North Sea

In 2020, the new reference surface area for the vertical limit of sand extraction was approved for each of the extraction sectors. This reference surface area is based on scientific criteria (geology and bathymetry) and was validated by a report on the impact on coastal safety. This reference surface area combines the sustainable management of the raw material and the limitation of the environmental impact of sand extraction on marine habitats, in accordance with the existing regulations. The new reference level came into effect on 1 January 2021. On the basis of this new reference, sub-zones were delineated in the extraction areas where mining is prohibited in 2021.

For more information, please consult the web page relating to [activities of the Continental Shelf Service](#).

Electronic trust services

As far as electronic service providers are concerned, it is not just about monitoring, but above all about guiding companies through a labyrinth of complex rules and procedures. This is the role of the “Digital Trust” unit of the Metrology Regulations Service, which has been appointed as the monitoring body to supervise the trust services and digital service providers in Belgium, in order to guarantee the integrity and origin of the electronic data. The eIDAS regulation entered into force on 1 July 2016 and the Digital Trust cell has since made a huge effort to inform and support the parties involved in this area.



2.2. Guaranteeing consumer safety through surveillance in high-risk areas

Market surveillance campaigns: safety of children, leisure items, lifts and fireworks as the main focal points in 2020

In order to guarantee user safety while ensuring fair competition between economic operators, we conduct proactive inspection campaigns every year. In addition to our national campaigns, we also participate in European surveillance campaigns to monitor a broader market segment.

In 2020, the safety of fireworks, children and leisure items figured among the priorities. The Safety Division was active in the inspection campaigns on fireworks, anchor points, work gloves, whipped cream dispensers, child bike seats, batteries, (motorised) personal personal transport, toys (toy drones, soft-filled toys and slime toys).

The safety of lifts also remains a primary concern. The control campaign on lift modernisation continues to have a positive impact on the safety of the targeted lifts. In addition, more than 247 questions were answered from owners, managers and companies on this topic.

In 2020, a total of 1,674 case files on product safety were handled. 1,081 of these were opened following a request for advice from the customs service. More than half of those files (688) concerned mouth masks (PPE face masks, medical face masks or comfort masks).

Table 2. Number of case files handled in relation to product safety in 2020

Regulation	Number of cases
General product safety	336
Pressure equipment	23
Products appearing to be other than they are	4
New lifts	13
Machines	205
Personal protective equipment	766
Pyrotechnic articles	68
Toys	231
Playground equipment	8
Aerosol dispensers	2
Other	18
Total	1,674

Source: FPS Economy.

Table 3. Cases related to product safety, opened in 2020 at the request of the Customs services

Regulation	Number of custom case files
Personal protective equipment	504
Toys	163
Machines	139
General product safety	253
Other	22
Total	1,081

Source: FPS Economy.

The Central Contact Point for Products monitors dangerous products. Producers and distributors are required to immediately inform the Central Contact Point by mail or through the European Business Alert Gateway¹, if they have information on the dangerousness of products or services that they put on the market, or in case of an accident caused by such an unsafe product or service. The Central Contact Point also receives complaints from consumers/users regarding a dangerous product. It is also the Belgian contact point for the Rapid Alert System, the European system for the exchange of information on products presenting a serious risk.

Table 4. Notifications treated by the Central Contact Point in 2020

		Safety	Mobility	Energy	Public health	Explosives	Construction products	Total	Belgian	Customs
RAPEX	Article 12*	706	481	270	454	21	0	1,932	113	908
	Article 11	76	0	33	17	2	0	128	1	77
	For information	134	3	27	20	0	0	184	1	98
	Complaints	20	0	7	5	0	0	32		0
	Recalls	107	134	36	10	0	4	291		0
	Total	1,043	618	373	506	23	4	2,567	115	1,083
Total number of notifications:								2,567		
Total number of Rapex:								2,278		

* Art. 11 and art. 12 of the General Product Safety Directive (2001/95/EC): art. 12: serious risk, art. 11: non-serious risk, for information: no risk identified but lack of information.

Source: FPS Economy.

1 The online platform where producers can notify to the authorities of all member states the voluntary measures they have taken regarding a dangerous product.

Corona crisis

Task Force

Minister De Backer was appointed to lead a task force responsible for the management of personal protective equipment, medical devices and medicines. The intention was to manage strategic stocks and avoid shortages. This task force went in search of respiratory protection masks, gloves, aprons, safety glasses and face shields, among other things. Since 13 March 2020, 746 technical opinions on the documentary compliance of these products have been submitted to the task force's central purchasing team.

Market surveillance

In the early days of the Corona crisis, there was a huge shortage of respiratory protection masks (in particular of the FFP2 type). The European Commission Recommendation of 13 March 2020 on conformity assessment and market surveillance procedures in the context of the Covid-19 threat advised market surveillance authorities to "focus primarily on non-compliant personal protective equipment (PPE) that exposes the intended users to serious health and safety risks", but also to "assess PPE that are not bearing the CE marking, provided it is ensured that such products are only made available to healthcare professionals during the current health crisis".

A further restriction on the sale of FFP2 masks was laid down in the Ministerial Decree of 23 March 2020 on special measures in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in accordance with Article 3 of Book XVIII of the Code of Economic Law. It soon became apparent that huge quantities of respiratory protection masks were imported into Belgium (and Europe) whose compliance with European standards and legislation could not be demonstrated. Such masks would normally never be released for use because the health of the user cannot be guaranteed. In order to cope with the emergency situation and to reduce the major shortages of respiratory protection masks, the government decided (based on the European recommendation) that such masks could be subjected to a simplified test protocol in which only a limited number of essential requirements were assessed: the "Alternative Test Protocol (ATP)". The "PFM : Penetration of Filter Material" (the degree of permeability of the substance used), "TIL : Total Inward Leakage" (the degree of sealing of the face by the mask) were tested. Depending on these test results, the masks were approved or not and, where appropriate, provided with additional warnings for the end user.

These checks were carried out in close collaboration between the FPS Economy, the General Administration of Customs and Excise of the FPS Finance, the Ministry of Defense, the FPS Public Health, the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAGG) and several Belgian laboratories. In particular, permanent joint inspections by the FPS Economy and Customs were carried out at the airports of Zaventem and Bierseet.

Manufacturers and importers could find all the necessary information and clarifications about these procedures and their obligations and possibilities on a specially designed webpage of the FPS Economy. 504 files were handled, for an estimated total of 277 million masks. Of these, only 14 million achieved a completely satisfactory ATP result.

Supervision of the services market

Routine checks were performed in:

- 363 playgrounds;
- 7 amusement parks;
- 7 fairground attractions;
- 14 active and extreme leisure activities.

Moreover, 58 complaints and reports were investigated. Complaints related to, among other things, the safety of playgrounds, active leisure activities and lifts. Finally, 25 reports of accidents and incidents were investigated.

Explosives and gases: safe use and transport

Explosives

Table 5. Activities and inspections in the field of explosives for civil use and pyrotechnic articles in 2020

Description	Number
Complaints Investigations of accidents, incidents	3
Commissioning inspections (verification art. 27 before commissioning)	11
Routine inspections of storage sites for fireworks	159
Routine inspections of storage sites for explosives	149
Inspections of ADR vehicles	327
Inspections of the setting off of fireworks	1
Inspections of blasting works in quarries	54
Inspections of blasting works other than in quarries (open cast mines etc.)	7
Seveso inspections	8
Shipping-related cases	20
Exams for ADR drivers (mainly of the Ministry of Defence)	67
Tests for approved co-drivers	24
Tests for authorized blasters (quarries)	16
Permits, derogations	2
Product approval	2
Transport	21

Source: FPS Economy.

The production, storage, sale, transport and use of explosives are legally regulated and monitored. In 2020, the Safety Division issued 525 national and 86 European permits for the transport of explosives and carried out technical inspections of the vehicles transporting these products.

90 technical opinions were given to local authorities that issued or refused permits to explosives manufacturers and economic operators requesting permission to store explosives, ammunition and fireworks (storage sites A, B, C, D, E, F, G). Approval was granted for 31 explosives.

The new draft regulation on the manufacture, storage, transport, delivery and use of explosives is based on the “New Approach” principle. In 2020, the draft Royal Decree on the storage, manufacture, transport, delivery and use of explosives and four draft Ministerial Decrees were finalised. The Ministerial Decrees concern the list and classification of establishments, the list and classification of transports, the list of transports by road or rail that are exempt from the presence of a co-driver on board and the list of explosives and their quantities that may be kept, stored, transported and used freely by a private individual. This entire project was notified to the European Commission under Directive 2015/1535 and submitted to the Council of State for advice.

The FPS Economy took samples of CE marked fireworks of category F2 on the Belgian market for inspection purposes. These were articles that were stored in wholesale depots in November 2020. A total of 10 types of articles were sampled and tested by an accredited laboratory. The [inspection rapport](#) is available on the website of the FPS Economy.

38 checks on Internet sales were carried out. The checks mainly focused on sales on social networks and sales sites between private individuals, such as 2èmemain.be, Marketplace, E-Bay, in order to combat illegal sales.

A total of 84 checks of fireworks depots were carried out. 11 depots were found not to be in order. The three main types of identified infringements were: unlicensed sales, exceeding storage capacity, and storage site not in accordance with the technical requirements. Six seizures were made for a total of approximately 62 kg of NEQ. In these cases official reports were drawn up on behalf of the respective public prosecutor’s offices.

In addition, our services were called upon to take over several seizures carried out by the police. For all these seizures, the goods were repackaged, inventoried and transferred to designated storage sites.

Gas

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety is responsible for public safety in connection with underground gas storage, gas transport through pipelines and gas distribution.

Table 6. Checks of underground gas storage, gas transport and gas distribution in 2020

Type of check	Number
Underground gas storage	1
Gas transport through pipelines	72
Gas distribution through pipelines	308
Works in proximity to pipelines	233
Total	614

(*) of which 1 SEVESO Fluxys Loenhout (**) of which 1 SEVESO LNG Zeebruges.

Source: FPS Economy.

Table 7. Investigation of gas incidents involving underground gas storage, gas transport and gas distribution

Type	Number
Underground gas storage	1
Gas transport through pipelines	1
Gas distribution through pipelines	55
Total	57

Source: FPS Economy

Table 8. Investigation of complaints in relation to underground gas storage, gas transport and gas distribution

Type	Number
Underground gas storage	0
Gas transport through pipelines	11
Gas distribution through pipelines	1
Total	12

Source: FPS Economy.

Routine checks and inspection campaigns in metrology

The Metrology Division is in charge of the supervision of measuring instruments and conditioned products (such as prepackages). In 2016, the inspection services of the Metrology Division obtained the ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation as an inspection body for the inspection of automatic and non-automatic weighing instruments, in 2017 for the inspections of fuel pumps and in 2019 for checks of the mass of prepackages.

In 2020, the Metrology Division's inspection services inspected 3,594 non-automatic weighing instruments (scales), 1,276 automatic weighing instruments and 4,454 fuel pumps (petrol/diesel/gas oil). A limited number of instruments were taken out of service.

Table 9. Global overview of the checks of measuring instruments performed by the units Inspection Metrology North and Inspection Metrology South

	Type of check						Grand total	Result of the check				
	Administrative check	Technical check initiated by the Metrology Department	Technical check requested by the client	Initial verification	Periodical verification	Surveillance		Conform	Rejected	Decision deferred	Warning	Out-of-court settlement or police report
Weights M1	0	0	0	553	6,962	0	7,515	7,515	0	0	0	0
Masses	0	0	0	2	854	0	856	856	0	0	0	0
Water meters	0	0	263	0	6,161	0	6,424	6,350	74	0	0	0
Gas meters	0	0	12	0	0	0	12	12	0	0	0	0
Automatic gauges	12	0	0	0	0	0	12	12	0	0	0	0
Fixed storage tanks	23	0	0	100	189	0	312	312	0	0	0	0
Pumps for CNG	16	0	0	40	244	0	300	297	0	2	1	0
Pumps for LPG	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	0	1	0
Two-stroke pumps	11	2	0	0	23	0	36	36	0	0	0	0
Fuel pumps (gasoline/diesel/gas oil)	3,902	552	0	0	0	0	4,454	3,966	56	0	328	104
Measuring equipment on tank trucks	1	0	0	3	30	0	34	34	0	0	0	0
Dipstick volume measurement systems on tank trucks	0	0	0	0	175	0	175	175	0	0	0	0
Additive pumps on tank trucks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loading stations for liquids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-automatic weighing instruments	3,117	477	0	0	0	0	3,594	2,485	46	24	999	40
Automatic weighing instruments	521	31	0	0	724	0	1,276	1,187	30	15	44	0
Grand total	7,608	1,062	275	698	15,362	0	25,005	23,241	206	41	1,373	144

Source: FPS Economy.

In addition to verification activities and routine checks, the Metrology Division carried out 5 specific inspection campaigns on the contents of prepackaged products and on measuring instruments:

1. Non-automatic weighing instruments used in shops for bulk product sales;
2. Scales in pharmacies;
3. LPG pumps in service stations;
4. Prepackaged foodstuffs conditioned according to a variable weight;
5. Prepackages of beer in bottles or cans.

Table 10. Checks of measuring instruments and conditioned products

Type	Number of checks
Weights and masses	8,371
Water meters	6,424
Gas meters	12
Automatic gauges	12
Fixed-storage tanks	312
CNG Pumps	300
LPG Pumps	5
Two-stroke pumps	36
Fuel pumps (gasoline/diesel/gas oil)	4,454
Measuring equipment and additive pumps on tank trucks	34
Dipstick volume measurement systems on tank trucks	175
Loading stations for liquids	0
Non-automatic weighing instruments	3,594
Automatic weighing instruments	1,276
Taximeters	18
Batches of conditioned products	304

Source: SPF Economy.

2.3. Setting up a knowledge centre and a “level playing field”

Developing a knowledge centre for metrology

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety has decided to structure its research and development activities within the framework of a multidisciplinary scientific platform.

In 2020, the National Standards and Continental Shelf services took part in the activities of the European Metrology Network (EMN), dedicated to climate and oceans. Scientists from both services work together in defining the European research strategy to ensure confidence in the quality of environmental measurements. Emphasis is placed on in-situ temperature measurements for climate purposes and on the use of acoustic data in the marine environment to assess the impact of human activities.



They also participated as experts in the EMN workshops to identify metrology needs, making it possible to set the future research agenda in this area. In June 2020, we also took part in EU Parliamentary debate on “How can R&I accelerate the green transition to a climate neutral economy?”.

In 2020, the European Commission published the strategic paper “Shaping Europe’s digital future”, in line with the European Industry Strategy, the Data Strategy and the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence (all published in 2020). The main goals are: technology for people, a fair and competitive economy and an open, democratic and sustainable society. According to the vision of the European Commission, this requires a (complete) digital transformation of existing and established processes and the safeguarding and strengthening of European digital leadership. In the context of the digital transition, metrology must deploy new instruments to guarantee the quality and traceability of measurements in Belgium in collaboration with other European countries.

We took an active part in working groups and workshops around the harmonised digital strategy for metrology, organised by Euramet in 2020.

The two priority axes are:

- Harmonization and implementation of digital calibration certificates in close cooperation with stakeholders in the field of metrology, laboratories and industries;
- Contribution to the overall European effort for open data in science and research.

Calibration activities

The National Standards Service offered calibrations in the following domains:

- nanometrology;
- dimensional metrology;
- electric measurements;
- masses;
- volumes;
- thermometry;
- time and frequencies.

The number of calibration certificates approximately decreased by about half compared to the previous year. However, the number of calibrated objects and the number of results delivered only decreased by about 20%. Compared to 2019, there are more results per certificate. The decrease can almost entirely be explained by the Covid-19 situation.

Table 11. Calibrations performed over the past years

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of calibration certificates delivered	274	294	392	209
Number of calibrated objects	1,205	891	1,529	1,208
Number of calibration results	2,411	1,679	2,786	2,255

Source : SPF Economy.

The National Standards Service manages and coordinates the Belmet network, i.e. the network of metrology laboratories that establish the primary measurement standards and provide traceability for the measurement units for which the National Standards Service does not have the necessary infrastructure. The laboratories must have ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation for those capabilities and meet additional requirements. Accreditations are valid for 3 years and are renewable.

In 2020, specialists from this service carried out about 10 technical audits for BELAC.

In 2020, as part of our ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation, we put a lot of effort into meeting the different requirements of the standard (risk and opportunity analysis, internal audit program, new procedure for the rounding off of measurement results and uncertainties, etc.).

The department's cleanroom is equipped for the installation of the metrological AFM, following the latest developments in this area by the VSL.

We continued the automation of the equipment in the Time and Frequency lab so that our Belgian legal time, UTC (SMD), can be ensured without permanent intervention in the lab itself. The necessary legal and technical initiatives have been taken to make the UTC reference time available in Belgium.

On 11 June 2018, the law introducing Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) as the basis for legal time in Belgium was passed in the federal parliament. The National Standards Service subsequently took the initiative for the implementation of Article 4 of the above-mentioned law by means of a Royal Decree, whereby both the National Standards Service and the Royal Observatory are responsible for the physical realization and dissemination of UTC in Belgium. The Royal Decree is expected to be published in the Official Gazette in 2021.

The measurement uncertainty for the calibrations of masses from 50 kg to 1,000 kg has been reduced. Now the masses can now be calibrated in the F2 class range.

Work to improve the lab infrastructure for mass calibration from 20 kg to 5,000 kg was continued in combination with adjustments to the volume calibration infrastructure (measuring vessels and calibration gauges). A new automatic mass comparator from 5 kg to 20 kg was put into operation.

Calibrations of thermometers, temperature references and primary DC voltage standards with the Josephson standard are offered in calibration campaigns instead of being offered continuously to optimize workflow and cost.

In dimensional metrology, the development of the error separation technique for roundness deviation measurements and the calibration of the average pitch of nanogratings (transfer standards for AFM, STM, etc.) using a diffraction technique, were further elaborated. The aim is to be able to offer this capability under ISO/IEC17025 accreditation in 2021 or 2022 with a measurement uncertainty in the range of 10 to 20 nanometers for the roundness deviation and 0.05 nanometers for the average pitch of nanogratings. The latter type of calibrations will be combined with measurements on our metrological atomic force microscope in order to fully characterize the gratings.

International cooperation

In 2020, the Mass section participated in a comparative measurement of weights from 1 mg to 10 kg, between calibration laboratories, organized by CT2M – Centre Technologique Méditerranéen de Métrologie (France).

Within the framework of the European research program EMPIR, which is part of the Horizon EU's 2020 strategy, the National Standards Service participated in the following projects in 2020:

- 17NRM05 EMUE: development of calculation examples of measurement uncertainty for inclusion in the GUM (Guide for Uncertainty of Measurement);
- 17NRM04 NPSize: progress in standardisation for achieving a chain of traceable nanoparticle size measurements;
- 18NRM03 INCIPIT: development of methods and calibration procedures for new techniques used for measuring atmospheric precipitation;
- 18NET04 ForClimateOcean: support for a European Metrology Network for climate and ocean observation;
- 19RPT02 RealMass: improvement of the realisation of the mass scale.

The laboratory also shares its expertise in the field of standardisation at international level through participation in ISO/TC 012 (Quantities and units), ISO/TC 201/SC9 (Scanning probe microscopy), ISO/TC 229 (Nanotechnologies), CEN/ TC 352 (Nanotechnologies), ISO/AWI 56001 (Innovation management), ISO/TC 146/SC5 (Meteorology), and in the OECD Working Party on Manufactured Nanomaterials.

3. New regulations

There were few changes in regulations in 2020. However, particular attention should be paid to the change in the legal units of measurement to adapt them to the new units adopted at international level, which are based on fixed values of certain natural constants (Royal Decree of 6 May 2020). With regard to sand extraction in the Belgian marine areas, the Ministerial Decree of 28 September 2020 lays down on maps the maximum scientifically justified extraction depths of control zones for sand extraction in the Belgian marine areas.

Various draft regulations are under development, in particular in connection with explosives and the Test Bench for Firearms.

Metrology

Royal Decree of 6 May establishing the legal units of measurement and the standards and rules for the reproduction of these units and amending Article VIII.35 of the Code of Economic Law.

Sand extraction – North Sea

Royal Decree of 28 September 2020 laying down maximum extraction depths for the exploitation of sand and gravel in the Belgian marine areas.

Ministerial Decree of 22 December 2020 amending the Ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015 appointing the officials responsible for monitoring the application of various regulations with regard to activities in the marine areas under the Belgian jurisdiction.



4. Our quality policy to serve you better

The quality policy within an organisation can only be effective if the management fully supports it and commits the necessary resources to it.

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety focuses on four quality standards: **ISO 9001:2015, ISO/IEC 17025:2017, ISO/IEC 17020:2012 and ISO/IEC 17011:2017**. Their implementation is not a goal in itself but rather a means of demonstrating that the output of our Directorate-General fully supports its mission.

All our processes are designed to be as simple as possible and optimised as much as possible. The objectives are defined in the management plan and operational plan of the Director-General and are translated into objectives by division and department.

Every year, before mid-February, a management review takes place at the highest level and subsequently at service level. During this review, a critical evaluation of past activities, possible improvements and future activities takes place. The long-term aim is to achieve an integrated management system that will not only serve as an example for other Directorates-General of the FPS but also for other public organisations. It is the only way we can demonstrate our added value for the companies and consumers. All of this should be combined with professionalism and with the values of our FPS, namely, "At your service", "Respect", "Stand together", "Excellence" and "Sustainability".

Internal audits

Internal audits are undertaken to check the proper functioning of the quality system and to improve its effectiveness. These internal audits are imposed by the four standards and play a major part in internal control (deontology, internal audit and budget control).

Every year, the activities of all of our services are subject to an internal audit. At each audit, several activities are thoroughly evaluated, so that fundamental improvements may be implemented on a sound basis. In order to step up the frequency of these internal audits and their impartiality, the Directorate-General has been turning to external auditors since 2015 and has organised training sessions for interested staff members.

Due to the Covid crisis, only 9 days of internal audits against the different standards were carried out in 2020. In addition, external audits took place for the different standards, confirming or even extending our certification and accreditation.

In 2020, the internal and external audits resulted in 98 findings: 45 non-conformities, 19 of which had not yet been resolved by 31 December 2020. The necessary steps are taken to resolve them as quickly as possible.

5. Contacts and useful information

5.1. Contacts and useful addresses

Belpoc

Areas of competence: Belpoc is the unique Belgian contact point created in the context of the information exchange systems set up by European regulations to facilitate the functioning of the internal market. It is involved in the notification of conformity assessment bodies and draft national technical regulations, in information exchanges between foreign manufacturers and Belgian authorities through the Product Contact Points and also in the transfer of information related to dangerous products.

Tel.: 02 277 53 36 – E-mail: belpoc@economie.fgov.be

Safety Regulations Unit

Areas of competence: general safety regulations for products and services listed in the Code of Economic Law, Book IX, Central Contact Point for Products, RAPEX, explosives and fireworks, etc.

Tel.: 02 277 76 99 – E-mail: ensure@economie.fgov.be

Construction products

Areas of competence: monitoring the market for construction products and the notified bodies in the construction sector, ensuring the follow-up and drafting of the technical regulations, providing the Belgian at international level, etc.

E-mail: bocova@economie.fgov.be

Recognition of contractors

Areas of competence: applying the regulations regarding the recognition of contractors and monitoring their application (financial investigation, bankruptcy screening, etc.), informing the sector, etc.

E-mail: erkenning.aannemers@economie.fgov.be

BELAC – Belgian Accreditation Body

Areas of competence: accrediting all types of conformity assessment bodies, developing and maintaining the accreditation tool for all technological sectors requesting it, with special attention to the support of innovation, ensuring that bodies providing services such as tests, calibrations, inspections and certifications have the competence required for their activities.

Tel.: 02 277 54 34 – E-mail: belac@economie.fgov.be

Standardisation en Competitiveness

Areas of competence: developing and supporting the activities in the field of standardisation and protection of intellectual property developed by the collective centres, the Standards Antennas and the patent cells for the benefit of companies, awarding the innovation bonus, managing the European systems for notification of technical regulations and notification of conformity assessment bodies, etc.

Tel.: 02 277 82 20 – E-mail: norcom@economie.fgov.be

Continental Shelf Service

Areas of competence: responsible for sand and gravel extraction in the Belgian part of the North Sea. Its main tasks are granting concession permits, managing operating licenses, monitoring sand extraction, mapping the areas, etc.

Tel.: 02 277 72 77 E-Mail: copco@economie.fgov.be

Metrology – National Standards

Areas of competence: national measurement standards, metrology, European research programs in the field of metrology (EMPIR and Euramet), nanometrology, inspections, etc.

Nationale Standards: metrology.scientific@economie.fgov.be

Metrology regulations: metrology.regulation@economie.fgov.be

Electronic certification

Areas of competence: supervising the providers of electronic trust services in order to strengthen the confidence of the users of such services.

E-mail: be.sign@economie.fgov.be

5.2. Our offices

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety has **eight offices**:

❶ [Brussels \(central administration\)](#)

North Gate III
Koning Albert II-laan 16
1000 Brussels

❷ [Antwerp](#)

Theaterbuilding
Italiëlei 124 – bus 85
2000 Antwerpen

❸ [Ghent](#)

Zuiderpoort Office Park
Gaston Crommenlaan 6
9050 Gent

❹ [Hasselt](#)

AC Verwilghen
Voorstraat 43
3500 Hasselt

❺ [Haren](#)

Haachtsesteenweg 1795
1130 Brussel

❻ [Liège](#)

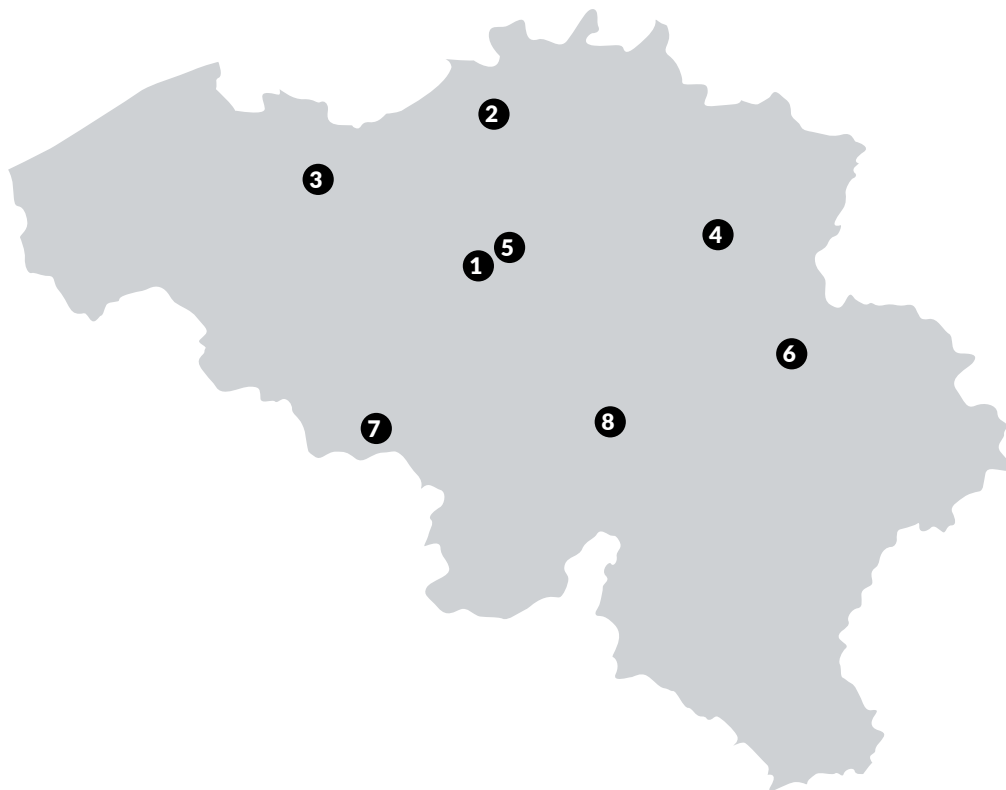
Saint Jean
Boulevard de la Sauvenière 73-75
4000 Liège

❼ [Mons](#)

Avenue Mélina Mercouri, bloc 10
7000 Mons

❽ [Namur \(Belgrade\)](#)

Business Center
Route de Louvain-la-Neuve 4 (bus 8, 9, 10)
5001 Belgrade



5.3. Follow the FPS Economy and our action on social media

Like our Facebook page and get advice on consumer rights, product safety and the activities of our FPS. Follow us on Twitter! You will get information about consumer rights, advice for companies and the self-employed.



<https://www.facebook.com/SPFEco>



<https://twitter.com/spfeconomie>



<https://linkedin.com/company/fod-economie>

5.4. Follow the actions of the Continental Shelf Service on Facebook

Through its Facebook page, the service keeps you informed about new research, its results and the scientific work of the FPS Economy.



<https://www.facebook.com/Service-Plateau-Continental-319506274818192/>

5.5. Our new publications in 2020

[Rapport d'activités 2019 de la Direction générale de la Qualité et de la Sécurité](#)

[Rapport d'activités 2019 de la Direction générale de la Qualité et de la Sécurité – Executive summary](#)

[Sand and gravel extraction in the Belgian part of the North Sea](#)

[Exploitation de sable et de gravier dans la partie belge de la mer du Nord – la réglementation](#)

[Conformité des balances à usage commercial - Ce qu'il faut savoir ...](#)

[Campagne de contrôle artifices - Résultats 2019-2020](#)

[Campagne de contrôle Artifices - Résultats 2020](#)

[Ne gâchez pas votre fête - Utilisez les artifices en toute sécurité !](#)

[Programme national de surveillance du marché de la Belgique pour 2021](#)

[Campagne européenne de contrôle CASP2019 Batteries - Résultats belges 2019](#)

[Campagne de contrôle européenne CASP2019 jouets souples rembourrés – Résultats belges 2019](#)

[Campagne de contrôle européenne CASP2019 Jouets slimes – Résultats belges 2019](#)

[Campagne de contrôle dans le secteur du bois utilisé comme produit de construction - Rapport des contrôles 2019](#)

[Metrology for the nanotechnologies](#)

[National Standards](#)



FPS Economy, S.M.E.s, Self-employed and Energy

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