



ACTIVITY REPORT 2022 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL QUALITY AND SAFETY



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

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Foreword

Dear reader,

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety of the FPS Economy ensures, within the framework of technical regulations, a competitive and efficient market, by regulating, by ensuring surveillance, by providing information, by investigating, by practicing consultation and coordination.

The regulatory framework is often imposed by the European Union and sometimes it is established on a national level. In all circumstances, we take into account the needs of our stakeholders, both businesses as well as consumers/users. Stakeholder consultation is part of the daily work of our management.

This annual report presents the 2022 performance of our employees active in various services of the Directorate General. It reflects to commitment of our employees to creating a level playing field on our internal market.

As in previous year, we had to make choices for market surveillance campaigns we wanted to carry out. These choices were based on risk assessment and prioritisation. Take the time to browse through the results of our actions, which may surprise you, but at the same time, take a glimpse at the many areas of activity of our Directorate General.

To find out more about our activities, please go to [our website](#) or subscribe to our [monthly newsletter](#).

[Enjoy your reading.](#)

Maureen Logghe

Director General

1. Our Mission Within the FPS Economy

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety 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. Our 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 our Directorate-General and the FPS Economy.

1.2. Our Strategic Goals

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

1. Ensuring a regulatory framework that takes into account the needs of stakeholders, reflects the current state of the art and allows for innovation.
2. 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.
3. Strengthening the role of the Directorate-General as a key Belgian player within the European framework of technical regulations
4. Standing out in technical and scientific knowledge.
5. 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.
6. Being an organisation where motivated employees enjoy working.

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, continued its activities on a legal basis and in accordance with the recognised 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 the European Cooperation for Accreditation (EA), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the Forum of Accreditation and Licensing Bodies (FALB) (EMAS) and it also participated actively in the activities of these organisations.

In 2022, 604 accreditation certificates were issued. 24 new customers were registered with mainly test activities (46%) and medical laboratories (21%). 19 new certificates were issued, of which 53% in test activities and 16% in inspection activities.



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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 this context, at the request of the FPS Economy, the NBN has further increased the resources for the translation of standards. The NBN has also commissioned a study by the VUB to determine the current needs of stakeholders for whom the current standardisation system is not the most suitable. The results will be analysed by the FPS Economy, which will set up a second working group of the High Council for Standardisation with regard to improving inclusiveness.

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 has to be developed, including a project on building in flood-prone areas, 8 post-standardisation projects aimed at the development of 6 popularisation documents and 2 tools which facilitate the use of standards,
- 38 Standards Antennas, which raise awareness and inform SMEs about standards and standardisation.

The reform of the Standards-Antennas system was completed in 2022. The aim is to better account for the subsidies granted and to meet the expectations of SMEs even better.

Improving standardisation legislation was at the heart of our activities. The FPS Economy also contributed to the amendment of Regulation 1025/2012 on European standardisation as well as to the amendment of the Code of Economic Law.

Status Quo in the Number of Applications for Recognition as a Contractor

The number of applications for recognition as a contractor in 2022 was about the same as in 2021. It amounted to 3,300, which represents an average of 275 requests for advice per month. 3,218 applications were submitted by Belgian companies and 82 by foreign companies, mainly from neighboring countries. The total number of accredited contractors remained stable in 2022 at 11,000.

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 three 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 2022, the scope of the Institute for Fire Safety (ISIB), and the inspection bodies Normec and Corcon was updated as a result of an extension of the period of their accreditation.

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 2022, ten formal complaints were registered: five of these were closed following an exchange of information by mail or an on-site visit and five are still being processed. The proactive market surveillance campaigns illustrate to what extent regulations are followed in a certain sector. A total of 344 companies were visited.

Table 1. Proactive Market Surveillance Campaigns for Construction Products

Proactive checks	Number
Smoke detectors	41
Electric cables	34
Individual heating appliances	27
Load bearing structures	65
Floor coverings	74
Natural stone	23
EPDM membranes	30
Facades: insulation elements	71
Sanitary equipment	33
Facades: cladding elements	65
Vertical road signs	25
Preparations and mixtures art 31 and 33 Reach	76
Gypsum products	61
Garage doors and gates	29
Crash barriers	8
Windows and external doors	103
Delineators and retroreflectors	13
Geotextiles	8
Clayey sand	21
Surface dressings /Cold asphalt	4
Shutters/Blinds	39
Reactive checks	10
Market analysis (*)	10

(*) 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:

- 344 companies were visited;
- 173 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 2022, the FPS Economy evaluated 1,288 applications within an average period of five working days, of which approximately 99% were approved. Over 320 companies benefited from the exemption of innovation bonuses.

Optimisation of the Monitoring of Sand Extraction in the North Sea

In 2022, the sand extraction sector extracted 2.7 million m³ of sand for the construction sector, whereas 1.4 million m³ of sand was extracted for the maintenance of the beaches.

In 2021, the scientifically grounded reference level for sand extraction in the Belgian part of the North Sea was used for the first time as a basis for determining the maximum extraction depths for sand (compared to the previous applicable vertical limit of 5 meters). On the basis of the reference level, sub-zones within the control zones were demarcated, where this level was globally reached or exceeded. These zones were closed for extraction for recovery purposes from 1 January 2021. The available sand stocks are updated and evaluated every year and the demarcated sub-zones are adjusted if necessary. Thus, in 2022, an additional section was closed for mining. More information is available on the FPS webpage about [Offshore Sand and Gravel Extraction](#).

The optimisation of sand extraction control was continued in 2022. The use of data from the Automatic Identification System (AIS) for the near real-time control and monitoring of sand extraction was further developed. In collaboration with the Agency Maritieme Dienstverlening en Kust (MDK) and the ICT support service of the FPS Economy, a project was launched to use AIS data from the Belgian part of the Schelderadarketen for near real-time control and monitoring of sand mining. With identical partners, a digitization project for registries was also launched in 2022. Finally, the first steps were taken in 2022 to adapt the automatic registration system in order to be able to monitor sand extraction in real time using a detailed information system in the future.

The Continental Shelf Service of the FPS Economy financed a high-resolution Kongsberg EM2040 multibeam echosounder, which was installed on the new research vessel Belgica. This equipment is used for monitoring the effects of sand extraction on the marine environment and for innovative research projects (high resolution habitat mapping, quantification of particulate matter suspended in the water column, etc.)

For more information, see the page about [the activities of the Continental Shelf service](#).

Electronic Trust Services

As far as electronic service providers are concerned, our action 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.

Since the entry into force of the eIDAS regulation, 13 Belgian companies have been granted the status of “qualified” service provider. At the present time, eleven of these companies are included on the list of electronic trust service providers. During 2022, a new service provider was added to the list of qualified service providers. The qualification of a service provider was withdrawn at his own request.

You can consult the list of qualified electronic trust service providers for Belgium and for the other Member States on the [eIDAS Dashboard website](#) of the European Commission.

2.2. Guaranteeing Consumer Safety Through Surveillance In High-Risk Areas

Market Surveillance Campaigns: Safety of Toys, Children's Articles and Pyrotechnic Articles as the Main Focal Points in 2022

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 participated in European surveillance campaigns to monitor a broader market segment.

Safety of Products

In 2022, the Safety Division was active in the inspection campaigns for the following products:

- chemical products in toys;
- pyrotechnic articles;
- scissor lifts;
- children's wear (pull cords);
- CO detectors.

The safety of services and installations also remains a priority. In 2022, this was particularly the case for the playgrounds in the hospitality sector, on campsites and in holiday parks.

In 2022, 740 case files related to product safety were handled. This number includes the 500 files opened due to a request for advice by the Customs services.



Table 2. Number of Cases Handled in Relation to Product Safety in 2022

Regulation	Number of cases
General product safety	176
Pressure equipment	1
Lifts placed on the market	11
Machines	91
Personal protective equipment	132
Products appearing to be other than they are	8
Pyrotechnic articles	24
Toys	237
Playground equipment	12
Tanning salons	16
Aerosol dispensers	1
Other	27
Total	736

Source: FPS Economy

Table 3. Cases Related to Product Safety, opened in 2022 at the Request of the Customs Services

Regulation	Number of customs case files
General product safety	122
Pressure equipment	1
Machines	62
Personal protective equipment	99
Toys	189
Pyrotechnic articles	2
Other	25
Total	500

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.

The total number of notifications remains stable. The number of notifications by the Belgian authorities, on the other hand, has fallen sharply (41 notifications compared to 107 in 2021). Consequently, fewer products with a serious risk were discovered during the inspection cam-

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.

paigns. 2022 marks a return to the pre-COVID level in terms of complaints and voluntary measures reported to the Central Contact Point (389 voluntary measures in 2022 compared to 315 in 2021, 291 in 2020 and 380 in 2019).

Table 4. Notifications treated by the Central Contact Point in 2022

		Safety	Mobility	Energy	Public health	Explosives	Construction products	Total	Belgian	Customs
Safety Gate	Article 12	631	363	179	670	18	0	1,862	40	776
	Article 11	71	16	27	25	7	3	146	1	67
	For information	37	2	5	98	0	0	142	0	18
Complaints		30	1	5	8	0	10	45	0	0
Recalls		190	153	27	19	0	0	389	0	0
Total		959	535	243	820	25	13	2,584	41	861
Total number of notifications treated:								2584		
Safety Gate :								2,150		

* 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: lack of sufficient information.

Source: FPS Economy.

Safety of Services and Installations

The safety of services and installations also remains a priority. In 2022 this was especially the case for playgrounds in the hospitality sector, on campsites and in holiday parks.

The following routine checks were performed:

- playgrounds (300 checks, of which 72 were aimed at the hospitality sector),
- amusement parks (15 checks),
- fairground attractions (21 checks),
- active and extreme leisure activities: (19 checks).

In addition, 52 complaints and reports were investigated, 23 of which related to the safety of playgrounds, 28 to the safety of lifts and 1 (to the Royal Decree on product rental. Finally, 45 reports of accidents and incidents were investigated.

In 2022, the FPS Economy carried out checks on the safety of lifts together with the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (ELSD). The External services for technical inspections at the workplace (ESTI) provided the Directorate-General Quality and Safety on a monthly basis with a list of inspected elevators that showed serious technical deficiencies. These lifts were then distributed between the FPS ELSD and the FPS Economy according to their competences. Based on our control plan, the Directorate General subsequently made a random selection from the list of lifts allocated to the FPS Economy. These lifts were then checked by the field services of the Directorate-General.

Explosives and Gases: Safe Use and Transport

Explosives

The production, storage, sale, transport and use of explosives are legally regulated and monitored. In 2022, the Safety Division issued 679 national and 68 European (intra-community transfer) permits for the transport of explosives and carried out technical inspections of the vehicles transporting these products.

148 technical opinions were given to local authorities that issue permits to explosives manufacturers and economic operators requesting permission to store explosives, ammunition and fireworks. 107 of these 148 technical opinions related to folkloric marches.

For the storage permits appealed against, 2 proceedings had their normal course in 2022. One proceeding was concluded with the publication of a Royal Decree.

A first draft of the Royal Decree on the revision of the legislation on explosives was submitted to the Council of State for advice in 2021. The response of the Council of State has led to important additional steps. In 2022, the draft was discussed at length with, among others, the Belgian river and sea ports and it is still being further amended.

Table 5. Activities and Inspections in the field of Explosives for Civil Use and Pyrotechnic Articles in 2022

Description	Number
Complaints Investigations of accidents, incidents	11
Commissioning inspections (verification art. 27 before commissioning)	7
Routine inspections of storage sites for fireworks	217
Checks on the sale of pyrotechnic articles on the Internet	24
Routine inspections of storage sites for explosives	254
Inspections of ADR vehicles	314
Inspections of the setting off of fireworks	7
Inspections of blasting works in quarries	83
Inspections of blasting works other than in quarries (open cast mines etc.)	4
Seveso inspections	12
Transshipment-related cases	267
Exams for ADR drivers	166
Exams for approved co-drivers	38
Exams for authorized blasters (quarries)	13
Permits, derogations	1
Product approval	2
Checks on the transport of explosives	20
Transport	155

Source: FPS Economy.

Party Fireworks

In 2022, the FPS Economy took samples of CE-marked party fireworks of category F2 on the Belgian market for inspection purposes. This concerned articles that were stored in wholesale depots in October 2022. A total of 20 types of articles were sampled. They were tested by an accredited laboratory. Two articles were not functionally compliant. These articles presented a serious risk. For the non-compliant products, the necessary corrective measures are requested from the relevant economic operators. For firework articles with a serious risk, this involved a recall, stopping the sale of the item and withdrawing it from the market. All corrective actions are followed up and checked. The results of this inspection campaign will be published in 2023.

This year's inspections were once again mainly focused on sales on social networks and sales sites between private individuals, such as 2dehands.be, Marketplace, E-Bay, Instagram. The inspections resulted in 53 infringements of the regulations for the sale of fireworks over the internet. As a result, several case files were opened to monitor the regularisation of the offending sellers and/or to take appropriate legal action. Six files led to house searches and to the seizure of 214.2 kg Net Explosive Quantity (NEQ).

During the month of December, 147 on-site inspections of fireworks storage sites were carried out; 23 storage sites, i.e. approximately 16%, were not in order. The three main types of infringements identified are the sale of category F1 products without a license, minor non-conformities with respect to the operating conditions for storage sites and the sale of a quantity in excess of what a private individual is allowed to possess. Two seizures were carried out for approximately 32.2 kg NEQ. For these files, official reports were drawn up on behalf of the competent public prosecutor's offices. In addition, our services were called upon to take over several seizures carried out by the police. The goods of said seizures were repackaged, inventoried and transferred to designated storage sites.

The inspections carried out together with the police to verify that the permitted quantities in vehicles were not exceeded led to 22 judicial seizures, for a total of 42.9 kg NEQ.

Inspection campaign for storage sites of gunpowder used for folkloric marches

After a first awareness-raising and inspection campaign in 2021, the Inspection Service South (COSESU) carried out a second campaign in 2022. In particular, the purpose of this new campaign was to verify compliance with the operating conditions set by our services for these storage permits, as well as to monitor the distribution of the gunpowder among the members participating in the marches. The checks consisted of unannounced visits to the addresses specified by the license holders for storage or distribution. During this period, 23 storage sites and three distribution sites were checked, which were used for five folkloric marches and two historical reconstructions. No infringements were established for 88.5% of the points checked.

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	2
Gas transport through pipelines	160
Gas distribution through pipelines	185
Works in proximity to pipelines	84
Total	431

Source: FPS Economy.

Table 7. Investigation of Gas Incidents Involving Underground Gas Storage, Gas Transport and Gas Distribution

Type	Number
Underground gas storage	0
Gas transport through pipelines	3
Gas distribution through pipelines	65
Total	68

Source FPS Economy.

Table 8. Investigation of Complaints in Relation to Underground Gas Storage, Gas Transport and Gas Distribution

Soort	Number
Underground gas storage	0
Gas transport through pipelines	151
Gas distribution through pipelines	0
Total	151

Source: FPS Economy.

Routine Checks and Inspection Campaigns carried out by the Metrology Division

The Metrology Division is in charge of the supervision of measuring instruments and conditioned products (such as prepackages). 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 2016,

- for the inspections of fuel pumps in 2017,
- for checks of the mass of prepackages in 2022,
- for checks of the volume of prepackages in 2022.
- In 2022, these services inspected
- 5,198 non-automatic weighing instruments (scales),
- 1,063 automatic weighing instruments,
- 2,788 fuel pumps (petrol/diesel/gas oil).

A limited number of instruments were decommissioned. The checks carried out in the context of specific control campaigns are not included in these figures.

Table 9. Global Overview of the Checks of Measuring Instruments Performed by the Services Inspection Metrology North and Inspection Metrology South

	Result of the check										
	Administrative check	Technical check initiated by the Metrology Department	Technical check requested by the client	Initial verification	Periodical verification	Grand total	Total conform	Rejected	Decision deferred	Warning	put-of-court settlement or police report
Masses	0	0	0	0	787	787	787	0	0	0	0
Water meters	1	0	215	10,130	22	10,368	10,296	72	0	0	0
Gas meters	0	0	6	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0
Automatic gauges	20	0	0	0	0	20	20	0	0	0	0
Fixed storage tanks	41	0	0	135	191	367	366	1	0	0	0
Pumps for CNG	11	2	2	32	295	342	332	2	2	2	4
Pumps for LPG	16	3	0	0	0	19	18	0	0	1	0
Two-stroke pumps	32	9	0	0	55	96	95	1	0	0	0
Fuel pumps (gasoline/diesel/gas oil)	2,159	629	0	0	0	2,788	2,560	139	1	48	40
Measuring equipment on tank trucks	90	46	0	6	0	142	135	6	1	0	0
Dipstick volume measurement systems on tank trucks	0	0	0	45	256	301	295	1	0	0	5
Additive pumps on tank trucks	3	9	0	1	0	13	11	1	0	1	0
Loading stations for liquids	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Non-automatic weighing instruments	4,358	840	0	0	0	5,198	4,095	56	51	958	38
Automatic weighing instruments	381	30	2	0	650	1,063	975	23	15	50	0
Three-dimensional measuring instruments	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0
Grand total	7,117	1,570	225	10,349	2,256	2,1517	19,999	301	70	1,060	87

Source: FPS Economy.

Table 10. Checks of Measuring Instruments and Conditioned Products, excluding inspection campaigns

Type	Number of checks
Weights and masses	787
Water meters	10,368
Gas meters	6
Automatic gauges	20
Fixed-storage tanks	367
CNG Pumps	342
LPG Pumps	19
Two-stroke pumps	96
Fuel pumps (gasoline/diesel/gas oil)	2,788
Measuring equipment and additive pumps on tank trucks	142
Gauges on tank trucks	301
Loading stations for liquids	2
Non-automatic weighing instruments	5,198
Automatic weighing instruments	1,063
Three-dimensional measuring instruments	5
Taximeters	0
Batches of conditioned products	935

Source: FPS Economy.

As part of the 2022 control plan, the inspection services of the Metrology Division carried out six specific inspection campaigns on the contents of prepacked products and on measuring instruments, in particular:

- non-automatic weighing instruments used in major cities;
- non-automatic weighing instruments used by jewelers-purchasers of gold;
- AD Blue pumps;
- measuring installations for liquid fuels in marinas;
- prepacked foodstuffs with variable weight;
- pre-packaging at the largest contract fillers for consumer products.



2.3. Setting Up a Knowledge Centre and a “Level Playing Field”

Developing a Knowledge Centre for Metrology

In the context of the multidisciplinary scientific R&D platform, emphasis was placed on the participation of the National Standards and Continental Shelf services in the activities of the EMN (European Metrology Network) dedicated to the climate and oceans. Scientists from both services work together in defining the European research strategy to ensure confidence in the quality of environmental measurements.

In 2022, the National Standards and Continental Shelf services participated as experts in the EMN workshops to present their joint project on the detection of sediment plumes. Together, the two services actively participated in the completion of the EMN's strategic research program. The National Standards Service also took part in the discussions on the development and sustainability strategy of the EMN.

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 actively participated in working groups and workshops on the harmonized digital strategy for metrology, organized by EURAMET in 2022.

The two priority axes are:

- harmonisation 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 has decreased compared to last year.

Tabel 11. Calibrations performed from 2017 to 2022

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of calibration certificates delivered	274	293	395	215	304	246
Number of calibrated objects	1,205	891	1,529	1,206	1,662	864
Number of calibration results	2,411	1,720	2,788	2,352	2,861	1,228

Source: FPS Economy.

The National Standards Service is actively involved in the European EPM program (European Partnership on Metrology). The project is part of the Horizon Europe project. It focuses on innovative metrology research and development in metrology in a coordinated collaboration between national metrology institutes, the academic community and the industry. The project coordinates research projects to address major challenges while simultaneously supporting and developing the SI system for units of measurement.

On an international level, the National Standards Service works together with national metrology institutes and other organizations to realize the international time. This is done through our participation in the “key comparison in time, CCTF-K001.UTC”, the results of which are published monthly, and in the realization of UTCr, the results of which are published weekly. Since November 2016, our realization of the UTC (Coordinated Universal Time), the UTC(SMD), is controlled by our hydrogen clock of the VREMYA type.

In 2021, a new hydrogen clock was purchased from the company T4Science in Switzerland. The clock was commissioned in early 2022 and serves as the new reference clock for the realization of UTC(SMD).

In the context of the service to the public, the National Standards Department started a project at the beginning of 2019 for the distribution of the reference time scale UTC (SMD). The realisation of the web clock on the internet and on the FPS website, together with the realization of the NTP servers, was completed in 2021. The ntp-servers ntp1.economie.fgov.be, ntp2.economie.fgov.be and ntp3.economie.fgov.be were permanently available for NTP synchronisation throughout 2022.

To obtain and maintain their ISO 17025 accreditation, testing and calibration laboratories must demonstrate and monitor their performance against the results of other laboratories, when available and appropriate. A tool such as proficiency testing (PT), which makes it possible to obtain

information about the quality of measurements and to compare/check measurements carried out by different laboratories, is therefore essential to fulfill the missions of the FPS Economy. However, the current offer on the Belgian PT market does not meet the needs of the testing laboratories and makes it necessary to carry out controls of the Belgian market.

Therefore, in 2021, the National Standards Service launched a project to develop the organisation of PT and extend the available services to meet the needs of its stakeholders (accredited testing laboratories, in particular laboratories with a legal obligation through delegation / recognized by MetReg; BELAB). The pilot project was carried out in 2022 by the thermometry department and consisted of the development and organisation of an inter-laboratory test for the characterisation of climate chambers. The project was presented at the end of 2021 to the Belgian actors accredited by BELAC for this service. They all showed interest. After having learned about the organization of this interlaboratory comparison, two more participants joined the initiative in 2022. Nine ISO/IEC 17025 accredited laboratories thus participated.

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 2022, specialists from the National Standards Service carried out about 10 technical audits for BELAC.

In 2022, as in previous years, we put a lot of effort, as part of our ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation, 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.).

Our cleanroom is operational.

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(SMD) reference time available in Belgium.

The laboratories are equipped with connected sensors, allowing the continuous monitoring of temperature, pressure and humidity of each of the rooms.

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

European and International Cooperation

In order to perform its task properly, the National Standards Service must maintain its primary references with a very high level of precision and quality and use them for the benefit of economic actors. This is achieved through the calibration of the devices and secondary standards and internationally through the recognition of and confidence in its references and measurement results. In order to offer companies evolving in a competitive world economy the opportunity to benefit from the realisation and diffusion of the latest metrological innovations, there is intensive international cooperation and coordination. The European organisation EURAMET and the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures ensure the mutual international recognition of national standards through comparative measurements of national standards and coordinate the metrological research and development efforts of the Member States in order to optimise and rationalise the investment in resources and staff. In addition, in 2022, the National Standards Service has strengthened its

cooperation with the Luxembourg national metrology lab ILNAS, which should lead to the signing of a ministerial protocol agreement in 2023 between our two countries to officialise this privileged cooperation.

The M4D (Metrology for Digital Transformation) working group was again very active in 2022 to raise awareness among members of the EURAMET community about the concept of digital transformation of metrology, including preparing the scope of the call for the targeted [Digital Transformation program](#). The National Standards service makes an active contribution to two sub-working groups:

Research data management - according to the FAIR principles and its relation to the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). The National Standards Service hosted, among other things, the annual meeting of this working group.

Digital certificates for calibration ([TC-IM 1448](#)), testing and conformity assessment.

In 2022 the service participated in several European comparative measurements and the results of the participation in previous comparative measurements were published. These results are all good and confirm the professional and correct operation of the service.

The Time and Frequency section participates permanently in the comparative measurement of atomic clocks, with daily, weekly and monthly reporting. In this way, our reference clocks contribute to the global stability of the international UTC time. The nanometrology laboratory participates in a ring test for the measurement of surface roughness with atomic force microscopy (AFM) in the framework of the EURAMET technical committee TC Length. The laboratory also participated in a ring test for atomic force microscopy measurements within the framework of the VAMAS (Versailles Project on Advanced Materials and Standards) pre-standardisation project. That ring



trial focused on measuring the size and shape of nanoparticles with AFM microscopy, as well as on the reconstruction of the geometry of the AFM sensor. The laboratory is participating in two new VAMAS ring tests concerning the measurement of nanoparticles with AFM, based on the developments under the EMPIR nPSize project. Those ring tests started in early 2022. The lab also takes part in a ring test on nanoparticle size measurement by FFF-MALS.

In the framework of the Euramet (EMN) MathMet network, the National Standards Service participated in the development of a coordinated action at European level aimed at improving training on measurement uncertainties in 2020. This action aims at a better identification of the needs of the stakeholders, an exchange of pedagogical material between national metrological institutes (in support of the small national metrological institutes) and the joint development of pedagogical material adapted to the level of each of the identified target groups. Establishing a community that is active in the field on the long term at European level and better promotion of our activities are other important goals. This will make it possible to expand the training courses currently organised informally and internally by the National Standards Service. BELAC, in its capacity as stakeholder, already showed interest in this initiative as it would allow better training of its technical auditors. The project started in October 2021.

In 2022, the National Standards Service participated in about ten EURAMET technical committees – including the committee dedicated to interdisciplinary aspects and chaired by the service – in the EURAMET General Assembly and the EMPIR/EPM meetings. In addition, in the context of the specialisations within the service, we regularly participated in workshops, conferences and meetings.

Since 2015, in the framework of the EMPIR program (for which the last call for projects dates back to 2020), eight projects have been selected for a total funding of more than €510,000: four projects in nanometrology, one project in dimensional metrology, one project in mass metrology, one project for the quality of climate measurements and one project in the field of mathematical statistical research, areas in which our team has developed new competences in recent years.

The European framework program for research funding “Horizon 2020” is replaced by “Horizon Europe”, which runs from 2021 to 2027. The positive evaluation of EMPIR by the members of EURAMET and independent experts has prompted the European Union to continue its cooperation with EURAMET within this new framework program. Our service participated in the creation of the new institutional partnership with the European Union that will fund new research projects under the name “European Partnership in Metrology (EPM)”. Belgium has committed itself to make a financial contribution of 2 million euros (spread over the 10 years of the program) to the EPM program. During the 2022 call for projects, two of the projects submitted by the National Standards Service were selected in the field of nanometrology.

In the context of this program, the National Standards Service participated in the following projects in 2022:

- 18NRM03 INCIPIT: Development of methods and a calibration procedure for new techniques for measuring atmospheric precipitation;
- 18NET04 ForClimateOcean: Support of a European metrology network for climate and ocean observation;
- 19RPT02 RealMass: Improving the realization of the mass scale.
- 20FUN02 POLight: Pushing boundaries of nano-dimensional metrology by light
- 21GRD07 PlasticTrace: Metrological traceability of measurement data from nano to small-microplastics for a greener environment and food safety

Nanometrology

The laboratory of nanometrology continues its research and development work in the field of instruments and methods for the metrological characterisation of nanomaterials. In 2022, the laboratory participated in 2 research projects within the framework of the European metrology research programs EMPIR and EPM.

The lab is currently working on the measurement of size and concentration of nanoparticles in a liquid and complex medium (gel, cream, etc.). For this purpose, it combined a size-based separation technique for nanoparticles in a liquid medium called Field Flow Fractionation (FFF) with measurement instruments that work with light scattering, Multi-Angle Light Scattering (MALS) and Dynamic Light Scattering (DLS). The lab continued its work on developing methodologies for comparing measurement techniques used to determine the size of nanoparticles with light scattering and AFM microscopy. The lab also worked on the development of a measurement uncertainty budget for the MALS measuring instrument.

This work will be continued under the EMPIR POLight project “Pushing boundaries of nanometrology by light” launched at the end of 2021. This also includes developing better measurement models with the aim of increasing performance: better traceability to SI units and smaller and better managed uncertainties. The laboratory has also collaborated with KULeuven for the characterisation and separation of carbon soot (air pollutants) with FFF-MALS-DLS and other instruments, for use in a biological matrix.

The laboratory also participates in the EPM PlasticTrace project “Metrological traceability of measurement data from nano- to small-microplastics for a greener environment and food safety”, which kicked off at the end of 2022.

This project has three objectives:

1. developing methods for the measurement and characterization of microplastics (SMP, 0.1 μm –5 mm) and nanoplastics (NP, 1-100 nm), taking into account composition, size distribution and morphology, and yielding suitable and realistic reference materials;
2. establishing sample preparation methods;
3. developing a practical guide for the measurement and characterization of SMPs/NPs in food and the environment.

This project enables traceable monitoring of SMPs/NPs to support decision making and mitigating actions for plastic pollution. It also supports future technologies, such as biodegradable bioplastics, and improvements in the health impact of industries such as food packaging and water management.

Finally, the lab’s activities have been the subject of several scientific publications and have been presented at various conferences, via posters and/or oral presentations.

3. New Regulations

In 2022, various regulations were adopted and numerous European legislative proposals were the subject of intense negotiation.

Particular mention should be made of the reform of the Testing Centre for Firearms, which was continued with the adoption of three Royal Decrees implementing the law of 8 July 2018 laying down provisions regarding the Testing Centre for Firearms. These decisions relate to the operation of the Testing Centre, its staff and the appointment of the members of the Board of Directors of the Testing Centre.

Legislation related to standardization (Book VIII of the Code of Economic Law) was revised to adapt the procedure for approving standards and improve governance.

Significant changes have also been made with regard to the inspection of lifts, in particular to allow owners of a lift with historical value to modernise their lift and at the same time conserve its historical character (the deadline has been moved to 2027 and the modalities of modernisation will still have to be described more clearly).

A number of other projects for change in regulations were the subject of consultation with all stakeholders (for construction products, explosives, distribution of the UTC time, etc.).

We also draw attention to the intensive work at European level, as important reforms of European regulations were negotiated at European Council level, in particular with regard to general product safety in the broad sense, safety of machinery and construction products.

Sand – North Sea

Law of 25 September 2022 containing various provisions relating to the economy, chapter 4.

Law of 11 December 2022 for the protection of the marine environment and for the organisation of marine spatial planning in the Belgian marine areas, Article 65.

Royal Decree of 12 July 2022 amending the Royal Decree of 1 September 2004 on the conditions and procedure for granting concessions for the exploration and exploitation of mineral and other non-living resources in the territorial sea and on the continental shelf

Ministerial Decree of 8 November 2022 amending the Ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015 designating the officials responsible for supervising the application of various regulations relating to activities in the maritime areas under the jurisdiction of Belgium

Products

Royal Decree of 20 July 2022 concerning the withdrawal from the market and the recall of small individual spits for cooking with open flame

Royal Decree of 27 November 2022 amending the Royal Decree of 9 March 2003 on the safety of lifts.

Explosives – Weapons

Royal Decree of 24 April 2022 concerning the certificate of competence for authorised blasters responsible for blasting in open mining works in the mining industry

Royal Decree of 10 March 2022 on the Testing Centre for Firearms

Royal Decree of 10 March 2022 on the personnel of the Testing Centre for Firearms

Royal Decree of 16 December 2022 appointing the members of the Board of Directors of the Testing Centre for Firearms, published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 17 January 2023.

Intervening bodies

Royal Decree of 14 January 2022 on the recognition of conformity assessment bodies for remotely piloted aircraft systems



4. Our Quality Policy to Serve you Better

The Directorate-General Quality and Safety focuses on four quality standards: ISO 9001:2015, ISO/IEC 17025:2017, ISO/IEC 17020:2012, ISO 14001:2015. There is also standard ISO/IEC 17011 for BELAC. 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 strategic plan of the Director-General and then 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. In this 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 (ISO 9001, ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17025 and ISO 14001) 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.

The different audits result in audit reports with the findings for the different audited aspects of the standard and for the activities that were checked. These findings are recorded in a specific database and divided into major non-conformities, minor non-conformities and opportunities for improvement.

In 2022, the ISO 9001 certification was renewed for our Directorate-General. Additionally, external audits were also carried out for the various standards.

Since 2016, the Directorate-General Quality and Safety has been accredited as a type A inspection body for its inspection activities of automatic and non-automatic weighing instruments, as well as passenger lifts. The accreditation was expanded to:

- inspections of playgrounds and fuel pumps in 2017,
- inspections of pre-packages in 2019

Contact Details and Useful Information

5. Contact Details and Useful Addresses

5.1. Belspoc

Areas of competence: Belspoc 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 exchange of information related to dangerous products.

Tel. : 02 277 53 36 – Email : belspoc@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, Safety Gate, explosives and fireworks, etc.

Tel.: 02 277 76 99 – Email: 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 position at international level, etc.

Email: 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.

Email: 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 – Email: belac@economie.fgov.be

Standardisation and 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. This service also plays a role in exchanges between foreign producers and Belgian authorities via the Product Contact Point

Email: 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 concessions, [monitoring](#) sand extraction, providing updates on the related [legislation](#) and managing the “Budget line for Sand Extraction”.

Email: 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.

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

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

Electronic Certification

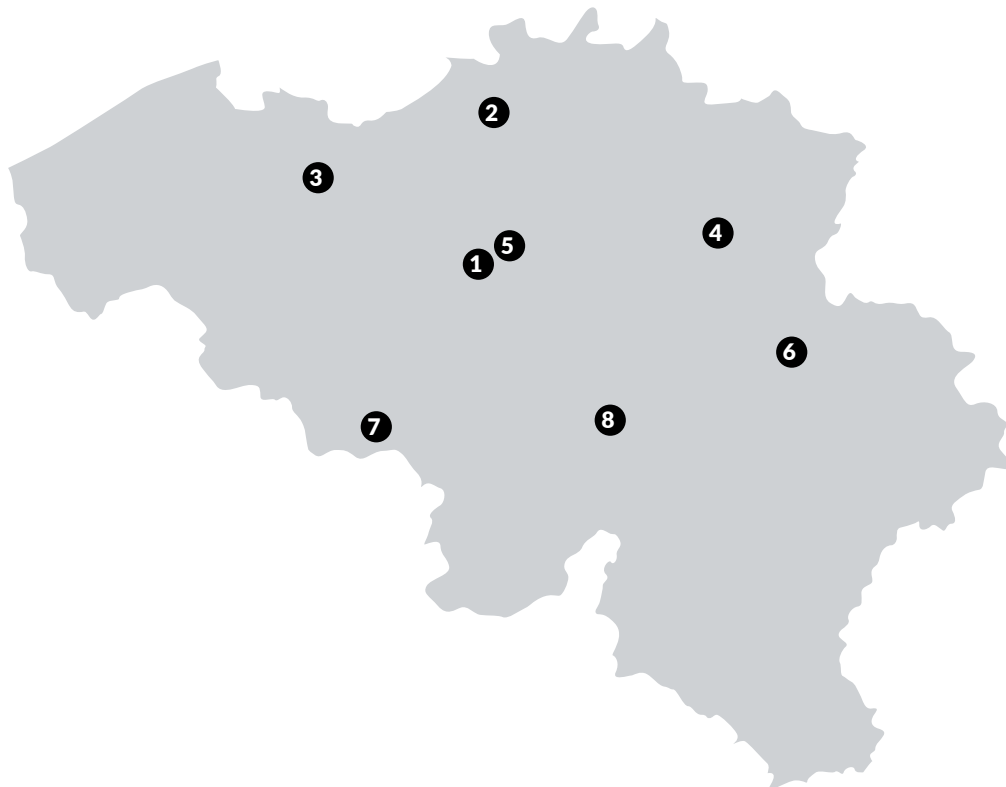
Areas of competence: supervising the providers of electronic trust services in order to strengthen the confidence of the users of such services.

Email: 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 Brussel
- ❷ [Antwerp](#)
AMCA
Entrepotplaats 1 bus 5
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/>

Our New Publications in 2022

Activity Report 2021 of the Directorate-General Quality and Safety

Read the [Executive summary](#)

The Executive summary is also available in [French, and German](#).



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

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