



ANNUAL REPORT

A year of growth, driven by progress and ready for tomorrow's challenges

2025



A trusted name for 120 years... together we will continue to build



FOREWORD



For FORWARD Belgium, 2025 was a year of intensive collaboration and strategic progress. The implementation of new customs systems, the further digitisation of logistics processes, the increasing focus on security and the impact of European sustainability legislation largely determined FORWARD Belgium's agenda.

In this challenging landscape, FORWARD Belgium once again took on a clear role: informing, connecting, defending and thinking ahead. Not with abstract positions, but with concrete support, targeted knowledge sharing and constructive dialogue with policymakers, administrations and partners. This enabled us to achieve tangible results once again.

As one of our members aptly put it:
"The strength of our sector lies in shared knowledge and joint action."

This annual report provides an overview of the most important developments, initiatives and achievements of 2025.



Digitalisation

Digitalisation remained one of the most important strategic pillars. In 2025, there was a strong focus on exploring generative AI within the logistics sector. During Lunch & Learn sessions in collaboration with The Beacon, concrete applications were explained, ranging from autonomous order processing and fraud detection to intelligent container tracking with CO₂ reporting.

FORWARD Belgium is currently investigating the possibility of developing an AI agent for fraud detection with the aim of making it available to the sector.



With the launch of WARD, FORWARD Belgium's new AI assistant, an important first step has been taken towards more accessible and digital knowledge services.

Our chatbot WARD makes it possible to find answers to frequently asked questions more quickly and marks the beginning of a broader vision of innovation within our association. It is the ideal point of contact with the younger generation within our sector.



Customs



The implementation of the various MASP projects brought about radical changes for freight forwarders and customs representatives. FORWARD Belgium acted as a bridge between the sector, software suppliers and the customs administration in this process. Through frequent communication, workshops and consultations, bottlenecks were identified, clarified and, where possible, resolved. The launch of NCTS P5 in January marked the start of an intensive year in which preparations for IDMS were also a key focus. The entry period for economic operators ran from June to September, after which the sector continued to prepare for the mandatory migration to the new PN/TS application. Customs announced a limited grace period until 31 March 2026 to give companies the opportunity to complete the transition carefully.

FORWARD Belgium

Particular attention was paid to the introduction of the Inbound Release Platform, the transition to new declaration systems and their impact on goods administration and operational workflows. The guidance provided by FORWARD Belgium was aimed not only at guiding companies through the transition phase, but also at making them structurally more resilient to future digital developments. The first messages were processed in April, and by the autumn, more than ten thousand shipments had been handled via the platform. The publication of the IRP FAQ, drawn up in collaboration with Alfaport Voka, NxtPort and the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, provided companies with a clear frame of reference for the new processes.

- FORWARD Belgium connects industry and government
- Digital transition strengthens the resilience of businesses
- New standards raise customs professionalism to a higher level

A milestone in 2025 was the joint development of professional standards for customs representatives by FORWARD Belgium and the customs administration. These standards, based on the AEO statute, set a new benchmark for quality, reliability and compliance within the sector. These agreements represent an important step towards a more transparent, efficient and trust-based customs policy in Belgium.



During the various meetings of the National Forum – for which Wim Gijbels was recently appointed as the new chairman – and the regional consultation, FORWARD Belgium continued to raise all kinds of issues that have an impact on the functioning of the sector.

Finally, intensive work is continuing on the revision of the sanctions policy on Customs & Excise. In the course of the year, 55 articles of the AWDA were rewritten and an Interuniversity Chair in Customs Sanctions Law was officially launched. This chair, supported by the University of Antwerp and the University of Liège, lays the foundation for a modern sanctions model in which administrative processing is central and criminal prosecution is reserved for fraud.

Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, 2025 was marked by important European developments. The 'stop the clock' regulation postponed CSRD reporting obligations for many companies, while the Omnibus package contained proposals to reduce administrative burdens. In December, a provisional agreement was reached to raise the reporting thresholds, meaning that fewer companies will be subject to the obligation.

The EUDR (European Deforestation Regulation) was also postponed. Large companies will only have to comply with the obligations from 30 December 2026, while micro and small companies will have until 30 June 2027.

The CBAM dossier also remained prominent. Although the reporting obligation has been in force since 2023, the next phase will come into effect on 1 January 2026. FORWARD Belgium organised several information sessions to prepare its members in good time. FORWARD Belgium has developed various templates and standard contracts relating to CBAM and distributed them to its members.



Within the [FORWARD Goals-programme](#), several companies were once again awarded the GOLD label. Polytra, Steelduxx and Remant Transport Architects were among the new laureates, while H.Essers, Van Moer Forwarding, Customs Support, Eutrac, Deloitte Belgium, Haeger & Schmidt Logistics Belgium, TCI Carriers, TMA Logistics, Fast Shipping & Forwarding Belgium, Embassy Freight Services Europe and FORWARD Belgium successfully had their labels re-evaluated. The FORWARD Goals Award 2025 went to Remant Transport Architects for their strong internal project work on sustainability.

“Sustainability only becomes truly powerful when it is supported by the entire organisation.”



External relations

In 2025, FORWARD Belgium continued to ensure active and consistent representation of the Belgian freight forwarding sector in international forums, supported by several experienced representatives.

FORWARD Belgium provides Dimitri Serafimoff, Chairman of Clecat, and Jens Roemer, Senior Vice President of FIATA.



“Together, we are building a promising future for the port and logistics sector!”



Human Resources

is an important spearhead in terms of our sector's image. The sector is jointly investing 863,000 euros in the new experience centre.

FORWARD Belgium is delighted to contribute as a structural partner to the realisation of this unique initiative.



FORWARD Belgium called on its members to become partners and participate in the Port Expert programme, in which companies can welcome students for company visits and speed dates.

In addition, there was a strong focus on training and talent development. The online basic training for freight forwarders was further rolled out, supplemented with in-house toolkits for freight forwarders, shippers and companies that outsource customs activities.



Legal

From 1 January 2026, e-invoicing will be mandatory for B2B transactions in Belgium. Information sessions were held to explain which companies are subject to the obligation, what the risks are of non-compliance and how organisations can best prepare.



Unfortunately, our sector remains a target for fraudulent practices. That is why we once again drew attention to FORWARD Belgium's reporting centre for suspicious shipments. The reporting centre for suspicious shipments is exclusively accessible to members of FORWARD Belgium and is part of a closed network. It offers support in carrying out internal risk analyses, for example when screening customers or assessing shipments. This initiative is a valuable addition to the existing 'Our port drug-free' reporting centre and contributes to a joint approach against fraudulent practices in the sector.

Electronic invoicing



Reporting point for suspicious consignments



Maritime Security Act



In addition, the Maritime Security Act received a lot of attention. From 1 July 2025, security checks will be mandatory for new recruits in critical positions, and by 30 June 2026, all existing employees in such positions must be screened. The digital platform Panoptes was announced as the central tool for these checks. New circulars in April, July and December provided additional clarifications, including the databases to be consulted and the new concept of a positive security advice with warning. FORWARD Belgium remains in consultation with the competent services and is closely monitoring the implementation.



*"From regulation to certainty:
compliant together."*

Training and knowledge building

In a sector where suitable talent is scarce, you as a company can make a difference by investing in training. That is why FORWARD Belgium launched a fully online basic training course for freight forwarders and customs representatives in 2025 – ideal for starters, experienced employees and managers.

This guidance offers:

- Essential Best Practices
- Understanding current logistics challenges
- Trade Compliance

Find out more about the online basic training course for freight forwarders [in our promotional film](#).



“Invest in knowledge today. Strengthen your team for tomorrow's challenges.”

In addition, FORWARD Belgium organised numerous information sessions on topics such as electronic invoicing, VAT procedures, sustainability legislation and productivity. By linking these training courses to concrete practical examples and current issues, knowledge was not approached purely theoretically, but made directly applicable to the daily operations of companies.



Young FORWARD Belgium

The future of the sector depends largely on its appeal to new generations. Young FORWARD Belgium plays a key role in this by connecting young professionals through FORWARD academies, guest lectures, networking events and sporting activities. This youth initiative served not only as a social network, but also as a breeding ground for future engagement within the sector and the association.

Young FORWARD Belgium had a particularly active year. The 8th edition of the FORWARD Cup brought together 24 teams and 260 players for an evening of sport, team spirit and networking. AML was crowned champion, while Fracht Polytra Belgium won the Best Support award.

On Thursday 2 October, the 12th edition of the FORWARD Belgium Quiz took place at De Ark Antwerp. With 59 enthusiastic quiz teams, challenging rounds of questions and a battle for the coveted challenge cup, it was an evening full of excitement, fun and connection.

The FORWARD Academies were once again a success. Hendrik Vos gave a lecture on the history of the European Union, Isabel De Clercq brought focus to a world full of distractions and Anja Moortgat linked Greek mythology to modern leadership challenges.



FORWARD Belgium

In addition, numerous networking activities were organised, including a port visit with YoungPOR and the Supply Chain Experience Day and the Supply Chain Experience Event 'Never a dull moment in liner shipping'.

Young people were also regularly sent to guest lectures, where they represented our sector in a positive and professional manner.

The youth board of Young FORWARD Belgium was re-elected for a new two-year term. The board team for 2025-2027 consists of:

→ **Chairman**
Cédric Peeters (Gaston Schul)

→ **Vice-Chair**
Cynthia Clauwaert (Haeger & Schmidt Logistics Belgium)

→ **Vice-Chair**
Nicolas Lens (Gosselin Logistics)

“Together, they are building a strong network of young logistics talents, with room for knowledge sharing, meetings and growth.”



FORWARD AWARD

What are the economic, ecological and social consequences of CBAM on the Belgian steel industry?

From the bachelor's and master's theses submitted to compete for the FORWARD Belgium Award, it was decided to award the prize to Stijn Bens for his bachelor's thesis 'What are the economic, ecological and social consequences of CBAM on the Belgian steel industry?', supervised by Kris Dekeijzer. The thesis was submitted for a professional bachelor's degree in Business Management, specialising in Supply Chain Management, at Karel de Grote Hogeschool.

MAGAZINES

FORWARD Magazine was published in June and December. Both editions featured inspiring stories, sector analyses and updates on digitisation, customs and Young FORWARD, and can be read online:

[FORWARD MAGAZINE ISSUE 22](#)



[FORWARD MAGAZINE ISSUE 23](#)



ANNUAL EVENT



The 2025 annual event took place at Antwerp ZOO under the theme 'Magic Ocean'. The 120th anniversary of FORWARD Belgium was celebrated during an atmospheric evening walk, reception and seated dinner. The evening was all about history, connection and sustainability, including the sponsorship of the seahorses at Antwerp ZOO. The seahorse – an animal that braves the turbulent waters with a straight back and proud head – perfectly symbolises our ambition to make sustainability tangible and visible. With this sponsorship, we want to send a powerful message together: sustainability is not a promise, but a choice we make every day.

CLOSING REMARKS



The year 2025 clearly demonstrated that FORWARD Belgium is more than just an interest group. At a time when the sector was facing major changes – from new customs systems and increasing European regulations to the growing need for digitisation and sustainability – FORWARD Belgium proved its role as a knowledge centre, network and reliable discussion partner for policy and administration.

The foundations laid in 2025 are therefore not only a response to today's challenges, but also a solid basis for a future-proof logistics sector.





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