UNION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

City Report: Brussels, Belgium

Report on the international association sector in Brussels.

Information extracted from the UIA's Yearbook of International Organizations, International Congress Calendar and Global Civil Society Database.

Edited by:
Union of International Associations (UIA)
Rue Washington 40, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
statistics@uia.org
www.uia.org

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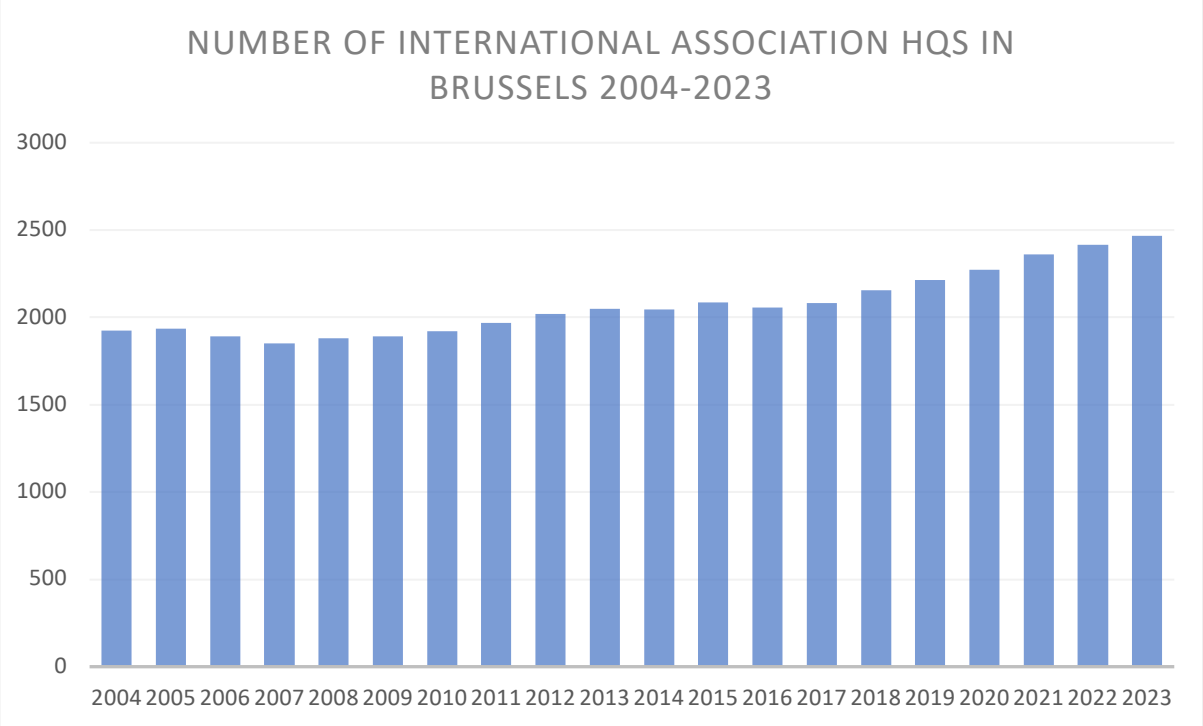
Section 1: International Associations with Headquarters in Brussels

1.1: Active International Associations with HQs in Brussels (2004-2023)



Year	No. of Associations
2004	1926
2005	1937
2006	1890
2007	1850
2008	1882
2009	1890
2010	1920
2011	1967
2012	2021
2013	2048

Year	No. of Associations
2014	2045
2015	2084
2016	2058
2017	2082
2018	2154
2019	2215
2020	2274
2021	2362
2022	2416
2023	2466

The number of associations with HQs in Brussels increased 28% from 2004 to 2023.

This is a notable increase when compared with the number of associations for the whole world as listed in the UIA Yearbook, which increased by 15% over the same period.

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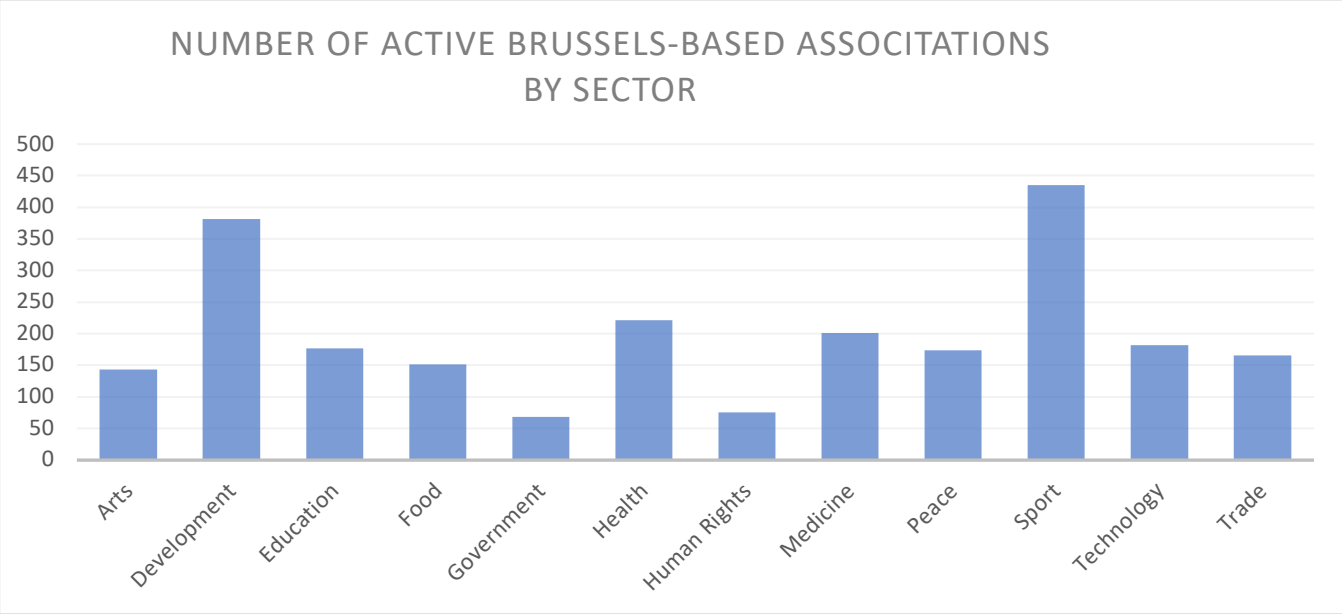
1.2: Active International Associations in Brussels by Sector



Organizational Type	No. of Organizations
Arts	143
Development	381
Education	177
Food	152
Government	68
Health	221
Human Rights	76
Medicine	201
Peace	174
Sport	435
Technology	182
Trade	166

The range of sectors represented in Brussels is wide-spread, with no main sector acting as the driving force of association life in the city.

Notable variations against global trends include larger than average representation of sport and trade associations and lower than average representation of medical associations.

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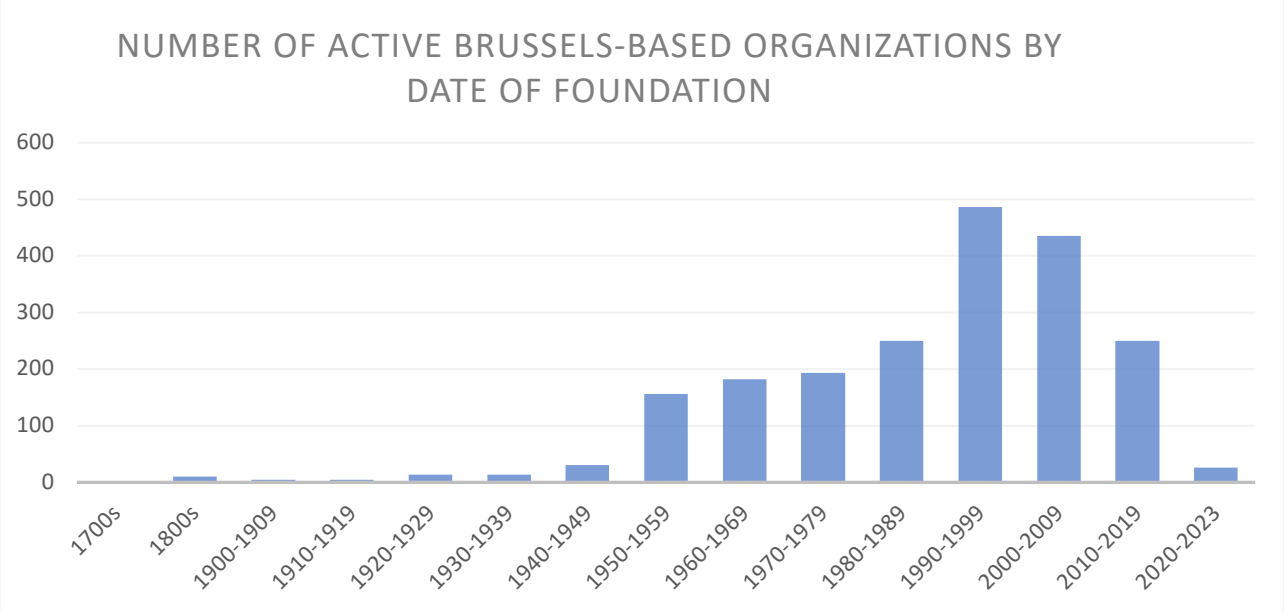
1.3: Active International Associations in Brussels by Date of Foundation



Decade / Century of Foundation	No. of Organizations
1700s	1
1800s	10
1900-1909	4
1910-1919	4
1920-1929	13
1930-1939	13
1940-1949	31
1950-1959	156
1960-1969	182
1970-1979	193
1980-1989	250
1990-1999	486
2000-2009	436
2010-2019	250
2020-2023	26

At first these data may appear to indicate a reduction in the rate of establishment of association HQs in Brussels.

This is not actually the case. UIA is not immediately aware of associations as they form and it can take years for a full picture of new associations to be reflected in the data. Also, of course, 2020-2023 is a much smaller time span than the other bars which reflect entire decades. This chart shows an expected trend and should *not* be seen as systemic decrease in association life in Brussels.

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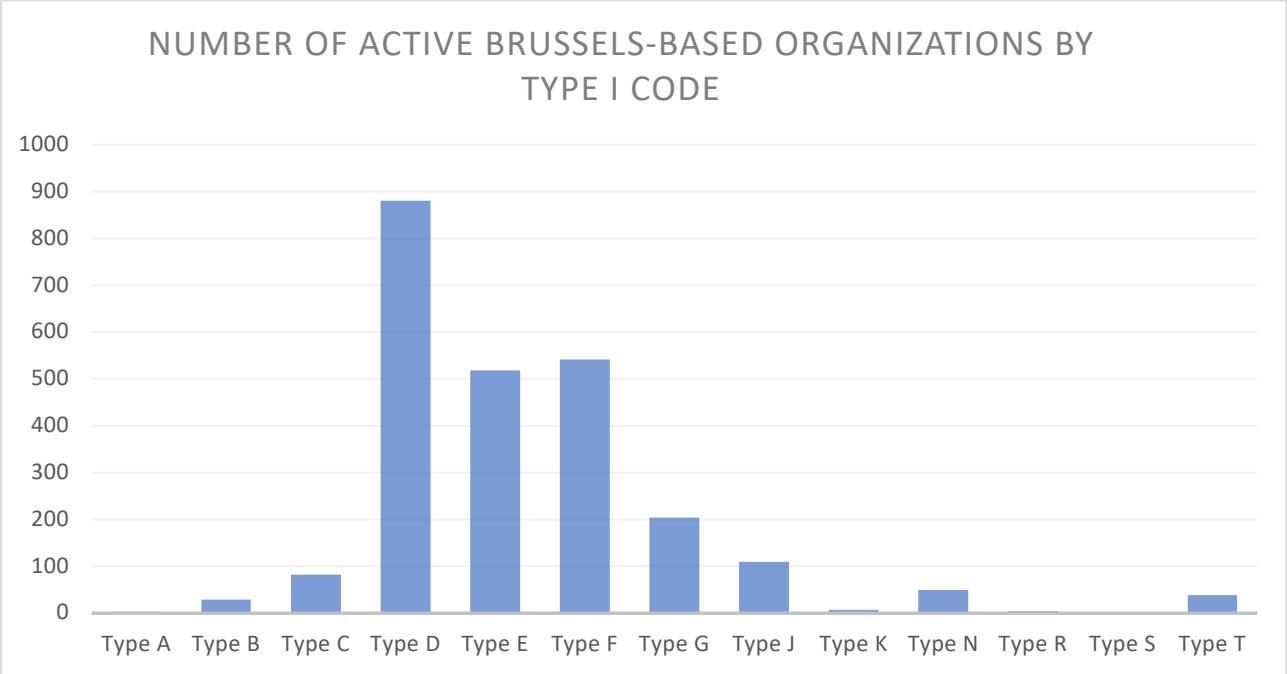
1.4: Active International Associations in Brussels by Organizational Type I



Organizational Type	No. of Organizations
Type A - Federations of international organizations	3
Type B - Universal membership organizations	29
Type C - Intercontinental membership organizations	83
Type D - Regionally defined membership organizations	881
Type E - Organizations emanating from places, persons or other bodies	518
Type F - Organizations having a special form	541
Type G - Internationally-oriented national organizations	204
Type J - Recently reported or proposed international organizations	110
Type K - Subsidiary and internal bodies	7
Type N - National organizations	49
Type R - Religious orders, fraternities and secular institutes	5
Type S - Autonomous conference series	1
Type T - Multilateral treaties and agreements	39

The most notable variations against global trends in this typology are a large increase in Types D and E associations in Brussels. These represent '*Regionally defined membership organizations*' and '*Organizations emanating from places, persons or other bodies*' respectively.

One can infer that Brussels being the seat of the European Union leads to an increase in associations which represent specifically European interests, which would fall under these two typologies.

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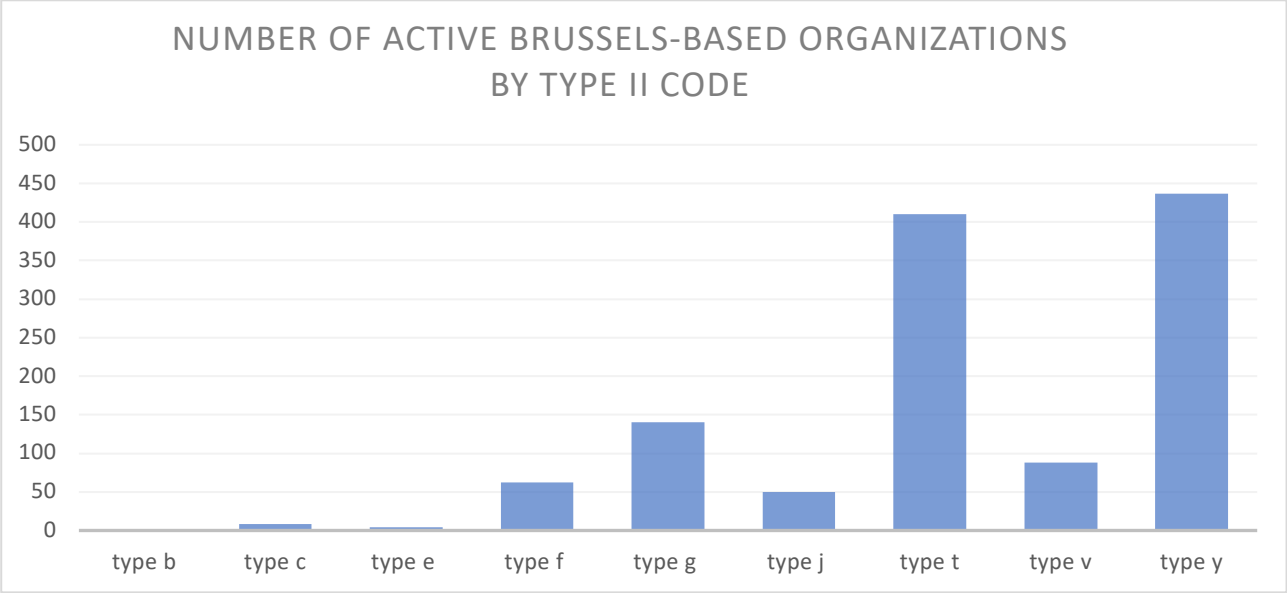
1.5: Active International Associations in Brussels by Organizational Type II



Organizational Type	No. of Organizations
b = bilateral intergovernmental organization	1
c = conference series	8
e = commercial enterprise	4
f = foundation, fund	62
g = intergovernmental organization (IGO)	140
j = research institute	50
t = trade association	410
v = individual membership only	88
y = international organization membership	437

The most notable variations against global trends in this typology are a large increase in Types t and y associations in Brussels. These represent '*trade associations*' and '*international organization membership*' associations respectively.

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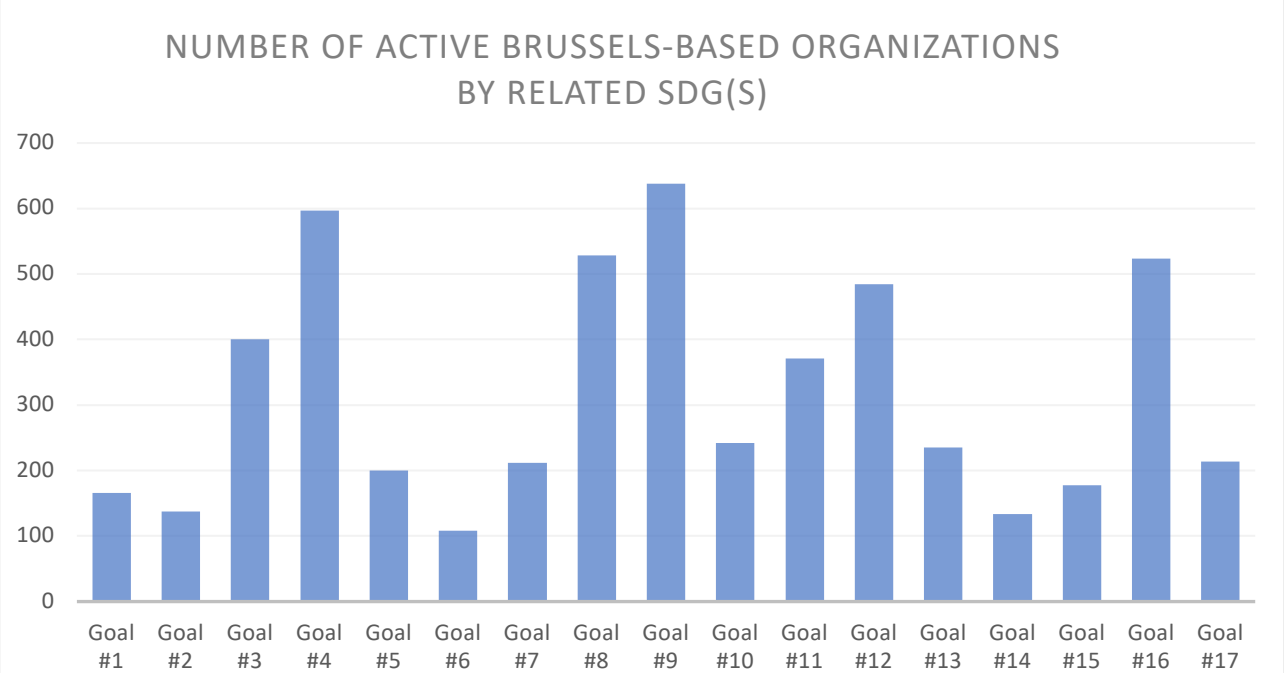
1.6: Active International Associations in Brussels by their relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



SDG	No. of Organizations
Goal #1	166
Goal #2	137
Goal #3	400
Goal #4	597
Goal #5	200
Goal #6	108
Goal #7	212
Goal #8	528
Goal #9	638

SDG	No. of Organizations
Goal #10	242
Goal #11	371
Goal #12	484
Goal #13	235
Goal #14	134
Goal #15	178
Goal #16	524
Goal #17	214

The most notable variations against global trends in SDG are a large increase in Goal 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*) and Goal 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*) and moderate increases in Goal 12 (*Responsible Consumption and Production*) and Goal 13 (*Climate Action*). No notable decreases in representation against the global trend are evident.

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Section 2: International Meetings Activity in Brussels/Belgium

2.1: Number of International Association Meetings in Brussels (2003-2022)

Year	No. of Meetings	Ranking
2003	182	3
2004	190	3
2005	189	3
2006	179	4
2007	229	4
2008	291	3
2009	388	2
2010	474	2
2011	459	2
2012	532	2

Year	No. of Meetings	Ranking
2013	429	2
2014	778	1
2015	657	1
2016	902	1
2017	757	2
2018	733	2
2019	961	2
2020	290	2
2021	319	1
2022	570	1

As can be seen in charts 2.1 and 2.2, Brussels has maintained a top ranking for 15 years with a #1 ranking for association meetings for five of the last 10 years. The large number of association headquarters in Brussels is likely a factor in this ranking, as well as a long-established meetings industry and the Belgian iASBL legal standing for international associations.

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2.2: Brussels Global Meetings Ranking (2003-2022)

Year	No. of Meetings	Ranking
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2.3: Number of International Association Meetings in Belgium (2003-2022)

Year	No. of Meetings	Ranking
2003	283	8
2004	282	8
2005	242	10
2006	239	12
2007	307	11
2008	367	7
2009	454	5
2010	572	4
2011	527	3
2012	581	3

Year	No. of Meetings	Ranking
2013	497	3
2014	841	1
2015	726	3
2016	949	1
2017	804	2
2018	849	3
2019	1090	2
2020	336	3
2021	384	4
2022	646	1

In charts 2.3 and 2.4, we see how Belgium also ranks in the top five meeting *countries* internationally for the last 10+ years. Again, the large number of association headquarters in Brussels is likely a factor in this ranking, as well as a long-established meetings industry and the Belgian iASBL legal standing for international associations.

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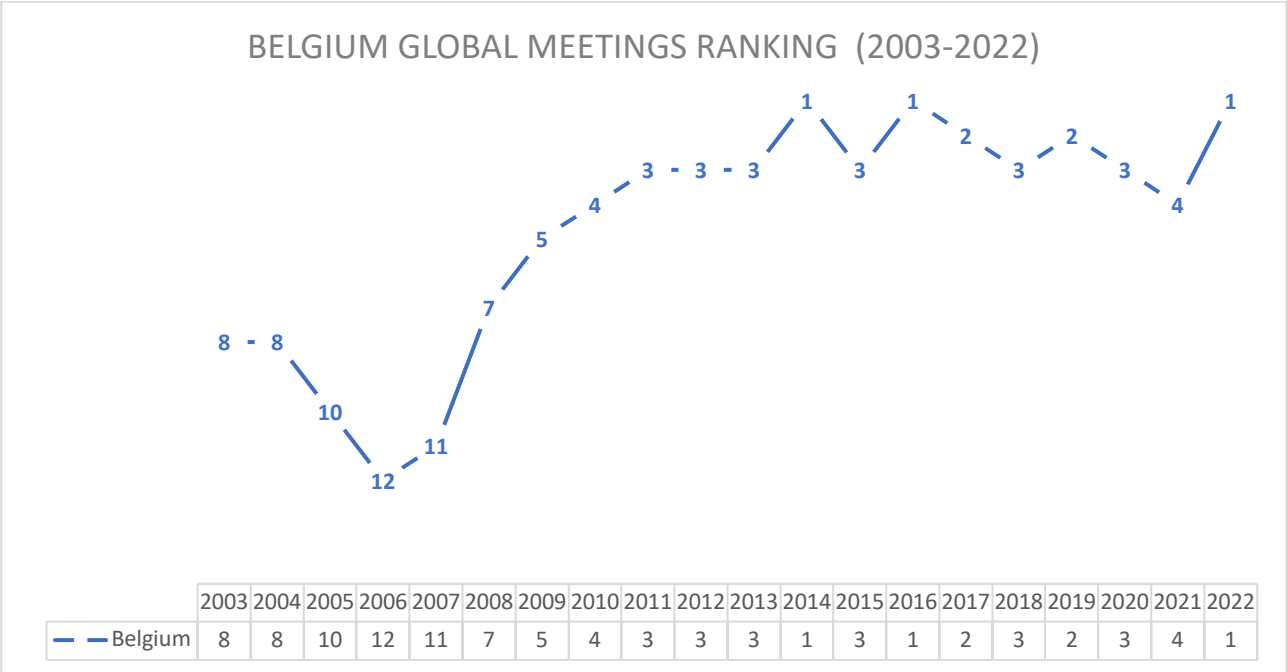
2.4: Belgium Global Meetings Ranking (2003-2022)



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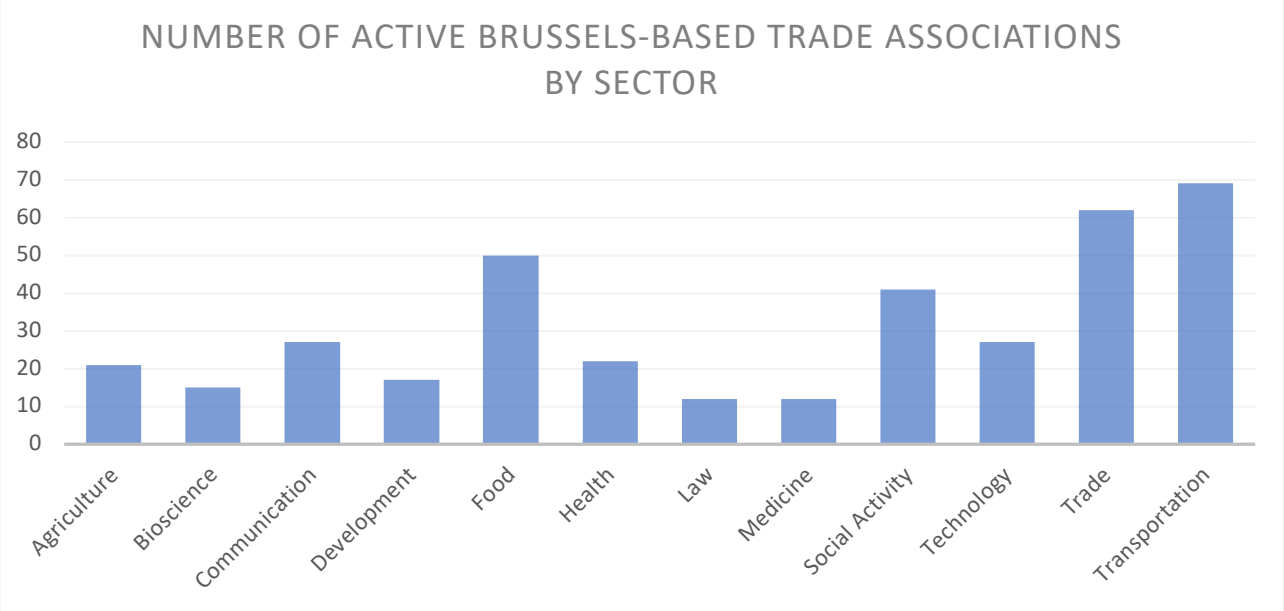
Section 3: Trade Associations in Brussels and Belgium

3.1: Trade Associations in Brussels by Sector



Trade Organizations by Sector	No. of Associations
Agriculture	21
Bioscience	15
Communication	27
Development	17
Food	50
Health	22
Law	12
Medicine	12
Social Activity	41
Technology	27
Trade	62
Transportation	69

There are 407 trade associations with headquarters in Brussels, making up approximately 17% of the association HQs in the city.

There are 427 trade associations with headquarters in Belgium, making up approximately 14% of the association HQs in the country.

Spreadsheets, attached to this report as addenda, provide lists of all trade associations in Brussels, and in Belgian cities other than Brussels.

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