

Position Paper: Improving Border Control Efficiency and Strengthening Transatlantic Connectivity

20 November 2025

AmCham Belgium regroups 400 companies, both American businesses operating in Belgium and Belgian companies with a presence in the US. As an independent organization, we do not report to either the Belgian or American governments, nor do we receive any subsidies. This independence allows us to advocate for international businesses with a clear and impartial voice. Our sole commitment is to our companies and to fostering an environment that drives growth, accelerates innovation, and ensures lasting prosperity for both Belgium and the US.

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Executive Summary

The American Chamber of Commerce in Belgium (AmCham Belgium) is committed to advancing transatlantic economic relations and ensuring that Belgium remains a leading destination for investment, innovation, and talent.

Smooth and reliable international connectivity is a decisive factor for global companies when choosing where to invest and expand. However, increasingly long waiting times at border control in Brussels Airport have become a growing concern among our member companies — both American businesses operating in Belgium and Belgian companies with operations in the United States.

This persistent issue risks undermining Belgium's image as an efficient and business-friendly gateway to Europe. With the EU Entry/Exit System (EES) now entering into force, the situation is likely to worsen unless prompt, coordinated action is taken.

The recent economic mission to the West Coast underscores the importance of close collaboration and seamless communication between our two countries. AmCham Belgium calls for the implementation of both immediate measures to alleviate congestion and long-term solutions to ensure secure, efficient, and welcoming border processes that reflect Belgium's global standing as an international hub.

Concerns

On average, Brussels International Airport welcomes approximately 8,000 non-EU travelers each day that are required to pass through border control. Around 10% of these passengers hold US, UK, or Canadian passports. Regarding the US routes specifically, Brussels Airport currently maintains direct connections with New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, and Atlanta, accounting for between five and seven daily flights. This represents an average of 2,600 passengers that travel between Belgium and the United States each day (arrivals and departures combined, across all nationalities).

While we understand that long waiting times at border control is not a new challenge, recent feedback suggests the situation is deteriorating. During busy morning period, EU citizens typically wait around 25 minutes at arrival e-gates, while third-country nationals face significantly longer delays, averaging 95 minutes, regularly exceeding two hours and with peaks of over three hours. There are also occasions of very long waiting times for departures from Brussels. The long waiting lines have become a persistent problem, also during traditionally quieter periods throughout the year. The recent 'Summer plan' seemed to help alleviate the pressure in the holiday period, but waiting times in recent weeks remain too long. Undoubtedly, the EU Entry Exit System (EES), entered into force as of October 12, will further exacerbate the problem.

We have received a number of concerning reports from our Member companies operating in Belgium regarding this matter. Many business travelers commuting between the United States and Belgium have experienced significant disruptions to their schedules, leading in some cases to missed meetings and flights. This situation unfortunately does not project the most favorable

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image of Belgium, nor does it strengthen the country's appeal as a destination for business and investment.

Recommendations

AmCham Belgium calls for a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy to restore efficiency of border control by government authorities at Brussels Airport and safeguard Belgium's competitiveness as a gateway for transatlantic travel and investment:

1. Strengthen Staffing and Border Infrastructure

Increase the federal police presence and allocate additional resources to border control to ensure adequate capacity during peak hours and as passenger volumes grow.

2. Expand e-Gate Access for U.S. Citizens

Until October 12, U.S., U.K., and Canadian citizens were allowed to use e-gates for departures. Since the entry into force of the EES, this is no longer permitted by government authorities. We strongly urge the reinstatement of e-gate access for U.S. citizens (following EES registration) for departures, and recommend extending this access to arrivals as well, as is already the case in many other major European hub airports. This practical measure would enhance the travel experience for U.S. citizens, help reduce overall congestion, and support Brussels Airport's position as an international hub.

3. Advance Belgium's Inclusion in the U.S. Global Entry Program

AmCham Belgium strongly supports Belgium's participation in the Global Entry Program operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. This would enable pre-approved Belgian nationals to benefit from expedited entry into the United States, aligning Belgium with EU peers such as Germany and the Netherlands.

4. Re-engage with the U.S. Preclearance Program

Implementing U.S. preclearance facilities at Brussels Airport would allow passengers to complete U.S. immigration and customs procedures prior to departure, arriving in the U.S. as domestic travelers. This would enhance connectivity, reduce congestion, and elevate Brussels' position as a premier transatlantic hub.

5. Expand Direct Air Routes to the United States

AmCham Belgium highlights the strategic value of establishing direct connections between Belgium and major U.S. destinations – such as San Francisco, Houston, Boston and Denver - to promote reciprocal investment, innovation exchange, and deeper transatlantic engagement. This expansion will only be feasible once current border control challenges are adequately addressed.

Conclusion

Addressing the persistent border delays at Brussels Airport is not simply a logistical necessity - it is a strategic imperative for Belgium's international competitiveness. Efficient and secure border processing will not only improve the experience for travelers and business professionals but also send a strong signal of Belgium's openness to business and readiness to attract global investment.

By implementing the recommended measures, Belgium can reaffirm its leadership in transatlantic connectivity and demonstrate its commitment to facilitating business, trade, and travel.

AmCham Belgium and its member companies stand ready to engage constructively with the Belgian authorities to help design and implement these solutions.

About AmCham Belgium

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