

PRESS RELEASE

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The Belgian Competition Authority publishes a report on recent trends in fast moving consumer good prices in Belgium, in comparison with the Netherlands, France and Germany

The Belgian Competition Authority (BCA) has published a [report](#) on recent trends in fast moving consumer good prices in Belgium, in comparison with the Netherlands, France and Germany. The report presents descriptive statistics based on “Euromonitor Passport” data on retailer and manufacturer sales values and volumes for Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Germany, for the period 2013-2022 for 8 “industries”: (i) alcoholic drinks, (ii) soft drinks, (iii) hot drinks, (iv) staple food (e.g. pasta, rice and canned food), (v) dairy products & alternatives, (vi) snacks, (vii) cooking ingredients & meals, and (viii) beauty & personal care products. This data allows to construct cross-country price ratios at different levels of the supply chain and analyze changes therein over time. The main results can be summarized as follows:

- Although there are diverse and persistent differences in the average retailer price levels between Belgium and the neighboring countries, the results show that, for almost all industries, the average retailer selling price at industry-level has been increasing less rapidly (or decreasing more rapidly) in Belgium compared to all three neighboring countries over the 2018-2022 period. In other words, the average cross-country retailer price differences have generally been evolving to the benefit of Belgian consumers of fast moving consumer goods in recent years.
- In addition, in particular for the alcoholic and soft drinks industries, the differences in average manufacturer selling prices are more pronounced than differences in retailer selling prices to the disadvantage of Belgium compared to all three neighboring countries. Furthermore, the relative reduction of gross retail margins in Belgium in those industries has contributed more to the recent favorable changes in retailer price differences for Belgium than relative changes in manufacturer price differences. In other words, the recent trends in cross-country retailer price differences to the benefit of Belgian consumers for the alcoholic and soft drinks industries are mainly driven by a relative reduction in the gross margin of retailers and not, or to a lesser extent, by relative changes in average manufacturer selling prices.
- The same pattern also emerges for most of the other industries in comparison to the Netherlands. However, the relationship between Belgian retailer and manufacturer price levels and trends in comparison to France and Germany is less clearcut. Furthermore, for all industry and country comparisons, the results significantly vary across the underlying product categories within the industries. So, more detailed investigation into the observed industry-level patterns is required in the future.

- Overall, it is likely that the recent trends in average retailer selling price differences to the benefit of Belgian consumers can be explained, at least in part, by the recent increase in competition in the Belgian retail sector. However, the study also points out that for some industries (in particular the alcoholic and soft drinks industries) the differences in manufacturer selling prices to the disadvantage of Belgium seem to be persistent. Therefore, “territorial supply constraints” (i.e. multinational firms supplying identical or very similar products at different prices to retailers across countries, typically in the disadvantage of relatively small countries like Belgium) remain an important topic to keep on the (Belgian and EU) policy agenda.

This report published by the BCA complements the recently published report of the Price Observatory ([NL](#), [FR](#)), which also studies consumer price differences between Belgium and the same neighboring countries, based on other data sources (Statbel, Eurostat, NielsenIQ and own desk research on private label prices). In 2024, the BCA and the Price Observatory will further collaborate and investigate in-depth the explaining factors behind the observed differences in price levels and pricing patterns of products sold in Belgian supermarkets compared to those in neighboring countries.

For more information you may contact:

Griet Jans

Chief economist

Tel: +32(2)2779565

E-mail: griet.jans@bma-abc.be

Damien Gerard

Prosecutor-general

Tel: +32 (2) 277 76 57

E-mail: damien.gerard@bma-abc.be

Website: www.abc-bma.be

The Belgian Competition Authority (BCA) is an independent administrative authority that contributes to the definition and implementation of competition policy in Belgium. Concretely, the BCA pursues anti-competitive practices, such as cartels and abuses of a dominant position, and reviews the main merger operations. The BCA cooperates with the other competition authorities of the member states of the European Union and the European Commission within the European Competition Network (ECN)