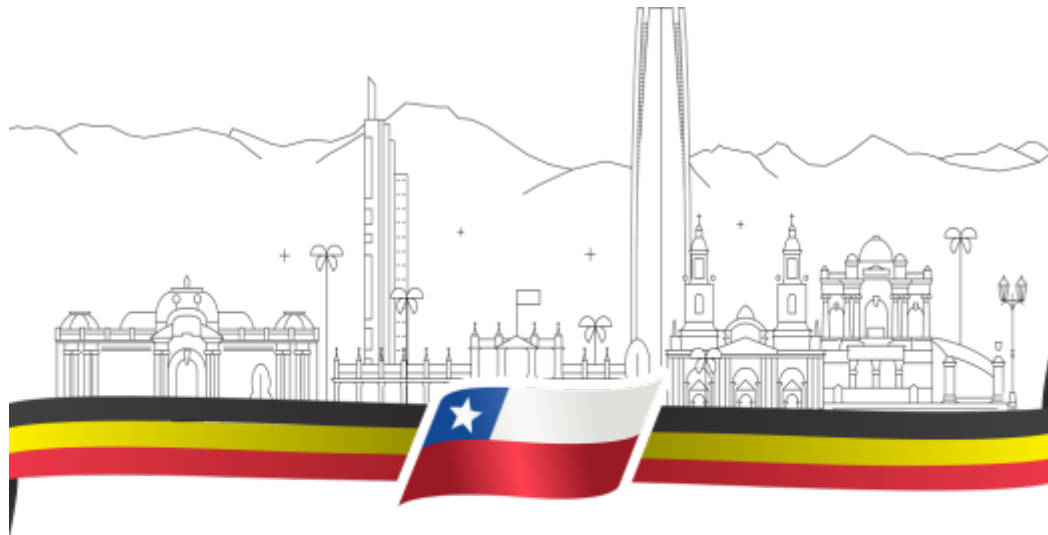


24 Jun 2025 -09:10

Belgium and Chile: historical partners, together in a sustainable way towards the challenges of the future - Antofagasta

From 24 to 26 June 2025, Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians, accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation, Maxime Prévot, will pay a State Visit to Chile, at the invitation of President Gabriel Boric.



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The program includes several political, diplomatic, economic, scientific and social meetings in Santiago de Chile and in the Antofagasta region. The State Visit will highlight the cultural and political proximity, as well as the complementarity between our two countries in a wide range of themes. It will also further consolidate our presence and economic interests in a country of primal importance in terms of economic security, sustainable development and cutting-edge research.

Belgium and Chile, top partners

In 1832, the young Belgian state appointed a consul in the city of Valparaíso, whose port soon became an important stopover for our emerging merchant navy. From these simple economic links, bilateral relations between Belgium and Chile have intensified and diversified over time, thanks to a long tradition of investment by Belgian companies and decades of presence of our international cooperation, including academically and culturally.

Today, Chile stands out for its deep attachment to the principles and values that Belgium shares, such as

the defense of multilateralism and the international legal order, respect for human rights, gender equality and the fight against climate change. In a changing geopolitical context, Chile remains an ally of choice, with significant potential to strengthen our ties. Chile's economic dynamism, particularly in the mining and energy sectors, its strategic anchoring in the Pacific, its environmental policy and its commitment to scientific research continue to provide new opportunities in our bilateral relations.

Day 2

The second day is entirely dedicated to space research. In the middle of the Atacama Desert in northern Chile stands the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Its location in the Atacama Desert offers exceptional observation conditions thanks to its clear and dry air.

Together with Minister Maxime Prévot and Minister Vanessa Matz, responsible for Science Policy, the Sovereigns will visit several telescopes at ESO's Paranal Observatory, including the construction site of the Extremely Large Telescope, the largest optical/infrared telescope in the world, the Belgian SPECULOOS telescope and the Very Large Telescope, one of the most powerful in the world.

For Minister Maxime Prévot, "this will be an opportunity to strengthen the links between the Belgian scientific and industrial institutions and ESO and to explore new opportunities for cooperation between Belgium and Chile in the field of research and innovation."

Indeed, Belgian institutions have long contributed significantly to ESO's success, actively participating in the development of important astronomical projects such as TRAPPIST and SPECULOOS, which are functioning at the Paranal Observatory. Belgium also plays a key role in the field of astronomy, optical instrumentation and the energy transition in the infrastructure of the observatories.

The SPECULOOS project (Search for habitable Planets EClipsing ULtra-cOOl Stars), also known as "planet hunters", aims to detect potentially habitable exoplanets. The observatory consists of several robotic telescopes that specialise in this type of research. Belgium, through the University of Liège, plays a central role: it is at the origin of the project, has built a number of telescopes and is coordinating the observations. This project builds on the Belgian success of the TRAPPIST mission (TRAnsiting Planets and PlanetesImals Small Telescope).

Day 3

The last day of the State Visit will begin with a visit to the *Planta Química Carmen* factory of the company *Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile* (SQM). It is the world's largest lithium refinery, producing the essential components for batteries used in electric cars, mobile phones, and energy storage systems, among others. SQM is a major player in the sector with 17% of global production and adopts a sustainable approach: reducing water consumption, increasing the use of renewable energy, reducing the carbon footprint and continuously innovating.

This project illustrates the strength of the Belgian-Chilean economic ties. SQM is indeed the largest wholesaler of chemicals in Belgium. The company invests heavily in Belgium, especially in the port of Antwerp-Zeebrugge, where it owns distribution centres and fertiliser mixing plants. In addition, SQM in Antofagasta has entrusted the construction of the largest modular warehouse in Latin America to the Belgian company Veldeman, which was filled with 80,000 tons of sodium ash.

At the end of the State Visit, the monarchs and Minister Prévot will visit an Enaex fertilizer factory, which is part of the Sidgo Koppers Group. In 2011, Sidgo Koppers, one of the most important players in the mining and industrial sector in Chile, bought the Liège-based company Magotteaux for 550 million euros. It is the largest Latin American company in Belgium. This acquisition has brought significant benefits to both Belgium and Chile and has strengthened industrial and economic ties between the two countries while fostering innovation, global expansion and operational synergies.

The full program and all relevant information about the State Visit to Chile can be found on the [website](#).

Separate press releases for the two parts of the mission (Santiago de Chile and Antofagasta) are scheduled for Monday June 23rd and Tuesday June 24th.

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