



Despite its Belgian roots, most of Sarens' business is outside the country, which accounts for around eight percent of group turnover and decreasing. Much of the growth is being seen in the BRIC nations. Soon Sarens will bring its SGC-120 giant crane into action during the construction of a new drilling platform in Nantong, China, as part of its participation in the Cheviot Octabouy project. The crane will be used to lift several modules for the construction of the topside drilling platform with a total weight of 15,000 tonnes. The SGC-120 will be transported directly to China, after finishing a project in Arizona, USA, with the assembly of the crane expected to start in August 2012. With so much equipment, Sarens is a major customer for forwarders and shipping lines. Transport coordinator Leen Vermeulen said that the group spent around EUR15 million (USD18.4 million) on shipping in 2011.

Still walking tall despite market uncertainties

Belgium boasts some of the biggest brands in the heavy lift market. Ian Matheson looks at why project forwarders have flourished in the country, and at the issues they face today in a fiercely competitive market.

HLPGF's review of the Belgian marketplace 12 months ago reported that the nation's heavy lift and project forwarding sector was preparing itself for an upturn in business.

One year on we return to the country to find out if that improvement in fortunes has actually materialised.

One notable event since we last wrote has seen a national government finally established, on December 5, 2011, some 18

months after the parliamentary elections in June 2010, with francophone Socialist Elio Di Rupo as Prime Minister.

Few people spoken to by HLPFI felt that the national government had done a great deal during its seven months in position to develop the work that the regional administrations had largely carried out in their respective logistics sectors in its absence.

However, the government must have been pleased that Belgium notched up

second place, behind Hong Kong and ahead of Singapore, in the global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Attraction Index, published recently by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The index also noted that as regards the contribution of FDI and foreign affiliates to the economy (in terms of value added, employment wages, tax receipts, exports, R&D expenditures, and capital formation), Belgium is also second in the world, behind Hungary and ahead of the Czech Republic.

Whilst small in size, Belgium is highly developed and densely populated, and at the crossroads of Western Europe, which helps to explain why so many foreign companies see it as a great place to set up, stimulating several Belgian companies to become some