

Belgium is a country composed of three regions: Wallonia with French as common language covers the southern part of Belgium, housing a small German speaking area in the East of its territory; Flanders with Dutch (also called Flemish) as common language covers the northern part of Belgium, housing Brussels in the South of its territory on short distance of the border with Wallonia. In the context of climate mitigation policy, it is important to note that Belgium's bi-polar structure North/South, Flemish/French created a divided and opaque political-administrative system. By the 'principle of no hierarchy', the federal government cannot impose anything that falls within the competences of the regions. Hence, voluntary cooperation and negotiation are the only leverage for intergovernmental relations in Belgium. Most contentious issues, therefore, strand in protracted stalemates.

Flanders is the most populous region (57.6% of the Belgian population; about 6.6 million inhabitants), creating a larger share of gross added value (59.2%; or about 232 billion Euro in 2017) than its population share. About 73% of the gross value added in Flanders is forthcoming from services activities. Flanders is the most industrialised region in Belgium. Large-scale chemical and oil refining and also steel (Arcelor Mittal) plants are situated in the maritime industrial zones of Antwerp and Ghent. Less energy intensive industrial activities are spread all over the Flemish region. The construction industry covers 5.9% of Flanders' gross value added. Renovation of the buildings stock and reconstruction of infrastructures are important factors of energy efficiency progress on the low-carbon energy path.

With regard to energy use, Flanders (and Belgium) is largely dependent on imported fossil fuels. The share of renewable energy—though steadily on the rise—accounted for a modest 6.7% of final energy consumption in 2017. For electricity production, Flanders (and Belgium) is still largely dependent on nuclear power, providing about 50% of electricity use on an annual basis. For the time being, the closure of all nuclear power plants is foreseen over the period 2022–2025. However, the May 2019 elections confirmed the political party N-VA as strongest party in Flanders and in Belgium. N-VA is in favour of maintaining 2 GW nuclear capacity operational after 2025. Doubt is a major impediment for investing in new generation capacity.