



BHKS

Belgium Hong Kong Society

SPRING 2025 #17

HONG KONG

PFFHK
熊貓香港親友會

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Alexander De Beir,
Chairman Belgium-Hong Kong Society

Chairman’s Message

Dear friends of Hong Kong,

The Belgium-Hong Kong Society (BHKS) organised various events in the past year to strengthen bilateral and business ties between Belgium and Hong Kong.

In addition to the annual “Legends of Lion Dance” exhibition in Antwerp and the Chinese New Year reception, a visit of Alibaba – Cainiao eHub followed by a lunch was organised in Liège, all in the first quarter of 2024.

A Hong Kong Film Night was held in April 2024 with a reception before the screening of “The Moon Thieves”. The other Hong Kong film “Bursting Point” was screened one week later.

The Dragon Boat Festival held its 10th edition in the Port of Antwerp in June, with 20 dragon boat teams taking part in the race. BHKS Education Fund sponsored the boat of the university students from KU Leuven in order to emphasise the importance of cultural and academic exchange between Belgium and HK.

BHKS Background

Founded in 1986, the objective of the Belgium-Hong Kong Society (BHKS) is to promote bilateral economic, social and cultural exchanges between Belgium and Hong Kong through a variety of business and cultural activities. BHKS is also a member of the Federation of Hong Kong Business Associations Worldwide.

The BHKS values the bilateral ties between Belgium and Hong Kong, which is an economic gateway between East and West, a hub of businesses and talents, and an international cosmopolitan with good governance. Our members all have a connection with and share the passion for Hong Kong. Joining us as a member, you will be offered privileged networking opportunities, first-hand information on Hong Kong and the region, and

other member benefits. Many of our events are joined by trade and businesses from a diverse background, officials of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels (HKETO Brussels) and the EU diplomatic corps.

We are truly grateful to the HKETO Brussels for their continued support in co-organising various Hong Kong events in Belgium.

BHKS belongs to all friends of Hong Kong and your participation is essential in helping us to improve. We have a handful of attractive activities awaiting your participation throughout the year. Please contact us directly if you have any feedback or directly comments on the newsletter or on the BHKS as a whole.

In August, we supported a pop-up gallery in Ghent showcasing pictures from Fan Ho and other artists, followed by a reception and ended with a Chinese dinner party.

The 6th edition of our annual End-of-Summer business seminar in September had 86 guests and was held in the AGEAS campus in Brussels. Filip Coremans, Managing Director of AGEAS Asia explained how AGEAS had been successful throughout China and Asia through a strategy of joint ventures with local insurance companies.

BHKS continued on the rejuvenation of its board and on accruing its corporate members by inviting new structural partners and new board members.

We said goodbye to Thomas Ronse and John Verzele as long time board members and welcomed their successors Lionel Kohn and Michèle Surinx.

The first week of December was the traditional Hong Kong Forum where all members of the Federation of Hong Kong Business Associations Worldwide were invited to celebrate, learn and connect with each other and with Hong Kong. Present were 400 business people from 40 different countries. In the Forum, we learned

about the northern metropolis in Hong Kong, a major development plan for a new international business and innovation hub at the border with Shenzhen; met with local established business owners and with young Chinese and western entrepreneurs who related their experiences of starting a business in Hong Kong. We celebrated friendship and cruised the harbour, admiring the Symphony of Lights, a giant laser and LED show involving the skyscrapers of the city.

I am happy to share that Margaret Wong, the new Chairwoman of the Federation, was elected to succeed Hans Poulis to hold the office in the next 3 years.

The Hong Kong Forum is the annual flagship event for anyone who wants to get the latest insights on doing business with Hong Kong. I invite all of you to join me at the next Forum in December 2025.

A word of gratitude to HKETO Brussels is in place. Their continued support gives us the possibility to work carefree on the promotion of business and cultural ties between Belgium and Hong Kong.

Dear friends, I wish you all a happy and prosperous year of the Snake.

BHKS Activities 2024

The BHKS has made many new attempts in 2024 to offer a diversity of activities to our members in different cities in Belgium. Besides many key events held in Brussels, such as the Chinese New Year Reception and the flagship “End of Summer” business seminar, BHKS organised a visit to Cainiao e-Hub with a lunch in Liège, supported the Dragon Boat Festival in Antwerp, and sponsored an art exhibition of Blue Lotus Gallery in Ghent. All these show the continuous efforts of BHKS to innovate the scope of our activities where arts and culture certainly play a role in enhancing the Hong Kong-Belgium connection. In the coming year, BHKS will go

on to reach out to Belgians who have links to Hong Kong in different cities and of different backgrounds. One of the initiatives is revising the membership fee scale to include “retirees” so as to attract veteran officials, business executives, art practitioners, etc. who are still very active to join BHKS in promoting Hong Kong-Belgium exchanges.

*Let’s look forward to an even more successful year for BHKS. We would also like to take the opportunity to **thank all the members** who participated in our events and for their unfailing support along the way.*

The “Legends of Lion Dance” 2024 8 – 11 February 2024



The BHKS and HKETO Brussels supported the 8th edition of the “Legends of Lion Dance” held in Antwerp, the port city of Belgium, from 8 to 11 February 2024. It offered Belgian and Chinese in Antwerp a Hong Kong film night screening “Where the Wind Blows”, an exhibition showcasing Hong Kong arts and culture, and a carnival with a Hong Kong booth, food market and Chinese cultural shows, among other cultural talks and workshops during the period.

The highlight of this 4-day event was a lively lion dance parade which delighted hundreds of local spectators as it made its way to Antwerp’s China Town to celebrate the start of the Chinese New Year on 10 February 2024, also the very first day of the Year of the Dragon.

Worth mentioning that the exhibition in 2024 not only displayed Lion Heads hand-embroidered and crafted in Hong Kong, but also presented a pop-up exhibition “Wanderers’ Land – Cityscapes in Hong Kong” featuring black-and-white drawings of Hong Kong comics artist Pen So, which depicted city scenes of local Hong Kong.





Chinese New Year Celebration Reception 20 February 2024

HKETO Brussels, with the support of BHKS, hosted the annual Chinese New Year reception in Brussels, Belgium on 20 February 2024. The reception attracted some 250 guests including officials of the European institutions, national governments, diplomatic missions, as well as senior representatives from trade and business, academia, arts and cultural sectors, media and also the Chinese community.

The opportunity was also taken to invite various Hong Kong artists to the reception to showcase their talents and to underline Hong Kong's efforts to nurture local artists in pursuit of developing Hong Kong into an international arts and cultural hub. They included a pop-up drawing exhibition of Hong Kong comics artist, Pen So, called "Wanderers' Land - Cityscapes in Hong Kong" which was also staged in Antwerp; and an original dragon-themed, action-packed dance performance "Convergence: MovINK Dragon", which was a crossover of comics, animation and Chinese kung-fu, delivered by Hong Kong dance group TS Crew.



Visit to Liège eHub of Cainiao/Alibaba 15 March 2024

The BHKS organised a visit to Liège eHub of Cainiao/Alibaba, followed by a lunch gathering with members on 15 March 2024.

In the visit, the BHKS members were updated on the latest development in the logistic industry with a briefing given by Cainiao, and were offered a tour of eHub's 12,000 sqm air cargo station and 18,000 sqm parcel sorting center to see how they make global e-commerce happen.

About Cainiao Liège eHub

Cainiao Smart Logistics Network ("Cainiao") is the logistics subsidiary of the Alibaba Group, aiming to deliver in China within 1 day and worldwide in 5 days. It utilises an innovative and open data platform to improve efficiency and customer experience throughout the supply chain. To fulfill the logistics needs of merchants and consumers for global shipments, Cainiao directly operates overseas sorting centers and has built a logistics network by partnering with over 500 logistics service providers to offer one-stop supply chain management solutions for over 200 countries/regions.

Cainiao Liège eHub started operation in November 2021 against the above background. Located next to Liège Airport, which was also crowned the best



European airport in 2021, the eHub is the largest of its kind in Europe. It helps facilitate global trade for small and medium-sized businesses via e-commerce between Asia and Europe, and also bring job opportunities and growth to the local logistics industry.



Hong Kong Film Night, Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival 10 April 2024

The BHKS, jointly with the HKETO Brussels, supported the 42nd Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFFF) held at the Brussels Expo on 9 – 21 April 2024, to promote Hong Kong's creative industry to Belgians, younger audiences in particular. Two Hong Kong films were screened in BIFFF: "The Moon Thieves" by Kim Wai Yuen (2024) and "Bursting Point" by Dante Lam and Calvin Tong (2023).

A Hong Kong Film Night was held on 10 April 2024 with a reception for the BHKS members and all friends of Hong Kong in Belgium before the screening of "The Moon Thieves". The other Hong

Kong film "Bursting Point" was screened on 17 April 2024.

All the BHKS members were invited to join the Hong Kong Film Night and offered free tickets to watch the two Hong Kong films.



End of Summer Business Seminar

19 September 2024



The BHKS held the flagship End of Summer Business Event 2024 on the topic of - **Ageas in Asia: a story of sustainable partnership management** – at AG Campus on 19 September 2024.

Ageas is well qualified to respond to the many opportunities and challenges facing the Asian markets.

Honoured to have **Mr Filip Coremans, Managing Director Ageas in Asia** as the keynote speaker, we recorded over 80 registrants and guests in attendance got greatly inspired by Mr Coremans' interesting sharing of his unique perspective into how Ageas steered partnerships and joint ventures in Asia towards sustainability in often volatile and fast changing environments, as he set out the insights gained in the past decades in the insurance industry.



As the leading Belgian insurer, Ageas has built a significant presence in the Asian insurance market, operating in 9 countries, and serving close to 30 million customers. Operating through well-established and longstanding joint venture partnerships with highly respected local partners,





More information of Hong Kong **Policy Address 2024** can be found at: <https://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2024/en/policy.html> or by scanning this QR code



The Latest Policies of Hong Kong to Promote Pillar Industries

*Financial services, trading and logistics, tourism, and professional services are the four traditional pillar industries in Hong Kong. Announced on 16 October 2024, Hong Kong's latest Policy Address aimed at consolidating the city's advantages and **developing high value-added professional services** in areas of finance, maritime, trading, etc. Hong Kong is also committed to promoting **integrated development of culture, sports and tourism**, fostering economic diversification and new quality productive forces, to strive for building Hong Kong into a vibrant **international hub for strategic enterprises and high calibre talents**.*

Highlights of the Policy Address 2024 which would be of interests to European travellers and friends who live, work, invest and run businesses in Hong Kong are shared below, covering different industries and sectors where opportunities are available.

Trade and services

1 Liquor trade

To promote liquor trade and the development of related industries including logistics and storage, tourism as well as high end food and beverage consumption, Hong Kong reduced the duty rate for liquor (of alcoholic strength of more than 30%) with an import price of over HKD 200 (about EUR 24) from 100% to 10% for the portion above HKD 200 with effect from 16 October 2024.

2 International gold trading market

Hong Kong ranks among the world's largest import and export markets for gold by volume. Riding on the city's security and stability, the HKSAR Government will promote the development of world-class gold storage facilities to facilitate the storage and delivery of spot gold by users and investors in Hong Kong, which help develop the related industry chain, ranging from investment transactions, derivatives, insurance, storage, to trading and logistic services.

3 *Commodity trading ecosystem*

Commodities including metals and minerals account for more than half of the global shipping trade volume. The HKSAR Government will explore tax concessions and support measures to attract international commodity exchanges to set up accredited warehouses in Hong Kong so as to boost the maritime industry, and bring demand for related financial and professional services such as hedging activities of related futures products.

4 *Mega-event economy*

Hong Kong has long been recognised as Asia's world city and an events capital. The HKSAR Government will continue to bring different mega events and conferences to Hong Kong to boost not only retail and hospitality industries, but also attract elites of different sectors and tourists from around the world to personally experience Hong Kong's charm and vibrancy as an international metropolis, deepening their understanding of Hong Kong.

Arts, culture and sports

5 *Arts, cultural and creative industries*

To enhance Hong Kong's role as the international cultural exchange centre, the HKSAR Government will steer the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) to establishing an industry chain of arts and creative industries. The WKCD will be branded as a must-visit destination for cultural and creative tourism. The Government will leverage the city's unique resources such as the Victoria Harbour, outlying islands, and its rich cultures, cuisines and history to promote the concept of "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong", combined with performing arts and creative technology.

6 *Sports development*

The new Kai Tak Sports Park coming into operation in Q1 2025 will be a sports and mega-event landmark where the HKSAR Government continues to promote community sports, support elite sports, and maintain Hong Kong as a centre for international sports events. The countryside and coastal areas will be preserved for resorts and outdoor recreational activities as Hong Kong develops eco-tourism and sports tourism.

Strategic companies and talents

7 *Headquarters Economy*

The HKSAR Government will step up efforts to attract strategic enterprises to set up headquarters or corporate divisions in Hong Kong, including proposing legislative amendments to introduce a facilitating company re-domiciliation mechanism. Besides, the validity period of multiple-entry visas for foreign staff of companies registered in Hong Kong, including non-permanent residents, will be extended to a maximum of five years to facilitate their visit to the Mainland, and their applications will enjoy priority processing.

8 *New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme*

Starting 16 October 2024, the New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme is enhanced by allowing the purchase of high-end residential properties, provided that the transaction price of the single residential property concerned is no less than HKD 50 million (about EUR 5.9 million), with the amount of real estate investment to be counted towards the total capital investment capped at HKD 10 million (about EUR 1.2 million). In addition, investments made through an eligible private company wholly owned by an applicant will be counted towards the applicant's eligible investment with effect from 1 March 2025.

Catching the Opportunities Arising from New Policies and Infrastructure in Hong Kong



Mr Chris Lo, Regional Director for Europe, Central Asia, and Israel

In the face of challenges in geopolitical tensions and transformation in the global order, Hong Kong remains committed to development and progress, introducing new policies and infrastructure projects.

Since its establishment in 1966, **The Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC)** has been promoting and developing global trade, reinforcing Hong Kong's position as a dynamic two-way investment and business hub. HKTDC's promotional efforts in Europe are headed by **Mr Chris Lo, Regional Director for Europe, Central Asia, and Israel**. HKTDC Frankfurt manages market development in DACH and Benelux, forging collaboration and strengthening business ties. The HKTDC is your ideal partner in navigating global trade and tapping into the Asian opportunities.

A City of Trade, Resilience and Growth

Hong Kong is the world's 10th largest merchandise trading entity, and the world's fourth-largest foreign direct investment destination. It is encouraging to see that Hong Kong's exports grew by 9.9% in the first 10 months of 2024. In 2025, Hong Kong's merchandise exports are expected to enjoy moderate growth of 4%.

With 50 offices worldwide, HKTDC offers unparalleled opportunities to both Hong Kong

and international businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in the mainland and international markets. HKTDC would continue to host international conferences and trade exhibitions, lead Hong Kong companies to international platforms and provide market insights and product information via research reports and digital news channels.

Hong Kong Spirits Tax Break Welcomed by Traders

To boost the development of high-value-added industries, including logistics and storage, tourism and high-end food and beverage consumption, the import tax on spirits has been slashed from 100% to 10% since late 2024. Following

the introduction of the tax incentives, HKTDC provided a platform for the renewed interest on spirits trade and drew in a record number of spirits exhibitors at the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair.



Northern Metropolis: New Engine for the Future Development of Hong Kong

The HKSAR Government is actively taking forward the development of the Northern Metropolis, which is set to support Hong Kong in becoming an international I&T centre under the new industrial pattern of “South-North dual engine (finance-I&T)”. Being a development covering about one third of the total area of Hong Kong,

the entire Northern Metropolis will eventually develop as a metropolitan with a residential population of about 2.5 million and providing about 650 000 jobs. European enterprises and startups are encouraged to capitalise on the new opportunities from building, transportation, circular design to environmental industries.

HKTDC Welcomes Belgian Businesses with Open Arms

Hong Kong is not only Asia’s business hub but also the region’s trade fair and convention capital. HKTDC connects businesses through an extensive portfolio of events, including:

- ◆ **Hong Kong Forum**
- ◆ **Asian Financial Forum (AFF)**
- ◆ **Asian Logistics, Maritime, and Aviation Conference (ALMAC)**
- ◆ Trade exhibitions such as **the Hong Kong International Diamond, Gem & Pearl Show, Gifts & Premium Fair** and Asian flagship fashion event **CENTRESTAGE**

Very soon at the **InnoEX** from 13-16 April 2025, countries and cities would gather to demonstrate next-gen smart solutions, cutting-edge technologies and disruptive innovations. Every

October, together with the HKSAR Government, HKTDC organises **Eco Expo Asia**, the leading fair showcasing innovative green technologies. We are eagerly anticipating more sustainable innovations from Belgium in Asia.

To encourage participation and foster international collaboration, HKTDC offers tailored support to interested parties from developing week-long tailor-made programmes for individuals and delegations, travel incentives and customised assistance for organising business initiatives.

We invite you to explore opportunities through our events, seminars, and networking initiatives in cooperation with the Belgium-Hong Kong Society (BHKS). Let us collaborate to bring Belgian excellence to Hong Kong.

Belgians in Hong Kong

In this issue, the BHKS is happy to have sharing from Ms Pauline Heymans, a Belgian now living and working in Hong Kong, and updates of Ms Sarah Greene about her art gallery founded in Hong Kong, to allow our readers to zoom into the latest development of Hong Kong and its connection with Belgium from different perspectives (other than the policy address)! We believe our readers will be inspired by their stories and will visit to see Hong Kong for themselves very soon - travelling, working, doing business and exploring opportunities in Hong Kong!

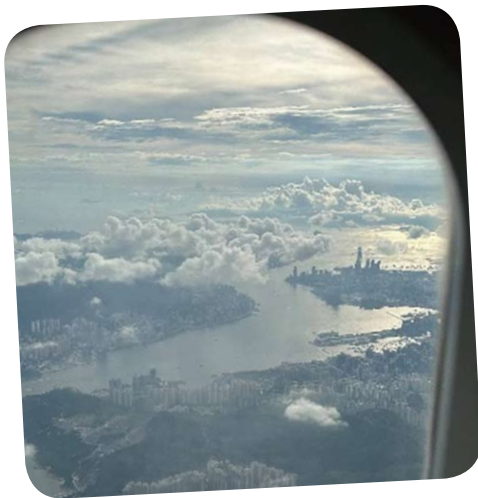


Ms Pauline Heymans, 24, Hong Kong resident.
Pauline's father is Mr Francis Heymans who joined the Board of BHKS in 2024.

What inspired you to move to Hong Kong?

After finishing my bachelor's degree at Saint-Louis University in Brussels during the COVID era—a time when “student life” meant attending Zoom classes in pajamas—I was craving something more exciting. My father was tasked with setting up a new asset management company in Hong Kong and so planned to move over. With my brothers already living abroad, I thought, “Why not me?”

Hong Kong's reputation as a buzzing, dynamic hub for business and culture made it the ideal place for a fresh start. So, I took a chance, applied to universities here, and in August 2021, I began my Master's in Global Management at the University of Hong Kong. And let's be honest, the idea of trading Brussels rain for Hong Kong's skyline wasn't a hard sell!



What were your first impressions of Hong Kong?

The moment I landed, it felt like stepping into a sci-fi movie. The skyline was jaw-dropping—skyscrapers glittering against Victoria Harbour, neon signs everywhere, and an energy so palpable you could almost bottle it. The sheer density of life was overwhelming in the best way possible.

One of the highlights was discovering the incredibly welcoming young Belgian community through the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and the Belgian Club. Everyone was eager to help each other settle in—whether it was navigating the city or simply sharing a beer and some laughs.



Can you share a memorable cultural shock you experienced in Hong Kong?

Oh, absolutely! My first encounter with Hong Kong's app-driven life was both hilarious and humbling. Whether it's ordering food at home, ordering a taxi, or organizing your government and bank administration, there's an app for everything.

Another surprise was the incredible efficiency of public transport. Buses, the MTR, and even taxis are so affordable and well-connected that I briefly questioned why I ever bothered driving in Brussels traffic.

What is your favorite local dish, and where do you recommend trying it?

Dim sum is hands-down my favorite—especially shrimp dumplings and barbecued pork buns. For an authentic experience, I'd recommend heading to *ManMo*.

But what I love about Hong Kong is its culinary diversity. From mouthwatering Indian curries to authentic Italian pasta, you can travel the world without leaving the city. A personal favorite? Exploring the food stalls at Temple Street Night Market for some adventurous street eats.

How did you adapt to the fast-paced lifestyle of Hong Kong?

At first, it felt like trying to sprint on a treadmill set to max speed! But I quickly learned to stay organized and carve out downtime. Hitting the gym daily at *Pure Fitness* became my anchor—it's amazing how it helps you lift your spirits.

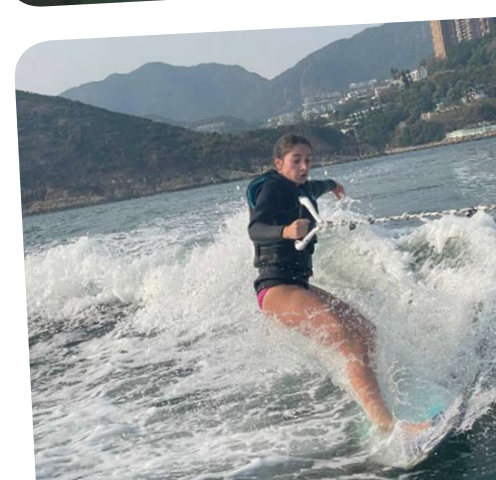
During the weekends, I made it a point to explore Hong Kong's tremendous green spaces with friends. Hiking trails like Dragon's Back, short island getaways or visiting lovely beaches like Shek'O, helped me find serenity amidst the urban frenzy. I enjoy fun junk boat parties and also practice pottery, painting, deep water diving, kayaking, wake surfing and golfing. Hong Kong is basically my playground—who knew you could go from the fairway to the waves to a ceramic wheel all in one weekend?

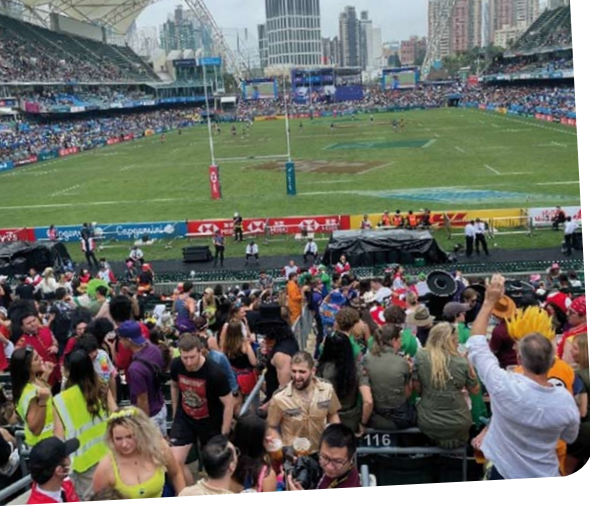
What unique traditions or festivals have you enjoyed participating in?

The Mid-Autumn Festival was magical—lantern displays, mooncakes, and the festive atmosphere were like nothing I'd ever experienced before.

Chinese New Year blew me away with its fireworks and drone shows—it's a sensory overload in the best way possible. I've also loved exploring Hong Kong's quirky markets, like the Flower Market and Bird Market.

And, of course, the **Hong Kong Sevens** rugby tournament is an absolute must. The energy, costumes, and camaraderie make it an event like no other.





How has living in Hong Kong changed your perspective on life?

Living in a small co-living apartment teaches you to value simplicity (and creative storage solutions). But beyond that, Hong Kong has shown me how to thrive in a global, fast-paced environment while staying grounded. I've become more open-minded and adaptable, realizing that challenges are just opportunities in disguise.

What are some hidden gems in Hong Kong that you think everyone should visit?

Lion's Rock is perfect for stunning hikes with panoramic views, while Tai O offers a glimpse into a traditional fishing village. For a more laid-back vibe, **Peng Chau** island is a peaceful retreat.

And if you're feeling fancy, there's always a rooftop bar to take in the city's skyline—my personal picks are *Ozone* at the Ritz-Carlton (ICC), Popinjays and Sevva.

Can you share a funny or unexpected experience with locals?

During my master's program, I realized quickly that communication with local students could sometimes feel like solving a riddle. Their polite silence often masked brilliant ideas, and once I figured that out, I learned so much from them.

At KPMG, working with Chinese colleagues was another eye-opener. Their attention to detail and preference for hierarchy challenged my more relaxed Belgian style, but it was a lesson in cultural harmony—and patience!

What advice would you give to someone considering a move to Hong Kong?

Dive in with an open mind and be ready to embrace the city's energy. While English will get you far, learning some Cantonese or Mandarin shows respect and can lead to fun interactions. I've started Mandarin lessons myself—who knows, maybe one day I'll confidently order dim sum without pointing at pictures!

What do you miss most about Belgium, and how do you stay connected to your roots?

I miss Belgian chocolate and the cozy pace of life back home. Staying connected is all about balance: regular FaceTime calls with family, celebrating Christmas in Belgium, and occasionally whipping up some Godiva's or speculoos to share a taste of home with new friends here.

What are your future plans in Hong Kong?

Hong Kong feels like a city of endless possibilities. I'm focused on growing my career, building meaningful connections, and continuing to immerse myself in its vibrant culture. Who knows? Maybe one day, I'll trade my tiny apartment for one with a view of the harbor!



Ms Sarah Greene and Blue Lotus Gallery



Ms Sarah Greene, founder of Blue Lotus Gallery (Hong Kong)

Blue Lotus Gallery was founded by Ghent-born Sarah Greene (Van Ingelgom) in 2007 in Hong Kong. The Gallery focuses on presenting narratives relating to Asian contemporary culture and heritage, especially Hong Kong through various exhibitions and publications. It is renowned for promoting exceptional photography. With a passion for storytelling and a deep appreciation for the artistic medium, Blue Lotus Gallery has established itself as a platform for both established and emerging photographers from Hong Kong and beyond.

Blue Lotus Gallery (Hong Kong)
<https://bluelotus-gallery.com/about>
or by scanning this QR code



In late summer 2024, Blue Lotus Gallery staged a pop-up photo exhibition "One City, Two Tales | Echoes of Hong Kong: Past and Present" in Ghent on 16 August - 7 September. Sarah returned to Ghent to host the exhibition which presented an artistic dialogue showcasing the profound evolution of Hong Kong through the lenses of two extraordinary artists, Fan Ho and Romain Jacquet-Lagrez, for the very first time in Belgium.

To celebrate this beautiful Hong Kong-themed photo exhibition, a special reception was organised exclusively for the BHKS and Hong Kong friends, on 29 August 2024. Around 50 guests had a great time enjoying the exhibition with Sarah, and sharing updates on Hong Kong and Belgium.



More about the photo exhibition:

Between past and present: Sarah Greene brings Hong Kong to Europe

<https://galleryviewer.com/en/article/2571/between-past-and-present-sarah-greene-brings-hong> or by scanning this QR code



BHKS Education Fund

The BHKS Education Fund was established in 2010 to sponsor exchange activities of young people between Belgium and Hong Kong with the goal of promoting stronger and more sustainable ties. The most prominent project of the BHKS Education Fund in 2024 was no doubt sponsoring the KU Leuven team in the 10th Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival Antwerp.

The 10th Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival Antwerp

8 June 2024



The 10th edition of the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival, one of the largest of its kind in Belgium, took place at the beautiful Kattendijkdok in the City of Antwerp on 8 June 2024.

It was organised by Rotary Club Antwerpen West and Rotary Club Antwerp International. It attracted around 6 000 enthusiastic paddlers and visitors with over 20 dragon boat teams taking part in a full day of racing. Besides the rowing competition, there were food trucks, a “Hong Kong booth” and other side activities to make the Festival a unique family event full of fun for BHKS members, local Belgian and Hong Kong communities.

The HKETO Brussels was the title sponsor of the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival Antwerp and sponsored the participation of a rowing team

from the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (“HKFYG”), who visited Europe under a cultural and sports exchange programme. Members of the HKFYG also manned the Hong Kong booth, where visitors could learn more about Hong Kong culture. The Festival highlighted Hong Kong’s commitment to youth development, the city’s rich cultural heritage as well as its role as a leading place for holding mega events.

The other team in the race was from the KU Leuven, one of the top universities in Belgium. Proudly sponsored by the BHKS Education Fund which supports cultural exchange between Hong Kong and Belgium, the [KU Leuven team took this youth and cultural exchange mission further with the HKFYG team](#). More details can be found on the following pages.



Participation of KU Leuven



*Ms Suzanna Cuypers,
student of KU Leuven*

The first time I participated in the Dragon Boat Festival was in 2018. I took a Chinese class at the University of Ghent and was invited by Chinese Studies Lecturer Mieke Matthyssen to participate. The event was amazing! Naturally in 2019, I joined the UGent team again. Since then, I have transferred to KU Leuven and am now doing a PhD in Geomatics at the Faculty of Engineering Technology in Ghent. This year (2024), I recruited my own team and had KU Leuven participate in the Dragon Boat Race. I gathered a group of interested (PhD) students and post docs at our campus and beyond. The KU Leuven Faculty of Engineering Technology has 6 campuses spread over Flanders! The next step was gathering funding. From our campus in Ghent, I obtained limited edition T-shirts of the 10th anniversary of our faculty. However, for financial funding I had to rely on our sponsors: **The Belgium-Hong Kong Society** and Rotary Antwerpen West. We are grateful for their organization of the event as well as the support to guarantee our participation.

Preparing

My goal was to beat the other universities, so I set up practice sessions for our team. We had no access to a real dragon boat, but my family has two canoes that we could train with. We spent many evenings in rain and wind since this year the weather has been so awful. Not only did we improve our technique and synchronization, but we also had fun as a team of colleagues and fellow researchers.



With the canoes to Het Gravensteen in Ghent

The Race

The dragon boat can fit 16 paddlers, a drummer and a helmsman. Our team consisted of 20 incredibly motivated people! Since the UGent decided not to participate this year due to finals, I recruited some of their team members; a few paddlers as well as the drummer. We were thus very well prepared to outperform the UGent's timing in 2018 and 2019.

Our times were 01:10.84, 01:10.71, and 01:12.04 in the qualifications, and 01:08 in the university final. We did incredibly well!



Cultural Exchange

The event is not just a competition. It's first of all a team building exercise and a cultural exchange opportunity. Our diverse team had a common goal, which worked great for us as the most important aspects of dragon boat racing are team spirit and working in sync. The festival was big fun for everyone!

We learned about Hong Kong culture and language at the Hong Kong booth organized by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office. **Meeting the amazing rowing team from the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups** was incredible. As often happens at international sporting events, we swapped T-shirts with the other teams. *"Sorry, KU Leuven PR Office, I lost all our T-shirts!"*



Proud to show off our swapped T-shirts



Pictured with BHKS Board Members

We received our trophy for Best University, wearing the Hong Kong team's T-shirt



Applications for the BHKS Education Fund

The BHKS Education Fund aims to support the following projects:

- a** Short-term academic, cultural, technology or sports exchange programmes between Belgium and Hong Kong
- b** Other projects to enhance and promote intercultural activities related to Belgium and Hong Kong
- c** Work or study experience that connects Belgium and Hong Kong

The proposed projects can be either “tangible” or web-based, and must be non-profit making.

Applications are open throughout the year. The applications can be submitted through the college / university / tertiary institution (including student’s association), or individually for applicants no longer in full-time education. The completed application form, which is available on BHKS’ website: <http://www.bhks.be>, together with the supporting documents should be submitted to the BHKS Secretariat. The applications will be vetted by the Board of the BHKS and applicants will be informed of the outcome within three months after the submission of the application.

Interested applicants may visit our website or contact the Secretariat directly for more information.

Applications to become BHKS Members

Joining us as a member, you will be offered privileged networking opportunities, first-hand information on Hong Kong and the region, and other member benefits. Membership is valid for one year, to be renewed annually at a fee in 3 categories: "individual", "corporate" and "young/retiree" members. Please do contact the Secretariat directly if you are interested in becoming a member.



Details can be found at:
<https://www.bhks.be/pg-become-a-member-9.html>
or by scanning the QR code.

Structural Partners



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