



8.3. Share of foreign-trained physicians (S-14)

8.3.1. Documentation sheet

Description	Share of foreign-trained physicians
Calculation	Numerator: Number of foreign-trained physicians (Stock) Denominator: Total number of physicians licensed to practice (Belgian-trained physicians and foreign-trained physicians)
Rationale	Maintaining a sufficient stock of physicians to guarantee the accessibility and quality of care requires investment in training new physicians, taking into account that it takes at least 8 years to train a general practitioner ⁱⁱ and 10-13 years to train a medical specialist. Some European countries opt for strong recruitment strategy to recruit trained physicians from abroad. ¹ The World Health Organization adopted in May 2010 “The Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel” ² to promote a more ethical recruitment of health personnel and to encourage countries to achieve greater “self-sufficiency” in the training of health workers.
Data source	Federal database of health care professionals (“Cadastre/Kadaster”), Federal Public Service Public Health OECD Health statistics
Technical definitions	Foreign-trained physicians are physicians who have obtained abroad the diploma allowing them to have a medical practice in Belgium (i.e. equivalent to the master degree to become a medical doctor). These physicians have also obtained a visa and are registered with the Medical College (Ordre des Médecins / Orde der artsen) to be entitled to practice in Belgium.
Limitations	This indicator refers to the share of foreign-trained physicians on all physicians with a license to practice and not on practising physicians or professionally active physicians (data not available). This indicator therefore includes physicians without active practice in Belgium.
International comparability	International comparability is partially limited due to methodological differences (some countries report licensed to practice physicians while others report practising or professionally active physicians). The data for Germany and some regions in Spain are based on nationality (or place of birth in the case of Spain), not on the place of training.
Dimension	Sustainability of the health system
Related indicators	Number of practising physicians Number of practising physicians above 55+ years old

ⁱⁱ General practitioners have the possibility to begin their 3 years post-graduate training the last year of their basic training.



8.3.2. Results

In 2017, 63 381 physicians licensed to practice were counted in Belgium (see Table 68). Almost 12% of them held a foreign diploma (7 606 foreign-trained physicians). Table 68 shows that the share of foreign-trained physicians is increasing over time in Belgium from 9.4% in 2012 to 12% in 2017.

The proportion of male foreign-trained physicians is slightly higher than female foreign-trained physicians (respectively 52.4% and 47.4%, Table 69). This is quite interesting to highlight since a reverse gender distribution is observed among new medical graduates with a Belgian diploma (40.3% were men and 59.7% were women in 2017). Moreover, more than 70% of them are younger than 55 years old. Unsurprisingly, 86.6% of foreign-trained physicians do not have the Belgian nationality. Figure 103 shows that half of foreign-trained physicians come from France, The Netherlands or Romania.

Table 68 – Number of physicians licensed to practice distributed according to the place of training (2012-2017)

Year (SPF)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total number of physicians	55 986	57 204	58 567	60 056	61 718	63 381
Belgian-trained physicians	50 745	51 517	52 370	53 314	54 515	55 775
Foreign-trained physicians	5 241	5 687	6 197	6 742	7 203	7 606
% of foreign-trained physicians	9.4%	9.9%	10.6%	11.2%	11.7%	12.0%

Source : SPF SPSCAE-FOD VVVL, Cadastre

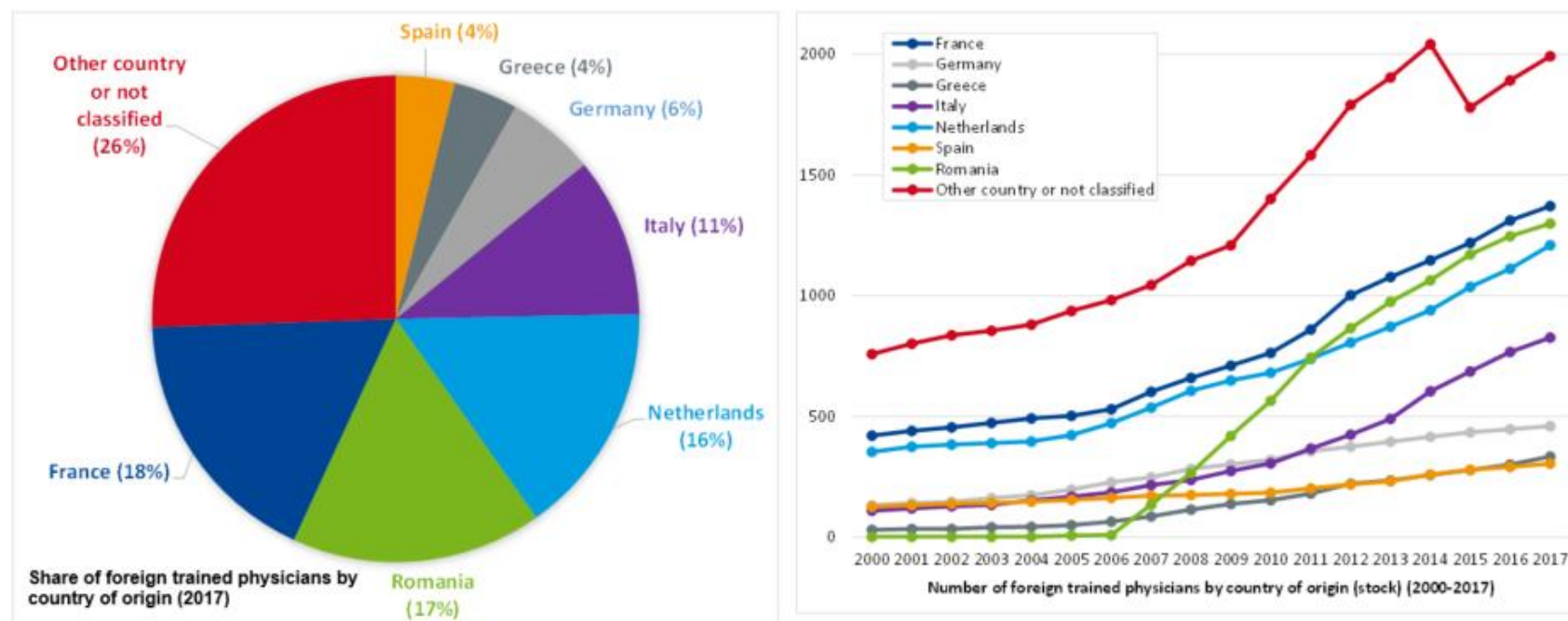
**Table 69 – Foreign-trained physicians by personal characteristics (2017)**

		2017
Foreign-trained physicians in Belgium		7 606 (12%)
Gender	Female	3 606 (47.4%)
	Male	3 985 (52.4%)
	Unknown	15 (0.2%)
Age group	<35	1 463 (19.2%)
	35-44	2 539 (33.4%)
	45-54	1 643 (21.6%)
	55-64	1 313 (17.3%)
	65-74	443 (5.8%)
	>74	205 (2.7%)
Belgian nationality*	No	6 587 (86.6%)
	Yes	1 019 (13.4%)

Source : SPF SPSCAE-FOD VVVL, Cadastre ; *Belgian nationality at the time of the data extraction

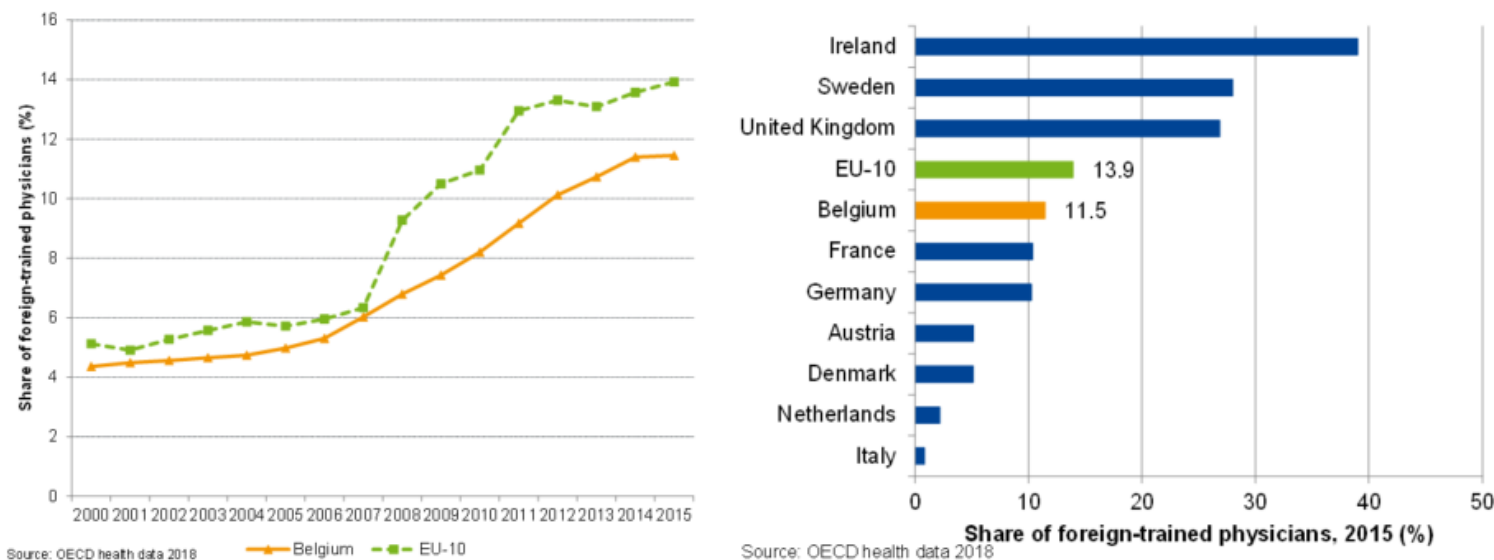


Figure 103 – Foreign-trained physicians by country of origin; stock (2000-2017)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

While the average proportion of foreign-trained physicians for EU-10 is 13.9%, a lower proportion is reported in Belgium (i.e. 11.5%) (see Figure 104). Since 2000, however, a gradually increasing proportion of foreign-trained physicians has been observed from 4% in 2005 to 11.5% in 2015.

Figure 104 – Share of foreign-trained physicians: international comparison (2000-2015)^{kk}

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

Key points

- In 2017, almost 12% of all licensed to practice physicians in Belgium hold a foreign diploma (7 606 foreign-trained physicians among 63 381 physicians) ; half of them come from France, The Netherlands and Romania. This proportion relates to graduated physicians who are entitled to practice and not to practising physicians.
- A gradually increasing proportion of foreign-trained physicians has been observed in Belgium (from 4% in 2000 to 11.5% in 2015) but remains slightly below the EU-10 average (13.9% in 2015).

References

1. OECD. Health at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators. Paris: 2017. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2017-en
2. WHO. Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel World Health Organization (WHO); 2010. Available from: http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/code_implementation/en/

^{kk} Because of the lack of data from other European countries, 2015 is taken as the reference in the calculation.