

# Commercial Risk

*Insurance & Risk Management News*

## **Geopolitics, cyber, nat cats and battle for talent big risks for Belgian firms**

[Ben Norris](#)    September 5, 2023

Geopolitics, cyber and natural catastrophes are among the biggest risks facing Belgian companies, agreed some of the country's leading risk and insurance managers. They also singled out the battle for talent as an area to watch, not least as employees increasingly demand a better work life balance.

Gaëtan Lefèvre, president of Belrim head of professional ethics risk and insurance management at John Cockerill, said geopolitics, cyber risk and supply chain are the key risks facing his company.

Marie-France Theys, corporate risk and insurance manager at Schneider Electric, gave a similar list citing geopolitical, cyber and natural catastrophes.

Nat cats are, of course, being exacerbated by climate change and there are fears among the buying community that insurers may start to reduce capacity for such risks.

"It is only going to get worse. Maybe insurers will start pulling out or offering us less capacity. I see more parametric solutions to try and help. It is a new tool and a new approach but we will have to see if it helps out here," said Bart Smets, head of risk and insurance at Umicore.

He thinks companies will have to pay much more attention to how and where they build their offices or warehouses in the future, using models to look further ahead at potential risk hotspots.

"I think the way you construct your buildings will become much more important, where you construct them and whether they are built in zones that will be prone to weather events in 30, 40 or 50 years. Only then do I think we will be able to get some kind of coverage," said Smets.

"Typically we only looked at whether buildings are located in a flood or earthquake zone but now we are looking at 2050 and beyond, and asking whether a certain location might be at risk then as a result of climate change, even if it is not today," he added.

Another leading risk that only looks set to get bigger is the battle for talent, several of the Belgian risk managers said.

Lefèvre said there is real lack of talent available across much of the Belgian economy, with many leaving work since Covid-19.

Smets said things are made more challenging by changing demands placed on companies by younger professionals.

"If you have an interview with a young candidate, one of the first things they ask is around their work life balance. How many days can they work from home, for example. This is a complete shift from let's say ten years ago and is extremely, extremely important for employers to adapt to," he said.

Nathalie Vandenbroucke, risk insurance and compliance manager at Eiffage Benelux, said it is becoming difficult to attract new talent and keep older builders working on site as they get older.

"The construction industry needs to focus on the average age of our workers. It has become a real difficulty to retain people," she said.

And Vandenbroucke said working from home is also creating an imbalance between white and blue collar workers, with the latter often unable to take up this option.

“Since Covid, a lot of more people are working remotely but this is only possible for white collar workers and those doing a certain type of job. So there is a gap between white collar workers who are more and more comfortable working from home and the blue collars who have to work on site. This could create frustrations with long-term additional risks and consequences,” she said.