Museum of the National Bank of Belgium

PLAN OF THE MUSEUM

Take a look at 15 flagship items from our collections!

Follow the route and to get more information, scan the QR codes on your smartphone or see our website internet (museum.nbb.be) after your visit.



National Bank OF BELGIUM

Eurosystem

FIRST FLOOR

TRAIL 3 :

THE STORY OF MONEY

Let us guide you through a time line that will tell you stories of money, from Mesopotamia to the arrival of the euro. You will also find biographic audio narratives along your route. Keep looking upwards to admire the architectural beauty of the building. Built in 1872 for the “Union du Crédit” bank, it has now been restored to all its splendour. Finish this itinerary by finding out all about commodity money (items that were used as currency).

1. Athenian tetradrachma, 449-413 BC



The owl and the olive branch seen on this Athenian tetradrachma nowadays feature on the Greek one-euro coins. This reference marks the historic importance of the City of Athens and reminds us that it was in Greece that the first European coins were minted.

2. Money changer’s bench, 16th c.



This table dating from the 16th century was the main tool of the money changer. This profession, which emerged in Italy in the 13th century, is the forerunner of today’s bankers: he changes coins, removes forgeries from circulation and enables the transfer, deposit and lending of money.

3. Swedish banknote, 1666

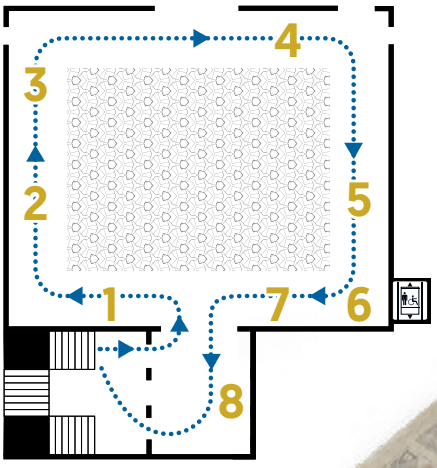


In the second half of the 17th century, Sweden became the first country in Europe to issue paper money. With these banknotes, Stockholms Banco intended to solve the problem of heavy and bulky coins in the form of copper plate, which were not suitable for payment of large sums.

4. The National Bank of Belgium’s first share, 1851



Established by the Law of 5 May 1850, the National Bank became the country’s central bank. From the start, it was a limited liability company. Although a private company, it worked for the general interest of the country. Since 1948, the Belgian State has owned half of its shares.



5. Lithography stone from Izegem, 1917

During the First World War, everything was in short supply, money included. Local councils, charitable associations and even companies had to issue emergency currency. This was the case of the municipality of Izegem which used this lithography stone to do so.



6. Model of an A4 patrol boat

During the Second World War, this boat helped evacuate part of the National Bank of Belgium's gold ingots to the United Kingdom. While its journey went smoothly, this was not the case with the ingots sent to France, which were condemned to an odyssey.



7. Last series of Belgian franc notes, 1994-1998

Find out about the last series of Belgian franc notes issued between 1994 and 1998. Do you recognise the Belgian artists honoured on the different denominations? These banknotes already had effective security features that are still found on our current euro banknotes.



8. Feather money

Take a trip through the Santa Cruz archipelago and discover this feather coil used as commodity money until the end of the 20th century. Made up of an assembly of red feathers taken from the cardinal myzomela, the production of this currency required ancestral expertise.



GROUND FLOOR

Trail 1 is devoted to an explanation of the major roles of the NBB, the country's central bank. Videos, multimedia installations and games help you to get a better understanding of these different tasks, and always in a historical context.
Trail 2 showcases many items connected in some way to money, as well as a magnificent display of Belgian banknote designs. Lastly, under the models of the bank's headquarters, the compartments contain plans and photos from the archives.

TRAIL 1 :
THE NATIONAL BANK OF BELGIUM'S ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

9. Stone of Yap

Up until the 20th century, this imposing object was actually a means of payment on the island of Yap, in the Pacific Ocean. The largest stones have a diameter of 4 metres and can weigh up to 6 tonnes. The reason why the people of Yap left them stocked up in the village streets !





10. Treaty of Maastricht, 1992

The introduction of the euro was a crucial stage in a long process of economic integration. Europe has seen various monetary unification initiatives but it was the signing of this Treaty that really marked the birth of the single currency.

11. First banknote issued by the National Bank, 1851

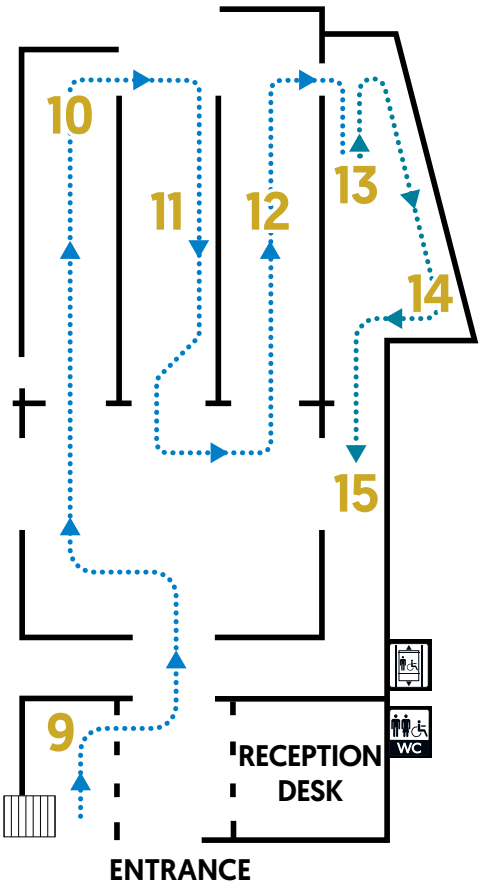
It was from 2 January 1851 that the National Bank of Belgium put its first banknotes into circulation. The 1,000-franc note (the highest denomination at the time) was mainly intended for businessmen and industrialists because it was worth a considerable sum of money back then.



12. German hyperinflation banknote, 1923

This banknote may well indicate a value of 200 billion Deutsche Marks, but it was more often than not used as a plaything by children. How was this possible ? Because at the time, Germany was going through a period of hyperinflation, a bad situation for the economy.





TRAIL 2 :

THE DEPOT AND THE BELGIAN BANKNOTE

13. Banknote design by Xavier Mellery, late 19th c.

Before being printed, banknotes are well thought-out and conceived in large format enabling very detailed designs to be integrated into them, as a guarantee of their security. Draft banknote designs did not always end up in circulation, as was the case with this draft 100-franc note.



14. Forged 20-pound-Sterling banknote, 1940-1945

This Nazi forgery bears witness to much wider counterfeiting operations designed to destabilise the British economy. The quality of these banknotes was so good that even the Bank of England got it wrong more than once.



15. Model of the Bank constructed by Marcel Van Goethem

The architect Marcel Van Goethem designed the headquarters of the National Bank of Belgium after the Second World War. It was built in the place of the building created by Henri Beyaert in the 19th century, the only part of which remains is the Hotel of the gouverneur.



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Museum of the National Bank of Belgium

Open from Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Entrance free of charge

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