

## Press release

### Regulated information

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### First quarter trading update 2011

#### Press

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# Bekaert confirms strong start to the year

In the first quarter of 2011 Bekaert achieved consolidated sales of €918 million and combined<sup>1</sup> sales of €1 233 million, an increase of 32.3% and 29.4% respectively, compared to the first quarter of 2010.

Strong demand in all segments and a positive product mix drove an organic consolidated sales growth of 28.3%. The net effect of acquisitions and divestments contributed 0.7% while currency movements added 3.3%. The currency effect amounted to 5.2% at the combined sales level due to the strong Brazilian Real and Chilean Peso. Organic growth of combined sales amounted to 23.7% compared to the same period last year.

### Consolidated and combined sales by segment

#### First quarter consolidated sales in millions of €

	2010	2011	Variance	Share
EMEA	244	307	+26%	33%
North America	141	176	+25%	19%
Latin America	67	82	+23%	9%
Asia Pacific	242	353	+46%	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>+32%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### First quarter combined sales in millions of €

	2010	2011	Variance	Share
EMEA	243	305	+26%	25%
North America	139	174	+25%	14%
Latin America	329	401	+22%	32%
Asia Pacific	242	353	+46%	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>1 233</b>	<b>+29%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Combined sales are sales of consolidated companies plus 100% of sales of joint ventures and associates after intercompany elimination.

## Combined sales by segment

### EMEA

Strong demand and passed-on raw materials price increases resulted in higher sales numbers across all activity platforms. Bekaert's manufacturing platforms hence operated at high capacity utilization, both in Western and in Central Europe.

### North America

Strong volumes and passed-on higher raw materials prices resulted in solid first quarter sales in North America. Compared to a relatively weak first quarter in 2010, the sales growth reflected increased economic activity in most sectors and still positive currency effects.

### Latin America

Revenues were up 22% in Latin America due to increased market demand in Brazil, Venezuela and Peru. Bekaert successfully defended its market position in Brazil by adjusting its selling prices downward in 2010 to compensate for the effect of the strong Real.

### Asia Pacific

Notwithstanding a slowdown in demand at the end of the first quarter in China, and increasing difficulty in passing on raw materials price increases in general, Bekaert realized a 46% sales growth in Asia Pacific. The robust growth was supported by a high utilization of increased capacities in China, India and Indonesia, combined with a further changing product mix and favorable currency movements.

## First quarter market developments

Bekaert is active in many sectors. The largest markets for Bekaert's products are the automotive, energy, and construction sectors. In the **automotive** sector, sales demand continued to perform strongly in all markets, but slowed down towards the end of the first quarter in China. **Energy**-related sectors continued to perform well on a global level across many different applications, especially as regards alternative energy solutions. In the solar energy sector, increased competitive capacities are coming on stream. **Construction** markets picked up after a long period of weak economic activity.

## Investment update

Several investment projects are in the course of implementation and include expansions of both finished product activities and of half product capacities. This mainly regards Bekaert's ongoing investments in Russia, Slovakia, Belgium and throughout Asia.

In order to support the Group's expansion programs with advanced, energy-efficient machinery and infrastructure, Bekaert has recently opened a new Engineering plant in Jiangyin, China.

## Outlook

As reported before, Bekaert anticipates more moderate and irregular growth perspectives as a result of measures to contain inflation in several countries and of increased competitive capacities taking effect, particularly in China.

Bekaert implements timely and appropriate measures, including adequate price adjustments, to maintain its strong market position in China.

Bekaert also expects that the translation effect of currency movements will turn negative as a result of the stronger euro.

Bekaert nonetheless remains confident of sustained strong performance in the first half of 2011, and considers its broad geographical coverage with a strong presence in emerging markets, as well as its growing portfolio of product innovations and strong balance sheet, to be of continued strategic importance.

## Financial calendar

General Meeting of Shareholders	11	May	2011
Dividend ex-date	13	May	2011
Dividend payable (coupon nr. 13)	18	May	2011
2011 half year results	29	July	2011
Third quarter trading update 2011	10	November	2011

## Profile

Bekaert ([www.bekaert.com](http://www.bekaert.com)) is a global technological leader in its two core competences: advanced metal transformation and advanced materials and coatings, and a market leader in drawn wire products and applications. Bekaert (Euronext Brussels: BEKB) is a global company with headquarters in Belgium, employing 28 000 people worldwide. Serving customers in 120 countries, Bekaert pursues sustainable profitable growth in all its activities and generates annual combined sales of €4.5 billion.