

## Foreword

February was a fairly **good month** for stock markets, with **resilient economic data** and relatively **strong earnings** reports both contributing to year-to-date gains. In contrast, Fixed income markets came under pressure as investors continued to **push out interest rate cuts** further into 2024, with US Treasuries down 1.3% in February.

Last month we are happy to share that we've successfully advised the shareholders of **Vetrinord** on the sale to a **private investor**. Vetrinord is a leading licensed B2B distributor of veterinary medicine with a focus on productive livestock, mainly active in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Additionally, VDP advised **Clover**, a prominent independent insurance broker in Belgium, in its new partnership with **Induver** and **HG**. The latter being a leading investor in European and trans-Atlantic B2B software and service companies with investments in both **Visma** and **team.blue**.

Finally, **Wings**, a Belgian company specialized in administration and accounting software, strengthens its growth ambitions by joining the **ConXioN Group** – a portfolio company of **Vectis PE**. The latter delivers digital transformation support across various domains such as infrastructure and cloud, modern workplace, software applications, etc. Through this partnership the new group can strengthen its position in the ERP and accounting software market while **ConXioN** will reinforce the continuation and deepening of Wing's existing SaaS model. **Overnamepartners**, a subsidiary of VDP, acted as advisor to Wings.

Happy reading

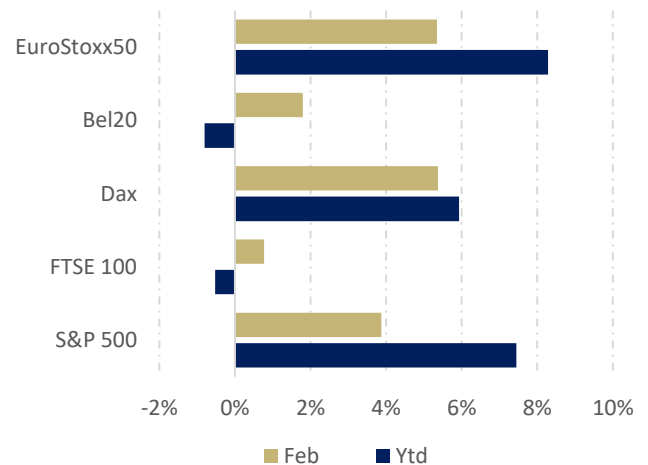
## SECTIONS

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### Overview Macroeconomic situation

Equity markets were supported in February by **continued strength in the US economy**, combined with signs of an uptick in European activity. This economic resilience, alongside signs that **inflationary pressures** have **not yet entirely dissipated**, suggest central banks will likely be on hold for a little while longer.

Chart 1: Performance main indices

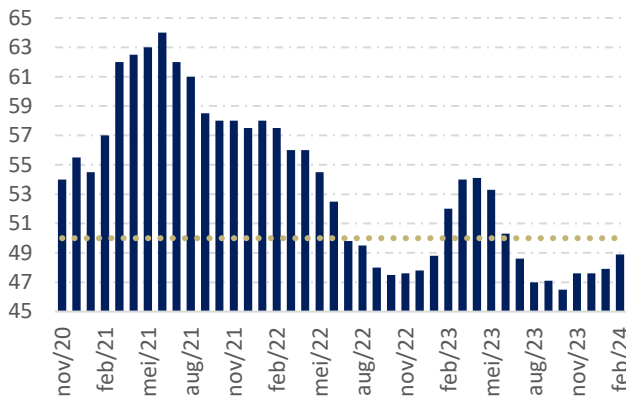


Despite a larger than expected **rise** in the eurozone **composite PMI** in February to 48.9, European stock market underperformed. MSCI Europe ex-UK rose 2.8% in February, versus 4.3% for the developed market MSCI World Index. On the upside, a **PMI uptick** suggests the worst of the continent's **growth weakness** is likely over.

**Earnings season** continued, with five of the 'magnificent seven' US stocks reporting results for the previous quarter. These companies broadly **met or exceeded expectations**, contributing to a 5.3% gain in the S&P 500 over the month. With over 90% of S&P 500 firms having reported, nearly

three quarters have **beaten analysts' earnings forecasts**. Also in the US economic data proved resilient, with the US composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) **suggesting activity continued to expand** over February and the US economy adding 353,000 jobs in January.

Chart 2: European composite PMI index

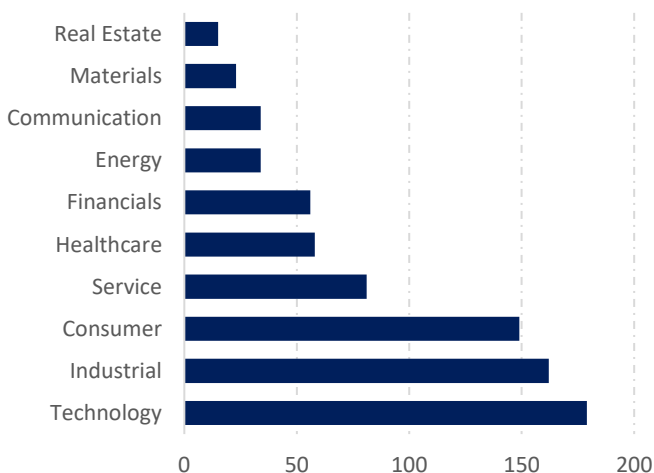


Source: Trading Economics

### European M&A activity

In this month's newsletter, we look at Argos Wityu's – a large independent European PE firm – latest research report. Findings are that in recent months, **eurozone M&A activity** – in terms of both the number deals and their total value – moved back to beginning of 2023 levels, while the number of **mid-market LBO deals rebounded** by 20%.

Chart 3: # of EU transactions per sector (Feb.)

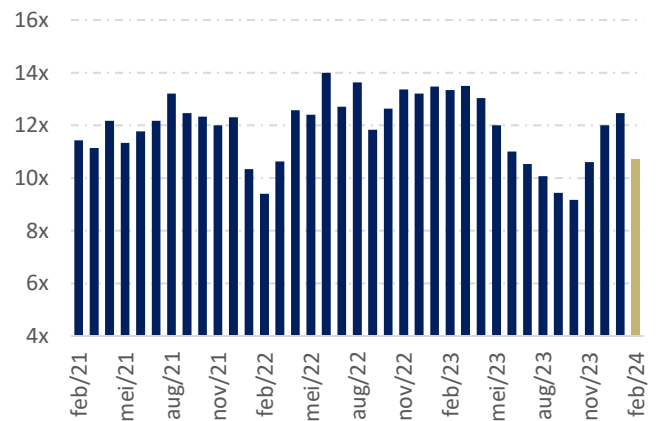


Source: MergerMarket

There are however some **positive takeaways**. Though marked by waning momentum in the later months, the first half of 2023 **surpassed H2 volume** in 2022, which itself was a **record-breaking period** in the European M&A market.

Buyers are definitely managing their risk. With a few exceptions, there has been a distinct **shift toward smaller deals**. The average M&A deal size in Europe was **€51m** in 2023, compared with **€62m** in 2022, which is indicative of the sparser presence of megadeals last year.

Chart 4: Multiple (EV/EBITDA) EU M&A (3m moving avg)



Source: MergerMarket

### Belgian M&A review

During the last 3 months, we've noticed a continuous **weakening of Belgian M&A activity** with **48 deal** announcements for the month of February with a total deal value of **>€3.0bn**. **PEs are still active** with **15 (31%)** transactions, while **cross-border investors** represented the bulk of the deal flow – **29 (60%)** deals. As with the overall European trend, **consumer and industrial** were the most active sectors (45% of deals) and are expected to remain a **large contributor** to the Belgian M&A landscape.

Below you may find an overview of the most **relevant Belgian M&A transactions** throughout the month of February.

## Selection of recent Belgian transactions

Date	Target	Buyer	Sector	Description
1-Feb	<b>Ensys</b>	<b>ExtraPower</b>	<i>Energy</i>	ExtraPower acquires a majority stake in Ensys, expanding its solar panel installation business to over €70M in revenue with backing from the Essers family, targeting families and SMEs.
1-Feb	<b>Acumen</b>	<b>M80</b>	<i>Services</i>	Lobbying firm Accumen welcomes investment from the fund M80, targeting new opportunities in the upcoming EU election cycle.
2-Feb	<b>GL Events</b>	<b>Trévise Participations</b>	<i>Services</i>	Sofina sells half of its 15.9% stake in event company GL Events to Trévise Participations for €44M, as GL Events ranks as the 9th largest expo organizer with €1.31B revenue in 2022.
6-Feb	<b>Sumi</b>	<b>Jansen</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Jansen, a Limburg construction firm specializing in building finishing and technology, acquires Sumi, a specialist in building automation for major clients, enhancing its services portfolio.
6-Feb	<b>Metamaze</b>	<b>Duco</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Metamaze, an AI document processing platform, is acquired by sector peer Duco from Nordic Capital to boost international growth and structured document handling.
6-Feb	<b>GeoExperts, NieuwlandGeo</b>	<b>Geo Square</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Geo Square, a geolocation firm with Bencis investment, acquires GeoExperts, NieuwlandGeo, and Ruimteschepper in the Netherlands, doubling its clientele and expanding internationally.
6-Feb	<b>Cinéart</b>	<b>Mubi</b>	<i>Services</i>	Mubi acquires a majority stake in Cinéart, the leading independent film distributor in the Benelux, enhancing its international presence beyond streaming.
7-Feb	<b>Dalton</b>	<b>KeBek</b>	<i>Healthcare</i>	KeBek acquires a majority in Dalton Medical, a Dutch distributor of medical and aesthetic laser systems, with founders co-investing, aiming to leverage its revenue and presence in Benelux.
7-Feb	<b>Wassen+ Partners</b>	<b>Umani Group</b>	<i>Services</i>	Umani Group, based in Hasselt, expands into the Netherlands by acquiring Wassen+Partners, marking its first international venture.
7-Feb	<b>Fly</b>	<b>Select Group</b>	<i>Services</i>	Select Group acquires Fly, specializing in leadership, team coaching, and organizational consultancy, enhancing its HR services and strategic offerings.
7-Feb	<b>Geldhof</b>	<b>Joris</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	Joris, a Brussels confectioner, acquires Geldhof from Eeklo, known for cuberdons and snowballs, pledging to uphold the traditional Belgian recipes.
7-Feb	<b>CMB.TECH</b>	<b>Euronav</b>	<i>Energy</i>	Euronav acquires CMB.TECH, specializing in hydrogen ship engines, to enhance its fleet diversification strategy towards 'green' shipping, under the Saverys family's ownership.
9-Feb	<b>Solid Talent</b>	<b>Planet Group</b>	<i>Services</i>	Planet Group acquires 90% of Antwerp's Solid Talent, an engineering staffing firm with €20M revenue, boosting its own to over €105M and a 12.5% EBITDA margin.
9-Feb	<b>Cible Skin</b>	<b>Verlinvest</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	Les Spoelberch family's investment vehicle, Verlinvest, acquires a significant minority stake in French luxury dermatological brand Cible Skin.
9-Feb	<b>Motmans &amp; Partners</b>	<b>Glowi</b>	<i>Services</i>	Glowi acquires Motmans & Partners to expand its HR services into a comprehensive offering, with the sellers reinvesting in Glowi, enhancing its position as Flanders' largest private employer.
12-Feb	<b>Vande Velde</b>	<b>Thienpont</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Containerdienst Thienpont acquires Vande Velde, expanding capacity and operational capabilities in waste management and demolition services in East Flanders.
13-Feb	<b>Radcal</b>	<b>IBA</b>	<i>Healthcare</i>	IBA, a Belgium-based company listed on EURONEXT, negotiates to acquire US-based Radcal, a diagnostic X-ray measurement leader.
14-Feb	<b>Liftcom</b>	<b>Gantrex</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Gantrex, a global leader in heavy load track systems from Nivelles, acquires Dutch firm Liftcom to strengthen its port crane services, aiming to double this segment's revenue by 2026.
13-Feb	<b>Fl. Insurance &amp; Dwels</b>	<b>Howden</b>	<i>Financials</i>	Howden, a brokerage serving SMEs, large corporations, and public entities, consolidates the sector by acquiring Flanders Insurance and Dwels.

15-Feb	<b>Stardekk</b>	<b>Lighthouse</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Ghent's hotel data specialist Lighthouse acquires Bruges-based Stardekk, advancing its aim to become the world's largest hotel data company.
15-Feb	<b>Osimis</b>	<b>Deepc</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Munich-based AI software firm Deepc acquires Belgian imaging platform Osimis, enhancing DeepcOS with advanced imaging for streamlined radiology workflows.
15-Feb	<b>Wings</b>	<b>ConXioN Group</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Wings, a Belgian company specialized in administration and accounting software, strengthens its growth ambitions by joining the ConXioN Group
16-Feb	<b>Bortier Gallery</b>	<b>Thierry Goor Pascal V. H.</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	Thierry Goor and Pascal van Hamme, creators of Wolf and Fox food markets, acquire the historic Bortier Gallery in Brussels to revitalize it with shops and cultural events, preserving its heritage.
18-Feb	<b>TFE ICT</b>	<b>CMC</b>	<i>Technology</i>	CMC enhances its network management and security solutions by acquiring Kasterlee's TFE ICT, integrating its skilled team into the Dessel-based company to bolster market position.
19-Feb	<b>W-VL City Sport</b>	<b>Artuur and Lowie Coffez</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	West-Vlaamse City Sport, a family business making 100,000 handmade caps annually with €4M revenue, is acquired by twins Enter Artuur and Lowie Coffez.
19-Feb	<b>Fun</b>	<b>Toychamp, Jysk</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	Following the bankruptcy of the Fun store chain, ToyChamp, Dreamland, and Danish furniture chain Jysk acquire 11 out of 27 stores, with ToyChamp taking 9 and Jysk 2.
20-Feb	<b>Well-Fair</b>	<b>Vendis Capital</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	Vendis Capital acquires Dutch senior bed manufacturer Well-Fair, marking its second senior sector investment in under a year, following the acquisition of furniture specialist Meubelzorg.
20-Feb	<b>Nupik</b>	<b>De Ster</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	De Ster, a global food packaging specialist for airlines and catering, acquires Spanish counterpart Nupik, as part of its acquisition strategy.
16-Feb	<b>Vetrinord</b>	<b>Private investor</b>	<i>Services</i>	Vetrinord is a leading licensed B2B distributor of veterinary medicine with a focus on productive livestock, was sold to a private investor
21-Feb	<b>Delaere</b>	<b>Pattyn</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Pattyn, a Bruges-based industrial packaging machine manufacturer, acquires a majority in Deerlijk's Delaere, enhancing synergies in packaging solutions across diverse industries.
21-Feb	<b>My Flexi-Job</b>	<b>The House of Support</b>	<i>Services</i>	The House of Support acquires My Flexi-Job, Flanders' largest flex job vacancy site, enhancing its offerings for reliable, extra, and flexible staffing solutions across over 2,000 companies.
22-Feb	<b>Laborex</b>	<b>LRM</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Limburg investor LRM and 6 managers partially acquire Laborex, an industrial cleaning machinery specialist in Olen, with LRM taking a 29% minority stake and management 18%.
23-Feb	<b>Dreem Health</b>	<b>Sunrise</b>	<i>Healthcare</i>	Namur-based Sunrise, a leader in sleep disorder diagnostics, acquires Dreem Health to expand in the US and integrate diagnostic expertise with telemedicine care.
22-Feb	<b>Brumos</b>	<b>Lobster Fish</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	Lobster Fish, based in Deerlijk, acquires the fish wholesaler Brumos in Mouscron, expanding its fresh fish and mussel offerings and strengthening its Belgian market position.
23-Feb	<b>Vadesco Logistics</b>	<b>Xwift</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Xwift, an express transport company from Nazareth, acquires Vadesco Logistics in Lier, expanding its services to include '24-hour distribution'.
26-Feb	<b>Blue Foot</b>	<b>CIF, QBIC, LRM, CVI</b>	<i>Industrials</i>	Blue Foot Membranes secures €10M in growth funding, enhancing its unique membrane technology for wastewater reuse in industries and municipalities.
26-Feb	<b>DustPhotonics</b>	<b>GBL</b>	<i>Technology</i>	GBL invests in Israeli startup DustPhotonics, raising \$24M for silicon photonics technology to enhance data transfer speed and reduce costs.
26-Feb	<b>Tablebooker</b>	<b>Zenchef</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Tablebooker, a restaurant booking tool, joins Zenchef, a leading European hospitality tech company backed by US venture capital PSG Equity.
28-Feb	<b>Induver / Clover</b>	<b>HG</b>	<i>Services</i>	Induver and Clover, two prominent independent insurance brokers in Belgium, joined forces with HG - a leading investor in European and trans-Atlantic B2B software and service companies
28-Feb	<b>K1 Speed</b>	<b>Verlinvest</b>	<i>Consumer</i>	K1 Speed, an electric indoor karting chain founded in 2004, welcomes Verlinvest for European expansion, planning 14 new locations to exceed 100 by year-end.
28-Feb	<b>Stratos Solution</b>	<b>Stemme Belgium</b>	<i>Technology</i>	Namur-based startups Stratos Solution and Stemme Belgium merge to enhance their aerial and stratospheric drone observation services.