

# De periodieke btw-aangifte in België: een analyse van de geaggregeerde aangiftegegevens en van de financiële gevolgen voor de overheid en de belastingplichtige ondernemingen (2002-2010)

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## ABSTRACT

### **Periodical VAT returns in Belgium. An analysis of aggregated data and the resulting financial flows between the treasury and VAT liable companies (2002-2010)**

In this article we examine to what extent the monthly and quarterly VAT returns collected by the Belgian tax administration make up a reliable aggregated data source and how they compare to VAT current account data and revenue statistics. The observed period runs from the first quarter of 2002 until the first quarter of 2010. We detect several "improbabilities," especially with respect to reported costs and turnover. This is due to the incomplete statistical verification by the tax administration of the "raw" data provided by the VAT liable companies.

Despite the weaknesses, however, the VAT returns remain a valuable data source. They permit the analysis of the composition and evolution of aggregated turnover and purchases, as well as VAT due and deductible VAT. It is striking that, while highly influenced by the business cycle, the international component of all four aggregates keeps growing. Albeit that the smaller companies lag somewhat: their VAT returns retain a local slant. Their cost structure also deviates from that of larger enterprises.

In principle, the periodical VAT returns provoke reciprocal claims between the treasury and the tax liable intermediates. Eventually, these claims result in payments to the treasury or refunds to companies. After sketching the interactions between claims, payments and refunds, we confront them with the macro-economic VAT revenue data. Over 90% of VAT refunds and payments appear to flow through the (automated) VAT current account, the remainder receiving a more specific (manual) treatment. The relative importance of VAT refunds gradually increased since the implementation of the VAT system. Initially this was also the case during the reviewed period. During the financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009, however, the decline of the VAT refunds was steeper than of gross receipts. Finally, we find that the impact of ex ante refund controls is limited, at least measured by its directly involved amounts.

**Keywords:** Value Added Tax, periodical VAT returns, tax revenues, VAT refund, tax administration procedures, VAT compliance, VAT enforcement, Belgium

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