



Nederlands Voorzitterschap
van het Comité van Ministers
Présidence néerlandaise du
Comité de Ministres

HIGHLIGHTS OF BENELUX COOPERATION IN 2023 UNDER THE DUTCH PRESIDENCY

In 2023, the Netherlands held the presidency of the Benelux Committee of Ministers, with a clear mission: to strengthen the Benelux economy and reduce risky strategic dependencies. The key focus areas were a more dynamic internal market, sustainable energy transition, smooth cross-border cooperation and enhanced security. Concrete and impactful progress was achieved in these areas.

CLOSER TO THE CITIZEN

- **A New Website**

Launch of a user-friendly and accessible website to improve public communication: www.benelux.int.

- **Benelux in Focus**

A clear and concise video, “The Benelux in 3 Minutes”, was produced to raise the Union’s profile and enhance recognition.



A STRONGER INTERNAL MARKET

- **Hydrogen as a Driver of Innovation**

On 20 March, Secretary-General Frans Weekers presented the results of a Benelux study on hydrogen to the Dutch Minister for Climate and Energy, Rob Jetten. The study, initiated under the Luxembourg presidency, demonstrates that the Benelux countries and six neighbouring regions are set to play a key role in developing the hydrogen sector in the European Union by 2030 and 2050.

- **A Versatile and Targeted Toolbox**

Through the Benelux legal instruments, the Benelux Union once again proved to be a decisive factor in the swift implementation of political agreements between the three countries, such as access for certain Belgian inland vessels to Dutch waters (the so-called “Estuary Shipping”).

- **Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)**

At a meeting at the Benelux House on 12 December, stakeholder organisations from Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, together with the Benelux Union, took an important step towards addressing trade barriers in the region. The organisations presented a joint Benelux agenda, which included concrete solutions to entrepreneurial challenges.



MORE CROSS-BORDER SECURITY

- **Strengthening Police Cooperation**

On 28 September, the police authorities and chiefs of police from the three Benelux countries signed a new Benelux Police Treaty. This treaty enables police officers from Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg to cooperate more easily and effectively across borders. It lays the foundation for the most advanced police cooperation in Europe.

- **International Joint Operations**

Several joint operations were carried out against drug trafficking, primarily within the framework of the Etoile-Hazeldonk project.

- **Crisis Preparedness**

The Benelux Union organised several thematic workshops to assess the impact of an energy crisis on vital infrastructure and to discuss preparedness for potential winter crises. The focus was on the management of gas and electricity supplies.

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

- **Waterbeheer**

In the aftermath of the severe flooding in 2021 that affected parts of Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, a Benelux Water Day was held in Maastricht on 29 November. The main objective of the event was to lay the foundation for a joint implementation policy for regional water systems.

- **Ambitions for Green Energy**

The action agenda for the North Seas Energy Cooperation (NSEC) was reinforced. This partnership between the countries surrounding the North Sea, with the Benelux Union playing a central role, aims to promote a more sustainable energy policy.



KEY POLITICAL ACTIONS

- **Benelux Day – 5 September**

Call for the official recognition of this date as a symbol of cooperation.

- **Benelux Summit**

On 30 November, the three heads of government discussed geopolitical challenges, migration, climate, and the future of the EU. The Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia was also invited.



Minister of Foreign Affairs
Wopke Hoekstra:

“For decades, we have been one of the leading cooperation frameworks in Europe. To maintain this position, we must continue investing in our collaboration.”