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## Belgium starts its European Presidency

From 1 January to 30 June 2024, it is Belgium's turn to take over the lead of the Council of the European Union. The ambition is to play a central role on the international stage for the next six months. It will be the 13th time for Belgium to hold the Presidency. Various events will be held to mark its launch.

On 1 January, the traditional New Year's fireworks display in Brussels will be symbolically resplendent in European colours.

Next, the FPS Chancellery of the Prime Minister will organise ceremonial events on Friday 5 January 2024 in the capital of Europe (in more ways than one this time).

### Visit of the College of Commissioners

The College of Commissioners of the European Commission will first visit the Belgian Presidency, represented by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs and members of the federal government and of the governments of the regions and the communities involved in the Presidency.

This meeting starts from 10.00 am in the atrium of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, rue de la Régence. The Belgian singer Gustaph will set the diversity and openness of Belgium to music.

Following a traditional group photo, guests will be invited to the Egmont Palace for round-table discussions, a working lunch and a bilateral meeting, organised by the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

### Unveiling of the Presidency's logo

At 11.00 am, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo will unveil the logo of the Belgian Presidency at Mont des Arts. It will be placed above the garden and facing the iconic panorama of the city centre. For six months, the logo will symbolize the Presidency on this photogenic spot in Brussels. During this period it will also feature on other locations, including Brussels Airport.

### Musical evening and official reception at Bozar

In the evening, the opening event of the Belgian Presidency starts at Bozar at 8.30 pm. At the prestigious Henry Le Bœuf Hall guests will attend a musical performance conducted by Jef Neve, in the presence of TM King Philippe and Queen Mathilde as well as Belgian and international prominent figures.



The evening will feature an original musical creation by Jef Neve, a tribute to some of the great Belgian artists of international renown, and performances by special guests such as violinist Lorenzo Gatto and the singers Selah Sue and Charlotte Adigéry. An orchestra comprising Belgian musicians from all regions will accompany the evening, which will close with a reception.

The musical performance will be broadcast live on the Presidency's YouTube channel, later followed by the national public television channels.

This event is organised in collaboration with the Communities and Regions, and highlights Belgium's openness for innovation, cooperation and diversity.

#### Six European months

The Belgian Presidency of the EU will thus be launched with great splendour, marking the start of six months of intensive work. As President of the Council, Belgium will set the European agenda and promote cooperation between Member States to strengthen the EU and make progress in a number of areas, ranging from climate to economic and social issues. The last time Belgium held the presidency was in the

second half of 2010.

During this Presidency, various summits and conferences will be organised, during which important decisions will be taken concerning the future of the European Union. To achieve this goal, Belgium will work closely together with the other Member States and the EU's institutions.

For this occasion, an electric articulated bus of the Brussels public transport operator STIB will be decked out entirely in the colours of the Belgian Presidency. The bus, co-financed with European funds, will run on line 64 between Haren and Porte de Namur during the six month-period of the Presidency. The initiative is the result of a collaboration between STIB, the FPS Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the European Commission Representation in Belgium.

FPS Chancellery of the Prime Minister  
Rue de la Loi - Wetstraat 16  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
<https://chancellery.belgium.be>  
[contact@belgium.be](mailto:contact@belgium.be)