

International parliamentary assemblies

Inter-Parliamentary Consultative Council of Benelux

Benelux Union

» What is the Benelux Union ?

The Benelux is an intergovernmental cooperation arrangement between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

» Creation

The Benelux was created in 1944 in the form of a Customs Union. Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg were the forerunners of European integration. In 1958, this Customs Union led to the signature of the treaty establishing the Benelux Economic Union. This treaty was intended to increase economic cooperation between the three States.

A new treaty was signed on 17 June 2008. The name “Benelux Economic Union” became “Benelux Union”.

» Main objectives

The Benelux Union aims at deepening and broadening cross-border cooperation between the three countries. Because the cooperation may go beyond European cooperation (cf. article 306 of the EC treaty), Benelux plays a pioneering role within Europe.

The Benelux cooperation has two components: cooperation within the Benelux Union and intergovernmental cooperation. Cooperation is based on three pillars: the internal market & economic union, sustainable development, and justice & security. The intergovernmental component covers foreign affairs and military cooperation.

» Structures

- 🕒 **Inter-Parliamentary Consultative Council of Benelux** (Benelux Parliament): cf. below
- 🕒 **Committee of Ministers:** the ministers set the priorities for cooperation within the Benelux. Its composition varies depending on the agenda. The Committee is chaired in turn by each of the countries for a one-year term.

In 2024, Belgium held the presidency. Top officials from the competent ministries prepare the Committee's dossiers within the Benelux Council.

- 🕒 **Secretariat General:** The College of Secretaries General (one secretary-general and two deputies) heads the Secretariat General, which supervises cooperation on economy, sustainability and security.
- 🕒 **The Benelux Court of Justice:** The nine judges of this international jurisdiction aim to promote uniformity in the application of the legal rules of the Benelux. These common rules concern intellectual property, penalties, recovery of tax debts and equality of tax treatment. In case of doubt about the interpretation of a common rule of Benelux law, national courts ask for an explanation from the Benelux Court which gives a binding ruling. The members of the Benelux Court are appointed from among the judges of the Court of Cassation of Belgium, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, and the Higher Court of Justice of Luxembourg.
- 🕒 **Office Benelux de la Propriété intellectuelle:** The Benelux Office for Intellectual Property is the official body for registration of trade marks, patterns or designs in the Benelux. The Office offers the possibility of establishing the existence of ideas, concepts, creations, prototypes, etc.

» External relations

The Benelux Union cooperates with the other Member States of the European Union, with the federated entities of these States and the bodies which promote regional cooperation between these States. Thus, for example, the Benelux Union has set up a partnership with the German Land of North-Rhine Westphalia.

Inter-Parliamentary Consultative Council of Benelux (Benelux Parliament)

» Creation

5 November 1995

» Composition

49 members chosen from among the members of the national parliaments of the 3 countries and appointed by them: 21 Belgian, 21 Dutch and 7 Luxembourg.

» Objectives

Cooperation between the parliaments of the 3 member countries of Benelux and democratic control of the workings of the Union. The Benelux Parliament aligns its activities with the annual plans of the Benelux Union and closely monitors intergovernmental cooperation (e.g., European policy and the consequences of Brexit for the Benelux).

» Powers

The Benelux Parliament formulates opinions in the form of recommendations for the three governments.

» Operation

In principle: 3 plenary sessions per year, each lasting 2 days. Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg hold the presidency in turn for a 2-year term. The Benelux Parliament consists of a Bureau, a Permanent Committee and seven Standing Committees. Besides committee meetings, these committees organise working visits and thematic conferences.

» Composition of the Belgian delegation

The Benelux Parliament has three recognized political groups: the Christian group, the Liberal group and the Socialist group.

The Belgian delegation has 21 members of parliament, 10 of whom are appointed by the House of Representatives and 11 by the parliaments of the communities and the regions.

More info

Benelux Union: www.benelux.int

Benelux Parliament: www.beneluxparl.eu

Benelux Court of Justice:

<https://www.courbeneluxhof.int>

Benelux Office for Intellectual Property:

<https://www.boip.int/en>