

**Benelux Prime Ministers' Summit Joint Declaration
Luxembourg**

Wednesday, 10 September 2025

We, the Prime Ministers of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, reaffirm our enduring commitment to the principles and values that unite our three countries in the Benelux Union. Rooted in a shared history of cooperation, trust, and solidarity, the Benelux partnership stands as a model of regional integration and forward-looking governance in Europe. Together, we stand for the rule of law, democratic governance, and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. We value open societies, inclusive economies, and sustainable development that respect both people and planet.

The year 2025 marks 65 years since the implementation of the Treaty establishing the Benelux Economic Union, which laid the foundation for the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital – a cornerstone of our regional cooperation and a catalyst for European integration. Over these six and a half decades, our three countries have not only deepened their collaboration across numerous domains but have often served as pioneers and a source of inspiration within the broader European project. As we look ahead, we remain firmly committed to further strengthening the European Project, ensuring it remains a driver of competitiveness, innovation, and social cohesion.

Ukraine

More than three years after the full-scale invasion as a part of the unprovoked and unjustified aggression of Russia, we reaffirm our steadfast support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We will continue to provide political, humanitarian, military, financial and reconstruction assistance. Russia's aggression against Ukraine - including the attacks on Ukraine's cultural heritage and cultural identity - constitutes not only a blatant breach of the UN Charter and international law but also poses the most serious threat to peace and stability in Europe since the Second World War. As countries committed to upholding international law and convinced that State leaders must be held accountable for their crimes, the Benelux countries welcome the efforts made to establish a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression with jurisdiction over the Russian aggression against Ukraine within the framework of the Council of Europe. Ukraine's fight for core values such as freedom and democracy, as well as its respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption, deserves our enduring support.

Defence

We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our defence cooperation in particular through the Benelux Steering Group. As founding members of NATO, we remain strong and reliable Allies, committed to bolstering the security and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area. It is imperative to enhance the European defence technological and industrial base to secure long-term geopolitical stability. We stress the importance of drawing on the full range of expertise and manufacturing capacity across our countries, from advanced materials and precision engineering to innovative dual-use technologies. Cross-border supply chains and specialized research centers are key assets to be leveraged, ensuring that our joint defence capabilities remain both competitive and strategically autonomous. We will continue to establish cross-border collaborations, including in the domains of capabilities, operations and industry, as we ramp up Europe's defence readiness and implement the NATO capability targets. Investing in our defence industries means boosting European and transatlantic technological innovation, supporting European competitiveness, promoting regional development and powering economic growth.

Security, Safety& Resilience

We reaffirm our commitment to advancing societal preparedness and resilience across the Benelux region. In an era marked by increasingly complex threats - from hybrid challenges to natural disasters - it is vital to foster unity, readiness, and shared solutions.

Embracing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society perspective, by cooperating in the Coalition for civil preparedness and resilience, the Benelux countries aim to ensure that all partners are prepared to respond effectively and cohesively in times of crisis. In this light, we pay particular attention to our collective security architecture and to strengthening civil-military cooperation, including optimized EU-NATO complementarity; preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism; addressing organized and cross-border crime such as drug trafficking and organized crime; strengthening our resilience against cyber and hybrid threats; and securing our energy supply and our national infrastructures in general.

In this context, the Benelux countries already developed a non-paper on EU baseline requirements, which was co-signed by 11 other EU Member States. In that respect, we also welcome the Preparedness Union Strategy and the holistic vision it proposes. We underline the essential role of education, culture, and media in building societal resilience, by fostering critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, and civic engagement across borders. Strengthening cooperation in these fields enhances our collective capacity to respond to crises and preserve democratic cohesion. Nevertheless, we also want to be vigilant in safeguarding the subsidiarity and autonomy of European Member States and regions in rolling out the Preparedness Union Strategy. European actions must therefore focus on where EU involvement presents an added value, avoiding duplication and seeking efficiency gains and synergies.

Europe-Competitiveness

Considering intensifying geo-economic competition, it is essential to build a more competitive European economy to guarantee long-term growth, job creation and quality of life. To this end, we need to build on the EU's open strategic autonomy and further reduce strategic dependencies in critical areas like energy, technology including AI, food security, and raw materials, while safeguarding open markets and international cooperation. A secure and more resilient Europe, based on a borderless single market will allow us to foster and attract investment, research and innovation. It will also help businesses, including small and medium enterprises to thrive. We are committed to interregional and cross-border cooperation in this field. Together with North Rhine-Westphalia, we reaffirm our support for the Euregion Maas Rhine's candidacy to host the Einstein Telescope.

Europe-Internal Market

The Internal Market is one of the Union's greatest assets and our main source of growth, prosperity, competitiveness and cohesion. We call for renewed ambition to unlock the many opportunities of our Internal Market, in service of a stronger, more competitive and resilient Union. By ensuring the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital across the 27 EU Member States and beyond, it tangibly shapes the daily lives of our citizens and the dynamism of our businesses. Still, intensified efforts remain necessary to remove unnecessary burdens, including territorial supply constraints, regulatory divergences, and impediments to mutual recognition. Key levers we must activate, are reducing fragmentation - through mutual recognition as well as harmonisation - strengthening our labour markets and simplifying rules. In this light, we welcome the Horizontal Single Market Strategy as presented by the European Commission and call for its ambitious implementation. Clear, coherent, and effectively enforced rules are essential to enable

our businesses to grow beyond national borders and scale up, to stimulate growth, and ensure the effective implementation of the EU acquis. The implementation of the Savings and Investment Union remains a priority in order to work towards a financing ecosystem matching our investment needs while assuring a level playing field.

Mindful of their historic role as pioneers of European integration, the Prime Ministers of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg reaffirm their commitment to deepening cooperation within the framework of the European Union and strengthen its competitiveness.

The 40th anniversary of the signing of the Schengen Agreement, commemorated earlier this year in Luxembourg, serves as a timely reminder that the smooth functioning of the Schengen area remains vital to facilitate economic synergies between the Benelux countries.

Europe-Rule of law

The rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights are deeply rooted in our citizens' perception of the EU. The Benelux countries underline that protecting and strengthening the rule of law ensures legal certainty and is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of the Single Market and the good functioning of the EU. We therefore support the Commission to make full use of the rule of law toolbox at its disposal and to take decisive action when the principles of the rule of law are violated. The Benelux countries reiterate their steadfast commitment to collectively uphold and promote a strong rule of law framework within our Union.

Europe-Enlargement

The Benelux countries recognise the importance of a merit-based and predictable EU enlargement process to be a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity. Fostering the values on which the Union was founded and based on rigorous reforms, a credible enlargement process offers European citizens a pathway to improved economic and social conditions, while bolstering resilience against external challenges. Candidate countries must meet the Copenhagen criteria and deliver on key reforms in the area of the Fundamentals (rule of law, functioning judiciary and public administration).

Advancing on these core reforms is essential for the credibility of the process and for ensuring that enlargement strengthens both the candidate countries and the Union as a whole. The Benelux countries await the Commission's new pre-enlargement policy reviews as announced by President von der Leyen.

The Benelux countries will continue to provide support to candidate countries in carrying out necessary reforms on their respective paths towards EU accession.

Benelux Union

We, the Prime Ministers of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, reaffirm our deep and longstanding commitment to the Benelux Union as a cornerstone of regional cooperation, solidarity, and innovation in Europe. Our cooperation builds on a combination of national initiatives and European financial instruments, including regional development funds, which help translate our shared ambitions into tangible projects for citizens and businesses.

By removing border obstacles, improving citizens' cross-border mobility, and strengthening our common digital ecosystem, our collaboration has delivered tangible results across key areas of strategic importance.

We enhanced cross-border law enforcement and cooperation between judicial authorities, notably in the fight against organized crime, trafficking, and cyber threats. The Benelux Police Cooperation Treaty remains a benchmark for operational security cooperation in Europe.

We advanced the Benelux Climate Platform by aligning national policies for climate neutrality and implementing cross-border infrastructure for renewable energy. Joint initiatives on hydrogen development, energy storage, and sustainable transport have reinforced our region's role as a leader in the European Green Deal.

Cooperation on cross-border mobility remains an area of key importance, with the seamless implementation of digital travel documents and interoperable public transport systems as tangible examples. The Netherlands-Flanders cross-border contact point has also become operational, working in close cooperation with the Benelux Union to remove legal and administrative obstacles to integration. Finally, through joint planning and infrastructure upgrades, we facilitated more sustainable, efficient, and inclusive travel for our citizens.

We signed a partnership between the Benelux and Hauts-de-France for enhanced cross-border cooperation to support citizens and businesses. This is a valuable addition to our long-standing and close partnership we enjoy with North Rhine-Westphalia.

With the Treaty on automatic recognition of Higher Education qualifications, the Benelux countries and the Baltic countries mutually and automatically recognize their higher education diplomas covered by the Treaty. Graduates no longer face lengthy recognition procedures, and we look forward to collaborating with countries that have shown an interest in joining the Treaty.

In continuity with this commitment to recognition and mobility, the Benelux will also maintain a strong focus on skills, with certification of competences – particularly in the preservation of digital data.

We jointly reaffirmed our commitment to protecting democratic institutions, media freedom, and the rule of law. Through educational exchanges and civic engagement initiatives, we are investing in the next generation of engaged and informed citizens.

As we look ahead, we remain united in our belief that the Benelux model – built on trust, pragmatism, and a shared future – offers lasting value to our citizens and to the European Union.

For the Netherlands

For Belgium

For Luxembourg

Dick Schoof

Bart De Wever

Luc Frieden