



GENERAL REPRESENTATION
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS
TO THE EU



Flanders
State of the Art

General Representation of the Government of Flanders to the European Union

The General Representation of the Government of Flanders to the European Union (EU) defends the interests of Flanders in the EU. Officially it is a division of the Permanent Representation (the Embassy) of Belgium to the EU.

The team is headed by the General Representative of the Government of Flanders, who is assisted by the Director of European Affairs. Eighteen specialized policy officers (“attachés”) from different departments and agencies within the Flemish administration closely monitor the agenda of the EU Council of Ministers. They also act as spokespersons for Belgium within the various working groups preparing the EU Council of Ministers.

The Permanent Representation provides a daily link between the national and European level and therefore plays a crucial role in the interplay between the federated state of Flanders, the federal state of Belgium and the European Union.

The General Representation ensures the interests of Flanders in the best possible way by reporting on EU developments, defending Flanders’ positions and maintaining close and direct relations with the European institutions.

Apart from these daily contacts at the European, Belgian and Flemish level, we maintain close contacts with other Member States and European regions.

The General Representation is in close contact with the Flemish administration, the members of the Government of Flanders and the Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs, which coordinates Flanders' European and foreign policy.

The General Representation also cooperates with the Liaison Agency Flanders- Europe (vleva), a public-private partnership. Vleva's mission is to get Flemish civil society and local authorities involved in European matters.

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Flanders and the EU

Almost every European decision has either a direct or indirect impact on Flemish citizens. This continues to grow as a direct result of the ongoing devolution of political power from the federal state to the regions and communities of Belgium. Monitoring and influencing European decisions are key to the future of the region.

For all of its devolved competences, the Government of Flanders co-decides the Belgian positions taken within the Council of the EU. The Government of Flanders does so together, and on an equal footing, with the Governments of the other Communities and Regions as well as the federal Government. In addition, the Belgian positions within the Council of the EU are often voiced by members of the Government of Flanders.

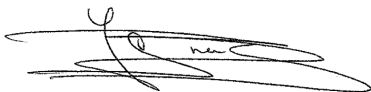
Practical agreements regarding position-taking and representation of Belgium within the EU have been laid down in a cooperation agreement between the Belgian governments. The legal principle in *foro interno*, in *foro externo*, as defined in the Belgian constitution, provides the basis for this agreement. It means that the same division of powers within Belgium is applied to foreign policy. The cooperation agreement allows all Belgian governments to co-decide on EU policies as well as to represent Belgium within the Council of the EU – an absolutely unique system in Europe. Clearly, this agreement has to keep up with institutional changes in Belgium, where consecutive state reforms have shifted the political ‘center of gravity’ to the federated states, as well as institutional changes at the EU level, such as the Lisbon Treaty.

The Flemish Coalition Agreement (2014-2019) indicates the EU as the most important working area for Flanders’ foreign policy.

In order to help shape such European policy cooperation, we require a strong European awareness throughout the Flemish administration. Only then, Flanders will be able to have an impact on the EU agenda. In view of a more pro-active monitoring of the EU policy agenda, the Flemish administration has to stay abreast of the European decision-making process as a whole, i.e. from the European Commission's proposal to the decision-making by the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament and the transposition of European regulation into Flemish legislation.

A strong Flanders in a strong Europe.... that is our mission, because a strong European Union and a solid economic base are vital to protect the prosperity and welfare of all.

We are open to your questions and suggestions. In this brochure you will find the contact details of each of our team members together with the policy areas they represent.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Julie Bynens
General Representative of
the Government of Flanders to the EU

A handwritten signature in black ink, with the name 'Verlaeckaert' clearly legible in a cursive script, followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Koen Verlaeckaert
Secretary General
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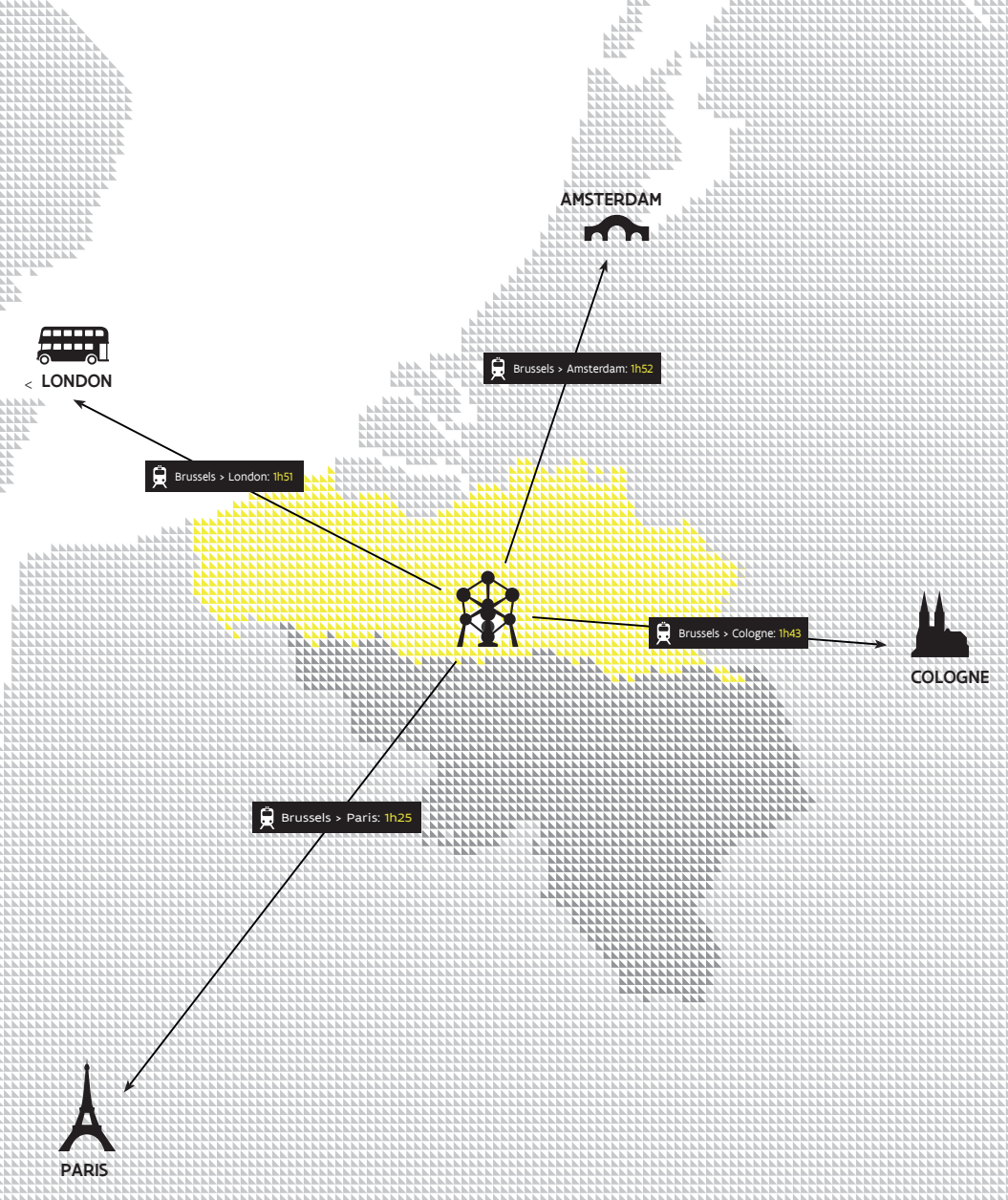
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