

Belgian Presidency Starts Term



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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

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News

Since 1 January 2024, the [Presidency](#) of the Council of the EU has been held by Belgium. Under the theme “Protect, Strengthen, Prepare”, [the programme](#) of the Belgian Presidency focuses on the following six thematic areas:

- Defending rule of law, democracy, and unity
- Strengthening the EU’s competitiveness
- Pursuing a green and just transition
- Reinforcing the EU’s social and health agenda
- Protecting people and borders
- Promoting a global Europe.

In the field of Justice and Home Affairs, the Presidency has two key priorities: the reform of the migration and asylum system as well as a resilient Schengen zone. Hence, the Presidency aims to address all remaining legislative files associated with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Furthermore, it will focus on intensifying the EU’s efforts to combat organised crime, terrorism, and violent extremism. The fight against drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, and preventing and combating child sexual abuse are further priorities of the Presidency. In the fight against corruption, the Belgian Presidency also wants to advance negotiations on the Commission’s initiative to criminalise all forms of corruption (→ [euclid 2/2023, 139-141](#)).

As part of its priority to further support and protect victims of criminal offences, the Presidency aims to reach agreement on a general approach regarding revision of the Victims’ Rights Directive and to work towards finalising the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

To further enhance judicial cooperation in criminal matters, an agreement on the Regulation concerning the transfer of criminal proceedings within the EU shall be reached and special attention paid to the enforcement of sentences in the context of mutual recognition of judicial decisions in criminal matters.

At its first [informal meeting](#) with the 27 EU Ministers of Justice on 26 January 2024, Belgium’s Justice Minister *Paul Van Tigchelt* also underlined the need to establish a European network of magistrates specialised in combating criminal organisations. At this meeting, the Ministers of Justice also shared information on Belgium’s approach towards small-scale detention as an alternative to prisons. Belgium plans to create around 700 small-scale detention spaces for prisoners who have received up to three years of imprisonment as a sentence. The detention houses shall provide programmes to work on prisoners’ reintegration and ability to live independently, with a view to preventing prisoners from committing new offences.

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The Belgian Presidency's term officially ends on 30 June 2024. However, the forthcoming European elections at the beginning of June will effectively shorten this period, as the European Parliament will not sit in plenary from May on.

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