

Belgium: Political Developments and Data in 2024

Before and After a New ‘Mother of All Elections’

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Abstract

In 2024, Belgium experienced its third consecutive ‘Mother of all elections’. Federal, regional and European elections were held on 9 June and local elections on 13 October. These elections profoundly transformed Belgium’s political landscape: the right and center, with Reformist Movement/*Mouvement réformateur* (MR) and Les Engagés, took the lead in Wallonia, putting an end to Socialist domination. In Flanders, New Flemish Alliance/*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (N-VA) maintained its position as the leading party despite the rise of Vlaams Belang, while the ecologists suffered a net decline in all regions. In Brussels, the Socialist Party remained in the lead, but the MR made significant gains. This led to the creation of unedited coalitions: the ‘Arizona’ federal government (N-VA, MR, Vooruit, Christian Democratic and Flemish/*Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams* [CD&V], Les Engagés)—yet not already formed by the end of 2024, the ‘Azur’ coalition in Wallonia (MR–Les Engagés) and a tripartite in Flanders (N-VA, Vooruit, CD&V), reflecting a profound restructuring of federal and regional executive power.

Introduction

The year 2024 was exceptional for the Belgian electoral democracy because there were elections on all policy levels. General elections were held on 9 June 2024 to elect 150 members to the House of Representatives (federal), 22 members to the European Parliament, 124 members to the Flemish Parliament, 75 members to the Walloon Parliament, 89 members to the Brussels Parliament and 25 members to the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. Municipal and provincial elections were held on 13 October 2024. The elections have had major impacts on the work of the executives (as almost all executive office-holders were campaigning in the run-up to 9 June and continued until 13 October in their municipalities). Elections resulted in previously unseen coalitions at both federal and regional governments, with a long government formation at the federal and Brussels levels—with no agreement by the end of the year.

Election report

Federal, regional and European Parliament elections took place simultaneously on 9 June. They featured a high level of aggregate volatility and a historically low score by the three traditional party families, that is, Socialists, Liberals and Christian Democrats: Together they only gathered 45 per cent of the vote at the federal elections. As in previous elections, the parties did not really produce separate regional and federal manifestos, therefore blurring regional and federal issues.

Parliamentary elections

Compared to 2019, the fortune of several parties changed considerably. In Flanders, the New Flemish Alliance/*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (N-VA) remained the country's largest party with 16.7 per cent of vote share at the national level.¹ Compared to the previous election, the party lost one seat. Further to the right, Flemish Interest/*Vlaams Belang* (VB) captured 13.8 per cent of the vote and two additional seats. Despite the competition between the N-VA and VB, the former remains the dominant party in the north of the country. The three Flemish mainstream parties (Forward/*Vooruit*, Christian Democratic and Flemish/*Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams* (CD&V) and Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats/*Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten*, [Open Vld]), all three part of the outgoing Vivaldi coalition (Baudewyns et al. 2024), obtained, respectively, 8.1 per cent, 8.0 per cent and 5.4 per cent of the votes, reversing their previous balance of power to the benefit of the socialist *Vooruit* and at the expense of the liberal Open Vld, the party of incumbent Prime Minister De Croo.

In Wallonia, a serious change of political direction could be observed. Traditionally dominated by the left, the political majority in the southern part of the country is now dominated by the liberal (Reformist Movement/*Mouvement réformateur* [MR]) and centre-right (The Committed / *Les Engagés*) parties. The leading Francophone party, the Socialist Party/*Parti Socialiste* (PS), declined to 8.0 per cent of the national vote and lost four seats. MR reached 10.3 per cent of vote share at the national level and won six additional seats, while *Les Engagés* reached a record high (14 seats). Green parties suffered a major setback, especially the Ecology Party/*Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales* (Ecolo), which lost 10 seats, while the Green/*Groen* lost two seats. The communists (Work Party of Belgium/*Parti du travail de Belgique-Partij Van de Arbeid van België* [PTB-PVDA]), running as the only bilingual party covering the whole country, made progress in Flanders and Brussels but not in Wallonia, obtaining three more seats across the country.

The take-home message of the 2024 elections (Table 1) is a strong shift towards the right or center-right in Wallonia, a close battle between the N-VA and VB in Flanders, a strengthening of the far left and a collapse of the Green parties (which was more marked in Wallonia).

European Parliament elections

The European Parliament elections in Belgium were held at the same time as the federal and regional elections. Even though Belgium held the presidency of the Council of the European

Table 1. Elections to the European Parliament in Belgium in 2024

Party	9 June 2024 8,436,372 7,599,758 7,133,784	EP group	Previous election			26 May 2019 24 Total seats Turnout Share of valid vote 93.4%			Seats
			N	%	Δ %	N	%	Δ N	
New Flemish Alliance	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA)	ACRE	995,868	14.0%	-0.2%	3	13.6%	0	0.0%
Flemish Interest	Vlaams Belang (VB)	ID	1,034,112	14.5%	2.5%	3	13.6%	0	0.0%
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Open VLD Renew EU)	RE	410,743	5.8%	-4.3%	1	4.5%	0	0.0%
Socialist Party	Partit socialistie Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (PS (CD&V)	S&D PPE	534,828 594,968	7.5% 8.3%	-2.2% -0.8%	2	10.0%	0	0.0%
Christian Democratic and Flemish						2	10.0%	0	0.0%
Green Ecology Party	Groen Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales (Groen) (Ecolo)	Verts/ALE Verts/ALE	450,781 264,564	6.3% 3.7%	-1.5% -3.6%	1	4.5%	0	0.0%
						1	4.5%	-1	-50.0%

Table 1. (Continued)

Party	EP group	Votes			Seats		
		N	%	Δ%	N	%	ΔN
BELGIUM							
Reformist Movement	MR	906,304	12.7%	5.6%	3	13.6%	1
Socialist Party	RE						
Different	(Vooruit)	570,067	8.0%	1.5%	2	10.0%	0
Workers' Party of Belgium	(PTB-PVDA)	763,340	10.7%	2.3%	2	10.0%	0
	GUE/NGL						
België	België						
The Committed	Les Engagés	383,837	5.4%	1.9%	2	10.0%	0
	(Les Engagés)	PPE					

Notes:

1. PTB and PVDA ran separately in 2019 but together in 2024.
2. Open VLD ran under Open VLD Renew EU.

Source: <https://elections.fgov.be/> (2024).

Union in the first half of 2024, this simultaneity helped to relegate European issues to the background, with debates being dominated by national and regional issues. This is no new phenomenon, as the second-order nature of European Parliamentary elections has been attested in the Belgian case (Beaudonnet et al. 2024), with a considerable share of voters splitting their votes between federal and regional elections on the one hand and EP elections on the other (Willocq & Kelbel 2018).

In the Dutch-speaking electoral college, VB and N-VA dominated (three seats each), followed by CD&V, *Vooruit*, *Groen*, Open Vld and PTB-PVDA. In the French-speaking constituency, the MR jumped to three seats, over the PS (two), the PTB-PVDA (one), *Les Engagés* (one) and Ecolo (one). Finally, in the German-speaking constituency, the CSP (centre-right, connected to *Les Engagés*) retained its seat. Unsurprisingly, the same trends can be observed as for the federal and regional elections: a rise in the Flemish far right and a rise of the right at the French-speaking side. VB confirmed its position as Belgium's leading party in European Parliament elections but remains neck-and-neck with the N-VA. The MR, led by former PM Sophie Wilmès, won by a wide margin on the Francophone side and gained a further seat, while the PS stayed at two seats. Finally, both Ecolo and *Groen* lost a seat each, marking the end of the green wave observed in 2019 (Reuchamps et al. 2020) (Table 2).

Regional elections

In Flanders, the N-VA remained the predominant party, but lost seats (−4), compared to the 2019 elections (Table 3). *Vlaams Belang* was successful at the regional election, as it gained the most seats (+8). N-VA and *Vlaams Belang* have now the same number of seats (31 each) in the Flemish Parliament. The Flemish Socialists (*Vooruit*) achieved notable success, gaining six seats and becoming the third-largest party in Flanders. Conversely, the Christian Democrats (CD&V) lost three seats, as did *Groen* (−5) and the liberal Open Vld (−7). Open Vld experienced the most significant decline in Flanders. The PVDA won several seats (+5) and stood among the winners alongside the *Vlaams Belang* and *Vooruit*, although its relative strength in Parliament is much lower. A new party, *Team Fouad Ahidar*, emerged and was able to win one seat. *Team Fouad Ahidar* is located at the left side of the spectrum, organised mainly around its leader and putting strong emphasis on multiculturalism and religious matters (especially, the recognition of Islam in the public space).

The N-VA legitimately claimed leadership for the formation of the Flemish executive, which resulted in a coalition government comprising the N-VA, CD&V and Open Vld on 30 September with Matthias Diependaele (N-VA) as Minister President.

At the Walloon side, the two winners were the liberal MR (+6) and *Les Engagés* (+ 7 if we compare to its predecessor, the Humanist Democratic Centre, cdH, in 2019) (Table 3). By contrast, the PS, Ecolo and the PTB-PVDA lost seats (respectively −4, −7 and −2 seats). The new Walloon government was formed as a Liberal-centre-right coalition headed by Adrien Dolimont (MR) as Minister President. The same coalition is in power in the French Community (*Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, a federated entity in Belgium without direct election but whose balance of power is determined by the outcomes of the Walloon and Brussels regional elections), headed by Elisabeth Degryse (*Les Engagés*) as Minister President.

Table 2. Elections to the lower house of Parliament (Chambre des Représentants/Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers) in Belgium in 2024

Party	Nieuw-Vlaamse Aliantie	(N-VA)	Votes			Seats			
			N	%	Δ %	N	%	ΔN	
New Flemish Alliance			1,167,061	16.7%	24	16.0%	-1	0.0%	
Socialist Party	Parti socialiste	(PS)	561,062	8.0%	-1.4%	16	10.7%	-4	-20.0%
Flemish Interest	Vlaams Belang	(VB)	961,601	13.8%	1.8%	20	13.3%	2	9.1%
Reformist Movement	Partij voor de Vrije Reformatie	(MR)	716,934	10.3%	2.7%	20	13.3%	6	23.1%
Ecology Party	Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales	(Ecolo)	204,438	2.9%	-3.2%	3	2.0%	-10	-77.0%
Christian Democratic and Flemish	Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams	(CD&V)	557,392	8.0%	-0.9%	11	7.3%	-1	-9.1%
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democrates	(Open Vld)	380,659	5.5%	-3.1%	7	4.7%	-5	-41.7%
Workers' Party of Belgium	Parti du travail de Belgique-Partij Van de Arbeid van België	(PTB/PVDA)	688,369	9.9%	1.2%	15	10.0%	0	0.0%
Forward	Vooruit	(Vooruit)	566,436	8.1%	1.4%	13	8.7%	0	0.0%
Green	Groen	(Groen)	324,608	4.7%	-1.5%	6	4.0%	-2	-25.0%
The Committed	Les Engagés	(Les Engagés)	472,755	6.8%	3.1%	14	9.3%	0	0.0%
Democratic Federalist Independent	Démocrate Fédéraliste Indépendant	(DéFI)	84,024	1.2%	-1.0%	1	0.7%	-1	-50.0%

Source: <https://elections.fgov.be/> (2024).

Table 3. Results of regional (Flanders, Brussels FL, Wallonia, Brussels FR) elections in Belgium in 2024

Party	Votes %						Seats %					
	N		%		N		N		N		%	
New Flemish Alliance	23.9%	3125.0%	11.9%	2	11.8%							
Flemish Interest	22.7%	3125.0%	10.5%	2	11.8%							
Christian Democratic and Flemish	13.0%	1612.9%	6.4%	1	5.9%							
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	8.3%	9	7.3%	10.6%	2	11.8%						
Forward	13.9%	1814.5%	10.0%	2	11.8%							
Greens	7.3%	9	7.3%	22.8%	4	23.5%						
Workers' Party of Belgium	8.3%	9	7.3%	7.0%	1	5.9%						
Team Fouad Ahdar	0.3%	1	0.8%	16.5%	3	17.6%						
Socialist Party												
Reformist Movement												
Ecology Party												
Workers' Party of Belgium	12.1%	8	10.7%	20.9%	1	20.8%						
The Committed	20.7%	1722.7%	10.7%	8	11.1%							
Democratic Federalist	2.7%	0	0.0%	8.1%	6	8.3%						
Independent												
<i>Parties et organisations politiques</i>												
<i>Parties et organisations de luttes originales</i>												
Parti du travail de Belgique												
Les Engagés												
Démocrate Fédéraliste												
Indépendant												
<i>Parties et organisations de luttes originales</i>												
(PTB)												
(Les Engagés)												
(Défi)												
<i>Parties et organisations de luttes originales</i>												
Brussels (FR)												
Brussels FL												
Wallonia												
Flanders												
9 June 2025												
124	17						75					
4,913,718	597,149						2,604,084					
4,595,561	500,759						2,260,689					
93.5%	83.8%						86.8%					
4,379,440	470,140						2,068,766					
95.3%	93.9%						91.5%					
							93.9%					

Source: <https://elections.fgov.be/> (2024).

Elections for the Brussels regional Parliament are always peculiar due to the guaranteed over-representation of the small Flemish minority (17 of 89 seats) and the traditional diverging electoral results of the respective Flemish and Francophone parties. Among the French-speaking parties, MR and PTB-PVDA were the winners (respectively, +7 and +5 seats). Ecolo lost quite heavily (-8 seats), and so did Democratic Federalist Independent/*Démocrate Fédéraliste Indépendant* (Défi) (-4 seats) and, to a lesser extent, the PS (-1). Losses are mechanically lower for the Flemish parties, gaining or losing one seat each. At the end of December 2024, a new Brussels coalition was still not formed.

Finally, in the tiny area of *Ostbelgien* (German-speaking Community), corresponding to two German-speaking cantons and just under 80,000 inhabitants, the catch-all ethnolinguistic party Pro German speaking Community/*Pro Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft* (ProDG) took the lead with eight seats (+2) and prolonged its former coalition with the Socialists (SP) and the Liberals (Partei für Freiheit und Fortschritt - PFF) under the leadership of Oliver Paasch (ProDG) as Minister President.

Cabinet report

The electoral upheavals of 2024 profoundly influenced the federal government's functioning. In the initial months, all but one minister were actively campaigning for the upcoming elections of 9 June. In addition to the European, federal and regional election campaigns, the federal government was notably preoccupied during the first semester with activities related to Belgium's presidency of the Council of the European Union. A primary objective during this period was to advance key legislative initiatives, such as the Nature Restoration Law and the Artificial Intelligence Act, while also addressing the ongoing situation in Ukraine.

The day following the elections, the King declared the government to be in a caretaker position, a status that persisted throughout the year due to the absence of a newly formed federal government in 2024. As his party (N-VA) emerged victorious at the polls, Bart De Wever was appointed in June as *Informateur*, and subsequently as *Préformateur*, charged with identifying coalition partners for the forthcoming federal government. On 10 July, the King appointed De Wever as *Formateur*, a role designated when coalition partners are informally agreed upon, and negotiations focus on substantive issues. However, the summer proved unproductive for the five negotiating parties—N-VA, MR, Les Engagés, Vooruit and CD&V.

De Wever resigned on 23 August due to disagreements, notably regarding the tax on capital gains. Subsequently, Maxime Prévot, party president of Les Engagés, a centrist French-speaking party, was appointed *Médiateur* by the King. Prévot succeeded in his role, leading the parties to agree on 2 September to resume negotiations with De Wever as *Formateur*. Nevertheless, the proximity of local elections, scheduled for 13 October, complicated the negotiation process, as all party presidents—negotiators were simultaneously campaigning for local office. Negotiations resumed in earnest after 13 October, but De Wever expressed his intention to resign again on 4 November, a decision the King rejected, reaffirming De Wever's role as *Formateur* on 12 November following a new round of consultations. By the end of 2024, no significant breakthroughs had been achieved, and the caretaker De Croo I government remained in place, awaiting replacement.

The outgoing Cabinet underwent several reshuffles in 2024 (Table 4), primarily due to ministers being elected or appointed to other levels of government. Three ministers—Thomas Dermine (PS), Caroline Gennez (Vooruit) and Nicole de Moor (CD&V)—were elected to regional assemblies and took their oaths of office at the end of June or early July. As it is not permissible to concurrently hold the positions of minister and member of Parliament, they were compelled to resign from their ministerial roles for a few days. During this interim period, their portfolios were managed by co-partisan ministers until substitute candidates could replace them in Parliament. Taking the oath enabled them to secure their parliamentary seats, allowing them to return to Parliament should they not be reappointed as ministers in a future government.

Caroline Gennez (Vooruit) was appointed Minister of Welfare, Culture, Poverty Reduction and Equal Opportunities in the Flemish government, leading to her resignation on 30 September. Frank Vandenbroucke, the other minister from Vooruit, took over her portfolios. The local elections in October, with new local authorities assuming power from 1 December, further influenced Cabinet composition. Thomas Dermine (PS) resigned from his ministerial duties to become Mayor of Charleroi, as the mayoral position cannot legally be held concurrently with a ministerial role. In this case too, his co-partisan Pierre-Yves Dermagne took over his portfolios. Additionally, the European elections impacted the federal government, with Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib (MR) resigning on 1 December to assume the position of Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management in the Von der Leyen II European Commission. To replace Lahbib, MR appointed Bernard Quintin, an experienced diplomat with no prior front-stage political experience.

Parliament report

Following the general and regional elections, the composition of the Chamber of Representatives was significantly modified in terms of seats share across parties (Table 5). A share of Walloon MPs was replaced early after the election once the Walloon regional executive was constituted in July 2024. Pierre Jadoul (MR) replaced Valérie Glatigny, appointed as a minister in the government of the French Community. Pierre-Yves Jeholet (MR) was appointed as minister in the Walloon regional government and was replaced by Mathieu Bihet. Elisabeth Degrise (*Les Engagés*), appointed as Minister President of the French Community government, was replaced by Ismaël Nuino. Valérie Lescrenier (*Les Engagés*), appointed as minister in the Walloon government, was replaced by Carmen Ramlot. Xavier Dubois replaced Yves Coppieters (*Les Engagés*), appointed as minister in the Walloon government. There was only one replacement of Dutch-speaking elected representatives: Melissa Depraetere (*Vooruit*) was replaced by Axel Weydts on 29 September 2024. All these replacements also took place when the regional and community governments were formed on 18 July 2024. Additionally, Philippe Close (PS) decided to resign from his mandate to focus on his mayorship of the city of Brussels and was replaced by Khalil Aouasti on 4 July 2024 (Chambre des Représentants//Belgische Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers 2024).

Table 4. Cabinet composition of De Croo I in Belgium in 2024

Duration of Cabinet	Inception	1 January 2020		Dissolution	Still in office at the end of the year			
		From	1 January 2024		Until	31 December 2024		
Period covered by table	Type of Cabinet	Party/gender composition on 1 January 2024				Seats in Cabinet	Seats held by women	Seats in Parliament
						N	%	N
Socialist Party	<i>Parti socialiste</i>	(PS)	4	20.0%	2	50.0%	19	12.6%
Reformist Movement	<i>Mouvement réformateur</i>	(MR)	3	15.0%	1	33.3%	14	9.3%
Ecology Party	<i>Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales</i>	(Ecolo)	3	15.0%	2	66.6%	13	8.6%
Christian Democratic and Flemish	<i>Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams</i>	(CD&V)	3	15.0%	2	66.6%	12	8.0%
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	<i>Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten</i>	(Open VLD)	3	15.0%	1	33.3%	12	8.0%
Forward	<i>Vooruit</i>	(Vooruit)	2	10.0%	1	50.0%	9	6.0%
Green		(Groen)	2	10.0%	2	100.0%	8	5.3%
Totals			20	100.0%	11	55.0%	87	57.8%
B. Composition of De Croo I Cabinet on 1 January 2024								
See previous editions of the Political Data Yearbook for Belgium or http://politicaldatayearbook.com								

Table 4. (Continued)

C.	Changes in composition of De Croo I Cabinet during 2024 Ministerial title	Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister	Comments
Secretary of State for the Recovery and Strategic Investments, charged with Science Policy, adjunct to the Minister of Economy and Labour	<i>Secrétaire d'État pour la Relance et les Investissements</i> stratégiques, chargé de la Politique scientifique, adjoint au ministre de l'Économie et du Travail	Thomas Dermine (1986, male, PS)	24 June 2024	Pierre-Yves Dermagne (1980, male, PS)	Thomas Dermine resigned to take the oath as Deputy in the Walloon Regional Parliament where he has been elected after 9 June elections.
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister Vice-Premier ministre, ministre for the Economy and Labour, also responsible for Recovery and Strategic Investment, and Science Policy	<i>Vice-Premier ministre, ministre de l'Économie et du Travail, chargé en outre de la Relance et des Investissements</i> stratégiques, et de la Politique scientifique	Pierre-Yves Dermagne (1980, male, PS)	26 June 2024	Thomas Dermine (1986, male, PS)	Thomas Dermine took back his position after being replaced by a substitute in the Walloon Parliament.
Minister of Development Aid, charged with Large Cities	<i>Ministre de la Coopération au développement et de la Politique des grandes villes</i>	Caroline Gennez (1975, female, Vooruit)	1 July 2024	Frank Vandenbroucke (1955, male, Vooruit)	Caroline Gennez resigned to take the oath as Deputy in the Flemish Regional Parliament where she has been elected after 9 June elections.
Secretary of State of Asylum and Migration	<i>Secrétaire d'État à l'Asile et la Migration</i>	Nicole de Moor (1984, female, CD&V)	1 July 2024	Annelies Verlinden (1978, female, CD&V)	Nicole de Moor resigned to take the oath as Deputy in the Flemish Regional Parliament where she has been elected after 9 June elections.

Table 4. (Continued)

C.	Changes in composition of De Croo I Cabinet during 2024 Ministerial title	Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister	Comments
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health, also responsible for Development Aid and Large Cities	Vice-Premier ministre, ministre des Affaires sociales et de la Santé publique, chargé en ouvre de la Coopération au développement et de la Politique des grandes villes	Frank Vandenbroucke (1955, male, Vooruit)	4 July 2024	Caroline Gennez (1975, female, Vooruit)	Caroline Gennez took back her position after being replaced by a substitute in the Flemish Parliament.
Minister for the Interior, Institutional Reform and Democratic Renewal, with additional responsibility for Asylum and Migration	Ministre de l'Intérieur, des Réformes institutionnelles et du Renouveau démocratique, chargée en outre de l'Asile et la Migration	Annelies Verlinden (1978, female, CD&V)	4 July 2024	Nicole de Moor (1984, female, CD&V)	Nicole de Moor took back her position after being replaced by a substitute in the Flemish Parliament.
Minister of Development Aid, charged with Large Cities	Ministre de la Coopération au développement et de la Politique des grandes villes	Caroline Gennez (1975, female, Vooruit)	30 September 2024	Frank Vandenbroucke (1955, male, Vooruit)	Caroline Gennez resigned to become Minister in the Flemish government.
Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Federal Cultural Institutions	Ministre des Affaires étrangères, des Affaires européennes et du Commerce extérieur, et des Institutions fédérales	Hadjia Lahbib (1970, female, MR)	1 December 2024	Bernard Quintin (1971, male, MR)	Hadjia Lahbib resigned to become European Commissioner.
Secretary of State for the Recovery and Strategic Investments, charged with Science Policy, adjunct to the Minister of Economy and Labour	Secrétaire d'Etat pour la Relance et les Investissements stratégiques, chargé de la Politique scientifique, adjoint au ministre de l'Economie et du Travail	Thomas Dermine (1986, male, PS)	1 December 2024	Pierre-Yves Dermagne (1980, male, PS)	Thomas Dermine resigned to become Mayor of the city of Charleroi.

Table 4. (Continued)

D.	Party/gender composition on 31 December 2024	Seats in Cabinet		Seats held by women		Seats in Parliament		
		N	%	N	% of party	N	%	
Socialist Party	<i>Parti socialiste</i>	(PS)	3	20.0%	2	66.7%	16	10.7%
Reformist Movement	<i>Mouvement réformateur</i>	(MR)	3	15.0%	0	0.0%	19	12.7%
Ecology Party	<i>Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales</i>	(Ecolo)	3	15.0%	2	66.7%	2	1.3%
Christian Democratic and Flemish	<i>Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams</i>	(CD&V)	3	15.0%	2	66.7%	11	7.3%
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	<i>Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten</i>	(Open VLD)	3	15.0%	1	33.3%	8	5.3%
Forward	<i>Vooruit</i>	(Vooruit)	1	10.0%	0	0.0%	13	8.7%
Green	<i>(Groen)</i>	(Groen)	2	10.0%	2	100.0%	7	4.7%
Totals		18	100.0%	9	50.0%	76	50.7%	

Note:

As from 10 June, the government was a caretaker government, waiting a new government to be formed after the 9 June elections.

Source: CRISP (2025).

Table 5. Party and gender composition of the lower house of Parliament (Chambre des Représentants/Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers) in Belgium in 2024

Party	1 January 2024				9 June 2024				31 December 2024			
	All		Women		All		Women		All		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
New Flemish Alliance	24	16.0%	12	50.0%	24	16.0%	12	50.0%	24	16.0%	12	50.0%
Socialist Party	19	12.7%	7	36.8%	16	10.7%	5	31.3%	16	10.7%	5	31.3%
Flemish Interest	18	12.0%	6	33.3%	20	13.3%	9	45.0%	20	13.3%	9	45.0%
Reformist Movement	14	9.3%	4	28.6%	19	12.7%	6	31.6%	19	12.7%	5	26.3%
Ecology Party	13	8.7%	6	46.2%	3	2.0%	3	100.0%	3	2.0%	3	100.0%
pour l'organisation de lutes originales												
Christian Democratic and Flemish	12	8.0%	5	41.7%	11	7.3%	6	54.5%	11	7.3%	6	54.5%
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	12	8.0%	6	50.0%	8	5.3%	2	25.0%	8	5.3%	2	25.0%
Workers' Party of Belgium	12	8.0%	4	33.3%	15	10.0%	7	46.7%	15	10.0%	7	46.7%
Belgique-Partij Van de Arbeid van België												
Forward	9	6.0%	6	66.7%	13	8.7%	5	38.5%	13	8.7%	5	38.5%
Green	8	5.3%	4	50.0%	6	4.0%	2	33.3%	6	4.0%	2	33.3%
The Committed Democratic Federalist	5	3.3%	2	40.0%	14	9.3%	5	35.7%	14	9.3%	4	28.6%
Independent	2	1.3%	1	50.0%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
Totals	150	100.0%	63	42.0%	150	100.0%	62	41.3%	150	100.0%	60	40.0%

Sources: <https://elections.fgov.be/> (2024); Chambre des Représentants/Belgische Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers, Liste des membres de la Chambre et leurs suppléants. Lijst van de Kamerleden and van hun opvolgers, Session extraordinaire/Buitengewone zitting (2024).

Similar replacements (not listed here) also took place in the respective regional Parliaments.

Political party report

Few parties changed party leader (Table 6), the core actors in Belgium's partitocracy (De Winter 2026), as no party would like to combine an intraparty competition and internal candidate strife during the run-up to the federal, regional and European elections. In fact, many parties bent the mandate duration rules (maximum usually set at three or four years) and organised a non-statutory early leadership election into 2023 instead of the 2024 regular date (see Baudewyns et al., 2024).

After having provided the Prime Minister for four years, De Croo's party (Open Vld) was the biggest loser. His party's score had plummeted to single-digit scores in several 2023 polls, upon which the incumbent party President Egbert Lachaert resigned, and a party congress elected on 23 September 2023, the unknown Tom Ongena, a party apparatchik that served various lower public and party offices (with 59 per cent, vs. 29.0 per cent for Vincent Stuer and 11 per cent for Bert Schelfhout). His mandate was restricted to the aftermath of the October 2024 local elections. This late replacement did not save the party from its worst records ever (at the federal and regional elections) upon which Ongena resigned immediately. The party then organised leadership elections already on 17 August 2024. Six candidates ran, including front and backbenchers, in a new two-round election system. In the first round, 8500 members participated, hence about one out of five. Eva De Bleeker won with 26.3 per cent, but needed a second round, against Vincent Verbeecke (21.5 per cent in the first round), an unknown candidate who got support from some party bosses. Eva De Bleeker was a frontbencher but was also considered an anti-establishment candidate. On 8 November 2022, as Federal Minister of Budget, she resigned (or better was forced to resign by the PM) after a conflict with the PM over incorrect information regarding the new budget. On 24 August, De Bleeker was elected party leader (54.7 per cent vs. 43.4 per cent for Verbeecke, with 7704 members participating).

Both ecologist parties got a serious electoral beating, leading to leadership changes. In the Flemish *Groen*, the presidential duo Jeremie Vaneeckhout and Nadia Naji (elected in 2022) announced on 18 October their resignation after another electoral drop at the local elections (while also at the federal elections the party had already suffered a backlash to a single-digit percentage status). About all the members and frontbenchers hoped that Petra De Sutter would run, the incumbent *Groen* vice-PM and electorally most successful green frontbencher. But she decided not to run for personal reasons, while other frontbench candidates were not eager to run. In the end, three tandems presented their candidacy. Note that for the first time the 'duos' are not labelled anymore as 'co-presidents' but as 'president' and 'vice president'. In the first round, 3500 members chose (online) the duo Bart Dhondt and Bright Adiyia with 49.1 per cent against two other duos. In the second round (18–19 December), Dhondt and Adiyia confirmed their frontrunner status (with 59.1 per cent).

In the Francophone greens, Ecolo, the incumbent duo Rajae Maouane and Jean-Marc Nollet decided to resign on 12 June. Two duos ran for the co-presidency: Samuel Cogolati/Marie Lecocq (less but not unexperienced duo, with two backbenchers) and

Table 6. Changes in political parties in Belgium in 2024

Party leadership changes in 2024										
Forward	<i>Vooruit</i>	Vooruit	Melissa	Depraetere	1992	Female	Return after election win	18 July 2024	Conner	Rousseau
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	<i>Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten</i>	Open VLD	Tom	Ongena	1975	Male	Resigns due to election defeat, successor elections 6 candidates	24 August 2024	Eva	De Bleeker
Green	<i>Groen</i>	Groen	Jeremie	Vaneckhout	1985	Male	Resigns as copresident due to election defeat, successor elections 2 teams	19 December 2024	Bart	Dhondt
Green	<i>Groen</i>	Groen	Nadia	Naji	1992	Female	Resigns as copresident due to election defeat	13 July 2024	Samuel	Cogolati
Green	<i>Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales</i>	Ecolo	Jean-Marc	Nollet	1970	Male	Resigns as copresident due to election defeat, successor elections 2 duos	13 July 2024	Marie	Lecocq
Green	<i>Écologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales</i>	Ecolo	Rajae	Maouane	1989	Female	Resigns as copresident due to election defeat, successor elections 2 duos	13 July 2024	Sophie	Rohonyi
DéFI	<i>Démocrate Fédéraliste Indépendant</i>	DéFI	François	De Smet	1977	Male	Resigns due to election defeat, successor elections 2 candidates	July 5 2024	1987	Female
BELGIUM										
Sources: for Vooruit, https://www.vrt.be/vrtnews/fr/2024/07/18/conner-rousseau-reclu-president-de-voortuit-avec-94-des-voix/ ; for Open VLD, https://www.rtbf.be/article/eva-de-bleeker-devient-la-nouvelle-presidente-de-l-open-vld-11424440 ; for Groen, https://www.groen.be/bart-dhondt ; for Ecolo, https://ecolo.be/representant/samuel-cogolati/ ; for DéFI, https://www.defi.be/actualites/sophie-rohonyi-est-la-nouvelle-presidente-de-defi/ .										

Marie-Colline Leroy/Gilles Vanden Burre (more experienced duo, with a former Secretary of State and a parliamentary group leader). On 13 July, 800 Ecolo members elected in a general assembly Lecocq and Cogolati as new copresidents for the following four years.

Also, Sammy Mahdi's leadership of the CD&V was at stake at his first electoral test. The Christian Democratic Party was the predominant party in the postwar period (until 1999). This atypical Christian Democratic candidate (son of a Shiite Iraqi refugee) succeeded President Joachim Coens in May 2022 after his party collapsed in an opinion poll (8.7 per cent). As a single candidate, he was elected with 96.85 per cent! He managed to keep his party electorally afloat with 13 per cent. Despite this Pyrrhus victory, he managed to be invited from the beginning at the coalition talks started by (in-)Formateur and N-VA leader De Wever.

One of the main winners was the far-right separatists (who had been leading in all electoral polls), who logically continued with their populist leader, Tom Van Grieken (who was re-elected in 2023), as party leader of the *Vlaams Belang*, starting his 10th year as party president. But the *cordon sanitaire* of most other parties against this xenophobe anti-establishment party held, and thus Van Grieken and his troops were solidly contained to their parliamentary chair and were excluded from coalition formation.

A complex case was the return of so-called 'King Conner Rousseau' (a reference to his nickname on social media). The leader of *Vooruit* (Flemish socialists) had managed to become Flanders' most popular politician (Lefevere & Walgrave 2023), and his party rose in the polls from 10.8 per cent at the 2019 elections to 16.1 per cent. It regressed to 13.8 per cent after some racist slips of the tongue in 2023, which forced his resignation. Still, the party decided reluctantly to admit his candidacy in his constituency for the 2024 regional elections (as the last candidate on the list). He did obtain a very good score in terms of preference votes and thus rapidly launched his comeback. He was elected again as party president on 18 July 2024 (as a single candidate with 94 per cent). And as agreed, his stand-in, Melissa Depraetere (31 years, parliamentary group leader), who was elected on 18 November 2023, got promoted and became Minister and Vice-PM in the Flemish regional executive (30 September 2024).

The Francophone parties, the PS (Paul Magnette), *Les Engagés* (Maxime Prévot) and MR (Georges-Louis Bouchez) went to the elections headed by a president elected in the previous year(s), who all remained in position after Election Day. DéFI lost nearly half of its votes and became stranded at 1.2 per cent of the vote (concentrated in and around the Brussels region). The incumbent leader François De Smet announced his resignation the day after the elections. He was succeeded by Sophie Rohonyi on 5 July 2024 with 79 per cent of the member vote (while she had just lost her parliamentary seat) competing with one challenger, Emmanuel De Bock. Her mandate will end in December 2026.

The only genuine Belgian party, which competes in all three regions under a single leadership structure, is the far left PTB-PVDA. The current party leader Raoul Hedebourgh, started his mandate on 1 January 2022, elected as a single candidate with a 94 per cent majority of the member vote. Before and after the campaign, just about all the parties declared not wanting to form a coalition at the federal or regional levels with these communists, so MP Hedebourgh continues his role as one of the most eloquent opposition voices against the De Croo Cabinet.

Issues in national politics

During the first half of 2024, Belgium held the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Belgian Presidency ensured progress on important issues such as the European Green Pact, the digitisation of industry and cooperation between member states on foreign policy and in support of Ukraine, notably through the mobilisation of Russian assets frozen in the EU.

The year 2024 has also been the year of all elections. Federal, Community and Regional elections were coupled with the European elections on 9 June, followed four months later, in October, by local elections. This means that the governmental action of the Vivaldi coalition, already fragile in 2023 (see Baudewyns et al. 2024), grew increasingly timid during its final stretch ('its winter', we might say) given the pressure of the electoral campaign. It was bound to be even more so in the second half of the year, when, while a new government was in its prolonged birth throes (see above), the outgoing Vivaldi government stayed on as caretaker government.

In the absence of a full government, the federal budget for 2025 could not be passed. In consultation with the *Formateur* of the new government, Bart De Wever (N-VA), outgoing Prime Minister Alexander De Croo (Open Vld) adopted the so-called provisional twelfths for the first quarter of the following year, allowing, in particular, the payment of salaries in the public services. It should be noted that, during this period, Belgium came under pressure from NATO to increase its Defence budget in order to meet the target of devoting at least 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product to Defence, a requirement that had to be considered in the negotiations to form the new government coalition.

On the economic front, GDP growth slowed down: the Belgian economy grew by only 1.0 per cent in 2024, according to the estimates of the National Bank of Belgium, this being the slowest growth in four years, after a 1.5 per cent rise in the year before (see Basselier & Langenus 2025).

Inflation was on a downward trend, compared with previous years, falling from 4.06 per cent in 2023 to 3.14 per cent in 2024, mainly due to lower food and services prices. Yet, inflation in energy prices, not taken into account for wage indexation, picked up somewhat.

The number of fully compensated unemployed persons fell by 3.2 per cent in January 2024, compared with January 2023. It dropped below 300,000 in March. However, the unemployment rate in Belgium remained stable at 5.80 per cent in December 2024, compared with the one at the end of the previous year.

Belgium has faced a major industrial crisis, marked by a series of plant closures and far-reaching restructuring of many others. There was a drop in the creation of new businesses, combined with a significant increase in business bankruptcies: over 11,000, up 8 per cent from 2023, and the highest number in 12 years. A number of key sectors of the Belgian economy have been particularly hard hit, such as construction, steel, chemical and automobile industries.

The management of Audi Brussels, which had already contemplated restructuring in July, announced at the end of October its decision to close the plant definitively at the end of February 2025. As it has proved impossible to find a buyer by end 2024, closure seems inescapable. Some 3000 jobs will be lost, not counting those at parts suppliers.

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that, on the social front, Belgium has seen major strikes and labour unrest in various sectors of economic activities as well as in the health and education sectors. Most of them took place in the last quarter of the year.

On 1 October, the so-called Common Front of trade unions organised a national one-day strike to denounce the lack of industrial policy in Belgium and Europe. In the public and non-profit sectors, this Common Front demonstrated on 7 November to denounce the structural underfunding and deteriorating working conditions in these sectors of activity.

In November, as part of a wider movement of farmers' protests in Europe, Belgian farmers demonstrated for several days in Brussels and throughout the country, including at the borders, which they blocked several times, to denounce the free trade agreement between the European Union and Mercosur in which they saw unfair competition.

In the education sector of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (the French Community), the united front of trade unions called a strike on 26 November to protest against the budgetary measures envisaged by the new MR - Les Engagés government of this French Community.

On 13 December 2024, the united front of trade unions organised a national demonstration in Brussels against European austerity measures and the ongoing government negotiations, which involved measures such as wage freezes, indexation reform and cuts in public services.

The persistent crisis in the reception of asylum-seekers, for which the Belgian state was condemned the previous year by the European Court of Human Rights (see Baudewyns et al. 2024), worsened again this year. Belgium is one of the five European Union states with the highest number of asylum applications in relation to its population. With 39,615 applications for international protection registered in 2024 (a 12 per cent increase on the previous year), the Belgian reception system is saturated and has reached its limits, leaving many asylum seekers homeless and forcing them to squat in abandoned buildings or to sleep rough.

While institutional reforms are often a core issue in Belgian politics, and in federal and regional elections campaigns, sometimes they tend to be rather absent. The agenda and actions announced by the 2024 coalition agreement of the De Croo government were not very ambitious (SPF Justice 2024). The agreement contained just two pages on state reform (out of 82 pages), announcing the preparation of a comprehensive revision of the constitution, to be implemented in the next legislative term (i.e., after the 2024 general elections).

Hence, the seven government parties could not present a satisfying balance sheet of their reform realisations at the last months of De Croo legislative term. But the main opposition parties N-VA and *Vlaams Belang* refrained from doing so.

The separatist *Vlaams Belang* had piped down on community issues and focused strongly on migration (an issue it 'owned'). The more moderate independentist N-VA had been campaigning on classical institutional reform issues, an issue that it 'owned' since its creation in 2001. De Wever managed to ridicule the VB's unrealistic plans for instant independence, but at the same time concentrated its own campaign on the economy and welfare and immigration. He pledged to become PM to redress the Flemish economy, social security, the budget and taxation and follow a gradual path to the ill-defined model of confederalism.

As usual, all Francophone parties pleaded against further devolution and even asked for full recentralisation in the name of efficiency.

Note

1. In Belgium, most parties run in only one part of the country, either Flanders or French-speaking Belgium, explaining the low absolute vote share of the largest Belgian party.

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