

Call for Abstracts:

Unlocking the Benelux's Integration Potential

**Exploratory Workshop Benelux Research, Integration, Strength & Expertise Network
(BENELUX-RISE)**

Friday 22 May 2026
Secretariat-General of the Benelux, Brussels

Context and Mission

The Benelux countries share complex socio-economic challenges. Since 1944, many of these challenges have served as the engine for the development of the Benelux Union. Furthermore, within the EU context, the Benelux Union constitutes a unique testing ground for deeper economic and political integration.

However, the precise status, contours and potential of Benelux integration remain unclear. Within the three countries, there is a wealth of expertise that aligns with the challenges the Benelux Union focuses on. Some researchers also focus on the Benelux Union as an institution and a legal pioneer.

Although the region is characterized by a high concentration of knowledge institutions, the potential of cross-border scientific synergies often remains underutilized. Research still too frequently takes place within national silos, with economies of scale and comparative insights lost.

Our mission is to unlock the full potential of the Benelux Union and the Benelux + cooperation by transforming fragmented national expertise into a unified, cross-border research pivot. Through the Benelux-RISE network, we mobilize targeted research to drive deeper integration, leveraging the unique strengths of our knowledge institutions to provide specialized expertise on regional challenges and opportunities.

We provide the critical intellectual infrastructure needed to challenge existing cooperation models—such as in police coordination and diploma recognition—while actively exploring untapped domains. Through interdisciplinary dialogue and rigorous critique, we aim to drive the strategic evolution of the Benelux as Europe's premier testing ground for regional integration and provide a solid academic foundation for its future.

Purpose of the Workshop

We invite experts from all disciplines to reflect on their own field of study. The goal is not merely to present completed research, but also to identify interesting perspectives and synergies. Which data, methodologies, or policy issues within your domain (potentially) cry out for a Benelux framework? The presentations serve as fuel for future (interdisciplinary) research projects and dynamics.

With this first workshop, the Benelux-RISE network intends to conduct an initial exploration of the Benelux's potential from various research perspectives. We are looking for existing research and identifying the needs for additional analysis. We invite researchers to reflect critically from their own discipline with the primary goal of getting a picture of "*unexplored territory*". We are looking for contributions that do not merely describe the status quo, but that actively identify knowledge gaps and strategic opportunities for future interdisciplinary research.

In this way, we aim to lay a robust foundation for research collaboration and the continuous strengthening of a scientific community focusing on and supporting the further development and the integration of the Benelux cooperation.

What are We Looking for?

We welcome abstracts that address questions such as:

- *Which discipline-specific issues can be solved faster through Benelux cooperation? Established Benelux-Union or Benelux-Union + initiatives—such as police cooperation, automatic diploma recognition, etc. can be emphasized, but there is also room to explore the need for collaboration in untapped fields.*
- *Where is the “hidden potential” (economic, social, technological, legal, historical, cultural, geographical, etc.) that currently remains underutilized within the Benelux Union?*
- *How can your expertise build a bridge to other fields of study in Benelux research? How can your Benelux-Union related or Benelux-Union+ research be strengthened by integrating interdisciplinary insights from operational and technical fields to move beyond traditional frameworks?*

Guidelines for Submission

- *Abstract:* Maximum 400 words.
- *Language:* Dutch, French, or English.
- *Deadline for abstract submission:* **6 April 2026**. Please send abstracts to Loth Van der Auwermeulen, loth.vanderauwermeulen@uhasselt.be.
- *Communication of selected abstracts and program:* 21 April 2026.

Workshop Conveners / Network Initiators

Dr. **Loth Van der Auwermeulen**, Postdoctoral Researcher of European administrative law and Research Coordinator Faculty of Law, Hasselt University

Prof. Dr. **Jan Wouters**, Jean Monnet Chair *ad personam*, Professor of International Law and International Organizations, KU Leuven