



**THIS IS**  
★  
HENDRIK VOS  
FRANS GRAPPERHAUS  
**EUROPE**

Beste genodigde,

Van 1 januari tot 30 juni 2024 is België voor de dertiende keer voorzitter van de Raad van de Europese Unie (EU). De Raad van de EU bestaat uit alle bevoegde ministers van de Europese lidstaten, daarom ook wel de Ministerraad genoemd.

Vanuit België wordt hiervoor de bevoegde Minister afgevaardigd, dat kan zowel een federale als een regionale Minister zijn.

De voorzitter van de Raad coördineert de werking ervan en bevordert de samenwerking tussen de lidstaten. Onder het Belgische voorzitterschap vinden er meer dan 530 informele en rond 2000 formele bijeenkomsten plaats. Dat gaat dan niet alleen om ministeriële vergaderingen en toppen op het niveau van staatshoofden en regeringsleiders, maar ook over alle voorbereidende vergaderingen en informele bijeenkomsten van de Raadswerkgroepen en samenkomsten van de Ambassadeurs van lidstaten bij de EU.

De Belgische Ambassade en de Algemene Afvaardiging Vlaanderen in Nederland spelen, elk binnen hun bevoegdheidsdomein, ook een ondersteunende rol voor het werk dat in Brussel en andere Belgische steden gebeurt. Ter ere van ons voorzitterschap nodigen wij u daarom uit om een stap terug te zetten van de dagelijkse drukte en een kijkje te nemen naar een aantal van de meest opmerkelijke gebeurtenissen rondom de EU in de theatervoorstelling *Dit is Europa*.

Er wacht u een kleurrijke voorstelling met de nodige 'Belgitude' in Theaterzaal de Brakke Grond te Amsterdam. De Belgische Ambassade en de Algemene Afvaardiging Vlaanderen in Nederland hopen alvast van harte u daar te mogen ontvangen!

Wij bedanken onze partner, De Brakke Grond, om deze voorstelling mede mogelijk te maken.



Honorable guests,

For the 13th time already, Belgium is holding during this first semester of 2024 the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. It does so at a moment when Europe stands at a crossroad, with the upcoming European elections and with numerous geopolitical challenges to be faced, both inside Europe, at its borders, within the multilateral rules-based order and globally.

In these times that require joint leadership and commitment, the Belgian presidency is working towards better protecting citizens, strengthening cooperation and preparing the shared future of current and aspiring members of the European family.

Much has changed since the days when Belgium co-founded what is today called the European Union. Belgium has changed. The EU has changed. The world has changed. In hosting *This is Europe* today, we invite you to briefly hit the pause button on the most pressing issues of the day, take a step back and have a closer look at some of the most remarkable people and events that have shaped our shared past and future alike. No dry and dull history, rest assured. Rather, a creative and colorful performance, with the necessary dose of Belgitude, and which we hope will make you realize that also today, together in an ever stronger and larger Union, we can find answers to the challenges we face.



## PARTNERS



Europe has a rich diversity of countries, cultures, languages and histories. Europeans may sometimes quarrel but they listen to each other, live together and build a common future. That is the foundation of European democracy.

The European Union was built in consultation and compromise. It is important to keep reminding ourselves of this, especially at a time when authoritarianism is on the rise.

## WHY THIS PLAY?

Today the European Union seems self-evident: member states form a common market, borders have disappeared, there is a single currency. As if it could not be any other way.

Only in retrospect, however, the European project seems inevitable. As if the French and Germans spontaneously began working together after World War II. As if all the next steps in the unification process logically followed each other. As if only one way was possible.

The European Union has always been a project under permanent construction. It has grown organically. The pioneers did not know where their plans would take them. They improvised and were inspired by coincidence and opportunity. But people were always key. Their ambitions and fears, their hopes and nightmares, their willingness or refusal to work together.

Today is no different. This play shows how people with often very different dreams, interests, backgrounds and expectations worked together for European unification and inspired the path we are on today.



# THE PLAY

This is Europe - a fascinating journey across the European continent.



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Hendrik Vos & Frans Grapperhaus, a Belgian-Dutch duo. They share a deep interest in, if not fascination for, with Europe.

What actually is the European Union, or rather, who is the European Union? Hendrik Vos offers an intriguing answer to this question. In this eponymous theater performance he brings his book *This is Europe* (in Dutch: *Dit is Europa*) to the stage.

After countless successful performances in Belgium, it is now time for a large-scale tour throughout Europe. Hendrik and Frans build Europe on the stage and present the history of the unification in a series of encounters that inspired great dreams and deeds.

Humour, music, misunderstandings and compelling anecdotes are the life and breath of *This is Europe*.

Frans Grapperhaus's cello provides a live soundtrack to this living history. With one world-famous composition – the European hymn – and some of his own creations, he contributes to the magic of this unique performance. Vos and Grapperhaus take you on a fascinating journey across the continent!

# THE KEY PLAYERS

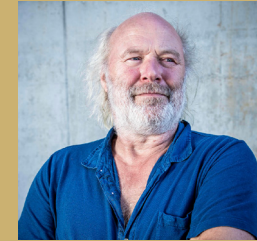


**HENDRIK VOS**

Vos is a Belgian political scientist affiliated to Ghent University, where he teaches on the history of European integration and on current issues of European politics.

He is a columnist for the Belgian quality paper *De Standaard*.

Through books, podcasts and media appearances he illuminates the intricacies of European politics to a large audience.



**FRANS GRAPPERHAUS**

Grapperhaus is an internationally acclaimed Dutch cellist who has been living in Belgium for many years.

He previously created a solo performance on Bach's cello suites. Except for the European hymn, the music for this performance is entirely his own.



**FILIP STANDAERT**

Directs performances and creates exhibitions. Standaert conceives and realizes very diverse artistic and social projects, in cocreation with specialists.

He is the co-founder of *Handelsreizigers in ideeën* [Merchants in ideas](Ghent, Belgium) that delivers ideas and devises customized concepts.



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## BELGITUDE

### Favorite Belgian artist?

**Hendrik** “Panamarenko, the visual artist who cobbled together insane boats, helicopters and flying carpets. You look at it and think: it could work.”

**Frans** “I think the rock singer Arno encapsulates the soul of Belgium.”

**Filip** “The visual artist Francis Alÿs. His ‘strolls’ often have social and political overtones. A playful artist at the same time.”

### Favorite Belgian song?

**Hendrik** “*Solo Gigolo* by Arno. Especially the version he made shortly before his death. Absolute beauty and deep sadness flow together in the most deeply felt song I know.”

**Frans** “*Mijn vlakke land* by Jacques Brel. Flanders and Belgium are so incredibly beautifully portrayed here.”

**Filip** “*Ça plane pour moi* by Plastic Bertrand. The author-singer Lou Deprijck remained in the shadows for a long time. Absurd lyrics and delightfully danceable Belgian punk.”

### Favorite Belgian dish?

**Hendrik** “Asparagus the Flemish way. That is with eggs, parsley and plenty of butter.

And for dessert a *Geraardsbergse mattentaart*, a regional heritage product!”

**Frans** “Chicory. In Belgian cuisine, chicory is eaten in all its forms: stewed, in a salad, with cheese and ham around it, ...”

**Filip** “Belgian fries with mussels and tartare sauce.”

### Favorite Belgian drink?

**Hendrik** “It is hard to choose among those hundreds of delicious beers. So I am not going for beer, but for the non-alcoholic *Gimber*. It is a ginger drink, with a secret spice blend in. For anyone who wants to turn 100.”

**Frans** “*Omer*, a natural blonde beer of high fermentation with refermentation in the bottle.”

**Filip** “*RoomeR*, a slightly sweet aperitif based on elderflower.

### Favorite historical figure from *This is Europe*?

**Hendrik** “Robert Schuman, the balding antihero with his crumpled suit and glasses, who, almost by accident, kicked off European unification.”

**Frans** “Wim Beyen obviously, the cellist. No explanation required.” *(smiles)*

**Filip** “Paul-Henri Spaak because he highly valued culture and social responsibility.”

### Define the European Union in one or two words?

**Hendrik** “Compromise Factory”

**Frans** “Boundless”

**Filip** “Gesamtkunstwerk”



# CREDITS

Text & acting: Hendrik Vos  
Cello & acting: Frans Grapperhaus  
Concept & direction: Filip Standaert - Handelsreizigers in ideeën  
Light design: Alexander Ronsse & Gilles Balcaen - TheaTech  
Design blocks: De Keiberg  
Translation script: Helen White - Snapdragon Translations  
Coaching English: Lode Demetter - Ape Translations  
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