

# Belgium political crisis looms over EU presidency

As Belgians head to the polls, there are fears that a new government will not be formed before the country assumes the rotating EU presidency on July 1. After the last general election in 2007, it took nine months for political parties, split into linguistic groups, to forge a coalition agreement

## KEY EVENTS IN POLITICAL CRISIS

■ **Jun 2007:** Flemish Christian Democrats, headed by **Yves Leterme**, score large gains in elections on pledge to give more power to Belgium's regions

■ **Dec:** Leterme fails in attempt to form government. **King Albert II** reappoints previous premier **Guy Verhofstadt** to head interim government

■ **Feb-Mar, 2008:**

Five-party coalition agreed. Government headed by Leterme sworn in

■ **Jul:** Leterme offers to resign after failing to reach agreement on power-sharing deal between Dutch- and French-speaking regions. King refuses to accept resignation

■ **Dec:** Government collapses amid scandal over rescue of stricken bank **Fortis**

## REGIONS

■ **Flanders**  
*Dutch-speaking*

■ **Brussels**  
*Officially bilingual*

■ **Wallonia**  
*Mainly French-speaking*



■ **Jan 2009:** Christian Democrat **Herman Van Rompuy** becomes prime minister at head of coalition largely unchanged from Leterme's

■ **Nov:** Leterme returns to office after Van Rompuy is appointed to new post of President of European Council

■ **Apr 2010:** Coalition fractures in row over francophone voting rights in suburbs of Brussels. Leterme resigns but stays on in caretaker role

■ **Jun 13:** National elections held