

Activity report 2023



CONTENTS

CONTENTS 1

1. Introduction 3

 Introduction by Patrick BONTINCK – CEO BY VISIT.BRUSSELS 4

2. Image of Brussels 6

 Development of the BRUSSELS brand and international city marketing: 6

 • Brussels Days 7

 • Brussels Houses 7

 • The Brussels Region at MIPIM 7

 B2C communication campaigns 7

 Brussels Night Council and nightlife promotion 8

3. Leisure tourism 9

 Tourist information 9

 Tourism products 10

 National and international tourism communication 10

 Partner events 11

 Travel Trade and carrier partnerships 12

4. Business tourism..... 13

 International trade fairs and marketing initiatives 13

 Conference and trade show bids 13

 Support Programme 13

 Ambassador Programme 14

5. Events and promoting the Region 15

 Bright Festival..... 15

 Tram Experience 15

 Iris Festival..... 15

 The BD Comic Strip Festival 16

 Eat Festival..... 16

 Brussels Pride 16

6. Promoting culture..... 17

 Cultural promotion and ticketing..... 17

 Cultural promotion 17

 Support for cultural activities and events: 18

 Developing cultural experiences 18

Film Commission 18

7. Brussels, capital of Europe 19

 Increasing the attractiveness of the European Quarter 19

 International associations 19

 The Association Place 20

 Press Club..... 20

 Europe Direct 20

 Welcoming expatriates 20

8. Sustainability, diversity, equity & inclusion..... 21

 Sustainability 21

 Accessibility..... 21

 Inclusion 22

9. Specific visit.brussels missions in 2023..... 23

 Ticketing Interfacing Platform (REACT EU)..... 23

 Adapting to Brexit (BAR Actions) 23

 Art Nouveau Year 24

 30 Years of BELIRIS 24

 Preparing for the Belgian presidency of the EU Council 24

 Gourmet roadshow in Mougins..... 25

 I Love Science Festival 25

 Digital Spring..... 25

 Closer collaboration with the municipality of Ganshoren 26

1. Introduction

visit.brussels ASBL is the Brussels promotion and communications agency dedicated to:

- promoting tourism, culture and events in the Brussels-Capital Region
- creating experiences that leverage its many assets
- offering a warm welcome to visitors, from leisure and business travellers to international associations

We energise the city and create unique experiences for visitors and residents alike.

Introduction by Patrick BONTINCK – CEO BY VISIT.BRUSSELS

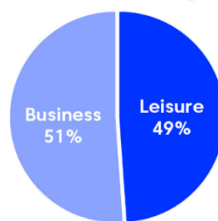
Hotel occupancy rate



70%

+9.6 points vs 2022

Breakdown of overnight stays



2022 : 47% business; 53% leisure



32nd

Brussels' international ranking in the Global Destination Sustainability Index*



8,4/10

Overall visitor satisfaction with the destination (TripAdvisor, Google, etc.)**



5,2 million

visitors of museums and attractions***

* 2022: 21st with an overall score of 76%. This 32nd place reflects the significant growth of the GDS Index in 2023. Some 42 DMOs recently joined the GDS movement.

** 2022 : 8,3 / 10 - Source: MMGY TCI Research

*** + 22% vs 2022 - Source : Museum barometer (panel of 37 museums and attractions)

To consult our destination barometers and recent studies, please click on the following link:

[Tourism facts and figures | visit.brussels](#)

2023 marked a turning point for the tourism sector, symbolising a recovery after years of disruption. With increased visitor numbers at attractions and museums, as well as a notable rise in hotel occupancy rates, Brussels demonstrated its ability to return to performances close to the record year of 2019, while bringing its prices in line with those of other European cities. 2023 also saw the return of business tourism, once again balancing the leisure and business segments. These advances are in line with visit.brussels' objective of stimulating the local economy and creating jobs, without neglecting the importance of preventing overtourism.

For visit.brussels, 2023 was the year we reaffirmed our commitment to sustainable and inclusive tourism. Our strategy of co-creation, in close collaboration with all the players in the sector, proved its effectiveness, transforming Brussels into an attractive destination that fulfils the expectations of visitors without neglecting the needs of its residents. The acceleration of our digital transition has strengthened our internal cohesion and enhanced our external impact, signalling a successful transition to an approach adapted to new tourism consumption habits. Lastly, the successful completion of the city marketing project and the BRUSSELS brand demonstrates the effectiveness of public-private partnerships and underlines the value of working together to create a unified destination.

As we look ahead to 2024, we remain focused on reducing our environmental footprint and on the power of tourism to bring cultures together, especially in these times of international tension. visit.brussels has reduced its environmental footprint by implementing several measures, including reducing its production of paper brochures, promoting sustainable mobility through bicycle touring, including the STIB transport network map in its publications and supporting partners as they adopt practices ecologically responsible practices. What's

more, the association has encouraged the use of reusable materials and obtained the Green Key eco-label for its BIP Meeting Centre, demonstrating its commitment to environmental sustainability.

Tourism aims to bring people together by building bridges and creating channels for dialogue. This aspect of our mission must continue at all costs. We will therefore continue to promote sustainable visiting alternatives and encourage tourism that enriches both visitors and local residents.

This report highlights our successes over the past year and sets our course for the future, demonstrating our commitment to making Brussels a first-class destination that pioneers sustainable, innovative and inclusive tourism. It underlines the vital importance of public investment in promotion, without which our vision and efforts risk not reaching their full potential. We invite you to discover how we are tackling today's challenges and preparing Brussels for tomorrow's opportunities, with the goal of shaping a tourism industry that is responsible, committed and connected to the world.

2. Image of Brussels

KPIs:



Actions taken

In 2023, visit.brussels orchestrated a series of strategic initiatives to promote Brussels as a top destination, targeting both visitors and tourism professionals. visit.brussels strengthened the capital's image on the international stage through a robust city marketing strategy, international actions and promotional campaigns. These visit.brussels initiatives included efforts focused in particular on mobilising and promoting Brussels' nightlife, notably through the Brussels Night Council.

Development of the BRUSSELS brand and international city marketing

2023 saw major achievements, with the creation of the visual and narrative identity of the new international city marketing brand, BRUSSELS. visit.brussels involved over 450 participants through seven educational workshops and four online sessions, reinforcing the commitment of public and private players to promoting Brussels internationally. Brand deployment tools such as a manifesto film, a graphic charter, a photo library and templates were also made available to partners via an online brand hub. These different initiatives allowed visit.brussels to act as a catalyst in consolidating the image of Brussels, as well as facilitating the involvement of stakeholders in promoting the Region.



Flagship initiatives of the new BRUSSELS brand and international impact

• Brussels Days

In 2023, the Brussels Days, co-organised by hub.brussels, brussels.international and visit.brussels, took place in Barcelona and Madrid. This annual event aims to promote Brussels on the international scene by facilitating high-level networking and showcasing the Region's economic dynamism, know-how, creativity, cultural wealth, gastronomy and tourist appeal.



• Brussels Houses

Brussels Houses are the result of a collaboration between visit.brussels and hub.brussels to create a space that brings the Brussels community together internationally while promoting the attractiveness and expertise of Brussels. These spaces, in which visit.brussels applied the concepts of the international BRUSSELS brand, embody the image of a dynamic, innovative, creative Brussels that is open to the world. In 2023, Brussels Houses were launched in Milan and Barcelona. Opening in Barcelona's Poble Nou district and Milan's Porta Nuova underlines the importance of these cities as key centres for fashion, design, tourism, innovation and finance. These venues serve as showcases for Brussels products and lifestyle, offering a sensory insight into the Region through immersive staging and marking an important step in the international promotion of Brussels.



• The Brussels Region at MIPIM

The world's leading real estate market event, MIPIM, showcased Brussels' ambitions in the real estate sector by bringing together major players and highlighting the Region's development projects. visit.brussels worked with hub.brussels, AWEX and private Flemish partners to set up a large-scale Belgian pavilion called "Surreal Estate in Belgium". www.surreal-estate.be



B2C communication campaigns

visit.brussels dynamically promoted the cultural and tourist scene through multi-sector communication campaigns, covering aspects such as gastronomy, artisanal shopping and cultural offerings even during the low season. For example, the "Janvier c'est nul, mais pas à Bruxelles" (January sucks, but not in Brussels) campaign allowed visit.brussels to transform the perception of January, often seen as an off-peak period, into a unique opportunity to discover

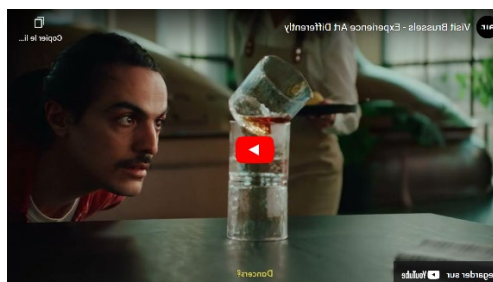
Brussels in a new light. This digital campaign, which focused on a rich offering of local activities, aimed to position Brussels as the must-visit destination for the start of the year.

The spring campaign, with the slogan "*Experience Art-Architecture-Music differently in Brussels*", targeted a range of international audiences and invited visitors to explore the city's cultural diversity through art, architecture and music.

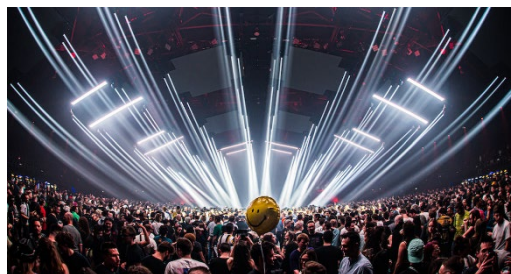
The autumn cultural campaign also aimed to boost tourism and cultural consumption, by inviting an international audience to discover what Brussels has to offer in art, architecture, music and the performing arts.

In 2023, visit.brussels systematically integrated the calculation of its campaigns' carbon footprint, covering both media production and consumption. Creative productions were adapted to favour local and sustainable shoots, while the carbon footprint of campaigns was optimised through the use of carbon footprint calculation and management tools specific to the communications and media sector, such as *Impact+* and *CommToZero*. The Art Nouveau 2023 campaign also won a bronze award at the MIXX Awards 2023 for its sustainable digital marketing.

Lastly, in 2023, visit.brussels worked on an international B2C marketing plan to decentralise tourism throughout the year. From 2024, this plan will enable the message and timing of our communications to be adjusted according to the interests and booking behaviour of each priority market.



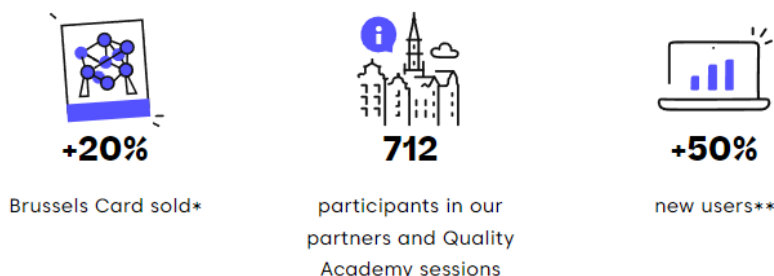
Brussels Night Council and nightlife promotion



In 2023, visit.brussels actively promoted the Region's nightlife, both permanent (clubs and bars) and temporary (a growing number of festivals with national and international reach, such as Listen, CORE, Nuits Sonores, Rave Rebels, Paradise City, Horst, Voodoo Village). At the same time, significant effort was devoted to developing the Brussels Night Council, a body whose mission is to centralise information on nightlife, facilitate collaboration between different sectors and coordinate the development of a regional nightlife plan. Initiatives for 2023 included the creation of the architecture and identity of the Brussels Night Council, a survey of nightlife perceptions involving 2,200 respondents, a regional proposal for a Night Charter for municipalities and the analysis and formulation of urban planning proposals. The Brussels Night Council was also involved in the inclusion of clubbing culture in the Brussels Region's inventory of intangible cultural heritage, and in supporting the reopening of FUSE.

3. Leisure tourism

KPIs:



* 2022 : 17.250 - 2023 : 20.660 ** August to December 2023 vs 2022 (the new digital ecosystem was launched in August 2022)

Actions taken

In 2023, visit.brussels' commitment to offering a quality tourism experience was demonstrated through a range of initiatives and products aimed at promoting Brussels as a first-rate cultural and tourist destination.

Tourist information

At a time when information is just a click away, visit.brussels is reinventing the role of tourist information offices with an omnichannel approach. visit.brussels uses this approach to emphasise its expertise, showcasing local talent and serving as a multilingual information hub. Thanks to new internal processes, visit.brussels increased its response speed, in three to six languages, to interactions by email, on social networks and via the instant messaging integrated into its web portal. Visit.brussels also laid the foundations for a network of partners able to disseminate quality information via QR codes and the preparation of an extranet. In addition, in 2023, the visit.brussels welcome points open 363 days a year, the 50 digital kiosks, the six 'coucou.brussels' cabins and the experience.brussels exhibition completed the offer of information, advice and inspiration for local or international visitors on everything that Brussels has to offer.



In all, almost 300,000 interactions with visitors were recorded; of these, 285,000 were at visit.brussels information desks, with an overall customer satisfaction score of 9/10 for the quality of interactions via instant messaging and for the services offered by the information desks.

Last but not least, we enhanced the customer experience at tourist reception desks by hosting a temporary pop-up store, "Le Chat déambule", accessible during the Philippe Geluck sculpture exhibition in the Parc de Bruxelles. Visit.brussels also partnered with STIB to create a tram out of

LEGO ® bricks in the association's colours. Lastly, the visit.brussels range of articles for sale underwent a metamorphosis, starting with its B2C range of publications, including the **Green Walk Guide**, the **Bicycle Plan** and the **"Brussels in your pocket" nano-guide**. These initiatives enabled the BIP information desk to be turned into an attractive pop-up store, offering visitors an enhanced, interactive experience.

Tourism products

In 2023, visit.brussels developed and promoted a whole series of flagship tourism products that together promoted cultural discovery, sustainable tourism and tourism decentralisation. The **Brussels Card** was at the heart of this dynamic, with 2023 seeing a record 20,000 copies sold, providing easy access to museums and attractions at reduced prices. It is a testament to visit.brussels' commitment to an enriching and accessible tourist experience.

The development of City Life products and experiences aims to offer visitors authentic and varied local experiences. In 2023, visit.brussels' actions in this area were illustrated by flagship initiatives such as the deployment of **Greeters**, the launch of the **Volume Pass**, the strengthening and promotion of the district offer and the promotion of Brussels' gastronomic offering. Activities linked to the deployment of Greeters was a great success, with 428 walks organised in their company (compared with 333 in 2022). These walks received an excellent satisfaction rate of 99.15%. The Volume Pass, meanwhile, allows visitors to experience the full wealth of Brussels nightlife at a reasonable price. In 2023, visit.brussels' development of City Life products and experiences also involved the promotion of local gastronomic delights in Brussels, including the famous Best Shrimp Croquette competition, the awarding of our **"Brusselicious"** label recognising the best local cuisine in our capital (awarded to 36 Brussels establishments), and the creation of a **Best Brussels Beer Bar** label targeting some seven establishments.



National and international tourism communication

In 2023, visit.brussels actively promoted Brussels on the international scene with a dynamic strategy of press actions and collaboration with international bloggers. In total, almost 3,100 print articles and 6,700 online articles about Brussels as a tourist destination were published in Belgium in 2023, for a total media value of over €65,200,000 and an audience of 570 million people. To encourage Belgians to visit Brussels too, three press partnerships were signed with French-speaking media (RTBF tv - Les ambassadeurs, RTL tv - la Grande Balade) and Dutch-speaking media (VRT radio - MNM Summertime).

To promote the image of Brussels and enhance its international appeal, visit.brussels orchestrated over 100 press trips, welcoming 389 journalists. Guests included media such as The

Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, TV5 Monde, TF1, Libération, Le Figaro and Il Corriere della Sera. These initiatives aimed to showcase the dynamism of local players in our destination through press trips that prioritised sustainable means of transport such as the STIB or the train, to limit the carbon footprint.

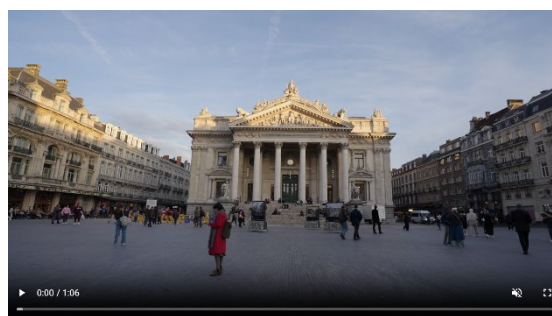
With regard to the visit.brussels digital ecosystem, the association introduced a differentiated content approach according to the audience, enabling a more personalised customer experience. In 2023, visit.brussels also translated the content of the web portal for B2C visitors and most of the content for B2B audiences into Spanish and Italian. visit.brussels is also aiming to capture the hearts of a new audience with the launch of its TikTok account, on which more than 100 videos have already been posted.

Partner events

In 2023, visit.brussels organised several major events to highlight the important role played by all its partners and provide them with the most relevant information possible. Among these events, the **visit.brussels Awards** took centre stage as they celebrated excellence in six categories, ranging from Brussels' international influence to digital innovation, sustainable initiatives and bold new projects. The event brought together 180 guests at Belgian Beer World, with 82 applications submitted and 73 accepted, highlighting the diversity and wealth of the Region's tourism initiatives. With 9,500 voters involved in electing the winners, this event underlined the importance of collaboration between partners and the active role played by the public and professionals in promoting tourism in Brussels.



The **visit.brussels Activation Day** 2023 was also an opportunity for partners to discover the projects implemented by visit.brussels. The **visit.brussels Meet Day** aimed to bring all the players in the tourism industry together for a major networking event. The **visit.brussels Open Day** was an opportunity to showcase visit.brussels' services and strategy. Lastly, the **visit.brussels Co-Creation Day** took place in December 2023 as a co-creation event between visit.brussels and its tourism and cultural partners. During this day, visit.brussels and all its partners worked together not only to enhance our tourism and cultural activities, but also to develop concrete, relevant actions that meet the needs and expectations expressed by visitors and partners.



In addition, over the course of the year, the organisation of around 20 **roundtables with specific sectors or with Brussels municipalities** enabled targeted, in-depth exchanges, resulting in effective collaboration, partnerships and outcomes tailored to the specific needs of Brussels' sectors or municipalities and also promoting the decentralisation of tourism in the Region.

The **visit.brussels Academy's Brussels Experts** training course, aimed at hotel receptionists in 2023, provided expertise and in-depth training on tourist attractions, cultural activities and local initiatives, improving their ability to promote the Brussels tourism experience.

Where appropriate, this ongoing work to support partners is carried out in consultation, collaboration and co-organisation with professional federations in the sectors concerned and with other existing PIOs (perspective.brussels, hub.brussels, urban.brussels, etc.).

[VB Meet Day](#) - [VB Open Day](#) - [VB Co-Creation Day](#)

Travel Trade and carrier partnerships

visit.brussels exploited Brussels' strategic position at the heart of Europe to establish key partnerships with international carriers, with a view to amplifying the impact and reach of its actions. These collaborations included an exchange contract with **Brussels Airlines**, close cooperation with Brussels Airport, partnerships with **Eurostar** and the inauguration of the Berlin-Brussels night train service in collaboration with **European Sleeper**. These initiatives aim to bolster the transport offer to Brussels, thus reinforcing its status as a major rail hub and facilitating access to the capital for international visitors. This demonstrates visit.brussels' commitment to making the city even more accessible, sustainable and attractive for global tourism.



The partnerships with carriers were exploited to target Travel Trade players (tour operators, travel agencies, etc.) in markets linked to Brussels. This led to the organisation of **famtrips** and the very first "**Brussels - Your European Train Hub**" event for customers in the tourism sector, in collaboration with different railway companies. The event included a workshop with Brussels partners and site visits to promote Brussels as a European rail hub. A total of ten site visits were organised for the French, German, Dutch, South Korean and Spanish markets. The destination was also promoted through a number of marketing campaigns...



4. Business tourism

KPIs:



Business Events overnight stays*

435.856



B2B Events**

1.940



Brussels UIA ranking***

#1

* overnight stays for conventions confirmed or supported by the Convention Association Bureau and held in 2023. + 155% vs 2022

** business meetings held/organised on our stands by visit.brussels and its partners. 2022 data not available.

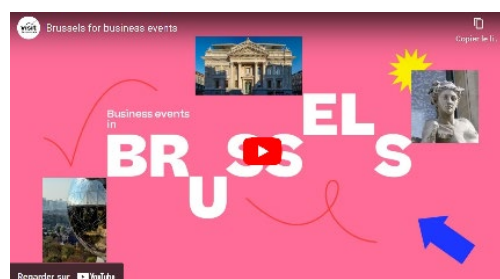
*** Brussels ranked in the "Most Popular meeting cities" category of the Union of International Associations in 2022. 2021 : 1st.

Actions taken

In 2023, visit.brussels boosted Brussels' visibility and attractiveness on the international market through targeted strategic initiatives, including participation in international trade fairs, the deployment of MICE sales initiatives, support for congress, trade show and event organisers, and the activation of the Ambassador Programme. Each of these actions helped to promote Brussels as a destination of choice for tourism and business events.

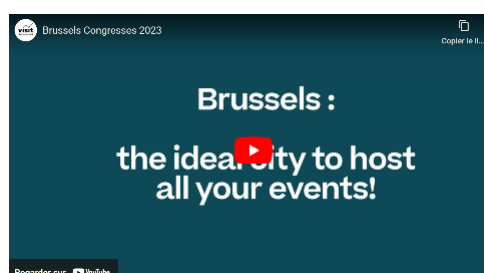
International trade fairs and marketing initiatives

visit.brussels attended a number of international trade fairs, mainly in Europe, drawing attention to Brussels in the MICE tourism sector. With notable participation at IMEX Frankfurt and IBTM, visit.brussels adopted a sustainable and reusable stand concept, underlining its commitment to the environment. The year also saw 19 innovative sales initiatives. These varied and interactive actions, such as "Brussels on the Road" and sales missions, helped to expand the visit.brussels network, give our prospects a Brussels experience and strengthen the destination's appeal.



Conference and trade show bids

visit.brussels actively canvassed and worked closely with local experts on bids to host new conferences and trade shows. The teams also defended 20 bids, with 12 winning bids in 2023. These efforts included hosting international associations at site inspections.



Support Programme

The visit.brussels programme provided crucial support for over 20 professional events, which in turn facilitated the hosting of over 20,000 international delegates. This support played a key role in promoting Brussels as an international conference and exhibition capital, attracting major new events and their economic spin-offs.

Ambassador Programme

The Ambassador Programme mobilised a network of experts to support Brussels' bid to host international trade events. The annual Ambassadors' evening rewarded 12 winners for their commitment, strengthening Brussels' network of influence.



5. Events and promoting the Region

KPIs:



Actions taken

In 2023, visit.brussels helped to enhance the capital's cultural and event offering through a range of festivals and unique experiences, making a significant contribution to the attractiveness and dynamism of Brussels.

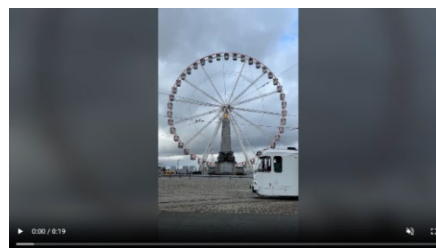
Bright Festival

The Bright Festival has been lighting up Brussels and enhancing its architectural heritage since 2017, thanks to illuminated routes through different districts. In 2023, the festival attracted 400,000 visitors. This event enjoys a steady growth margin: +18% in terms of international visitors and +300% in terms of domestic visits. These figures demonstrate the public's enthusiasm for this emblematic event. The 2023 Bright Festival actively promoted sustainability, accessibility for people with reduced mobility (an Access-I-certified route) and decentralisation, with a new route in Schaerbeek that attracted 80,000 people.



Tram Experience

Launched in 2012, the Tram Experience offers a unique dining experience on board a tram specially fitted out as a gourmet restaurant and running six days a week. In 2023, the Tram Experience operated 289 B2B, B2C and private outings. These outings, with a 100% fill rate and booked almost two months in advance, served 6,600 B2C customers and 1,600 B2B customers. With a customer satisfaction rate of 9/10, this activity also received extremely positive feedback and demonstrates our customers' support for local gastronomy. The positive attendance and fill figures reflect the progress made by visit.brussels in 2023 in developing a new ticketing platform to optimise the marketing and fill rates for this unique experience.



Iris Festival

Celebrating the creation of the Brussels-Capital Region each year, the 2023 Iris Festival gave the public direct access to the European institutions during an open day. In the heart of the Parc de Bruxelles, this year's event also featured a multitude of stands organised around seven themed villages, offering original, fun and educational activities for a wide



audience. The highlight was a major electronic music concert on 6 May 2023, organised in partnership with RTBF, which attracted no fewer than 15,000 people to Place des Palais. In all, the many activities staged over the weekend of 6 and 7 May 2023 attracted over 100,000 people. They were also instrumental in supporting local artisans, promoting decentralisation and ensuring the sustainability of visit.brussels' actions.

The BD Comic Strip Festival

The BD Comic Strip Festival celebrating the art of the comic strip, featured the 77th anniversary of the Journal Tintin. In 2023, the festival attracted 54,000 visitors and welcomed many of the world's leading publishers, as well as several independent publishers. The event included a manga area and an auditorium where authors and the public could meet and interact. The event now pays particular attention to welcoming people with reduced mobility: the 2023 festival was awarded the "Access-I" label, attesting to the on-site availability of all the infrastructures required for people with reduced mobility. This approach also reflects visit.brussels' direct involvement in the organisation of fully inclusive events. Last but not least, the 2023 event saw the exceptional participation of comic strip schools from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.



Eat Festival

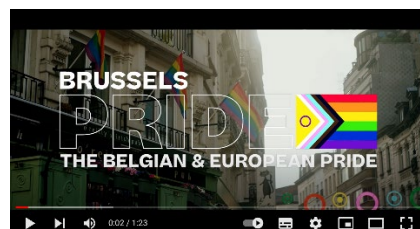
This festival held at the Gare Maritime de Tour & Taxis, showcased over 60 local chefs and artisans. During this event dedicated to gourmets and dining pleasures, 20,000 plates created by chefs and 17,000 tastings of Bordeaux beers and wines were sold. Efforts to enhance the event's sustainable aspect (notably through the use of reusable or biodegradable materials) and the promotion of local products were the highlights of this gastronomic celebration, organised in 2023 in collaboration with BXLBeerFest.



Brussels Pride

Brussels Pride, entirely coordinated by visit.brussels in 2023, attracted over 240,000 participants. The event, also supported by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, COCOF, Vlaamse Gemeenschap and Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, underlined the Region's commitment to openness, inclusion and support for the LGBTQIA+ community and reinforced Brussels' image as a welcoming destination.

Together, these initiatives reflect the diversity and cultural richness of Brussels, while demonstrating the Brussels Region's commitment to sustainability, inclusion and the enhancement of local heritage.



6. Promoting culture



888

filming days supported in
the Brussels-Capital
Region



+27%

tickets sold via classic
ticketing and Last Minute
Tickets



8,568

Art Nouveau Passes
sold***

* -19% vs 2022 ** 2022 : 206.000 - 2023 : 261.000 *** +260% vs 2022

The ASBL visit.brussels demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting culture in Brussels, with significant achievements in 2023. The diversity and richness of Brussels' cultural offerings were showcased, notably through competitions supported by the ASBL. The actions of visit.brussels also made a major contribution to the wider objective of decentralising tourism. These achievements are presented in this section.

Cultural promotion and ticketing

In 2023, visit.brussels worked to facilitate access to Brussels culture through innovative and sustainable initiatives, marking a landmark year in cultural promotion. Thanks to its **ticketing** service, visit.brussels made it easier to book tickets for a wide range of events, expanding its online offering with a new digital ecosystem and strengthening its partnerships with emblematic cultural institutions. The results of these investments can be seen directly, with no fewer than 220,000 tickets sold, representing an increase of 29% on the previous year. In addition, the **Last Minute Tickets** service democratised access to culture, offering discounted same-day tickets, and contributes to the diversity and decentralisation of the visit.brussels cultural offering as it extends to every municipality in Brussels. This innovative service was a great success, with over 37,000 tickets sold.



Cultural promotion

It was at the heart of visit.brussels' efforts, with campaigns tailored to a range of target audiences, including a large-scale Meta campaign (Facebook, Instagram) that reached over 5.8 million people. The visit.brussels communication strategy focused on digital media. In addition, the **joint cultural communication strategy implemented by visit.brussels and supported by the COCOF, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the Vlaamse Gemeenschap and the Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC)**, concentrated the efforts of the institutions mentioned above to promote the Region's cultural offering. Thanks to the creation of the new digital ecosystem, the merging of agenda.brussels content into the visit.brussels web portal and the revision of its content on social networks, visit.brussels not only optimised its online presence but also strengthened regional coordination. The result A database containing 11,653 events spontaneously entered by organisers and 4,307 events imported automatically. Over 1,600,000 visits were made to the agenda pages of the visit.brussels portal (an average of 4,384 per day). A community of 32,505 subscribers also signed up for the cultural newsletter. These achievements testify to our commitment to innovation, sustainability and the promotion of a rich cultural offering accessible to all, affirming Brussels' position as a dynamic and inclusive cultural capital.

Support for cultural activities and events

In 2023, Brussels hosted almost 20,000 cultural and tourist events, affirming its identity and influence on a national and international scale. At the heart of this buzz was an eclectic offering, ranging from comics and jazz to street and contemporary art. To support the sector, visit.brussels organised two competitions to promote and enhance its cultural partners. The award criteria included the image of Brussels, the scale of the event, decentralisation, partnerships, sustainability, accessibility and inclusion. This initiative supported 60 projects with a multi-faceted communication campaign in 2023, selected from 139 submissions to organised competitions.

Developing cultural experiences

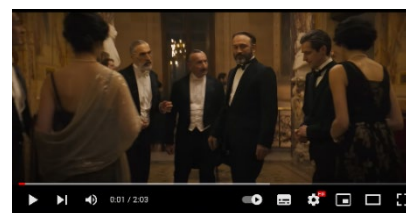
With the organisation of the **"Bruxelles sur Scènes" festival in collaboration with the COCOF**, visit.brussels promoted the city's intimate and often little-known cultural offerings by encouraging the discovery of unique venues throughout the Region. 531 "Bruxelles sur scènes" passes were sold in 2023.

In addition, visit.brussels also celebrated the **diversity of Brussels heritage** through the **Brussels Renaissance Festival**, the **Ommegang** and the promotion of Art Nouveau. These events showcased the capital's emblematic historic and architectural sites, not only attracting visitors but also raising awareness of the richness of its local heritage.

The influence of Brussels' culture grew considerably thanks to the initiatives led by visit.brussels. In addition, collaboration with the Réseau des Arts and the Brussels Kunstenoverleg, as well as the publication of the Art Guide 2023, strengthened the Region's cultural network, reached a wide audience of enthusiasts and supported local artists.



Film Commission



In 2023, Brussels once again established itself as an attractive location for film shoots, thanks to its quality welcome, diverse settings and rich gastronomic and hotel heritage. The visit.brussels Film Commission played a pivotal role in supporting 304 productions, totalling 888 shooting days and attracting projects from 13 different countries, including 59 international shoots with famous actors. This activity not only stimulated the local economy by boosting the hospitality and services sector, but also helped to strengthen Brussels' territorial marketing. While this activity fell by 19% compared with 2022, it improved in terms of production quality, with a 5% increase in international filming.

7. Brussels, capital of Europe



1,598,119

visitors to the
Europe/Cinquantenaire
zone*



114,000

people saw content from
the Europe Direct Brussels
Facebook page (Facebook
page coverage)



47

partners (businesses,
institutions, companies)
took part in meetings to
launch the EUQB brand.

* 2022 : 1.254.278 visiteurs - Source : Baromètre des musées (panel de 37 musées et attractions) ** 2022 : 4.100 personnes

In 2023, visit.brussels deployed a range of actions to promote Brussels as a European capital and international business centre. Below is a summary of the main initiatives supported:

Increasing the attractiveness of the European Quarter



2023 saw the launch of the "European Quarter Brussels" brand. **The** launch was accompanied by a promotional campaign and partnerships designed to enhance the European Quarter's offering and revitalise its image. The aim of these actions was to encourage visitors and locals alike to explore and rediscover this lively and sometimes little-known district. This included finalising the brand's visual identity. The involvement of local players, such as traders' associations and district committees, encouraged the adoption and promotion of this new shared brand. In all, 47 different partners (businesses, institutions, companies) took part in 220 co-creation meetings and the brand launch. This event also attracted a great deal of interest, as evidenced by the 17 press articles published and the attendance of 85 people at the launch press conference.

International associations

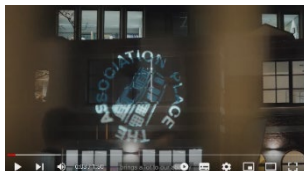
In 2023, visit.brussels worked to consolidate Brussels' position as a major MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) and association hub through **partnerships and strategic initiatives**. visit.brussels intensified collaborations with local and international MICE associations and organisations. Communication and promotional initiatives were carried out to raise Brussels' profile, receiving an extremely positive response from partners and target audiences. The overhaul of the digital system improved [access to](#)



[information and resources for associations](#), with the aim of reinforcing Brussels' position as a preferred destination for international associations.

The Association Place

This brand-new hub opened in November 2023. This unique initiative provides a place for international associations to meet and exchange ideas. The creation of this space aims to boost the attractiveness of Brussels through networking events and professional meetings. It reflects visit.brussels' commitment to promoting Brussels as a dynamic platform for international associations and the MICE sector, with an emphasis on creating lasting partnerships, and offering meeting and discussion spaces for professionals from all over the world.



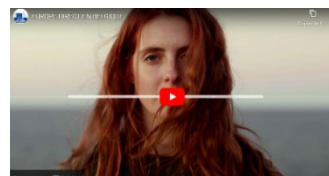
Press Club

The Press Club Brussels Europe is not only a meeting place for professional journalists, but also a platform for conferences. visit.brussels processed 700 requests, which in turn enabled the Press Club to host no fewer than 470 events, including 180 press conferences. These actions help to reinforce Brussels' image as the capital of the European Union and the nerve centre of European communication.



Europe Direct

In 2023, as part of its joint "Europe Direct Brussels" mission with the European Union, visit.brussels established itself as an essential local information centre on the European Union (EU) for the Brussels-Capital Region. This initiative aimed to inform a wide range of audiences, from young people to the general public, about the EU, how it works, what it does and how it is funded. To achieve this objective, visit.brussels stepped up its awareness-raising activities throughout the year: regular updates and activity on the Europe Direct Brussels website and Facebook page; dissemination of information via a digital kiosk and distribution of informative brochures.



visit.brussels also set up pop-up stands and fun activities during key events such as the Iris Festival and Europe Day. Lastly, the "Europe Direct Brussels" project demonstrates visit.brussels' commitment to schoolchildren by offering a wide range of classroom activities, such as meetings at the House of European History, and maintaining a special relationship with teachers (newsletters and special visits).

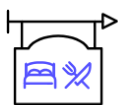
Welcoming expatriates

In 2023, visit.brussels stepped up its welcome for the international community in Brussels, to facilitate integration and promote the Region's cultural offering. Nearly ten "Destination Brussels" presentations were given to newcomers to the European institutions. The visit.brussels newsletter, tailor-made for expatriates, was also a notable success, with 8,000 subscribers and a monthly open rate of around 25%. visit.brussels also offered expatriates digital Welcome Packs containing, among other things, a Villo! subscription and a Volume Pass.



8. Sustainability, diversity, equity & inclusion

KPIs:



39%

Eco-labelled hotel rooms*



38

partner infrastructures
certified Access-I**



31

certified Bike Friendly
partner facilities***

Actions taken:

Sustainability

visit.brussels drafted and coordinated a sustainability action plan, largely based on the 2022 recommendations of the **Global Destination Sustainability Index** (GDS-Index), to implement concrete actions for improving Brussels' score in this international index.



Key actions for 2023 included helping tourism sector players to obtain the **Green Key** and **Bike-friendly** labels, and the launch of the **Sustainable Partners** umbrella organisation, which lists all partners with a label, certification or accreditation in the Brussels-Capital Region. In all, 39% of hotel rooms and 13% of venues in Brussels are eco-labelled. We also organised an online **Label Week** (each day, a different label is presented to an audience of over 50 participants), and worked with Flanders and Wallonia to promote "EuroVelo" in Belgium.

visit.brussels also organised an event dedicated to its own social and environmental responsibility, held in the presence of all its employees: **Impact Day**. This awareness-raising day allowed the ASBL's various departments to generate ideas for actions with a positive impact. Concrete results included the development of an internal strategy focused on sustainable public procurement, as well as the awarding of the **Green Key label** to the Bip Meeting Center. visit.brussels also translated its commitment to the organisation of high-quality, sustainable events by implementing concrete measures throughout the year, such as the use of biodegradable and reusable logistics materials, the promotion of soft mobility, the use of less energy-intensive technical resources, and the implementation of the Region's "Brudalex" waste management rules.

Accessibility

In terms of visit.brussels' infrastructure, work carried out at the City Hall information desk led to the creation of a new reception desk for people with reduced mobility.



With regard to accessible tourism, visit.brussels financed the labelling of some 15 tourist infrastructures, as well as three events with "**Access-I**" certification, a reference tool in terms of accessibility which informs people with special needs about the accessibility of places open to the public by type of disability.

Inclusion

The launch of multilingual **LGBTQIA+** training for reception staff reinforced visit.brussels' commitment to inclusivity. By actively supporting LGBTQIA+ events such as Brussels Pride and La Démence Anniversary, visit.brussels also plays a key role in promoting equality and human rights. Targeted communication campaigns and strategic partnerships allow visit.brussels to highlight the diversity of its offer to the LGBTQIA+ community and make it accessible to all.



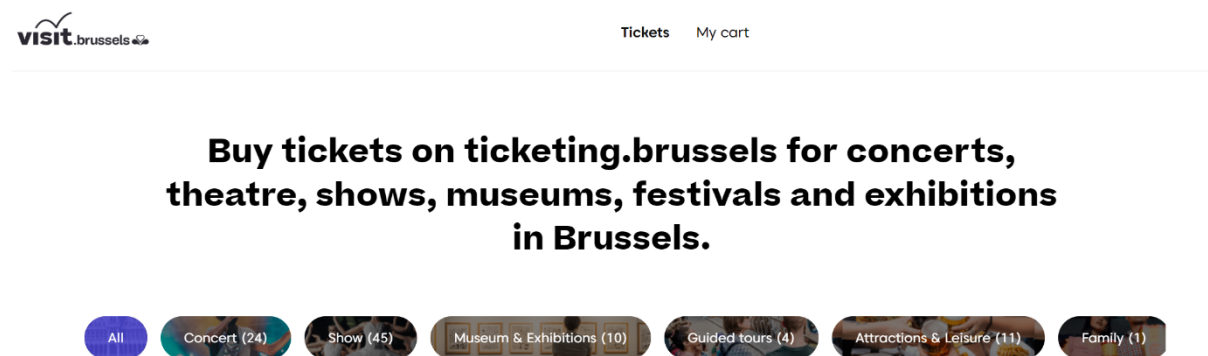
visit.brussels also carried out a number of communication campaigns aimed at **families** and **students** (Erasmus Welcome Pack), as well as **Kids Friendly** selections for reception staff and hotel receptionists. Lastly, visit.brussels invested in logistical resources to set up a baby/kids corner at its major events.

visit.brussels' approach to schools and teachers (seasonal newsletters, information sessions in schools, participation in events and trade fairs such as Pro-contact, EDUC and Career Day) promotes awareness of and access to culture for everyone from an early age, whatever their social background.

9. Specific visit.brussels missions in 2023

In 2023, visit.brussels carried out a number of specific missions to enrich the Brussels experience, demonstrating the association's commitment to innovation, culture and sustainable tourism.

Ticketing Interfacing Platform (REACT EU)



As part of its digital transformation, visit.brussels developed an innovative ticketing interface platform, positioning itself as an ally for cultural professionals. This platform facilitates greater interaction between cultural professionals and their audiences, enabling online ticket sales, paperless ticket generation and efficient reservation management. Designed as a unified web catalogue, it offers an exhaustive view of Brussels' cultural offerings and encourages cultural discovery according to criteria such as artistic genre, affinity or desired period. It also simplifies the online proposal of cultural offers by professionals, thanks to the automation and integration of booking processes. The ticketing.brussels platform was launched in December 2023 and will continue to develop in 2024. Key achievements in 2023 include the interfacing of ticketing software, an in-depth survey of purchasing behaviour and an extensive communications campaign reaching local and international audiences. This initiative underlines visit.brussels' commitment to making culture ever more accessible to all.

Adapting to Brexit (BAR Actions)

In response to the impact of Brexit, in 2023 visit.brussels implemented targeted strategies to support the Brussels tourism sector and mitigate the repercussions of the UK's exit from the European Union. The Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) allowed the association to focus its efforts on two main areas. Firstly, **the strengthening of prospecting in the UK market**: This approach aimed to encourage international associations and their representative agencies to establish or develop their activities in Brussels, and to organise events in the Belgian capital. Secondly, **support for European associations** in the UK wanting to expand their activities in Brussels. Tools have been provided to help these associations continue their activities within the EU, with a particular focus on conference organisation.

Achievements in 2023 included the implementation of marketing actions in the UK and Belgium; the organisation of professional meetings specific to the international association sector; the opening of "The Association Place" in November; a new space dedicated to associations as well

as the launch of a MICE promotion campaign in December, aimed at increasing the visibility of Brussels as a destination of choice for business tourism and association events.



Art Nouveau Year



Art Nouveau was given pride of place in 2023 with a dedicated thematic year celebrating this artistic movement that continues to fascinate through its history, style and impact on various fields. The aim was to reinforce Brussels' position as the world capital of Art Nouveau, attract visitors to discover its rich heritage in this field and forge links between historical heritage and contemporary creation. Major achievements in

this thematic year included the successful launch of two digital and poster campaigns to promote Art Nouveau, the sale of 8,568 "Art Nouveau Passes" facilitating access to different sites and exhibitions, and the great success of our dedicated web page (93,000 visitors).

30 Years of BELIRIS



At the initiative of the Federal Government, the BELIRIS 30-year celebration was an opportunity to showcase the significant contributions BELIRIS has made to the Brussels public space through cultural, artistic and culinary events in several municipalities (Etterbeek, Ixelles, Brussels, Molenbeek, Schaerbeek). This family event, with its emphasis on discoveries in the districts, attracted over 10,000 participants.

Preparing for the Belgian presidency of the EU Council



Strategic work was undertaken to prepare for the Belgian presidency of the EU in 2024. This preparatory work included the development of a comprehensive action plan, as well as the establishment of collaborations for future events to demonstrate the importance of Brussels on the European scene. In

particular, visit.brussels launched a communication campaign and set up visuals in public spaces. In addition, via a Conference Fund, visit.brussels supported 17 conferences linked to the themes of the presidency and European priorities through a call for applications. Lastly, visit.brussels received no fewer than 85 applications from Brussels events seeking the "European presidency" label. A total of 22 events were accredited and will be integrated into the presidency's official cultural program.

Gourmet roadshow in Mougins

On 10 and 11 June 2023, as part of an initiative to promote Brussels craftsmanship supported by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, visit.brussels helped promote Brussels internationally, highlighting comic strips, crafts and gastronomy. To this end, visit.brussels and the City of Mougins organised the "Brussels celebrates in Mougins" weekend event. The event showcased the attractions of the Belgian capital and included presentations of Brussels gastronomic specialties. A farmers' market, activities dedicated to comics and an information stand on Brussels were also on offer. The event attracted 12,000 visitors and helped forge links between this corner of southern France and our crafts.



I Love Science Festival



In the context of its achievements in scientific research, the Region entrusted visit.brussels and Innoviris with devising and organising an event which would bring people together for science promotion.

The "I Love Science Festival" brings together a large number of actors raising awareness of science, and offers the public activities, shows, exhibitions,

workshops, open laboratories and more. A total of 17,000 visitors were welcomed during the 2023 event. The festival also hosted a festival of national and international science trucks, with a nod to the food truck movement and offering scientific experiments.

Digital Spring



Brussels Digital Spring showcased the Region's digital initiatives through start-up showcases, workshops, laboratories, exhibitions, roundtables and conferences. Brussels is a hotbed of talent. Many fields benefit from the expertise of a pool of young people, particularly in the digital sector. To connect with local digital players, the third Digital Spring, in cooperation with paradigm.brussels and

inspired by the example of Montreal, offered a wide range of free activities, including augmented reality and virtual reality experiences, introductory sessions to coding and video game creation, a digital bus, workshops and conferences on different themes such as digital inclusion, digital and art, VR, gaming, sound/video, and an artistic/digital partnership with Reset Immersive, an immersive digital art exhibition. On Friday 24 March, a drone show was

staged for the first time in Brussels on the esplanade of the Cité Administrative. The 2023 event was a great success, with no fewer than 5,000 visitors.

Closer collaboration with the municipality of Ganshoren

In line with its general objective of decentralising tourism, visit.brussels encourages the dispersal of visitors throughout the Region and is constantly strengthening its collaboration with the different players and the 19 municipalities. Since October 2023, visit.brussels has been specifically commissioned by the municipality of Ganshoren to support it until November 2024, to help it develop and manage cultural and tourism projects, make strategic recommendations and create an action plan for the development of tourism and culture and, lastly, to animate the sector and bring players together by providing strategic support and facilitation.

