Barely 8 % of the Flemings wants to work more

The ‘Steunpunt Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Vorming’ (WAV - Employment, Labour and Education Support) published its annual overview of the main trends in the Flemish labour market. The 2001 survey shows that the number of employment opportunities in Flanders rose by 40,000 (+1.7) last year. These were mainly focussed on the service sector. Years of job losses in industry have come to a halt. Many sectors opened vacancies to the low skilled because of a shortage in the labour market. In 2001, however, the economic situation came to a standstill with increasing unemployment figures and a drop in vacancies as a result. According to the WAV there is a positive side to this, because as the number of unemployed per vacancy increases, the employment market will become more efficient. The Flemish labour market does, however, have to deal with a structural problem. Europe is demanding that the current activity rate of 65.7 % be raised to 70% by 2010. But that is a virtually impossible task, because of the rising number of employees over 50 and because few Flemish people (8%) are interested in working more (FF).

JOHAN RASKING • DE STANDAARD • 19 DECEMBER

Opinion polls carried out by the Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek (NIS - National Statistics Institute) show that 8% of the Flemish population, at a professionally active age, would want to work more. Obviously the unemployed, but also people with work, albeit only 4% (64,000). This activity rate in Flanders would thus increase from the current 63.9% to 68.4%. Meanwhile the share of the over fifties in the workforce professional population continues to rise from the current 5% to 11% in 2025. Their increasing impact pushes the activity rate down by 2.2%, as older employees tend to take on less and less full-time work. An increase of 8% rather than 6% is required in order to meet the European objectives. To keep or get more Flemish people working (longer), it is important that the jobs on offer are attractive, writes the WAV. Many employees do not see any quality on offer. One in five describes his/her job as physically demanding, another one in five as emotionally demanding. More than half of the Flemish workforce states that the pressure of work is too high.

www.steunpuntwav.be

INTRODUCTION

Rarely have the majority parties of the Purple-Green coalition quarrellied so fiercely as during the debate on immigrant voting rights held last week in the press and in the Senate Commission for Interior Affairs. The Flemish Liberals through their Chairman, Karel De Gucht, do not want to see a vote on immigrant voting rights in the Senate. De Gucht demands that the government parties (VLD, SPA, Spirit, Agalev, PS, PRL, and Ecolo) observe agreements entered into, otherwise the matter could result in a government crisis. De Gucht himself is in favour of immigrant voting rights, as are a lot of his fellow party members, but is of the opinion that this is not the time to implement them, as the majority of the Flemish people is opposed to them. Even after the 2003 elections the subject of immigrant voting rights remains taboo as far as the VLD chairman is concerned. To introduce this right would represent an electoral gift to the Vlaams Blok, he states. The Flemish Christian Democrats of the CD&V, who are part of the opposition, agree. Similar to the VLD, they think that the integration of immigrants should be based on a relaxation of nationality acquisition procedures, which were included in a new law at the beginning of this term. The VLD grudgingly adopted this so called ‘Fast Track Belgian Act’ and that will do as far as immigrants’ integration is concerned, according to De Gucht. In the senate commission the threat had an adverse effect on SPA figurehead Louis Tobback, who swore that he would vote in favour of immigrant voting rights, ‘even if this brings down 5 governments’. All the French speaking parties and Agalev also made it clear that they support immigrant voting rights fairly and squarely. It thus seems that there is a definite majority for immigrant voting rights in the Senate. Somewhat pushed into a corner, VLD senator Jeannine Leduq pointed out that her party did not want a vote on this subject, no less than that the VLD had not tried to push a ‘pentitie’ law against the wishes of the PS via an alternative majority (with CD&V). Although firmly denied by both parties, it seems that agreements had been made on this subject by the VLD and PS. Discussions on a relevant bill will commence after the Christmas holiday. The dossier will thus represent one of the first political balancing acts of the new year, according to De Financieel-Economische Tijd (19 December).

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Immigrant voting rights: VLD upsets the other majority parties

The Senate’s Commission for Interior Affairs will start discussions this week on a number of immigrant voting right bills. The Flemish Socialists are expected to approve municipal immigrant voting rights in the Senate, even though the majority does not include the Flemish Liberals. This is stated by SPA Chairman, Patrick Janssens, in an interview in De Morgen of 17 December. If not successful during the current term, immigrant voting rights will have to be introduced after the 2003 elections. This is Janssens’ vigorous answer to his colleague of the Liberal VLD, Karel De Gucht. In an interview in Het Laatste Nieuws (15 December) De Gucht points out that the government agreement was based on a clear consensus, i.e., the acquisition of nationality would be eased - which was confirmed by the so called ‘Fast track Belgian Act’ - but immigrant voting rights would not be discussed. He therefore demands solidarity between the governing parties (VLD, SPA, Spirit, and Agalev). According to De Gucht, who is in favour of immigrant voting rights himself but does not consider the time right as yet, the majority of Flemish nationals is against immigrant voting rights. Even after the 2003 elections immigrant voting rights will remain taboo for the VLD chairman. Both the SPA Chairman, Janssens, and the former SPA strong man, Louis Tobbback, have reminded De Gucht that the government agreement does not mention immigrant voting rights anywhere (FF).

According to De Gucht this is not an ethical question, on which members of parliament are free to vote. The SPA and CD&V are just as divided on this subject as the VLD, he maintains. ‘Deep down both the SPA and the CD&V hope that the VLD will confirm that it will put a stop to this. They would then be rid of the problem [...] Why are we so against immigrant voting rights? This can actually be explained quite simply. Because we are of the opinion that there is no democratic basis for it amongst the Flemish population. We are talking about a limited group of people, who have lived here for at least five years, speak Dutch, work and reside here and opt not to adopt the Belgian nationality. In other words these are people who value the idea of nationality. There is nothing wrong with that, but they should not reproach the Belgians for the fact that they value their nationality equally? […] Deep down we all know that we are moving toward a multi-faceted society. Within a democracy the speed of evolution of that society should be taken into account. I would state that the entire discussion is based on a ‘luxury problem’ […] A symbolic fight on immigrant voting rights would benefit the Vlaams Blok in the extreme.’

According to the Flemish Socialists De Gucht is going too far. Chairman Janssens states that all SPA members of parliament will approve the voting rights and thus not oppose the government agreement. ‘The government agreement does not include any reference to immigrant voting rights’, is the statement. ‘There is, therefore, no mention of an alternative majority. If Karel De Gucht sees that as a political issue, that is his problem. He is not the president of Belgium’. However, the VLD chairman could provoke a cabinet crisis. ‘If that happens it will be a cabinet crisis about parliamentary democracy,’ states Janssens. ‘Not about voting rights. The question will be whether parliament can approve something on which no government agreement has been reached. If De Gucht says no to this, parliament might as well be abolished’.

The VLD is the only party in the Verhofstadt government that is not in favour of immigrant voting rights. But according to De Gucht it is backed by the majority of the population. Pure populism according to Janssens. ‘If De Gucht allows his viewpoints to be defined entirely on the basis of cafe talk, the VLD might as well be controlled by a parrot. His attitude with respect to this dossier reminds me of the Vlaams Blok’.

‘De Gucht’s statements do not fit in with his intention to build up an open centre party. They are merely evidence of blinkered and conservative thinking,’ is the reaction of Jos Geysels, Agalev political secretary. ‘Why should Greeks be allowed to vote but Moroccans, who may have lived here much longer, not?’ Geysels points out that five of the six governing parties do support immigrant voting rights.

‘By hardening its viewpoints the VLD shows itself as an anxious blue party. It continues to hide behind a number of excuses in fear of the brown Blok,’ writes Annemie Vande Casteele, chairwoman of Spirit. She calls upon the socially minded Liberals to look inwards and examine whether they can live with this move to the right.’
Opinion
BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 17 DECEMBER

There is no danger of a real problem within the government. PS Chairman, Elio Di Rupo, promised De Gucht a few weeks ago not to allow an alternative majority. The SPA is not prepared to go to extreme lengths either. And no one believes that the Greens will drop the government on the basis of this subject. None of the Flemish parties are looking forward to early elections. De Gucht is also rejecting immigrant voting rights in a new government term. With elections looming in 2004 (regional) and 2006 (municipal) the climate is far from favourable to reach an effective conclusion for such a sensitive dossier. This is why it was now or never for the SPA. This way it manages to avoid the pre-electoral hype and it will be completely integrated by 2006.

Opinion poll shows a shattered political Flanders

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

Following the re-division and innovation fever amongst Flemish political parties in the last few months, curiosity about the results of the last opinion poll carried out by La Libre Belgique was more intense than usual. The Volksunie collapsed and a dissident movement led by Johan Van Hecke separated from the CD&V, so that this opinion poll shows a politically divided Flanders. The results have been disappointing for 2 of the 3 new parties. The NCD, which includes the dissident CD&V members Karel Pinxten and Johan Van Hecke, refers to itself not as a party but a movement. Fortunately so because it barely receives 0.6%. Spirit, the party around the Flemish Bourgeois, disappoints with 2.7%. Minister-President Dewael remains the largest party, it has lost 1.1% since the previous poll. The Christian Democratic opposition party, the CD&V, has made slight gains. Another important factor is the fact that the confidence in the Purple-Green government suffered a major blow. Confidence in the Federal Government dropped by 4% to 43%, confidence in the Flemish Government dropped by 6% to 37%. This was to be expected as the opinion poll took place at the time of the Sabena bankruptcy.

VOTING INTENTIONS OF FLEMINGS

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SOURCE: LA LIBRE BELGIQUE

CD&V to elections in 2003 without Dehaene, but possibly with Sauwens

The next parliamentary elections in this country are not in the diary of Jean-Luc Dehaene. On Saturday the former Belgian Prime Minister accepted the vice-chairmanship of the European Convention, together with former Prime Minister Giuliano Amato of Italy. Meetings with representatives from governments, national parliaments, the Commission, and the European Parliament will prepare the next changes to European agreements up to the first six months of 2003. EU Chairman, Guy Verhofstadt, made it quite clear on Saturday that he would only accept the former French President, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, as chairman of the Convention if Dehaene and Amato were appointed vice-chairmen. Dehaene, who was still the figure-head and major vote catcher of the CD&V in 1999 had not consulted his party before this decision. There is every possibility that Johan Sauwens, until recently Flemish Minister for Interior Affairs in Dewael’s Purple-Green cabinet, will be a candidate for the CD&V in 2003. Sauwens, a former VU leader, announced that he is joining the Christian Democrats following talks with the CD&V chairman Stefaan De Clerck. Sauwens was part of the centre group in the Volksunie, which wanted to prevent the collapse of the party (FF).

BERNARD BULCKE • DE STANDAARD • 17 DECEMBER

‘The party is well aware that I have made a choice. Where possible I would like to supply my services based on my experience particularly at a European level. I am not obliged to consult my party when a mandate such as this is offered to me’, states Dehaene. To the question whether he will take part in the next parliamentary elections, all being well in 2003, Dehaene, who is the mayor of Vilvoorde, replies: ‘These elections are not part of my diary. The next elections that are marked in my diary are the municipal ones in 2006.’

focus on FLANDERS • 15 December - 21 December 2001 • Number 44
Qualified evaluation of European Top

On Saturday morning the cabinet approved the Declaration of Laeken, the pièce de résistance of the Belgian chairmanship. It introduces the challenges and reforms faced by the new Union when it expands to 25 member states. The Declaration states that Europe will first have to deal with a number of internal problems and lists these as a number of questions on the power of the European Parliament, the day to day management of the Union, the election of the chairman of the European Commission, the expansion of the Commission’s authority, the surplus nature of some European institutions and many more. A European convention led by Giscard d’Estaing, Jean-Luc Dehaene, and Giulio Amato should provide the necessary answers by 2004. Government leaders will then have to take decisive action.

Any current successes relate to the maintenance of law and order. Following the violence at the top meetings in Göteborg and Genoa, the demonstrations in Brussels remained fairly peaceful. Incidents during the demonstration of the anti-globalists on Saturday were limited to a few broken windows in bank buildings and a police station. Both Prime Minister Verhofstadt and the mayor of Brussels, Freddy Thielemans, were quite satisfied on Sunday. The police remained invisible to the demonstrators where possible, which had the desired effect. The prospect of all future top meetings taking place in Brussels was no longer causing fright.

The Flemish press deals with the question of whether the European top and the Belgian chairmanship were successful, in more detail. The joint arrest warrant, the European public prosecutor and the establishment of Eurojust provided the necessary success with respect to legal policy. Progress was also made on European social consultations. The social parts will obtain their places in the convention and a European social top was held on 13 December. However, the fact that a social Europe is still in its infancy was highlighted by an extremely well attended union demonstration in Brussels on 13 December. Reluctant first steps were taken with respect to defence, but Europe did not make progress with respect to asylum and immigration policies and joint patent rights. And the battle for the agencies, which in effect led to nothing, again shows the weakness of European ‘decision-making by consensus’, states De Standaard [17 December].

Opinion

Has this chairmanship, now that it is nearing the end of its term, been a success or a failure? It cannot be compared with that of Dehaene, as the circumstances are entirely different. I do think that, notwithstanding the incidents, setbacks, and failures, it has proved to be a moderate to good chairmanship, also for the European public. It was interrupted by a major catastrophe, which put all the leaders of the Western world to the test. But thanks to the efforts of Verhofstadt, Solana, and Michel the European Union did play a part on the international stage. Europe was not noted for its absence. It scored at a very difficult moment, which is no mean achievement for this country. The Belgian chairmanship also reopened the Europe project. Ever since Delors, Mitterand, and Kohl went, the Union was managed on automatic pilot. The inspiration had gone, there was a lack of vision and no objective to work towards. This situation has now completely changed and is here to stay. The European Convention, which includes Jean-Luc Dehaene, is leading the way.

Taxi ride at the price of a bus ticket

The Flemish transport company, De Lijn, is developing a plan to employ taxis in remote areas. Dial-a-Ride buses are currently already operational for De Lijn. In some remote areas these buses are too expensive to run and taxis will be employed instead. According to the Flemish Minister for Transport, Steve Stevaert (SP.A), public transport should be available to everyone (FF).

‘Half a million people are already using the Dial-a-Ride option,’ states a spokesman for De Lijn. ‘They mostly include older housewives (27%) who use the bus for shopping purposes, followed by pensioners who use them free of charge (21%), and students (17%).’

‘Its success is usually contributed to non-paying pensioners. But these people were forced to stay at home before that’, states the Flemish Minister for Transport, Steve Stevaert. Two in three single people over 65 have their own means of transport. Now that they have access to the services of De Lijn free of charge, it is a pleasure for them to venture out. This contributes to the ‘Gross National Feel Good Factor’.

A successful Dial-a-Ride service requires a centre of attraction,’ states Steve Stevaert. ‘This could be a market, a hospital, or a connection to the traditional De Lijn services. This is where the growth potential for public transport lies and why we aim to bring public transport to everyone’s doorstep with our mobility plan’.
Social Policy and Economy

Working Time

Additional Flemish incentive premiums encourage part-time work

The Flemish Government is introducing 5 new incentive bonuses on 1 January for employees in the private sector, who want to care for a sick family member at home (care credit), who are involved in training (training credit), or subject to company restructuring (bonuses related to companies in difficulty) or who have reached the age of 50 (transition jobs) and are forced to switch to part-time work. Employees who aim to devote more time to their families and move to a 4/5 working arrangement, will also be eligible for a monthly bonus. The Flemish Government thus aims to increase satisfaction amongst the workforce in the private sector. The Flemish Minister for Employment, Renaat Landuyt (Sp.a), has allocated 21 million euros for incentive bonuses in next year’s budget. From 1 February all companies are entitled to request training cheques worth maximum 6,000 euros from a special website set up by the Flemish Government. This does not seem much, but for a small to medium sized company it is a welcome bonus, states the Minister for Economic Affairs, Jaak Gabriëls (VLD) (FF).

De financieel-economische tijd • 15 December

Employees, who take a career break to care for a sick child (up to the age of 18), a sick parent [aged 70 or above] or a seriously ill family member, will henceforth receive a monthly additional care credit of maximum 150 euros. The Flemish bonus is in addition to the incentive bonus from the Federal Government (500 euros/month).

The training credit entitles employees, taking up a federal time credit for training purposes, to receive an incentive bonus of 150 euros per month from the Flemish Government. As with the care credit the training credit is in addition to the federal bonus (500 euros/month). The Flemish training bonus is allocated for a period of two years. The bonus is allocated for the entire training term only if it relates to training/study for professions subject to shortages or training/study within the framework of adult education.

Henceforth employees, who voluntarily work 20% less to devote more time to their families, will receive a [Flemish] monthly bonus of 50 euros. This bonus is also in addition to the federal time credit for a shorter working week, which will replace the career break regulations on 1 January. With the transition job system employees aged 50 or older, who move to part-time work are entitled to a monthly bonus of 50 euros, on top of the federal time credit.

Finally, employees who are forced to move to part-time work within the framework of company restructuring plans, will be entitled to a maximum monthly bonus of 125 euros for a period of two years. A separate arrangement is being developed for employees not covered by a collective labour agreement.

Aviation

Air Holding makes a 1 euro bid for DAT

New DAT, the planned successor to Sabena, has been given another chance. The Commercial Court in Brussels has not declared the financial service centre of Sabena, SIC, bankrupt. SIC has applied for a new judicial settlement, on which the Court will make a decision on 26 December. Furthermore, SIC has come to a preliminary agreement with its creditors (banks and leasing companies) in which part of the debt, which DAT owed via SIC, is acquitted. The other debts owed to the creditors by DAT will be converted into DAT shares (50 million euros). SIC and its creditors are now working on a new recovery plan. However, SIC is not providing any cash. On 19 December a bid was submitted by nv Air Holding, the group of investors led by Étienne Davignon and Maurice Lippens, for the existing DAT. If it is accepted, DAT can be converted into the New DAT.

The investors in the nv Air Holding also include Victor Hasson and George Hutelmann, whose air company City Bird went bankrupt a few months ago and who are now investing privately. This undoubtedly helped to convince candidate shareholders that there is sector-specific know-how available for the project (FF).

Guy Meeusen • De financieel-economische tijd • 20 December

The candidate investors [Air Holding] around the Davignon-Lippens team submitted a bid for Delta Air Transport to the administrators of Sabena last night. Air Holding is offering 1 euro for DAT, but promises to invest between 190 and 200 million euro in DAT. Until yesterday Air Holding was still short of 25.75 million euro, after the Flemish Region decided not to get involved. But an anonymous private investor was found in the nick of time. The Air Holding bid is, however, linked to two conditions. The first relates to a new agreement with the DAT fleet leasing company. Air Holding wants the leasing price to be considerably reduced, according to the business plan by 35%. The second condition relates to DAT’s creditors via SIC. They do not want to drop their claim on Sabena Technics as long as the European Commission has not approved a bridging loan. According to one source Air Holding wants the creditors to drop this condition.
Economies and reorganisation in the Flemish media sector

Roularta, the stock market company, and editor of Knack, Trends, and De Streekkrant (free distribution paper), clocked up a loss of 5.5 million euros during the third quarter of the year. The group is anticipating low profits for the whole of 2001 and a similar turnover to 2000, i.e., 435 million euros. Top man, Rik De Nolf, has announced cost savings to the tune of 18 million euros. Rejection of loss-making projects, such as the Metro free paper, cuts in participations in loss making company sections, no further new title launches and natural (not forced) redundancies amongst its 2000 employees should result in cost savings. Roularta shares rose from 0.72 to 19.5 euros following the announcement. But this is still barely one third of its share price at the beginning of the year (60 euros). The Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij, which publishes De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad and Het Volk newspapers, had to announce forced redundancies, which the unions managed to limit during negotiations with the management. The Pegasus reorganisation plan originally anticipated 224 redundancies. The final figure was 197. The Regionale Uitgevers Groep, which publishes the Gazet van Antwerpen and Het Belang van Limburg newspapers and which is a subsidiary of the stock market company Concentra, also announced economy measures. And finally, De Persgroep, which publishes Het Laatste Nieuws and De Morgen newspapers announced that advertising recruitment for both titles is to be handled by one direction. Advertising revenue in the third quarter suffered considerably from the deteriorating economic situation. This in fact applies to most Flemish newspapers. They saw their advertising income drop by an average of 25% in the third quarter (FF).

Roularta head, Rik de Nolf, blames the excessive losses of the company on a slack economy, a traditionally weak summer period, and the high launch costs associated with a number of new projects. Next year De Nolf wants to keep these launch costs down to a minimum, because Roularta is ‘keeping its head down’ until further notice. This should result in savings of 18 million euros in 2002. The above should be feasible because the media group sold its 50% share in the loss-making free paper, Metro, to its Limburg partner in the sector, Concentra, and stopped its event organisation activities. De Nolf is also counting on the fact that in 2002 the price of paper will be approximately 5% lower than in 2001. The printed media section of Roularta incurred a loss of 303,000 euros during the first nine months of this year. Its printing activities, i.e., Roularta’s interest in the Mercator Printing Group (39.15%), resulted in a loss of 2.8 million euros throughout the same period. Roularta is reducing its interest in Mercator down to one third in January. The windfall for Roularta, in a difficult 2001 media year, was centred on its audio visual division, particularly its 50% interest in the Vlaamse Mediamaatsschappij (VMM, parent company of the VTM, Kanaal 2, JIM TV television companies, and the national FM radio broadcaster Q-Music). Fortunately we decided to diversify and not be dependent on printed media only. Otherwise the outlook would not be so rosy, states De Nolf.

ECONOMY

DIRK VANDENBERGHE • DE FINANCIELE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 18 DECEMBER

Last weekend an agreement was reached at the VUM on a cutback of 197 jobs. The management assumes that approximately 30 employees will leave the company voluntarily. Fifty-six temporary contracts will not be extended. Sixty-three will be forced to take full time early retirement, and 24 equivalent jobs will be cut on the basis of end of career arrangements. There will also be 24 forced redundancies. The obligatory early retirement age for blue and white collar workers was raised to age 54. From the age of 52 white collar workers will have to take part-time early retirement. Other arrangements were made for journalists. They will be forced to take early retirement at the age of 57, part-time early retirement at the age of 53 and will be forced to adopt a four-day working week from the age of 52. The above new measures are being collated in a new collective labour agreement for 2002-2003. Unions and management met for the first time at the Regionale Uitgevers Groep (RUG). The RUG aims to request the implementation of a company under reorganisation statute. Employees from the age of 54 could take voluntary early retirement. Approximately 80 members of personnel would be eligible for this. However, there is no need for so many people to go. The RUG wants to cut back its workforce from 680 to 630.

BUDGET FOR THE CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE 2002-2004 (IN MILLION BEF)

JEROEN LISSENS • DE FINANCIELE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 18 DECEMBER

Roularta head, Rik de Nolf, blames the excessive losses of the company on a slack economy, a traditionally weak summer period, and the high
Anciaux wants to transfer federal cultural institutions to the Communities

The Flemish Minister for Culture, Bert Anciaux (Spirit), is calling on all Flemish parties to unanimously demand the transfer of the federal cultural institutions to the Communities in 2003, when the new federal government is set up. Anciaux wants to set up an action plan accordingly by 2003 and have it approved by the Flemish Government and Flemish Parliament. In other words, he wants all Flemish parties to adopt a unanimous standpoint on this matter when the negotiations for the formation of the next government are taking place. The Flemish and French speaking Communities have the authority on culture. He is, therefore, of the opinion that these institutions should be managed by both Communities together, and not on a federal basis as is currently the case. They are presently managed by the Federal Minister for Scientific Management, Picqué (PS), and his government commissioner, Ylieff (PS). From a statutory point of view these are aberrations according to Anciaux, as cultural activity is centred at Community level. The institutions referred to by Anciaux are all based in Brussels and hold the most magnificent collections in the country. They include the Royal Library, the Royal Museum of Art and History, and the Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren. The cultural icons, the Muntshouwburg (Munt Theatre) and the Palace of Fine Art, also have the same statute. According to De Standaard, most of these institutions remained dormant for a long time. However, after a phase of politicising and bureaucracy, they seem to have woken up again. Only the national opera, De Munt, is proof of the contrary. De Munt has gained a place in the international top ten and tickets for all its performances are hard to come by. But De Munt remains an exception (FF).

GEERT VANDER SPEETEN • DE STANDAARD • 15 DECEMBER

Some institutions, such as the Africa Museum in Tervuren, are being prepared for a revolution. Unparalleled riches are being discovered in the collections or patrimonies, but efforts to valorise them or gain public interest are unsuccessful. Federal cultural institutions do not have an international appeal, as could be expected with a capital city. So what now? Various scenarios are being circulated in the field. Bernard Foccroulle, the director of the Munt, is one of the ‘believers’. He has faith in the federal model until evidence to the contrary is found. Foccroulle promotes his opera as ‘a fragile location in Brussels where both communities still feel at home.’ He has apocalyptic visions with respect to any change in statute. Dual management could have disastrous consequences. He is of the opinion that the two communities should first enter into a cultural agreement, in order to prove their maturity. Guido Minne, co-ordinator of a future cultural communication centre in Brussels, believes that the road ahead will be long and difficult. Complex statute, mortgaged future, frugal budget increases... everything is frozen. Minne puts his faith in a regional chairman of the Cultural Executive, who is about to enter the actual situation in Brussels. Why would the Brussels Region as an entity not be able to do what was after all possible for Ghent and Antwerp?

Paul Dujardin, director of the PSK, where a flexible model is being set up, adopts a pragmatic approach. He is a proponent of diversified shareholder status, i.e., the third option. A plan, tailor-made to client requirements, is being developed in which the Communities, the Federal Government, and the private sector co-operate in successful management. None of the partners have to be excluded from this management blend. Whatever

Anciaux conjures up BEF 3.5 billion for cultural infrastructure

Last week the Minister for Culture, Bert Anciaux (Spirit), introduced his new policy document on the cultural infrastructure in Flanders. It is highly ambitious. He is providing no less than BEF 3.5 billion for infrastructural operations until 2004. Whereas most ministers are forced to tighten their budgets, Anciaux continues to play Father Christmas, De Morgen notes (14 December). In November Anciaux managed to raise the cultural budget from BEF 12.5 to 14.2 billion. Projects supported by Anciaux particularly favour Antwerp, with 850 million to be provided for construction of the Museum aan de Stoom (MAS), a new construction project for the ‘cultural temple’ De Singel and another BEF 455 million for the restoration of the Antwerp Opera. In addition to the MAS in Antwerp, a second museum for Flemish Emancipation will be set up in Ghent, at the Bijloke site (BEF 350 million). Mechelen will gain a holocaust museum (BEF 250 million), Leuven a new museum site (120 million), and Brussels will be given a European Style Dutch-Flemish Centre (BEF 200 million). The new concert building in Bruges, the construction cost of which has already exceeded the original budget by 600 million, will be taken over by the Flemish Community for one symbolic franc, so that the Flemish Community will indirectly be lumbered with the additional cost. The Music Forum in Ghent, previously budgeted at BEF 2.4 billion, has to be redesigned. The building, artistic project vision and social perception must be more closely related and the association with existing cultural offerings in Ghent (Vooruit, Flanders Opera, Gele Zaal, Bijloke, Capitole) must be clarified, according to the Anciaux cabinet. In the meantime 20 million is being provided for an architectural contest.

Table p. 6

focus on FLANDERS • 15 December - 21 December 2001 • Number 44
model is chosen, it is unlikely that one single master plan can be designed for all institutions simultaneously. The debate will be difficult, prolonged, and dreary. One thing is for certain, in Brussels matters will have to be unravelled together. Anciaux’s co-community plan will have to be based on mutual co-operation, rather than co-operation alongside one another.

**Diary**

**MUSIC. DANCE THEATRE**

- Until 30 March: Ballet of Flanders, musical company with A Little Night Music on tour, info: www.koninklijkballetevanvlaanderen.be
- Until 30 December: Der Rosenkavalier by Richard Strauss; conductor: Antonio Pappano, direction: Herbert Murauer and Christof Loy, De Munt, Brussels; info: 070/233.939
- 22 December: Christmas Concert by Toots Thielemans, Auditorium 2000, Heizel, Brussels; info: 070/350.350
- 22 December: The Amsterdam Concert Hall Orchestra conducted by Riccardo Chilly with Oedipus Rex and The Psalms Symphony by Igor Stravinsky, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00
- 27 December to 1 January: Explaining Bach: Bach and contemporary Music with concerts in historical settings in Brussels; 27 December: Van Insmeesel (harpischord), Fruinstraat 29; 29 December: Piano recital by Jan Michiels with compositions by Bach, Ligeti and Goeyeverts, Pales van Lootharingen; info: 02/507.82.00; 2 January: Musica Antiqua Köln, Conservatory, 3 January: Currende, Cathedral, 5 January: Pieter Wispelwey (Cello), 7 January: La Petite Bande, Rubenszaal Museum Oude Kunst; 8 January: Il Gardellino, City Hall, 10 January: Il Fondamento, Conservatory, 11 January: Collégium Instrumentale et Vocale Brugense, Cathedral, info: 02/507.82.00
- 12 January: The Walkabouts, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 2, 3 and 13 January: Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michel Tilmink with compositions by Tchaikovsky and Chostakovitch, Halle van Belfort, Bruges, Conservatory Brussels, Bourlaaschouwberg Antwerp; info: 050/84.05.87
- 31 December, 7 and 12 January: Flanders Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Muhai Tang with compositions by Chiaikovsky and Glinka, Bourlaaschouwburg, Antwerp; De Warande, Turnhout and Konings Elisabethzaal, Antwerp; info: 0800/20.036
- 29 December and 6 January: New Year’s Concert by The Beethoven Academy with compositions by Brahms, Dvorak and Johann Strauss, CC Hasselt and stadsschouwburg Leuven; info: 011/22.99.33 and 016/29.52.95
- 31 December and 1 January: The New Year’s Concert of The Flanders Opera Orchestra with music by Ravel, Bizet, Rodrigo and De Falla, Ghent and Antwerp; info: 02/507.24.25 www.vlaamseopera.be
- 8 January: Sonatini de la gioiosa marca with compositions by Bach and Vivaldi, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 02/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 10, 11 and 12 January: Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak, Bits and pieces, dance, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 02/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

**EXPO**

- Until 6 January: Europalia Polska, 11 exhibitions, 120 concerts, 80 films, info: 02/507.85.50
- Until 13 January: José Vermeersch, retrospective exhibition, PMMK, Ostend; info: 03/42.76.88
- Until 24 February: Körperwelten, an exhibition of anatomy by Prof. Von Hagens (Germany), Kelders Van Cureghem, Anderlecht; info: 02/431.19.90
- Until 27 January: Railways 44, exhibition 75 years of Belgian Railways Company (NMBS), Passage 44, Brussels; info: 02/222.57.57 www.dexia.be
- Until 6 January: Exhibition Early Spring, Poland 1880-1920, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.85.50
- Until 6 January: Exhibition Early Spring, Poland 1880-1920, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.85.50
- Until 2 June: 2002:Brains in action, Exhibition, Museum of Natural Sciences, Brussels, info: 02/627.42.52 www.natuurwetenschappen.be
- Until 30 December: The a.r. collection, Modernists from the Museum Sztuki in Lodz, (Europalia Poland), Museum for Fine Arts, Ghent; info: 09/240.07.50
- Until 13 January: Casino 2001, exhibition, curator: Jeanne Greenberg, SMAK and Bijlokenmuseum, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
- Until 6 January: Mutations, exhibition about the contemporary city, La Rafinerie, Brussels; info: 02/411.69.25
- Until 17 March: Europe in Euphoria (1851 - 1913), exhibition, Royal Museum of Art and History, Jubelpark, Brussels; info: 02/741.72.11 www.europaeuforie.be
- Until 2 June: About the Head, exhibition, Museum Dr. Chusilain, Ghent; info: 09/216.35.95 www.fracarita.com
- Until 20 January: Fishtula, exhibition, Philip Huyge, Muhka, Antwerp, info: 03/258.59.60
- Until 6 January: Young Belgian Painters, exhibition, Antichambres PSK, info: 02/507.84.66 www.expo-psk.be
- Until 24 March: Woman’s Business - Business Women, exhibition, St-Pieters-abdij, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.30
- Until 30 December: The earth from the air, photo exhibition, St-Pietersabdij, Ghent; info: 09/221.90.97
- Until 31 March: Frans Olbrechts – in search of art in Africa, photo exhibition, Ethnographical Museum, Antwerp, info: 03/220.86.00
- Until 16 January: Mies van der Rohe Award 2001, architecture; exhibition Library Two Brothers, Ruijschooldstraat 4, Leuven
- Until 20 January: Notorious, Alfred Hitchcock and contemporary art exhibition and retrospective films, Centre for visual arts, Hasselt; info: www.limburg.be
- Until 3 March: cartoons, exhibition: the art of Alex Raymond, Belgian Centre for Cartoons (BCB), Brussels; info: 02/219.19.80
- Until 31 January: Ten Spanish sculptors, exhibition, Capa Esculturas, Brussels; info: 02/513.18.08
- Until 15 January: Sculptures of Christmas Cribs by 18th century sculptor Francisco Salzillo, Instituto Cervantes, Tervurenlaan 64, Brussels
- Until 15 February: The Jewish Resistance 1939-1945, organised by B’nai B’rith, the Army Museum, Jubelpark, Brussels; info: 02/737.78.78
- Until 3 March: vain cloth, interior textile in Western Europe 1600 - 1900, exhibition, Hessenhuis, Antwerp; info: 03/206.03.50
- Until 6 January: Peter Witkin, In and Out Life, exhibition, Art Concern, Kortrijk, www.artconcern.be
- Until 17 February: Citésus de sables, photo exhibition, PMMK, Ostend, info: 059/50.81.18 www.pmmk.be

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**Focus on Flanders • 15 December • 21 December 2001 • Number 44**