**I was ‘used’ by VTM, says De Decker**

In an interview with De Standaard (25 January), senator Jean-Marie De Decker gives a new version of the facts surrounding the visit he paid Marc Dutroux in the Aarlen prison on 3 January. The original idea was that he himself would record the conversation, and not the VTM journalist accompanying him. But to his amazement the journalist, who passed himself off as his chauffeur, managed to gain access to the cell with him. He agreed with VTM that the tape would not be broadcast, but the TV channel went back on that understanding. De Decker now feels that he was ‘used’ by the broadcasting station. He repeats that his intention was to try to ascertain why the Dutroux trial was taking so long to get off the ground, and that he was not angling for publicity (see also page 2) (FF).

---

**Opinion**

**BART STURTEWAGEN • DE STANDAARD • 25 JANUARY**

Senator Jean-Marie Dedecker has confessed. From the very start he was nothing more than a messenger. Using his status as a member of parliament, he would make a recording of Marc Dutroux, in the latter’s prison cell, for the commercial broadcasting company VTM. He let himself be used like a Simple Simon, like a pawn in a war that the television channel is waging with the VRT on the television news market (...). Then, in attempting to extricate himself from the swamp, he made one mistake after another (...). The further debate will now centre not on the pawn that was Dedecker, but on the chess players among VTM senior management. An amoral pattern of behaviour is becoming apparent. Getting a media-hungry politician to do the dirty work, and persuading him to participate in a deceitful damage limitation operation, without any moral consideration for the consequences for himself or the officers who were outwitted. The director of the news service that puts forward a lying journalist as an example for his colleagues in the profession, and lays on a programme devoid of any news value as the fruit of months of research work. The degree to which journalistic standards have been allowed to slip is taking on perilous proportions. The laws of competition dismiss all other considerations as irrelevant. We in the media are busy sawing off the branch we’re sitting on.

---

**CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice: Senator De Decker and VTM with Dutroux in the prison cell</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press association criticizes VTM</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flemish House opens in Paris</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult compromise over priorities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backlog in tax and VAT collection</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents damage VLD</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaudeville on number plates</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action plan for Flemish enterprises</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xeikon presents liquidation plan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capco into joint venture with HP</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th century enamel art in Brussels</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jean-Marie Dedecker and VTM-journalist visit Dutroux in prison

VLD senator Jean-Marie De Decker is a political stunt man. Further proof of this was supplied on 3 January, when he accepted an invitation from Marc Dutroux, and paid the most famous and probably most hated prisoner in Belgium a visit in his cell in Aarlen prison. Dutroux had promised that he would make some revelations to him. For the umpteenth time Dutroux reiterated his claim that he had had contacts with paedophile networks, but that the judicial authorities did not want to investigate this lead, chiefly because they wanted to bring him before the court as quickly as possible. According to the Neufchâteau judiciary, this is merely a delaying tactic, and Dutroux has simply made another attempt to have the criminal court proceedings awaiting him postponed. De Decker also acknowledges that Dutroux had nothing much new to say. Like all senators, De Decker had the right to pay the prisoner a visit. He had also obtained permission to do so from Minister for Justice Marc Verwilghen (VLD). However, he had not gained permission to sneak a journalist from the commercial broadcasting station VTM in with him. The latter had passed himself off as Verwilghen’s chauffeur, and once inside the cell, promptly brought out his dictaphone. Dutroux’s declarations were recorded for an hour and a half and were broadcast during the VTM programme Telefacts on Monday 21 January. ‘Unacceptable’ was the unanimous judgement of the VLD’s top party members. That De Decker should misuse his parliamentary privileges in order to smuggle journalists into prison to see Dutroux was seen as totally unforgivable. What is more his party colleague, the Minister for Justice Marc Verwilghen, who bears responsibility for prison matters, once again risked becoming the scapegoat, for there are those in the CD&V opposition parties who are already saying that Verwilghen had acted ‘very silly’. De Decker stated that he had not been aware of the journalist’s plans, and inveighed bitterly against the inadequate security measures in the prison. The flamboyant freebooter De Decker, who had been the coach of the successful Belgian and-later Flemish judo team before he entered politics, largely has the media to thank for his political career, as he himself readily concedes. He has been denounced for stating his opinion in forthright, outspoken terms, be it concerning what he regards as the wholly superfluous royal family or the trade in African footballers. But this time he had clearly overstepped the mark. And although on Sunday 20 January he was still saying that he was not thinking of apologising or falling to his knees, on Monday he was already sounding a lot more humble after the meeting of the VLD’s party officers. He ended up apologising no fewer than three times, and was also given an ‘official reprimand’ by the party’s executive committee—an elegant solution for a party that would prefer not to lose a major vote-catcher of De Decker’s ilk (FF).

BART DOBBELAERE/BOUDEWIJN VAN PETEGHEM • DE STANDAARD • 22 JANUARY

The VLD’s press release after the meeting of the party’s executive committee left nothing to be desired in terms of clarity. Dedecker had bowed his head— and bowed low. He had to apologise three times. Firstly he apologised for having sneaked in the VLD journalist. Secondly he apologised for having criticised VLD minister Verwilghen for the very slow progress in Dutroux’s trial (according to the communiqué, Dedecker now acknowledges that Verwilghen cannot be reproached for anything). And finally Dedecker also distances himself from the sound recordings. The senator now evidently feels that they should not have been used in the VTM broadcast. This threefold admission of guilty was sufficient for the VLD’s party mandarins. The party did not give its vote-catcher the chop, and the disciplinary committee proposed inflicting the lightest sanction but one. The VLD had most probably realised that it had nothing to gain by engaging in an open conflict with Dedecker. After all, before the party executive meeting Dedecker had already said that he would carry on as senator in any case; if not as a VLD member, then as an independent. ‘I can operate outside the party as well. There are other meadows with green grass.’

Opinion

DIRK ACHTEN • DE STANDAARD • 22 JANUARY

In exchange for his apologies, Dedecker receives nothing more than a reprimand from his party. The VLD’s statutory committee has been asked to pronounce a censure. For Dedecker that is a huge relief, whilst for the party it means that it has been possible to avoid the vote-catcher from West Flanders being removed from the party. For, paradoxically enough, the whole Dedecker row could yield electoral gain rather than electoral loss, and that in itself is a shocking conclusion.

However, the whole affair has been anything but glorious. It has not been an illustrious episode either for Dedecker, who, despite throwing his weight around, ended up having to apologise, or for the VLD, since a good many party bigwigs had condemned Dedecker’s actions in clear terms. Dedecker had nothing further to fear. An ethical problem has been remedied with a political solution and a strong signal is thus virtually precluded.
Flemish House opens in Paris

A mid great interest, the Flemish Minister for Foreign Policy Paul Van Grembergen (Spirit) opened the Flemish House in Paris. The nineteenth-century property cost EUR 5 million and is located just a stone’s throw from the Champs Elysées. Jos Aelvoet, the Flemish diplomatic representative, will be moving into the building, but the centre will also house the Flanders Export Promotion Agency (Export Vlaanderen), the Tourist Office for Flanders (Toerisme Vlaanderen) and the Flanders Agricultural Products Promotion Board (Vlaams Promotiecentrum voor Agro- en Visserijmarketing - VLAM). By bringing these departments together in one building, the Government of Flanders wants to emphasise its presence in the French capital. This Centre gives Flanders a face of its own, said Van Grembergen, although he clearly added - for the sake of those French listeners not familiar with regional representations - that the Flemish representation was a part of the Belgian Embassy. After Vienna, The Hague, and Berlin, Paris is the fourth capital where Flanders has such a House. (FF).

BART DOBBELAERE • DE STANDAARD • 23 JANUARY

For the Parisians, it’s all a bit strange. Belgium is not very well known anyway so what does Flanders represent? Jos Aelvoet, the Flemish representative, is optimistic. ‘Of course, Paris only knows the big multinationals, so Flanders doesn’t mean all that much to them. Until, that is, they look at the export figures of our SMEs. France is Flanders’ second largest export country. And something of Flemish culture has in fact already reached them, too, and not just thanks to the Louvre. The Antwerp fashion year was very closely followed by a number of major French magazines. If Gerard Mortier becomes director of the Opera House here shortly, they’ll no longer be able to ignore us.’ Aelvoet laughs: ‘Anyway, getting people acquainted with Flanders is what our job’s all about here. So it’s fortunate that the work isn’t finished yet.’ Until recently his office was located on the top floors of the Belgian embassy, a few streets further up. He makes a face. ‘Not that it was so awful, but this is another kettle of fish altogether. For one thing, because we can centralise various different offices here: the Flanders Export Promotion Agency, the Tourist Office for Flanders, and the Flanders Agricultural Products Promotion Board.’ ‘We’re not renting here, as we are in Vienna. We’ve bought this building. In that way the French know that we mean business, and that our interest isn’t just a whim. After all, a Fleming is only really serious when there are bricks and mortar involved.’ The building at 6, Rue Euler is not for the hundred odd Flemings in Paris, but for the French. ‘We’re the point of contact for the French authorities, if French border municipalities want to work together with their Flemish neighbours or with the Flemish inter-municipality companies, for example. That sounds simple, but believe me, there’s nothing more difficult than that.’ In addition, the Parisians who want to go to Bruges 2002 can come here, as can French people dreaming of a holiday in Flanders-reportedly such people really do exist. And companies, of course. Especially the companies.
Laborious compromise on list of priorities

On Friday evening, after the row between Verhofstadt and Ecolo party secretary Defeifyt, the government finally presented the priorities for the year and half still to run before the federal parliamentary elections in this country. There are 21 of them, and all the governing coalition partners can find something to their taste in them. The originally fairly liberal memorandum that had been drawn up by Verhofstadt’s office led to a project with an equal number of Green and Socialist aspects, after days of negotiations between the principal private secretaries. Top of the list-and Verhofstadt emphasises this-is a balanced budget. Socialist priorities include the ‘maximum bill’ in health care, funding for the pensions of the future in the so-called ‘Silver Fund’, road safety, and higher minimum benefit payments. The latter item is also a priority for the Greens, but they also managed to get nuclear energy reduction, environmental taxes, and a study into the CO2 energy tax onto the list. The Liberals themselves are placing the emphasis on a cut in corporate tax, efforts to keep the over-fifties in employment, the fostering of technological renewal, and a simplification of the administrative obligations for companies. Verhofstadt assured that he would personally deal with this latter item himself. The Prime Minister dismissed suggestions that there had been tensions within the coalition, with the comment: ‘The most important thing is the result. The rest is anecdotal.’ However, most commentators in the Flemish press have taken a very different view on this (FF).

Opinion

STEFAN HUYSENTRUYT • DE FINANCIELE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 19 JANUARY

The Liberal-Green federal cabinet’s search for a new élan has proceeded in fits and starts, to put it mildly. That is partly down to the Belgian presidency of the EU during the second half of last year. That presidency took up so much time and energy that all the tricky questions on the domestic front were left to rest, with the result that there are now a whole host of matters awaiting a solution. However, the reversal in the economic climate also explains the Liberal-Green coalition’s breathlessness. The coalition was able to survive the first half of its term of office without any problems, thanks to the period of buoyant economic activity. The growth in tax revenue made it possible to have each of the parties in office notch up a success in turn. Now that the economy is gasping for breath, the Liberal-Green coalition is doing the same. The ideological differences of opinion have become magnified and the cabinet is not succeeding in creating a different policy culture of its own. Instead of eating sweets, the majority parties must now learn to bite the bullet.

The open-debate culture has degenerated into the public taunting and besmirching of one another. The carefully cultivated image of a team of swift and efficient young men and women has given way to the image of Liberal-Green chaos. The agreement that the government managed to reach yesterday evening on the priorities for the rest of its term of office cannot dispel this image. What ought to have been the signal for a renewed dynamism is nothing more than an agreement on a temporary suspension of hostilities.

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

The good understanding between the majority parties also appeared still to be fragile during the parliamentary debate on the priorities on Tuesday 22 January. The Flemish coalition partner SPA considered that not enough attention had been given in the memorandum to combating tax fraud and to road safety. Agalev parliamentary party leader Jef Tavernier promised the Prime Minister a ‘watchful but not un-

questioning vote of confidence’. In a reaction to the Premier’s list of priorities, Yves Leterme, parliamentary party leader of the opposition party CD&V, listed 21 failures on the part of the Liberal-Green coalition. However, he got tit for tat from the Prime Minister, who was once again in fine fettle and rebutted the 21 points of criticism from the largest opposition party with the help of some hastily collected figures that he had at the ready. According to the Financieel-Economische Tijd (23 January) he won the debate on points.

Collection of income tax and VAT runs up an enormous backlog

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

According to François Goris, deputy chairman of the association of tax officers (NUOD) in De Morgen (23 January), the backlog in the collection of income tax is getting bigger and bigger. At the end of September last year this already amounted to some EUR 10.74 billion (11% more than in January). By comparison, so Goris says, this amount was EUR 2.42 billion in 1988. According to Goris, a category of well-off taxpayer is enjoying impunity, whilst wage-earning employees inexorably have their taxes withheld at source, i.e., directly deducted from their salary. He feels that the only way to change this situation is to strengthen substantially the departments competent for tax collection. The amount of overdue VAT is also increasing at an alarming rate. At the end of last year this already totalled EUR 10.24 billion, which was 9% more than in January. Nonetheless the consumer has already paid that VAT to the companies and traders, says Goris, who wants to get a political debate under way on the subject (graph on page 3).
Incidents damage VLD

In the afternoon of Friday 18 January, it had been announced, Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt was to unveil the plan of priorities for his Liberal/Green government. But a radio interview given by Ecolo leader Philippe Defeyt on the RTBF threw a spanner in the works. ‘Verhofstadt is not the premier of all the Belgians. He should finally get it into his head that not everything should revolve around the Liberals, the Flemings, and the economy,’ he let slip. Verhofstadt did not swallow that reproach and refused to chair the talks on the memorandum of priorities. Even for a Prime Minister who advocates the culture of open debate, the tough language of Defeyt, comments went a little too far, even though the remarks were made a day before the Ecolo general assembly and were chiefly intended for that party’s grassroots supporters. Verhofstadt had had his pride hurt and first demanded apologies from Defeyt, not only verbally but also in writing. These apologies were duly forthcoming, albeit in veiled form, at around 5.00 p.m. Agalev political secretary Jos Ghesels acted as go-between. Three hours later Verhofstadt was able to present his memorandum of priorities after all (FF).

Opinion

WALTER PAULI • DE MORGEN • 21 JANUARY

The awkward attempt at crisis management illustrates yet again that all is not well with the VLD. On Friday it still looked as though Verhofstadt was in earnest whilst flexing his muscles. But anyone who looks at this row now that the dust has settled can only conclude that the Prime Minister’s behaviour has been somewhat clownish. It does not say much for the Premier that he was unable to keep a grip on himself. But Verhofstadt’s macho behaviour is the petite affaire; much more important is the fact that the Verhofstadt row is the umpteenth illustration of how things are not going swimmingly in the VLD. And if the largest coalition party cannot get its machinery into gear, the government also sputters. After all, what have the ‘hot items’ of Belgian politics been since the New Year? In chronological order, the row surrounding Noël Slangen (whose communication firm competed for a government assignment whilst he himself is the Prime Minister’s communication adviser, a scenario which strictly speaking is not allowed), the education debate, including the attention suddenly accorded to the subject ‘moral philosophy classes’, the row over De Decker, and Friday’s little crisis surrounding Verhofstadt. On four occasions things have revolved around the VLD and at least twice (Slangen and De Decker) it has been a case of unadulterated opéra bouffe, which does more harm than good to political business and results in the liberal players involved to a large degree getting off scot-free.

A Vaudeville on reflective number plates

The most glaring example of the discord within the current coalition is perhaps the business of the new reflective number plates, which the Federal Minister for Mobility Isabelle Durant has made obligatory via a Royal Decree. From 1 July every Belgian car must have one such number plate at the front of the vehicle. A bill tabled by Sp.a member Jan Peeters proposed scraping these number plates introduced by Ecolo deputy premier Durant. Peeters calls it an absurd bureaucratic measure, which will occasion unnecessary costs for people. Moreover, so he affirms, they would again have to be replaced when the European black and white number plates, that have to be affixed on the rear of the vehicle, are introduced. Durant replied to this by saying that the reflective number plate (with red letters) at the front can be kept when the official European number plate (with black letters) is introduced at the rear. Nonetheless, it seemed as though the majority parties, with the exception of the Greens, as well as the opposition were siding with Peeters. Durant’s office resisted fiercely. It pointed out that those same majority parties (VLD, PRL, SPA, PS) had approved the draft Royal Decree in the summer of 2001. And what about the people who had already purchased a new number plate, wondered Durant’s office. And what about the many stores and wholesalers who still have large stocks of such reflective number plates? It was expected that these businesses, together with the manufacturers, would demand compensation for the investments made. The latter argument, in particular, made the majority parties realise that there was no going back, with the result that in the end they did indeed side with Durant. (FF)

MARK EECKHAUT • DE FINANCIËLE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 23 JANUARY

All majority parties are now going back on their tracks. ‘Because we have guaranteed them that Belgians will not have to buy another number plate within two years as soon as the European number plate comes into being,’ says Patrick Balcaen of Durant’s office. ‘We shall even produce a special royal decree to make that absolutely crystal clear.’ The council of ministers will approve Durant’s proposal on 25 January. VLD member Ludo van Campenhout said that approving Durant’s proposal was the only logical choice for his party. ‘Too many companies and small self-employed operators have already invested in producing the number plates, and too many people have already bought a number plate. Jan Peeters’ bill has at least had the merit of serving to make it quite clear that Belgians will not be asked to fork out twice.’ The N-VA feels that in the whole number plate business, the majority parties have shown themselves to be ‘little performing dogs in the Verhofstadt circus’.
Gabriëls announces his Enterprise Action Plan

On Wednesday 24 January the Minister of the Government of Flanders for Economic Affairs and Foreign Trade Jaak Gabriëls (VLD) presented his Enterprise Action Plan. The aim of the plan is to boost the vitality of companies in Flanders. One of the plan’s main lines of force is the strengthening of the financial structure of companies, by means of an easing of the tax and premium burden, among other measures. He is earmarking EUR 30 million for a cut in the environmental levy on water treatment. In so doing, he wants to do away with the discrimination between private individuals and companies. In addition, Gabriëls wants to stimulate entrepreneurship, reduce the financial burden of administrative costs, make new industrial sites available, and give those enterprises engaging in international business a helping hand. A ‘Business Office’ is also to be established in every province, where entrepreneurs can obtain answers to their questions and can fulfil all the relevant formalities. They will be able to obtain advice from regional development agencies (GOM), advice for entrepreneurs (VIZO) and export advice (Export Vlaanderen), all under the same roof (FF).

AN GOOVAERTS/ERIC POMPEN • TRENDS • 24 JANUARY

‘We’ll be instilling entrepreneurship in people from the word go,’ said Gabriëls. Therefore the education concept of mini enterprises will be extended from September 2002 to all levels of primary and secondary education, including a business plan competition for universities and colleges [a budget of EUR 2.3 million]. The Government of Flanders will also be providing for so-called ‘godparenthood cheques’ [a well-established company supports one that has recently been started up, ed.] ‘consulting cheques’ [a company can call upon external consulting services at reduced rates, ed.] and ‘training cheques’ [a contribution towards the costs of staff training, ed.] for companies, worth almost EUR 54 million. This initiative fits into the ‘lifelong learning’ concept. Given that the maximum amount per company is EUR 6,000, it will chiefly be SMEs that benefit from this. What is more there will no longer be any paperwork involved for the administrative settlement, as everything will be dealt with via the Internet.

The second part concerns incentives to encourage venture capital. A government fund will be set up, which will invest in growing start-up companies [EUR 10 million]. An additional EUR 10 million will be earmarked for an advantageous tax system to be applied to loans extended by individuals to SMEs. The minister also wants to speed up work on making the Business Office the one-stop-shop for all business managers. In the long run all advisory bodies will be housed, together with a representative of the administration, in one SME counter. Finally, the Authorities of Flanders will urgently extend the number of industrial sites [EUR 25 million] and have the various points of contact for the promotion of foreign investment [the Flanders Export Promotion Agency, Export Vlaanderen, the Flanders Agricultural Products Promotion Board, VLAM, the Flanders Investment Office, the FITA and the regional development agencies GOM] work together under one flag [EUR 75 million].

Xeikon works on liquidation plan

The digital printing press manufacturer Xeikon from Mortsel will continue to operate until 2 April under a judicial settlement because it is unable to pay off its debts (EUR 45.3 million). Xeikon now wants to sell its assets in order to be able to pay its creditors (chiefly the banks KBC, Dexia, Fortis, and ING), since the search for a new investor has been fruitless. The liquidation plan should be ready by March. Chief Executive Gino Despeghel says that the core assets will be kept together and will be sold to one of the four potential buyers. This is therefore not a bankruptcy, according to Despeghel, but a ‘transfer in going concern’. The potential purchasers include the Flemish electronics manufacturer Punch International and the German printing press manufacturer Man Roland (FF).

JAN SCHEIDTWEILER • DE MORGEN • 23 JANUARY

By March the creditors and the employees also have to give their approval to the plan. By then it should also be clear as to which of the four potential buyers has the best chances. Nonetheless, Xeikon is taking a risk by working out a liquidation plan. Even if the plan meets with the approval of the creditors, it is then still up to the Antwerp Commercial Court to decide whether the company can organise the transfer of activities itself. For that, the court will have to extend the current period of protection from creditors. Last year the Ypres court declared Lernout & Hauspie bankrupt when it tried to obtain a definitive judicial settlement with similar plans. The president of the court Handschoewerker said at the time that the judicial settlement could not be used to organise a liquidation. On account of the liquidation, the shareholders do lose all hope. For example, Agfa-Gevaert, which holds a 25% stake in Xeikon, again has to write off a further EUR 13 million. Things do not look good for the 423 Xeikon employees, either. Eighty workers have been idle since the beginning of this month. One purchaser is threatening only to take over a reduced team.

focus on FLANDERS • 19 January – 25 January 2002 • Number 3
Capco in joint venture with HP

The American IT giant Hewlett Packard is investing EUR 34 million in The Capital Markets Company (Capco), the Belgian IT consultant for the financial markets. The two companies will be jointly offering total solutions to the financial sector, through a joint venture. The co-operation will be far-reaching, since both the development and the marketing and selling of solutions will be carried out jointly. For Capco, this is the second deal in a short space of time (FF).

KURT VANSTEELAND • DE FINANCIEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 24 JANUARY

‘HP’s sizeable investment underpins a global co-operation, in which Capco becomes our privileged consulting partner,’ said Marc Roththier, Managing Director of HP Belux. ‘HP has many years’ experience as an IT consultant, but we were still weak in the financial sector. For us, Capco is just the partner we need in order for us to break through on that market.’

‘Conversely, Capco is strong in the provision of consulting services for the financial sector, for example on clearing and settlement,’ says Rob Heyvaert, founder and Managing Director of Capco. ‘We ourselves do not have the bulk of the infrastructure needed to turn our advice into concrete solutions. In the framework of this alliance, that infrastructure will be provided chiefly by HP.’

For Capco, this is the second major deal concluded in a short space of time, since the company had entered into an alliance with information supplier Reuters in October. It has not been revealed exactly what participating interest in Capco HP obtains with the EUR 34 million investment. Heyvaert assures that Capco’s valuation is in line with the previous capital round. That capital increase valued Capco at EUR 745 million in the middle of 2000, which means that HP has probably acquired a participation of five percent or so in the capital.

Capco has enjoyed strong growth since it was established in 1998, although this did slow down somewhat last year. ‘In 2001 we recorded a positive operational cash flow, as predicted,’ says Heyvaert. The rise in turnover was limited to 30% in comparison with the EUR 100 million for 2000 - less than the expected 50%. That is a consequence of the less favourable economic situation, which is resulting in lower investment budgets in the banking sector, too.

Belgian net pay rose by only 0.1 % since 1975

Source: DS-INFOTIGRAPHIEK

Mediaeval enamel art in Brussels

In the BBL Cultural Centre in Brussels, the country that has just taken over the presidency of the EU, Spain, has organised a sublime exhibition on mediaeval enamel art. The exhibition aims to add the necessary lustre to the country, and to show that there was already a shared European culture in Europe in the twelfth century, the Golden Age of Romanic art. The reliquaries, Eucharist boxes, and bishop’s croziers on display are all decorated with enamel inlay. The technique itself consists in applying glass that has been ground to powder onto a metal carrier and then firing this. The colour is determined by the addition of oxides such as iron oxide, copper oxide, or cobalt oxide. The major centres of mediaeval enamel art were located in the Maas and Rhine valley, in Northern Italy and in the French cities of Limoges and Conques. But the area around Silos in Spain claims an enamel workshop of its own (FF).

BERT POPELIER • TIJD CULTUUR • 23 JANUARY

In the twelfth century the little enamelled works of art were sold to bishops and abbots from all over Europe. In this way the celebrated enamel work was exported from Limoges to northern Spain, among other places. The Spanish exhibition in Brussels is called ‘Mediaeval enamel art, from Limoges to Silos’. That implies that enamel art was also produced in Silos.

There is a religious and a nationalistic reason for Spain organising a prestigious exhibition on enamel art now. About a thousand years ago, Domingo Manos was born in Spain. He was a monk who was to make the Romanesque monastery of Silos famous. As abbot, he reformed religious life there. He must have made such a great impact that the monastery was named after him after his death in 1073. Domingo was regarded as a saint, and his tomb in the monastery church became a place of pilgrimage. The monastery was completely rebuilt from 1150 onwards, and grew into one of the most important religious institutions in Castile. The Spanish are now again claiming that there must have been at least one enamel workshop here, either in the Silos monastery itself, in its immediate surroundings, or in Burgos. To make this assertion, Spanish scholars are basing themselves on the comparative study of the stylistic characteristics, according to Joaquin Yarza Luaces, the commiss-
sioner of the Brussels exhibition. It is indisputable that the style of some enamelled reliquaries is strongly reminiscent of the figurative and decorative representations on the chapiters and reliefs in the Santo Domingo monastery of Silos. But whether that proves anything is another matter. The exhibition brings together a hundred or so exceptional pieces and ensembles: spiral-shaped prelate's staffs, crucifixes, Eucharist boxes, candleholders, medallions, censers and images of the Virgin Mary. The restrained layout of the exhibition enhances the almost intimist nature of the exhibited items.

**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE**

- 26 January to 4 February: *Music from The Silk Road*: PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00
- 31 January to 8 February: Festival Sentex, STUK Arts Centre, Leuven [new location]; info: 016/320.300 www.stuk.be
- 1 February: *Flemish Radio Orchestra* with Nikolai Lugansky with music by Rachmaninov and Buckinx, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: 016/29.41.91
- 31 January: *Beethoven Akademie and Collegium Vocale* conducted by Christo- pher Hogwood, Messiah by Händel De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- Until 1 February: Small hands, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, dance, Arena van Vlissingen, Ghent; info: De Vooruit, 09/267.28.28 www.vooruit.be
- 1 February: *Ictus Ensemble* with Georges-Elgie Octors, with compositions by Ligeti, Chin, Schölhammer and Harvey De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 1 February: Diana Krall, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.84.66
- 2 February: *London Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by Paavo Berglund with symphonies by Haydn and Shosta- covich De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 5 February: *Flamenco with Manolo Sanluca*: Carmen Linares e l’ Ensemble, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 8 February: *Travis, Ancienne Belgique*, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be
- 6 to 9 February: *Verosimile, Thomas Hautert/Cie Zoo*, dance, Kaaithater, Brussels, info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaithater.be
- 7 February: *Trio Fontenay*, with chamber music by WA Mozart, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 8 February: *Royal Philharmonic Or- chestra of Flanders* conducted by Olari Elts and Thomas Larcher, piano with compositions by Schumann, Neuwirth [pi- ano concerto], Britten and Adès, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 8 February: *Philharmonic Orches- tra/Esa-Pekka Salonen*, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.84.66

**EXPO**

- Until 31 January: *José Vermeersch*, retrospective exhibition, PMMK, Ostend; info: 050/80.18
- Until 24 February: *Körperwelten*, an exhibition of anatomy by Prof. Von Hagens (Germany), Kelders Van Cureghem, Anderlecht, info: 02/528.19.00
- Until 2 June 2002: *Brains in action*, exhibition, Museum of Natural Sciences, Brussels, info: 02/627.42.52 www.natuurwetenschappen.be
- Until 17 March: *Europe in Euphoria* (1851 - 1913), exhibition, Royal Museum of Art and History, Jubelpark, Brussels, info: 02/741.72.11 www.europaeforie.be
- Until 2 June: *About the Head*, exhibition, Museum Dr.Ghuislain, Ghent; info: 09/216.55.95 www.fracarita.be
- Until 24 March: *Woman’s business - Business Women*; exhibition, St-Pieters- abdij, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.30
- Until 31 March: *Frans Olbrechts – in search of art in Africa*, photo exhibition, Etnographical Museum, Antwerp; info: 03/220.86.00
- 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 February: *The Jewish Resis- tance 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 28 February: *Treasures from Spain*, enamel art from the Benedictine Monastery Santo Domingo de Silos, BBL-CC, Brussels info: 02/547.22.92 www.seacex.com
- Until 3 February: *Belgian Antiques Fair*, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.84.66
- Until 17 February: Tadayuki Kaneko, painter and sculptor, City Hall, Brussels; info: 02/279.64.45
- Until 14 April: *Jan Van Inschout, Steven Aalders and Yshai Jusidman*, SMAK, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be

**Focus on Flanders** provides a weekly overview of articles from the Flemish press and appears in English, French and German. This newsletter is published by Uitgeverij Lannoo nv, 3800 Moretus, Antwerp, info: 09/267.42.52 www.natuurwetenschappen.be

**CULTURE**