Flemish tax cut causes quarrel over index

The abolition of the radio and TV licence fee in Flanders and Brussels from 1 January caused disagreement on the national index figure. After all, this tax is linked to the price index that is used as a reference for adapting wages to the cost of living. Because the tax is being abolished, the cost of living is falling in Flanders and Brussels, but not in Wallonia. Trade unions and employers were unable to agree on how this abolition must be taken into account in January's inflation figures. The Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Charles Picqué (PS), then seized the bull by the horns and decided not to take the abolition into account. The trade unions are happy, the employers are furious (FF).

Even when the joint government of green, blue, and red (+ a bit of yellow on the Flemish side) was still running smoothly, each of the government partners was allowed its trophies. They simply had to ensure that the balance was more or less maintained, that win-win situations were created. This year, almost all Flemish press commentators note, this has failed to work. No one could shake off the impression that the unity within the coalition was fundamentally disrupted. Green, blues, and reds only reached a compromise on the contents of the memorandum after long and difficult discussions and then the result was not particularly satisfactory for all partners, as evidenced by the outburst of Ecolo leader Philippe Defeyt, who dared to call Verhofstadt too Flemish and liberal. Verhofstadt’s attempt to re-assert his authority was not really convincing, notes Knack (30 January). Furthermore, his anger did not really relate to the minor Defeyt, but, again according to Knack, to the socialist figure-heads on opposite sides of the linguistic boundary: Eli de Rupo in Wallonia and Steve Stevaert in Flanders, who are pushing up community tension. It was indeed Stevaert who forced the decision that Flanders would not invest in DAT, the successor to Sabena. It was also Stevaert who took aim at the failing federal road safety policy. Others saw in Stevaert’s assertiveness a power struggle between himself and federal Vice-Premier Johan Vande Lanotte within the SPA, which prompted Vande Lanotte to remove all doubt on this matter in the eyes of the outside world. It is Stevaert who is being given the role of leader in the party (De Standaard, 26 January). Since then, tricky community files have succeeded each other in rapid fashion: Flemish bonuses for time credit, Flemish care insurance in Brussels and more recently: the influence of the Flemish abolition of the radio and TV licence fee on the index. The trade unions and ‘the federals’ fear that the bonuses, the care insurance, and the index discussion will open the doors for different Flemish and Walloon Collective Labour Agreements on pay, for a Flemish and Walloon social security and even for a Flemish and Walloon index. They want to avoid that by blocking every Flemish initiative in this direction. Moreover, the Francophones simply do not have the money to offer an equivalent service. De Standaard (26 January) calls this strategy plain ‘spoilsport’.

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Introduction  1

RENAAT SCHROTEN/EVELYNE HENS • DE FINANCIËL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 1 FEBRUARY

Picqué saw the danger of his forced and unusual intervention and called on social partners to take measures so that the incident remained limited to a one-off event. He spoke of a precedent and fears an intolerable situation each time regional decisions influence the national index figure. The social partners must therefore consider the situation very carefully.

Picqué: We should not underestimate the risk of the index becoming regionalised after this incident. I want to avoid opening this Pandora’s box. But as it turned out, Picqué was unable yesterday to keep the lid on the Pandora’s box. The preamble of the continued existence of the national index mechanism and the federal social dialogue. A few hours after Picqué’s comments, certain parties seized the file during question time in the Chamber to announce the end of the federal index and therefore of a federal labour market policy. Is a federal index still opportune?, Fons Borginon (Spirit) wondered. Simonne Creyt (CD&V) warned against the umpteenth community laden file. Joos Wouters (Agalev) provided a balance and congratulated Picqué on his decision. He defended the national system.
Tension between communities

You couldn't help but notice. The community demons have again reared their heads in Belgium. First there was the Walloon government, which invoked a conflict of interests against the time credit bonuses the Flemish government pays in a number of cases on top of a federal bonus. Shortly afterwards the Commission communautaire française (COCOF) (French Community Commission) in Brussels decided to ask the Court of Arbitration to do away with Flemish care insurance in Brussels. After the demand to also be given what the Flemings are given, there is now a call not to grant the Flemings anything that the Francophones are not granted, De Financieel-Economische Tijd summed up the view of the Francophones (26 January). In other words, they expect not only positive, but also negative solidarity from the Flemings. In the meantime, the storm over Flemish time credit bonuses has died down a little. On 25 January, certain differences were ironed out in the Conciliation Committee between all the country's governments. The Walloon government does not object to the time bonuses as such, but to the linking of the bonuses to sectoral and industrial agreements. After all, they are afraid that that would pave the way for Flemish Collective Labour Agreements. A second community success at that Conciliation Committee was the decision that the three regions would jointly lower the Tax on putting into circulation (BIV) for less polluting vehicles that comply with Euro 4 emission limits (FF).

WIM VANDE VELDEN • DE FINANCIËL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 26 JANUARY

On Friday, Premier Guy Verhofstdadt (VLD) announced that the meeting of the Conciliation Committee between all the country's governments had passed off positively. There had been no sign of community fever, even though the Flemish time credit bonuses remained suspended. After the meeting the cabinet of Walloon Prime Minister Jean-Claude van Cauwenberghe (PS), announced that it did not accept that the Flemish bonuses should be linked to sectoral and industrial agreements. According to the Walloon government, that boils down to a Flemish attempt to extend its own powers to the federal area of labour law. Namur (the capital of Wallonia, ed.) fears that the path is being paved for Flemish Collective Labour Agreements. Van Cauwenbergh's cabinet did, however, explicitly add that it did not have a problem with the granting of an additional Flemish amount per se, on top of the federal time credit bonuses. But it must be done within Flanders' own jurisdiction. Namur is suggesting making it a Flemish fiscal measure and implementing the intended incentive in personal income tax. Flanders is duly empowered to do this by the Lam伯mont Agreement, came the reply from the other side of the linguistic boundary.

It has now been agreed in the Conciliation Committee that the Flemish incentive bonus file will be discussed further at the Interministerial Conference on Employment, in which the minister-presidents will also exceptionally take part. In a month an agreement must be reached on the way in which Flanders can do something extra. The Interministerial Conference must be ready by the next meeting of the Conciliation Committee on 26 February. The Flemish Minister for Employment, Renaat Landuyt (Sp.a), declared himself relatively satisfied. It is a comfort to him that the principle of time credits has now been accepted.

Francophone objection to Flemish care insurance

The Commission communautaire française (COCOF) in Brussels has decided to ask the Court of Arbitration to do away with Flemish care insurance in Brussels. This insurance for non-medical aid and services is compulsory in Flanders, but optional in Brussels. Francophones in need of care can therefore also sign up and receive care cheques. COCOF now fears that Francophone residents of Brussels will increasingly make use of the services of the Flemish Community (FF). The Flemish Minister for Welfare, Mieke Vogels, wanted to enter into a cooperation agreement with the bicomunity (officially bilingual) institutions in Brussels; their services would therefore be eligible for refunding of the Flemish care insurance. If the Francophones want to sink this insurance, they also do not want a cooperation agreement; the poorly developed purely Flemish care institutions and initiatives must then be considerably expanded, claims, among others, the Flemish-Brussels MP Sven Gatz (Spirit). His colleagues in the Brussels SPA and Agalev are still hoping that the Francophones will come to their senses if the Court of Arbitration finds against them. Meanwhile, the Flemish government and Flemish Minister for Welfare Mieke Vogels (Agalev) are not concerned by COCOF's complaint to the Court of Arbitration. The French Community has already done this once, with almost the same arguments, and that produced a detailed argument from that Court stating unambiguously that the Flemish Community is duly empowered.

Geert Bourgeois of the N-VA does not understand that the other Flemish parties are sticking to this so quietly. COCOF's objection to the care insurance is inspiring him to call on the Flemish government parties to finally do what they state in their government policy statement: demand that health-care and family policy be made full Flemish areas of competence.
Social Policy and Justice

Francophones fear split of social security
Opinion

LUC VAN DER KELEN • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 26 JANUARY

Brussels Minister-president De Donnéa spoke of a social policy with two speeds in Brussels. That is warped reasoning, because all residents of Brussels, including Francophones, are perfectly free to sign up for Flemish care insurance. Actually those Francophones should be happy, because given the great need for care in the poor districts of the capital a new social transfer could well be put in place from Flanders to Francophone Belgium. The care transfer. These new Flemish social initiatives, which do not deprive the Francophones of anything, show Brussels and Walloon ministers in a bad light to their public. It is not that they do not want any care insurance, it is that due to a lack of a proper financial policy in their respective governments they do not have the funds for it. If the Francophones feel this foreshadows a split in social security, they have a point. What is now happening in Brussels with care insurance could just as easily happen in other areas of social security. Care insurance is an extra threat because to a large extent it meets the needs of older people who need a lot of care. In Brussels that is precisely the generation that became frenchified 20 to 30 years ago, usually for their earning. What whole series of Flemish language laws were unable to do - prevent frenchification - may well be attainable with Flemish money. The frenchified Flemish residents of Brussels could well perform an about-turn.

Verhofstadt forces solution in young delinquents’ file

FRANK WILLEMSE • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 29 JANUARY

By the end of February, initially ten and later fifty young criminals will be able to be locked up in a federal secure institution. Call it a juvenile prison, although politicians feel this term is too emotionally charged. This was decided by Premier Verhofstadt following discussions with his Justice Minister Verwilghen and Flemish Minister for Welfare Mieke Vogels and her Francophone counterpart Maréchal. This is intended to do away with the acute shortage of space for wayward young people. The federal government will monitor the young criminals, the communities will try to set them back on the straight and narrow. There are three possible locations for the ‘juvenile prison’, all in the Brussels area. Not only in the new institution, but also in the existing secure community institution of Mol. Drug-users, asylum-seekers, and psychiatric cases will move to institutions where they can be given better help. In this way, Mol can again devote itself to genuine young criminals. An agreement must also be in place by March on Verwilghen’s new penal law for juveniles. That must solve the problem of housing young delinquents once and for all. Until now, Francophones in particular were against this because they thought it too repressive for young people.

Dedecker suspended for 3 months after new revelations

The disciplinary committee of the liberal VLD has suspended its Senator Jean-Marie Dedecker for three months because of his controversial visit to Marc Dutroux in his cell. De Decker broke the code of ethics by making improper use (smuggling in a journalist) of the permission he had obtained to visit Dutroux. He brought dishonour on the VLD, the parliamentary mandate and politics in general, read the judgment.

Initially the party leaders advised only censuring Dedecker, but later statements revealed that he had collaborated much more actively with VTM than he first admitted (FF).
PCBs in chicken and pig feed

The Federal Food Safety Agency (Federaal Agentschap voor de Voedselveiligheid, FAVV), set up after the dioxin crisis of 1999, recently discovered chicken feed contaminated with PCBs at the animal feed producer “Hanekop”, based in Roeselare, West Flanders. More than 20,000 chickens ate the contaminated feed. This latest contamination came to light on 18 January via the Consum Programme, which constantly checks for contamination in the food chain by taking samples. Two samples contained 2,000 micrograms of PCB per kilogram of fat, whereas the Belgian standard is 200 micrograms. Of the 5 suspected firms, 3 had already allowed chickens to be slaughtered in one and the same abattoir. Production was able to be blocked in one firm. This was only partly true of the two others, which meant chickens from these firms had reached the shops. Two samples with contaminated pig feed were also found in the same animal feed firm, the FAVV announced on 28 January. Here the measured values were 1569 and 821 micrograms of PCB per kilogram of fat. Of the eight pig farms, four had in the meantime had pigs slaughtered, which meant meat from these farms has also reached the shops. However, neither case involves worrying concentrations, the Food Agency points out. Nevertheless, not everyone is happy with the Consum Programme, which monitors the safety of the food chain and has the reputation of being the safest in the whole of Europe. Ten days passed between the samples being taken and tested and that is too long according to Consum’s rules. Iwan De Jaegher, chairman of the animal feed manufacturers, points an accusatory finger at the Food Agency. ‘Our firms are able to provide a complete list of buyers and suppliers within two hours,’ says De Jaegher. The fact that the competent Green Minister, Magda Aelvoet, waited a week to inform the public, has met with a certain amount of incomprehension in the press (FF).

A PCB test only takes 48 hours,” says De Jaegher. ‘Add a further 24 hours for processing and transporting the tests and you arrive at 3 days. If the aim of Consum is to monitor the food chain, the system has failed. A faster processing time could have prevented chickens infected with PCBs from reaching the shelves.’ If the concentration of PCBs in chicken feed, in contrast to what was fortunately the case, had been high, the consequences for public health would have been much more far-reaching. According to MEP Bart Staes (Spirit), Belgium is once again putting up a poor show in Europe with this mini crisis. ‘When the positive test results were announced on 18 January, Belgium should have immediately notified the European Commission. It took until 24 January before Belgium contacted Europe.’ FAVV spokesperson Houbaert admits that Consum’s strategy was not respected. ‘In principle there should be six days between samples being taken and the test results. We will re-evaluate the internal procedure and examine how the tests can be sped up. However, we should not forget that thanks to this system we have been able to keep the vast majority of contaminated chickens out of the food chain.’ More important still is the conclusion that PCBs continue to occur in animal feed. ‘Many animal feed producers process raw materials, admittedly from recognised vendors, but for which it is not known whether or not they contain PCBs. The whole thing stands or falls by the raw materials. At this moment the distribution of 20% of those PCBs present is still unknown. Furthermore, 60% of our raw materials come from abroad and Europe is not making the charting of PCBs compulsory until 2010. The result is that we have no clear view of the possible PCB contamination of certain foodstuffs,’ says DeJaegher.

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 29 JANUARY

It is a little cheap to compare the current PCB contamination with the dioxin crisis that proved fatal to the Dehaene government. Firstly because under the legislation then in force we could not even have known that there was a PCB contamination. Then, the dioxin crisis was only noticed when the animals contained so many toxins that they dropped dead in their pens. Compared to that, significant progress has been made and now attention was drawn to the problem with values that did not even exceed the standards by that much. It cannot be said that the new way of tackling food safety has failed. On the contrary, in most European countries a contamination of this size could even have passed by completely unnoticed. But that does not mean that the current system is perfect. Thus, too many days elapsed between the samples being taken and the publication of the results. And in her own words, Minister Aelvoet waited a week to inform the public. Nothing prevented her from saying that there was a problem that was probably minimal and limited. The fact she did not do so has to do not so much with a fear of being thought of as a panic-monger than with a fear, surprising in a Green minister, of offending an economic sector.
Virgin and DAT continue talks

MOST IMPORTANT SHAREHOLDERS OF SN AIRHOLDING

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Source: Tijd graphics

InterBrew international headquarters in Leuven

The Belgian brewer Interbrew is to build its new international headquarters in its home town of Leuven. Leuven’s Mayor Louis Tobbback (Sp.a) was able to announce this at his party’s New Year reception. The existing head offices, where the corporate centre is currently based, do not have enough space following the lightning-fast foreign expansion of recent years. With the successive take-overs of Labatt (Canada), Whitbread and Bass Breweries (UK) and Beck’s (Germany), Interbrew has grown into the second largest brewer in the world in terms of volume (FF).

A merger between Virgin Express and DAT Airlines, the successor to Sabena, will provide greater profit than if both companies go their own way, decided the work groups that have investigated the possibilities of a merger. DAT now wants to negotiate exclusively with Virgin and make a decision by the end of February.

First licence for wind farm in sea

To date there are three projects for a wind farm in the Belgian territorial waters of the North Sea. The first, C-Power, is the project of a consortium of the Limburg intermunicipal company Interelectra, windmill builder Turbowinds and the Flemish dredging group Dredging. There is also the Seaneergy of a consortium of the Belgian electricity producers Electrabel, SPE and the Flemish dredging firm Jan De Nul, and a project of the French petroleum company Total-FinaElf. The Federal State Secretary for Energy, Olivier Deleuze (Ecolo), has now granted a domain concession for C-Power, planned on the Wenduine sandbank to the west of Ostend. But construction work is still a long way off (FF).

C-Power wants to build a wind farm of fifty windmills with a power of 2,000 kW on the Wenduinebank, 6 to 11 km off the coast between Ostend and Wenduine. The cost of the C-Power project is around 225 million euros. Seaneergy wants to build a wind farm on 12 km of the Knokke-Heist coast. In an initial phase this will involve ten wind turbines with a power per mill of 2,000 kW. Once the first part of the farm is operational, a further forty windmills can be added. The Seaneergy consortium never published an investment amount. Finally, the French petroleum company intends building on its own a wind farm of forty windmills with a power of 2,500 kW. Total-FinaElf estimates the cost of the project at 150 to 200 million euros. With the domain concession C-Power has taken a necessary, but not yet decisive step. An environmental licence is also required from the Federal Minister for the Environment, Magda Aelvoet (Agalev), and the consortium must also be granted permission by Royal Decree to lay electricity cables on the seabed.

Next, the Flemish Minister for the Environment, Vera Dua (Agalev), must grant permission to lay a cable from the flood line, where federal authority ends, to the high-voltage network on dry land. Because the high-voltage infrastructure on the coast has to be strengthened to be able to draw power from the sea, that is not a foregone conclusion. And it is also clear that there will be considerable local resistance. Because the Flemish coast is fully developed, there are many apartment owners with views of the sea who are afraid that those views will be spoiled.

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Diamond cutters want to be taken seriously

On Monday, striking workers from the diamond sector closed off the entire diamond district in Antwerp, bringing the diamond trade to a standstill. The 1,500 or so remaining diamond cutters are angry that employers are not taking wage negotiations seriously. They find their proposals (BEF 50 rise per week) laughable. They also want better early retirement terms for the numerous older employees, better unemployment compensation and greater effort in the area of training and time credits (FF).

MARC BALDUYCK • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 29 JANUARY

‘Antwerp’s diamond cutting firms are the pride of the region. But in recent years the industry has lost its lustre. The high wage costs began to weigh on the profitability of the many small businesses, so that occasionally firms dealt on the black market to counter the inevitable losses. The unmistakeable fiscal ‘laissez-faire’ policy of the government prompted some to imprudent action. In the 1970s the Belgian public refused to accept the positive fiscal discrimination of the sector any longer and successive raids by the tax inspectorate accelerated the decline. One workshop after another closed its doors. Now there are 2,000 officially registered cutters. In reality there are no more than 1,500. The rest are unemployed.

For years, Antwerp and De Kempen have had to endure significant competition from Indian cutters. Gradually a diamond community grew up in and around Mumbai, which now employs more than 300,000 people. The Indian workshops initially concerned themselves with the small stones sector, but as their skills developed, they gradually switched to medium-sized stones. And this trend is continuing. Most likely to the dismay of the last Belgian workshops, which now mainly deal in large stones. The employers of the Belgian Diamond Industry Syndicate now find the situation barely tenable. Hence their reluctance to grant extra pay rises.

ANTWERP DIAMOND MARKET IN 2001

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<td>cut diamonds</td>
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<tr>
<td>- united states:</td>
<td>2.0 billion dollar (-15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- israel:</td>
<td>526 million dollar (-17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hongkong:</td>
<td>554 million dollar (+13%)</td>
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EVOLUTION OF ANTWERP DIAMOND BRANCH

In 2001, Antwerp’s diamond sector made 12% less turnover than in the record year of 2000. The events of 11 September, the proceedings against conflict diamonds and the earthquake in Gujarat, where many Antwerp-Indian diamond dealers come from, also played a role, according to Peter Meeus of the Diamond High Council.
Pawns move on electoral chessboard

Eighteen months before the federal parliamentary elections there is as yet no talk of election fever, and yet the Flemish parties are already giving serious consideration to the electoral strategy to be followed. This mainly concerns the places the parties’ figure-heads must obtain on the lists of candidates. The question of whether or not the electoral law is to be amended is also of vital importance. Premier Verhofstadt is proposing dividing the country into broader provincial electoral definitions and making the first two places on the Chamber lists accessible to national candidates, so that the political heavyweights can join battle with each other for the Federal Chamber. He wants an agreement on the amendment to the electoral law before Easter (FF).

BART EECKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 29 JANUARI

Most parties are assuming that the amendments will take place. Certainly for the Purple-Green parties in government the proposals suit them fine, because in this way they can play their figure-heads from the various governments to their greatest advantage. The SPA has already raised one corner of the veil. In Het Laatste Nieuws, Flemish Transport Minister Steve Stevaert announced that he may well become the SPA’s leading candidate for the Senate. Federal Vice-Premier Johan Vande Lanotte could then become leading national candidate for the Chamber. Government partner VLD also has a rough sketch on the table. It is no surprise that Premier Verhofs-tadt will be the national figurehead on the Chamber list. The fact that he would form a tandem with Flemish Prime Minister Dewael at number two is more surprising. In this way, however, a Limburg clash with Stevaert on the Senate list would be avoided. Furthermore, if necessary Dewael could then make a credible switch from the Flemish government to the federal after 2004 (Flemish Parliament elections), if the Purple-Green coalition remains in place. For the leading Senate candidature the VLD has a surplus figurehead: Justice Minister Verwilghen. Other parties will have to make do with less. Both Agalev and Spirit, coalition partners of the VLD and SPA, have yet to begin thinking about the elections. It is nevertheless a public secret that both parties will probably also (have to) use a Flemish-Federal duo for both Chamber and Senate. For Agalev, Magda Aelvoet (Federal) and Mieke Vogels (Flemish) are the leading candidates, while for Spirit they are Bert Anciaux (Flemish) and Patrik Vankrunkelsven (Federal). Even more scarce is the abundance of personnel in the opposition parties the CD&V and N-VA. In the CD&V, only Chairman Stefaan De Clerck has a national profile that is likely to be cashed in on the Chamber list. In addition, people at CD&V headquarters are also aware there is not actually anyone who can head the national Senate list. Unless former Premier Jean-Luc Dehaene goes back on his decision to stand down as candidate in 2003. In the N-VA Chairman Geert Bourgeois may now head the Chamber list, possibly followed by Frieda Brepoels. For the Senate list they are considering an ‘influential Flemish voice’. That that could well be Matthias Storme is not being denied.

Flemish art in Paris

The Flemish House in Paris, that opened last week, has also become something of a cultural ambassador. Flemish artists were allowed to exhibit permanent installations there. Together the artists Wim Delvoye, Michael Vanden Abeele, and Guy Rombouts ensured a fine passage that links the front of the House with the out-house via the modest inner garden. And at approximately the same time exhibitions of the Flemish artists Panamarenko, Wim Delvoye, and Patrick Van Caeckenbergh opened in Parisian galleries. (FF).

LIEVEN VANDEN ABBEELE • DE STANDAARD • 30 JANUARI

In the entrance hall Wim Delvoye placed a window frame in an elliptical spy hole between the hall and the director’s office. For his window frames he used X-ray photos of courting couples. Here a traditional technique becomes the carrier of modern images and thus Delvoye exposes the relationship between cultural heritage and the future. The homely window frame forms part of a series of recent works by Delvoye that can currently be seen in the gallery of Nathalie Obadia. From a series of monumental window frames that depict the twelve months, six have been incorporated into the walls of the gallery. In his work, Michael Van den Abeele seeks the poetry of our day-to-day actions. In the modest inner garden he placed a bench that sits on a slant (and brings people closer together). It is an excellent metaphor for the intentions and activities of this house.

That the Flemish House has to do with language, not only as an expression of our cultural identity and as a means of communication but also as a source of irritation and misunderstanding, is so evident that we no longer give it a moment’s thought. On the facade of the out-house Guy Rombouts placed a metal plate with the legend of his unnamable alphabet. Even the stairwell was decorated with a life-size gem in which all the letters of Rombouts’ plastic alphabet, from angular to zigzag, follow each other. With this he is inviting passers-by to give creative form to their thoughts.
Diary

MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE

- Until 8 February: Festival Sentrix, STUK Arts Centre, Leuven (new location); info: 016/320.300 www.stuk.be
- 5 February: Flamenco with Manolo Sanluar, Carmen Linares & Ensemble, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/428.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 6 February: Film: Tosca with Symphony orchestra and Choir of the Royal Opera House of Covent Garden conducted by Antonio Pappano, De Munt, Brussels; info: 070/23.39.39 www.desingel.be
- Until 8 February: Schönberg week at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels with Daniel Blumenthal, Jan Michiels, Alexander Madzar and Boyan Vodenitcharov; info: 0213.41.37
- Until 14 February: Flanders Symphony orchestra, Valentine’s concerto with music by Prokofiev, Mahler and Lutoslawski, in Bruges, Antwerp, Sint Niklaas and Ghent; info: 09266.70.40
- Until 8 February: The X-eucitons, contemporary music, Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09267.24.24 www.devooruit.be
- 13 February: Symphony Orchestra of De Munt conducted by Antonio Pappano with Y Thibaudet (piano), compositions by Ruggles, Gershwin, Bernstein and Ives, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/428.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 14 February: Andreas Scholl, Markus Maerkl (harpsichord), Christophe Colin (cello) and Katharina Speckelson (oboe), solocantates by GF Händel, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/428.28.28

EXPO

- Until 24 February: Körperwelten, an exhibition of anatomy by Prof. Von Hagens (Germany), Kelders Van Cureghem, Anderlecht; info: 02729.64.45
- Until 4 April: Jan Van Imschoot, Steven Albers and Yshai Jusidman, SMAK, Ghent; info: 09221.17.03 www.smak.be
- Until 24 February: Ubraculum, Jan Fabre, exhibition, Deweer Art Gallery, Otegem

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