The approval of the Purple-Green electoral reform is no longer under threat in the Chamber and Senate, even though a handful of Purple-Green dissidents are abstaining. The N-VA and CD&V opposition parties, however, seem firmly against electoral reform, even though they are not in a position to swing the vote against it. According to the CD&V, it only serves the interests of the Purple-Green heavyweights and in no way those of democracy. Nevertheless, neither party is giving up, and both have already announced that they will contest the new Electoral Act before the Court of Arbitration. Earlier critical comments by the Council of State on the government’s electoral reform plans strengthen them in their conviction that they have a chance of success (FF).

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**INTRODUCTION**

On 16 October the Flemish employers of the VEV will hold their conference on the theme of ‘entrepreneurship’. In the run-up to that conference the VEV had an extensive survey carried out in Flanders, Wallonia, the 3 neighbouring countries, Ireland and Sweden, a question of embellishing the conference somewhat (www.trends.be). The aim was to investigate to what extent the views of the public and business leaders on socio-economic themes differ. In total, 6,592 private individuals and 2,012 business leaders took part in the survey. A number of the results of the survey have already been published. These show that companies generally inspire more confidence among the Flemish public (58%) than the trade unions (40%), who in turn score far better than the government (29%) and the media (23.9%). In Wallonia, confidence is generally somewhat lower: thus, for example, only 47% in companies and only 30% in trade unions. These results confirm earlier similar surveys. However, the answers to a number of questions relating to wage costs and work are surprising, claims Trends (12 September). Both Flemings and Walloons are prepared to moderate their wages if it means more people in employment. Even 66% of Flemings and as many as 84% of Walloons are prepared to waive part of their wages if it increases to achieve this. Also, 75% of private individuals in Flanders and 56% in Wallonia appear prepared to earn less if they then have to work for less time. The magazine points out that this is extremely interesting material for the social negotiations to begin in the autumn. Employers are calling for wage restraint to maintain the competitive position of and employment opportunities in Flemish and Walloon companies. But trade union leaders are bracing themselves against this. They are precluding any discussion on time credit or early retirement in advance, do not want automatic wage indexing and are not prepared to sacrifice the wage margin. Clearly they are adopting a much more uncompromising stance in this respect than the employees, Trends claims. But just as remarkable is that those business leaders questioned are displaying much less solidarity, even though their own organisations are pressing for it. Indeed, they seem much less prepared than the average individual to sacrifice wages (46% compared with 66% private individuals in Flanders) for more jobs or for a reduction in working time (60% compared with 75% private individuals in Flanders).
Ghent doctor delivers baby with parents’ preferred sex

Senate Committee for Bioethics feels that sex selection is only justified for medical reasons

Ghent Doctor Frank Comhaire, fertility specialist at Ghent University Hospital, made the news all over the world at the weekend. For a fee of 6,300 euros, Comhaire can deliver a baby with the parent’s preferred sex. He sends a sperm sample from the father to a laboratory in the US, more specifically, the Genetics and IVF Institute in Fairfax (Virginia), where the germ cells are sorted according to sex using the so-called Microsort technique and sent back to Ghent. Embryos of the desired sex are then created by artificial insemination in a laboratory dish and implanted in the mother’s womb. Sixty American and seven international fertility centres are involved in the study, which is being supervised by the American Food and Drug Administration. What is more, it has already produced remarkably good results. Of the 400 babies already born whose sex was selected using this technique, 85% of the girls and 75% of the boys had the desired sex. Comhaire, who worked on the study with the utmost discretion in his private practice, unwillingly spilled the beans to a journalist from the British newspaper The Observer, who posed as an interested mother. The news immediately triggered a lively debate on sex selection in the Flemish press. Strictly speaking, sex selection is not prohibited, but many ethicists feel that the technique is justified for medical reasons - e.g., to avoid hereditary diseases - but not for non-medical reasons such as family balancing. The Belgian Senate Committee for Bioethics, which is currently discussing a bill on the in-vitro treatment of embryos, shares this view [FF].

SUE SOMERS • DE MORGEN • 10 SEPTEMBER

The Senate wants a ban on choosing an embryo’s sex for non-medical reasons. This is contained in the bill on the in-vitro treatment of embryos currently being discussed by the Senate Committee for Bioethics. A first reading of the bill did not throw up any objections. ‘Only sex selection for medical reasons will be permitted,’ says Committee Chair Jacinta De Roeck (Agalev). All political parties in the Senate agree that sex selection can only be allowed to avoid serious congenital diseases. ‘If, for example, the embryo is a boy and one of the parents has haemophilia, sex selection will be permitted,’ says De Roeck. ‘After all, this blood disease is only transferred to boys. But if we develop into a world where parents want a boy first then a girl and use in-vitro treatment to meet this royal wish, then it is a small step to the screening of embryos for intelligence.’ Frank Comhaire’s clients are couples who want to balance their family. They already have several sons or daughters but now want a child of the other sex. Moral philosopher Etienne Vermeersch has already said he does not have any ethical objections to family balancing. ‘I cannot think of any solid arguments against a real demand amongst the population.’ Vermeersch is also part of the Advisory Committee for Bioethics, which has been asked to advise the Senate Committee on the in-vitro treatment of embryos. A majority of that Committee would not be against sex selection on the basis of non-medical reasons, but according to Senator De Roeck the Senate Committee is not required to follow that Committee.

BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 10 SEPTEMBER

The National Medical Association (Nationale Orde van Geneesheren) is also opposed to sex selection for non-medical reasons. ‘You don’t know where this sort of intervention will end, so we say: let’s not even begin it,’ says Ivo Uyttendaele, Vice-Chair of the National Association. For the University of Ghent there is no problem: Professor Comhaire did not need to ask for the approval of the Ethics Committee of the University Hospital because he is taking part in the American study from within his private practice. ‘Neither the University nor the Hospital are involved in this matter,’ says Professor Bob Rubens, Secretary of the Ethics Committee. Vice-Chair Uyttendaele of the Medical Association does not agree. ‘Professor Comhaire should have asked the advice of the Ethics Committee. After all, he is a lecturer in Ghent’s Medical Faculty. Therefore it doesn’t matter whether or not he takes part in the study from his private practice. In my view it is also the first time that the people participating in a scientific study have to pay.’ Leuven lawyer Herman Nys feels the same: ‘There is a world-wide consensus - also laid down in a European Directive - that participants in medical studies do not pay, as compensation for the uncertainty involved.’

WILLY DE BUCK • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 10 SEPTEMBER

Ghent fertility doctor Comhaire finds the criticism that has been levelled at him hypocritical, because in his opinion people already choose the sex of their babies secretly in our country. ‘I know for certain that people who already have several children of the same sex have abortions if it appears that the next foetus is again of the same sex,’ says Comhaire. ‘And I also know that sex selection via embryos takes place. In principle, the sex of an embryo may only be determined to avoid a child being born with a serious hereditary disease, but this medical reason is sometimes invoked to give parents the child of their choice.’ ‘In that case I would prefer we met those parents’ wishes with a safe technique,’ says Comhaire.
Vande Lanotte calls for quota and compulsory integration courses

His Flemish colleague in employment and fellow party member Renaat Landuyt has his reservations about quotas

In a noteworthy interview in Knack (11 December), Vice-Premier Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A), at the same time Minister for Social Integration, calls for a more active integration policy to be introduced and the discrimination of immigrants in the job market to be dealt with firmly. His remedies are simple, but not new: compulsory language lessons for immigrants and compulsory quotas of recruited immigrants for employers. He is not meeting with much approval. Employers’ associations are squarely against quotas. His Flemish colleague in employment and fellow party member Renaat Landuyt has his reservations about quotas, and Flemish Welfare Minister Mieke Vogels (Agalev) does not agree with making integration programmes compulsory (FF).

JOHAN RASKING • DE STANDAARD • 11 SEPTEMBER

The address by the Socialist Vice-Premier yesterday met with strong condemnation from employers’ organisations. The VBO, VEV and Unizo were unanimous in rejecting quotas for immigrant jobs. ‘A company is not a social profit organisation, it is looking for the best workers. The government cannot force employers to recruit certain groups of workers, it is not financially wise,’ says VBO Director-General Pieter Timmermans. The SME organisation Unizo is throwing the ball back to the government, ‘which is not setting a good example. The number of immigrant workers in government services is many times lower than in SMEs.’ The VEV (Flemish Employers) is calling for a sustained policy of stimulation, with extra attention for training projects and the application of the non-discrimination charter, which has already been signed by more than 800 Flemish companies. Temping agencies, for example, have introduced a special non-discrimination programme. The Socialist ABVV trade union does not feel ‘informal promises from employers’ are the answer, but is calling for the generalisation of so-called diversity plans in companies to facilitate a multi-coloured staff policy.

PIER PIRYN/HUBERT VAN HUMBEECK • KNACK • 11 SEPTEMBER

Vande Lanotte: ‘If we say that integration is necessary, we must be prepared to face the consequences. Then we must also stop complaining about the lack of Dutch lessons for immigrants and the fact that there are not enough teachers. Then we must dare to say: we will make language lessons compulsory. Full stop. It’s clear that have to do something about the shortage of teachers. But I find it a wry argument to say: we cannot yet talk about compulsory lessons because we do not yet have enough supply. You have to turn this argument around: you will never have enough supply if you do not make it compulsory. But language lessons do not give immigrants a guarantee of work. I therefore believe that we can no longer tolerate discrimination on the shop floor and must if necessary impose quotas on employers…A disabled Fleming still has more chance of getting a job than an able-bodied Moroccan.’

BART EECKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 11 SEPTEMBER

Renaat Landuyt (SP.A): ‘Quotas are the last resort. They testify to the failure of the present policy.’ Landuyt is defending his own three-pole policy: ‘We have cracked down hard on discrimination in the interim sector, we have encouraged trade unions to tackle racism on the shop floor and we have taught businesses how to deal with diversity.’ Landuyt’s Agalev colleague Mieke Vogels is all in favour of quotas. ‘We have had the solemn oaths and festive protocols and we have to recognise that they have failed to deliver.’ Vogels is proposing that employers and trade unions agree on a quota regulation themselves. ‘Only if they fail to reach an agreement can the government intervene.’ The other coalition partner, the VLD, is strongly opposed to quotas. ‘A policy is being operated in favour of integration and against discrimination. Businesses must not be saddled with further obligations,’ says VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht. Apart from a quota system, Vande Lanotte is also calling for compulsory integration programmes (with Dutch language courses, ed.). Competent Minister Vogels (Agalev) calls Vande Lanotte’s argument ‘a typical lawyer’s argument. They think they simply have to introduce a law to change reality.’ Vogels points out, however, that Integration programmes do not get to the heart of the debate: ‘Integration programmes are for newcomers. The current debate concerns the underprivileged of the second or third generation. For them, language is not the problem.’

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**NUMBER OF JOBLESS IN FLANDERS**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>Number of Immigrants</th>
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<tr>
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<td>19,433</td>
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<tr>
<td>204,865</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>180,449</td>
<td>18,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>159,585</td>
<td>15,000</td>
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**SOURCE:** TID-GRAPHICS
Barely nine months separate us from the Federal elections for Chamber and Senate. In the press there is already fevered speculation as to the composition of the candidate lists, even though most parties will only announce these definitively in the spring. Behind the scenes, the informal talks and elbow-work have begun. The party chairmen have got quite a job on their hands, says De Financieel-Economische Tijd (10 September), as the parties must take account of the larger, provincial electoral districts involved. The electoral weight of the leading candidates is becoming crucial, because the list votes count for only half. And because many ‘figure-heads’ will be candidates and will be elected to the Senate and the Chamber, the list of successors will be more important than ever before, claims the paper. Finally, the parties must take account of the Quota Act. The list must be given top spot. CD&V Youth chair Jonathan Cardoen had earlier expressed the same opinion guaranteed discussion at the weekly meeting of party leaders (FF).

CD&V compromises between old and new

At the Christian Democratic CD&V a discussion is raging over the question of whether the heavyweights of 1999 should once again head the lists. CD&V Youth chair Jonathan Cardoen does not think so. In an interview with De Morgen, Pieter De Crem, the most conspicuous CD&V politician of the moment in the media, called for new young leading candidates. The interview guaranteed discussion at the weekly meeting of party leaders (FF).

Assize Court barrister Vermassen not on VLD list

At the VLD, candidatures must be in by 28 October. A vote will only be taken on the composition of the lists in March. However, a report in Het Laatste Nieuws caused a certain amount of displeasure among the party leaders. Flanders’ most famous Assize Court barrister Jef Vermassen would be offered the second position on the Senate list (behind Premier Verhofstadt) and would even have been promised the Justice Ministership. To the extreme dissatisfaction of current Minister for Justice and liberal heavyweight Marc Vermilghen. Both Party Chairman De Gucht and Premier Verhofstadt dismissed the report as ‘nonsense’, but the paper had a number of statements from Vermassen on tape, so there was little point denying that he had indeed at least received a request to appear on the Senate list for the VLD.
Dewael also wants electoral reform in Flanders

FOCUS ON FLANDERS • 7 September - 13 September 2002 • Number 30

On Friday 13 September the Chamber is likely to approve the changes to the Federal Electoral Act. If the Senate then approves the Act, the new electoral system with national heavyweights and provincial electoral districts will be law. Back from holiday, Minister-President Patrick Dewael (VLD) announced in De Morgen (7 September) that he also wants to propose a similar electoral reform for Flanders after the Federal Act had been approved. He wants to put a draft decree before the Flemish Parliament whereby 28 seats are retained for MPs elected across the whole of Flanders and 90 for the successful candidates of five provincial lists, six of whom will be from the Brussels region. To amend the Flemish electoral system, however, the Purple-Greens need a two-thirds majority in the Flemish Parliament and therefore the support of one of the opposition parties, be it the CD&V or the Vlaams Blok. The CD&V does not intend backing the draft, but the Vlaams Blok thinks there could be something in it (FF).

FRANK WILLEMSE • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 10 SEPTEMBER

Flemish Minister-President Dewael wants to follow his Federal colleague and table a similar proposal for the Flemish elections of 2004. ‘Because two different electoral systems in one country is not viable,’ is his reasoning. That the reform benefits politicians who do not do so well locally and can win more votes with a larger electoral district is not denied. Nor is the fact that popular politicians will also benefit. The CD&V would oppose it because they are struggling with a lack of national political stars, but are still strong locally. If the electoral district is widened, these ‘little barons’ would find the going tougher. ‘Oh, the CD&V is fighting a losing battle because we are now living in a time where the media are important for politicians,’ says SPA Parliamentary Party Leader Bruno Tobback. To which the CD&V’s Van Rompuy reacts angrily: ‘Political stars are too distant from the people. They don’t have any roots. The only area they know well is that of the television and newspapers. We want them to be elected because they are good politicians, not because they come across well and spend millions on advertising campaigns to be able to reach the whole of Flanders or the whole of their province.’ Van Rompuy finds it arrogant of Dewael to table electoral reform without allowing CD&V members to have their say, despite needing a two-thirds majority. ‘He is counting on the support of the Vlaams Blok, but at the same time he is writing a book on the fight against the far-right,’ says Van Rompuy. Blok Parliamentary Party Leader Filip Dewinter is not actually saying no. ‘We were against Federal electoral reform on community grounds, but at Flemish level we are certainly willing to discuss the matter,’ says Dewinter. Agalev and the SPA would rather not enter into agreements with the Vlaams Blok. ‘If we don’t push the reform through now, we will manage it next time. If we amend the Constitution, we will no longer need a two-thirds majority,’ concludes the SPA’s Tobback.

Priest Staf Nimmmegeers stretches hand to SPA

The SPA will have to hold talks in the autumn with Spirit. After former Culture Minister Bert Anciaux had announced that his Spirit was choosing to go to the elections in a cartel with the SPA, a number of Spirit senators and MPs went to seek salvation with the VLD and Agalev. What remains of Spirit (including current Minister Van Grembergen) will pronounce on the formation of the cartel in October. One piece of luck for SPA Party Chairman Janssens is that the well-known priest-writer Staf Nimmmegeers, priest of Brussels’ Finis Terrae church, has agreed to fill an eatable place on the Senate list. Staf Nimmmegeers is the priest who conducted the celebration of the Eucharist at the Ijzer Pilgrimage and has in his own words been seduced by Janssens’ attempts at modernisation. In these times, when right-wing tendencies are rearing their ugly head, he no longer wants to remain in the wings, says Nimmmegeers, who feels that the SPA has the most Christian programme. If Nimmmegeers is elected senator, however, he will have to choose between his pastoral work in Brussels and his mandate, the Council of Bishops feels (FF).

BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 7 SEPTEMBER

Janssens could hardly imagine a better birthday present than the arrival of priest Staf Nimmmegeers. It must show that the transformation of his part is gradually bearing fruit. Nimmmegeers also has the inestimable ability, just like Stevaert, to appeal to both the ‘intelectual’ and the ‘VTM (commercial TV, ed.) public’ when speaking. Few politicians in the SPA manage to effortlessly compromise between the classic nationalist militants and the intellectuals in their trendy cafés. Later this year Janssens is also guaranteed a cartel with Spirit. But Spirit will be the vehicle to attract young people, to move them. It gives the Chairman more breathing space to be able to continue the modernisation after the next elections. Undoubtedly Nimmmegeers will have to struggle with some SPA public that wants to eat priests for breakfast every morning. Other militants are not happy about a collaboration with Spirit and Bert Anciaux. But for Janssens there is no way back. The Chairman made 18% in June 2003 the target. Janssens can now breathe a little more easily. But the feeling remains that there is still some way to go.

POLITICS
Tele Atlas loses 40% of its liquid assets in first half year

SLACK ECONOMY AND POOR PERFORMANCE OF MAIN SHAREHOLDER BOSCH CAUSE LOSS IN Turnover

The Ghent company Tele Atlas is a household name in the world of navigation systems for cars. The company not surprisingly receives three quarters of its turnover from navigation. The rest comes from geographical information systems, applications in geo-marketing and transport management and location-based services (LBS, ‘please find the nearest Chinese restaurant’). Navigation is a burgeoning market in which growth figures of 20 to 30% per annum are normal. But it is also a sector where massive production costs must first be incurred before the benefits are reaped. The production of maps from aerial photos, topographical surveys and prospection in the field wastes a great deal of energy and money. Furthermore, the Tele Atlas’ annual updates costs huge sums of money, for Europe alone some 30 million euros a year. Since 1998, inputting and digitisation have been carried out by the Indian subsidiary Tele Atlas India Pt. Ltd. And just as investments in Europe are beginning to show a return and the digital map of the US (cost: 190 million euros) is nearing completion, the crisis and an unsuccessful partner seem to be throwing a spanner in the works, finds Trends. In the first half of 2002 the company lost 40% of its liquid assets and in the last quarter growth barely reached 0.2%. What is going on? (FF).

BRUNO LEIJNSE • TRENDS • 12 SEPTEMBER

The drop in car registrations - down 21% in August in Belgium - is giving reason for concern. A slack economy is hitting companies with high fixed costs doubly hard. But there is also the poor performance of shareholder Bosch. Bosch controls around one third of Tele Atlas and in 1999 was responsible for 40% of Tele Atlas’ turnover via its subsidiary Blaupunkt. Blaupunkt, the then market leader in navigation, has since lost its way. Mercedes recently started giving its navigation systems for its E-class and S-class to Harman Becker and Siemens VDO respectively. Estimated loss for Blaupunkt: 400 million euros.

Bosch lost contracts worth a further 100 million euros with Volkswagen. Tele Atlas is now trying to compensate for that loss in turnover by increasing supplies to Siemens VDO, which up to now has worked with the rival system Navtech. Navtech and Tele Atlas form a duopoly, although Navtech dominates the US and at present is also stronger in Europe. Seventy percent of Tele Atlas’ turnover comes from car manufacturers who fit the systems directly into their cars. Thirty percent comes from cars already on the road: installation and loose sale of CDs and DVDs. Once every three or four years customers purchase an update.

In Europe, responsible for 84% of Tele Atlas’ turnover, the massive investment is beginning to yield liquid assets, says Manager Alain De Taeye. In 2003, a positive cash flow is guaranteed. Apart from Bosch, International Asset Management, owned by the Dutch De Pont family, also has a 32% stake in Tele Atlas. One third of the shares are on the Neuer Markt and 2% are owned by employees.

WIM VANDEVELDEN • DE FINANCIELE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 11 SEPTEMBER

Foreign investments in Flanders at 1.435 billion in 2002

In the first half of 2002 foreign companies invested 1.435 billion euros in Flanders, including the mega-investment of 900 million euros in Ford Genk. These investments created 550 jobs. These are foreign investments in which the Flanders Foreign Investment Office (FFIO) had a hand, says Pol Verhaegen, Managing Director of the FFIO. Thanks to the mega-investment in Ford Genk, the share of the US in foreign investments in Flanders rose to 70.7%. However, Verhaegen does not expect the rise in investments to continue at the same rate. In particular, the changed investment climate in the US after the accounting scandals (Enron, Worldcom) will definitely have an effect on investment in Flanders, he feels (FF).

The Asian share remained as good as stable at 20.9% in the first half of 2002, the European share fell to 8.4%. Last year 46% of foreign investment in Flanders came from the US, 29% from Europe, and 25% from Asia. In total, Flanders received 2.7 billion euros of foreign investment in 2001, good for 4,941 jobs. This involved 199 files. The car sector did particularly well; it accounted for 32% of all foreign investments. The chemicals sector was in second place, with a share of 16%.

In 2000, foreign companies invested 2.57 billion euros in Flanders, which was good for 8,958 jobs. Verhaegen (FFIO) points out, however, that the investment figures for 2000 and 2001 cannot be compared with those for the first half of 2002. For the first six months of this year, only investments received via the mediation of the FFIO are taken into account. Previously a ‘mix’ was made of data, which the FFIO gathered from various sources (press, Regional Development Companies, etc.). The Flemish Government announced earlier that the data from the FFIO said very little. Which also explains why the FFIO figures on foreign investments in 2001 were not released earlier. In the meantime action has been taken and a decision made to integrate the FFIO and Export Flanders in the new service Flanders Investment and Trade.
Interbrew restructures its European production network
400 jobs to go, 120 jobs to be created

The Leuven brewer Interbrew wants to optimise its production network of 17 sites in Western Europe. Per-capita beer consumption is falling and the international competition is increasing. The company must therefore become more cost-effective, and for this it needs to be restructured. One production division at Breda, in the Netherlands, is to close within 18 months. This will mean all 335 workers on the site will lose their jobs. The annual production volume of 2 million hectolitres in Breda, consisting mainly of the Oranjeboom brand, and the logistical activities are gradually being transferred to the Interbrew breweries in Dommelen, in the Netherlands, and to the Belgian sites in Leuven and Jupille. The commercial and administrative services in Breda are being kept out of it, according to Interbrew spokesman Dewulf. Interbrew is also restructuring in Manchester, in the UK, where 1 million hectolitres of production volume is being moved to the breweries in Magor and Preston. The restructuring in Manchester is costing 68 jobs. In total some 400 jobs are to go. In Leuven and Jupille together an additional 80 jobs are being created, says Dewulf. Around 40 jobs are being created in the Netherlands, the UK, and Germany (FF).

BERT LAUWERS • DE FINANCIEEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 10 SEPTEMBER

The Leuven brewery must produce an extra 600,000 hectolitres. However, of greater importance is the extra filling activity that is moving to Leuven. This involves a modern filling line for 50 cl and 33 cl cans that is moving from Breda to Leuven, good for 1.1 million hectolitres. In addition, 200,000 additional hectolitres will be filled in kegs, 16,000 hectolitres in returnable bottles and 55,000 hectolitres in disposable bottles in Leuven. According to Dewulf, the extra production means that Leuven will now be working round the clock.

In Jupille, near Liège, 800,000 extra hectolitres will be produced and 380,000 extra hectolitres filled. The breweries of Belle-Vue and Bremen are also to receive extra production. In the United Kingdom 1 million hectolitres of production is being transferred from Manchester to the breweries in Magor and Preston.

In addition to the costs of the redundancy programme, Interbrew is writing off 25 million euros’ worth of tangible assets and investing 12 million euros in relocating production.

Whether the announced measures will finally sort things out for the Western European network, Dewulf cannot say. ‘All the sites were investigated, and there is no need to take any further steps. But whether we have to repeat the same exercise at a later date depends on further developments in the beer market,’ he says. The Interbrew share fell 0.76% to 26.2 euros.

7,000 years of Persian art in Ghent
AFTER VIENNA AND BONN NOW IN GHENT

The exhibition ‘Seven thousand Years of Persian Art’ brings together for the first time works of art that span the seven-millennium-long history of Persia (Iran). After Vienna and Bonn, they are now visiting Ghent, and not by chance. Exactly twenty years ago the exhibition Urartu en Luristan was not by chance. Exactly twenty years ago the exhibition ‘Seven thousand years of Persian art’ brings together for the first time works of art that span the seven-millennium-long history of Persia (Iran). After Vienna and Bonn, they are now visiting Ghent, and not by chance. Exactly twenty years ago the exhibition Urartu en Luristan was

Exhibition ‘Seven thousand Years of Persian Art’ brings together for the first time works of art that span the seven-millennium-long history of Persia (Iran). After Vienna and Bonn, they are now visiting Ghent, and not by chance. Exactly twenty years ago the exhibition Urartu en Luristan was

After Vienna and Bonn now in Ghent

The experts could argue about it for ever still merrily raging away. Are the clay figures of women mother goddesses, are they toys or decorative objects? The experts could argue about it for ages. The strange images of a man and a woman on the third floor of the exhibition intrigue the visitor just as much as...
the image of a bull with ear-bells in the next case charms with its simple but powerful lines. There is also much to see for those with no knowledge of ancient Iranian cultures. Most of the objects are not large, but technically very refined. The most impressive pieces come not only from the period of the Achaemenids [sixth-fourth centuries B.C.]. At that time, rulers such as Darius I founded a kingdom that stretched from the Danube to India and built the mythical city of Persepolis. The golden beaker that decorates the exhibition poster is an eye-catcher from this period. But the relief with the head of a warrior, the jewellery, a tablet in lapis lazuli or the amazing Sassanian silverwork open up new worlds.

Until 5 January: 7000 years of Persian art, exhibition, Sint-Pietersabdij, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.30

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 Lannoov nv, Kasteelstraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.

Diary

MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE

• 4 to 29 September: Cirque du Soleil with ‘Salottombo’, Heizel, Brussels; info: 0900/84.07
• 19 to 21 September: Les Nuits Botanique with Marc Moulin’s Top Secret Band, Les Rita Mitsouki, Chocolate Genius, 16 Horse Power etc., Botanique, Brussels; info: 02/218.37.32
• 18 to 21 September: Drumming Live, Rosas, dance with Steve Reich compositions performed by Ictus Ensemble, kaaitheater, Brussels, info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be
• 18 September: Orchestre révolutionnaire et romantique conducted by John Eliot Gardner, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00 www.psk.pba.be
• 19 and 20 September: Ti Trittico by Giacomo Puccini, directed by Robert Carsen, Flanders Opera, Antwerp; info: www.vlaamsopera.be
• 19 September: Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Flanders and Berlin Rundfunkchor: L’ascension by Messiaen and Parfaital by Wagner, Sint-Baafskaathedral, Ghent, info: www.festivalvanlaaardenen.be
• 19 and 20 September: Martin Pizani (Sans) and Kassys (Mousse) and Noise Maker’s Jyfes and Bambuso sonoro, dance and theatre, De Vooruit, Ghent, info: 09/267.24.24 www.vooruit.be
• 23 September: KRAFTWERK, Vooruit, Ghent, info: 0900/26060 www.vooruit.be
• 23 September: Water Music and Music for the Royal Fireworks by Händel, Le Concert Spirituel and the Freiburger Barockensemble conducted by Hervé Nicuet, Sint-Baafskaathedral, Gent, info: 09/77.00.00
• 24 September: Alicia Keys, Vorst Nationaal, Brussels, info: 0900/260.60
• 25 September: Engelbert Humperdinck, Koningin Elisabethzaal, Antwerp, info: 0900/00311

EXPLO

• Until 17 November: Closed world - Open books, exhibition, medieval manuscripts and contemporary art in a splendid site of an abbey, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02 www.brugge2002.be
• From 26 May onwards: Interactive Diamond Museum of the Province of Antwerp, info: 03/20.48.90 www.diamantmuseum.be
• Until 29 September: Een Swaarte Enterprise, exhibition on the East-Indian Company in the 18th century, Venetaanse Gaarderien, Ostend; info: 059/80.55.00
• Until 17 November: Dead Lines: War, media and propaganda in the 20th century, exhibition, Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres
• Until 21 September: Ommegang - Circuit/flexion, exhibition with Flemish and international video-art in the chapels and churches of Roeselare (West-Flanders), info: 051/20.85.09 www.phidias.be
• Until 1 December: Tyndale’s Last Will (the Coverdale Bible), exhibition, Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, info: 03/221.14.50
• Until 27 October: Aztecs and Mayas, pre-columbian art, CC, St-Niklaas; info: 03/777.29.42
• Until 31 October: Station2station, exhibition: art in petrol stations along the roads leading to Bruges; info: www.station2station.be
• Until December: Festival art and equal rights, women artists show their work in 40 places, organisation: Gynaika, info: 05/232.22.29 www.gynaika.be
• 20 September to 3 November: ArchiLab: ecology in contemporary architecture, exhibition, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 05/248.28.28
• Until 17 November: Graphical work by Martin Ernst, exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, info: 09/240.07.00
• 20 to 29 September: Eurantica Antwerp, International Antiques Fair, Antwerp, info: 0800/30.007 www.artexis.com
• Until 12 January: Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings, The artists of the Pharaoh, exhibition, Liebelparkmuseum, Cinquantenaire, Brussels, info: 02/741.73.11
• Until 11 October: The enchanted wood, open air exhibition by Flor Bex, Mstra-Aalter (East Flanders), info: 0495/10.09.10
• Until 5 January: 7000 years of Persian art, exhibition, Sint-Pietersabdij, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.30