Schouppe forced to resign from ABX

according to Schouppe himself, the board of directors was placed under pressure by the government.

ABX Logistics (turnover 3 billion euros, 16,000 employees), the road-based carrier service of the Belgian Railways (NMBS), is being split into a profitable and a loss-making part and is to receive a bridging loan of 140 million euros. The Board of Directors did not therefore opt for bankruptcy, but for a balance between risk management and a quicker maturity guarantee, says Karel Vinck, Managing Director of the NMBS. This year ABX has sunk 426 million euros into the red. In addition, the NMBS took a further 200 million euros in provisions for ABX and the company itself is heading for a loss of 444 million euros. According to Vinck, the NMBS will definitely lose 1.2 billion euros a year unless it changes its policy. Of this pit the NMBS can fill 20% at most itself, the rest will have to come from the government, says Vinck, who is holding out the possibility of difficult negotiations with this and any future government. Meanwhile, ABX’s grim figures have cost the head of Managing Director Etienne Schouppe. According to Schouppe himself, the board of directors was placed under pressure by the government. Vinck denies this (FF).

Opinion

GUIDO MEEUSSEN • DE FINANCIEEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 15 NOVEMBER

The political support that Etienne Schouppe had so carefully cultivated throughout his career vanished over the past twelve months like snow in the sun. In the spring he had to step down as boss of the NMBS, now he is also being forced to resign as Managing Director of ABX Logistics, his favoured child. But it is still astonishing that he managed to survive as a well-known CD&V member for three years under the Purple-Greens.

His enforced departure as boss of the NMBS was first and foremost a political settlement, his resignation from ABX Logistics is primarily the consequence of his failure as a manager. As boss of the NMBS Schouppe, certainly under CVP (former CD&V) administration, was a loyal implementer of the government’s budgetary policy. As the driving force behind ABX he and his board of directors bore the greatest responsibility. And the directors who jointly approved all ABX investments have almost all disappeared. This left only Schouppe as the scapegoat. But as NMBS boss Karel Vinck let slip, if the ship is forced to change course dramatically, it is normal for the captain to be replaced. (see also page 6).

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INTRODUCTION

A study by the University of Antwerp and the Public Prosecutor’s Offices of Brussels and Flanders reveals that 60% of drug users who come into contact with the legal system are aged between 18 and 24. 12% are over the age of 29. 5% are below the age of 16. The figures were published this week in Flemish newspapers and are based on the Prosecutor’s reports that have been kept since 1991. This also explains why the group of older drug users is so small. These use drugs at home more than on the street, have less contact with the police or have simply stopped using drugs. However, the most worrying aspect is the sharp rise in the number of young people below the age of 16 that were booked. According to investigator Pierre Van Damme, this shows that young people are starting to use drugs earlier and earlier. The message is that drugs prevention must begin as early as primary school, claims Van Damme. Equally worrying is the sharp rise in the use of ecstasy. In 1992, 6.6% used this chemical drug, now the figure is 15.3%. Meanwhile users, parents, teachers, and educators remain confused about the use of the soft drug cannabis. Although under the drugs memorandum that was approved by the government in January 2001 cannabis use below the age of 18 remains illegal, many young people mistakenly believe it is permitted. Nor should that come as a surprise, says Guido VanHalen, one of the people behind the study in Gazet van Antwerpen (13 November). Communication on the new drugs memorandum is a cacophony.

In the weeks following the publication of the memorandum a discussion developed between politicians on whether or not to punish cannabis use. Problematic use (in public, including at music festivals) by adults and in the presence of minors remains an offence, but not home use. A folder was distributed by the government, but the information already no longer corresponds to the texts that are now being debated in the parliamentary committees. After all, many young users and their parents do not even know that there may well be a memorandum, but there is still no law. One reason for SPA member Dalila Douifi to press for a swift implementation. However, she suspects that after all this criticism of the lack of communication, the government is anxious about pressing forward and has stuck its head in the sand. Meanwhile the legal uncertainty continues and use is tolerated by one police force and punished by another and there are no prevention campaigns (see also page 5).

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
PARTIES

VLD chairman De Gucht introduces his book

His colleagues in the other majority parties, Jos Geysels of Agalev and Patrick Janssens of the SPA, were invited to give their opinion of his ideas.

Karol De Gucht, Chairman of the Liberal VLD, has written a book in which he explains his version of social liberalism for 2002. He expresses a clear opinion on almost all political issues of the moment, from immigration to the environment, pluralism in education, safety, social security, and health insurance. In ‘De Toekomst is vrij’ (‘The future is free’). That was striking, he defends almost like a demonstration of the debating culture so cherished by the Purple-Greens, says De Morgen (13 November), which describes the event as a Purple-Green party, to which the VLD Chairman introduced De Gucht’s book yesterday together with Agalev leader Jos Geysels.

His colleagues in the other majority parties, Jos Geysels of Agalev and Patrick Janssens of the SPA, were invited to give their opinion of the ideas De Gucht defends in his book, almost like a demonstration of the debating culture so cherished by the Purple-Greens, says De Morgen (13 November), which describes the event as a Purple-Green party, to which the VLD Chairman introduced De Gucht’s book yesterday together with Agalev leader Jos Geysels.

According to Patrick Janssens, who introduces De Gucht’s book yesterday together with Agalev leader Jos Geysels, that conflict of roles is also visible in De toekomst is vrij. As Chairman of a majority party he actually has to serve several masters. Avoid treading on two premiers’ toes, try and become the biggest problem of Catholic hospitals and schools in the lack of pluralism. He even disagrees fundamentally with his vision of health insurance. To which the VLD Chairman postulated that the social security system would be untenable if the health insurance budget continued to rise at its current rate. Regionalisation was the obvious solution, he argues in De toekomst is vrij. Because Flanders is currently paying more, but gets less in return, claims De Gucht. In Flanders, an in-flamed appendix costs 3,875 euros per 1,000 inhabitants, in Wallonia 5,625 euros.

The book the VLD Chairman postulates that there is no reason to depart from the logic of this coalition on not introducing immigrant voting rights. In the book the VLD Chairman postulates that there is no reason to depart from the logic of this coalition on not introducing immigrant voting rights. According to him, immigrant voting rights is not a subject over which the immigrant community is losing sleep. Was not De Gucht formerly a supporter of immigrant voting rights? ‘I have not changed my views,’ says De Gucht. ‘Although I have about integration. That should be compulsory. In the past I was not used to believe that.’

STATE REFORM

Regional powers for health care and employment?

Patrick Dewael (VLD) is calling for the formation of a great Flemish front.

The Flemish Minister-President Patrick Dewael (VLD) is calling for the formation of a great Flemish front. In preparation for the new phase of state reform he is proposing a series of areas in which more powers would be given to the regions and communities. These are taxation, transport (including the railways), family policy, and health care and employment. In his book, VLD Chairman De Gucht places the main emphasis on health care. According to De Morgen his viewpoint makes sense. For the regionalisation of employment policy Dewael received support from an unexpected corner: Het Belang van Limburg points out, namely from the European Commission (FF).

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 13 NOVEMBER

For De Gucht it is not right that a solidarity mechanism such as health care ultimately leads to those who give more per capita of the population get less back in return. De Gucht is proposing a radical system: an equal amount per capita of the population, which the Flemish and Francophone communities can pay to health care. If one wants to do more than the other, no problem, but they must find the financial means to do so themselves, e.g., through higher taxes or social security contributions. Residents of Brussels can then choose between the two systems. There is no doubt whatsoever that this line of thought will not receive a unanimous nje from Francophone political parties because they have so much to lose. But unless Wallonia actually takes measures against the derailment of its health care, this argument will sooner or later lead to a new round of state reforms.
De Clerck heads full-speed towards elections

Stefaan De Clerck has been re-elected Chairman of the CD&V

With 91% of votes cast, Stefaan De Clerck has been re-elected for three years as the General Chairman of the Christian Democratic CD&V. The news was announced at the art event ‘De Beeldenstorm’ in his home base of Kortrijk, where he is mayor. From January 2003 he will pass that mayoralship on to his first Alderman, Frans De Stoop. In so doing he wants to free himself up as much as possible to run the election campaign. But in the Wetstraat in Brussels, in contrast to Kortrijk, De Clerck is a lot less happy with himself, and that could play tricks on him in the campaign with all its media coverage, says De Morgen (FF).

FILIP ROGIERS • DE MORGEN • 12 NOVEMBER

In a newspaper interview this weekend, VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht pitched De Clerck into being the challenger to Guy Verhofstadt. That provided food for thought, but the CD&V troops are at a loss what to do. Some see it as a gift from the VLD, ‘because it makes the election stakes clear,’ others cannot bear to think about it. De Clerck may well be their party’s figurehead, and he heads the Senate and Chamber lists in West Flanders, but if he is forced to join battle on the Wetstraat in Brussels, it could go horribly wrong. He wants to be a coach, ‘against the vendetta culture and politics as an individual sport of the parties in government’, a sort of ‘enthusiasm-kindling’ leader of some youth movement, but in the election studios there is only room for one voice that speaks for all. And that is where the Kortrijk man will have problems, and many of his party colleagues with him. Certainly the old veterans - brought up in the atmospheres of statesmanship and associated seriousness - do not feel at ease in the bright Wetstraat with all its media coverage. Laws rattle around on all sides, according to the CD&V Reds and Blues and Greens speak consciously and at set times about what topics they will be debating in public. ‘It’ll drive us mad,’ say several CD&V figureheads. But they are obliged to play the game. The same is true of the reform of the Electoral Act. The party is challenging this before the Court of Arbitration, but at the same time it has to comply by it. Thus, De Clerck is on two lists. Thus, he may soon have to take the gloves off in man-to-man debates.

CD&V members know that they are not in pole position, but their confidence is growing nevertheless. In the book by former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, ‘Er is nog leven na de 16’ (‘There’s still life after the prime ministership’), there is a crucial sentence. What this government lacks in substance, it makes up for in enthusiasm and spectacle. History will be the judge, said the former premier. One CD&V MP put it like this: ‘Some in our party are even quietly hoping that we can remain in opposition. Let this government clear up its own mess. The ACW (Christian workers’ movement) is right. Even I could blindly endorse the texts of Patrick Janssens (SPA Chairman) or Agalev. We cannot oppose their plans, as the CD&V does not possess an alternative. We do, however, for the practices of this government. The ACW knows that.’ De Gucht is therefore not wrong when he says that the CD&V does not want a centre-right cabinet. Or that it wants it to be CD&V or VLD.

### THE FLEMISH BUDGET 2002: MAJOR DEPARTMENTS

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<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>IN MILLION EUROS</th>
<th>IN %</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Well-being and health care</td>
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<td>Roads and inland shipping ways</td>
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Source: TIJD Graphics
Vogels: houses for victims of domestic violence

Violence against women was the main theme of the 31st Women's Day in Leuven, and with good reason. One in five women is still the victim of physical violence caused by her partner. Furthermore, if the victims lodge a complaint there is only a small chance of the matter being followed up. Nine out of ten complaints are dropped. Shelters for women in Flanders are overcrowded and urgently need to be expanded, demanded the Women's Consultative Committee (Vrouwen Overleg Komitee, VOK) on Women's Day. But Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities, Mieke Vogels (Agalev), does not agree. She would rather negotiate with her colleague in Housing, Jaak Gabriëls (VLD), about the possibility of setting aside every social housing project a few houses for battered women (FF).

VEERLE BEEL • DE STANDAARD • 12 NOVEMBER

Domestic violence and acts of war against women formed the diptych that came up for discussion in debates and working groups on the 31st Women's Day yesterday. Rather than increase the number of shelters for women, as the VOK wants, the Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities, Mieke Vogels, wants to look for alternatives. I am negotiating with the Housing minister on the possibility of setting aside a few houses in every housing project for battered women.' According to Vogels, shelters do not always meet current needs: 'The trial project in Antwerp shows that you can also help battered women on an 'outpatient' basis.' With the new campaign Draw the Line, aimed at young people aged between 14 and 18, Vogels hopes to alert a young target group to the problem of domestic violence. But the VOK does not see much benefit in yet another campaign. Chair Galbusera: 'What's missing is a structural policy of prevention with regard to violence against women. It's all too anecdotal.' Vogels answered that in the best possible scenario you can only ever prevent, 'but that you cannot undo violence. If you are responsible for policy, you have to approach things step by step.' She is attaching great importance to the implementation of a general Flemish prevention decree that is currently being prepared and will hopefully come into effect in this legislature. Yesterday she promised to urge her fellow ministers to pay specific attention to the problems of women in the decree. But she cannot directly do anything about the lack of treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence. Help for offenders, which since the Dutroux affair has focused on sexual delinquents, still comes under the authority of federal Justice Minister Marc Verwilghen (VLD). The Flemish community is supposed to take over responsibility for this, but Vogels wants Verwilghen to put money on the table as well. The VOK is not happy about this game of 'ping-pong' between two cabinets.

Later on that day the VOK presented representatives of the Federal Government, the Parliaments and the Office of the Public Prosecutor with its demand for a law allowing police to deny perpetrators of domestic violence access to their house for ten days. Such a law has already been applied successfully for the past five years in Austria.

Youth and adult organisations face financial setback

In their own words, Flemish youth organisations and the socio-cultural educational work are standing with their backs to the wall. The minister responsible, Paul Van Grembergen (Spirit), has been unable to free up sufficient money to implement the new decrees in their sector. According to this decree youth and socio-cultural organisations must recruit people, draw up policy plans etc., and that costs money. If no decision is reached before January, the decrees risk not being able to take effect, leaving the organisations in a legal vacuum. Van Grembergen needs 11 million euros. At the time his predecessor Bert Anciaux promised the money, but the Flemish government still has to cut the knot, and the Liberals seem to be opposed to this (FF).

KARL VANDEN BROECK/WILFRIED EETEZONE • DE MORGEN • 9 NOVEMBER

The adult education work was extremely pleased with the draft decree that was drawn up at the time together with Anciaux because it puts an end to compartmentalisation and because it guarantees greater funding. In 2004 the sector will need 5 million euros, and in 2005 7 million euros. ‘That money was promised by Bert Anciaux at the time,’ says Flemish MP for Agalev Jos Stassen, ‘but since he was replaced by Minister Van Grembergen, the Culture cabinet has received much less co-operation. The Liberals in particular do not seem able to forgive Anciaux for having formed a cartel with the SP.A. They are clearly taking revenge. At the same time it is a shame that the SP.A does not appear inclined to support Van Grembergen. The SP.A-Spirit cartel appears not to be working within the Flemish Government with respect to organisations of the centrefield.’ This last point is confirmed by a source within Van Grembergen’s cabinet.

Youth movements are also in a tight spot. In total, some 2.5 to 3 million euros are needed to implement the new decree on Flemish youth policy. Steven Wouters of the Flemish Youth Council (Vlaamse Jeugdraad): ‘Our budget has now been frozen. That means that we will really have to tighten our belts. On top of this, the money that we used to receive from the National Lottery now goes to communication and participation.’
On 5 November the controversial refugee centre at Sangatte near Calais stopped accepting any new refugees. It has been declared ‘full’. Those refugees already staying there may come and go with a special pass. New refugees are no longer being admitted. That’s why they will simply wander around the area, which is causing quite some concern among local residents. For the past few days, Flemish coastal towns have also been reporting a sharp increase in the number of illegal immigrants in the border region. The Federal Council of Ministers therefore hastily approved an action plan intended to prevent illegal immigrants trying to reach the UK en masse via Belgian ports. These are mainly Iraqis and Afghans. Sangatte led to rows between the UK and France. London claimed that Sangatte was a base for refugees trying to enter the UK via the Channel tunnel. London and Paris finally agreed that the refugee centre would close in April 2003. According to a witness in Het Nieuwsblad (9 November), many illegal immigrants have reached the UK in small boats (rubber dinghies, yachts), mainly from the port of Nieuwpoort (FF).

For several days, the police in Westhoek (the westernmost part of the province of West Flanders) and those coastal towns bordering on France have been reporting a sharp rise in the number of illegal immigrants caught. On Thursday morning eight more Iraqis who were staying in our country illegally were apprehended in Nieuwpoort. More and more illegal immigrants are being seized, especially along the A18 motorway and in the port of Nieuwpoort. The action plan approved on 8 November is intended to prevent the 1,200 refugees still at Sangatte from drifting into Belgium en masse. The centre must be completely empty by May. The plan is based primarily on tighter controls at the border and in coastal ports. While the local police concentrate their efforts on minor roads, their federal colleagues will check the motorways. The police are already monitoring the ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend around the clock. These controls are now being extended to the port of Nieuwpoort. Premier Verhofstadt also promised that as many of the illegal immigrants as possible would immediately be deported. The Department of Foreigners’ Affairs is setting up a separate unit in the area. An army aircraft is permanently stationed at Ostend airport. The government has also asked the French Government for a list of all the people currently in Sangatte. If these are apprehended at a later date on our territory, they can then be sent back to France. Our country is also insisting that the French and British Governments implement the earlier agreements on joint controls and investigation teams. In emergencies the government can also invoke article 2 of the Schengen Treaty. This allows a country to reintroduce border controls in exceptional circumstances.
Vinck proposes splitting ABX

The profitable part ABX1 will be privatised next year

Karel Vinck, the new boss of Belgian Railways, is opting for transparency in the state enterprise. In so doing he appears to be breaking with the tradition of his predecessor Etienne Schoupe of embellishing the results via "financial engineering". For Vinck the NMBS is pure business, reports Knack (13 November). Five months after taking over, the results of an internal audit have been published and are frankly alarming. The company is heading for a net loss of 443 million euros, bringing the railways' debts up to 5 billion euros. This financial pit is also due to the loss-making subsidiary ABX, in which the NMBS has already invested around 570 million euros. Vinck has therefore drawn up a plan to restore ABX to a healthy state. He wants to split the carrier firm up into a profitable part (ABX1) and a non-profitable part (ABX2). The profitable part will be privatised next year (FF).

PASCAL DEN DOOVEN • DE STANDAARD • 14 NOVEMBER

ABX1 will be privatised next year by a part-sale to one or more private shareholders. That money will be used to restructure ABX2. ABX2 is essentially the ABX companies from France, Germany, and the Netherlands. These account for around two fifths of the ABX group. The cost of the rescue operation for the NMBS and the government will run into hundreds of millions of euros. The intention is that the private shareholders that are to take an interest in ABX1 next year will do the same with ABX2 sometime in 2004 so that the shareholder value becomes identical and the commercial network can remain intact. In the interim phase, which will last at least six months, the NMBS will remain the 100% owner of the problem part until after restructuring. In the short term only the healthy part will receive a new identity and become separate from the NMBS. The railways company does, however, want to remain the "reference shareholder", but will be happy with a significant minority position. Earlier it was suggested that the privatisation of ABX should produce up to 200 million euros. What is certain is that at least some of the money from the privatisation of the "good" ABX will be used to restructure the "bad" ABX.

Electrabel buys Italian Interpower for 874 million euros

Together with partners Acea and Energia Italiana, the Belgian electricity producer Electrabel is buying Interpower from the Italian electricity producer Enel for 874 million euros. Interpower has four power stations, three thermal and one hydroelectric with a power of 2,611 megawatts. Energia Italiana, an energy holding of Carlo De Benedetti, is taking a 50% share in Interpower, Electrabel 35% and Acea, Rome's energy company, 15%. The price - 551 million euros in cash and the taking on of 323 million euros in debts - is rather on the low side because the Interpower power stations are old and will therefore need replacing relatively soon. Also, there is only one hydroelectric power station. Power stations of this type are more attractive because of their greater flexibility and low fuel costs. Enel, 68% of which is owned by the Italian state, has already sold the much larger Elettrogen and Eurogen, admittedly at a higher price. However, the market was not favourable for the sale of Interpower. No counter-bid appeared. In total Enel retained from the sale of its electricity production 8.3 billion euros. Electrabel already has a 356-megawatt installed power station near Pisa and a 400-megawatt one is being built near Voghera. Two years ago Electrabel Italia was set up and in May this year the Brussels company entered into a joint venture with Acea from Rome. The two companies want to expand in terms of the production, sale and distribution of electricity. The joint venture with Acea is aimed at production and sales to small customers. Electrabel has a joint venture with the Swiss firm EOS to supply bulk consumers in Italy.

Duo succeeds John Goossens at Belgacom

FF EDITOR

Belgacom boss John Goossens (57) died suddenly on Friday from a heart attack. Goossens, who in 1995 moved from Alcatel Bell to Belgacom, was praised by politicians and fellow managers for his managerial qualities. He converted the former state enterprise RTT into a competitive, semi-privatised telecoms company. For this, he was able to restructure the company and let a total of 10,000 staff members go with a minimum of social unrest. Today Belgacom is a thriving telecoms company that is in profit in a sector that is burdened with debts. On 12 November Belgacom's Board of Directors appointed Chairman Michel Dusenne and Financial and Administrative Director Ray Stewart as temporary successors. In consultation with the telecoms company's Board of Directors they handle the company's ongoing business. In the meantime the Council of Ministers will elect a selection board in consultation with the shareholders, which will look for a permanent successor to Goossens. According to De Financieel-Economische Tijd (12 November), there is no doubt that Belgacom's merger and privatisation plans will be significantly delayed following the sudden death of John Goossens. It was well known that Goossens was conducting Belgacom's merger talks with the French Cegetel personally.

TELÉCOM

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De Persgroep invests in ‘Het Parool’

The Amsterdam evening newspaper has been saved

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

The Amsterdam evening newspaper Het Parool (circulation: 60,000) has been saved. Its former publisher PCM, which also publishes NRC Handelsblad, Algemeen Dagblad, De Volkskrant and Trouw, announced that from 1 January the paper would again be operating independently. A consortium consisting of main shareholder ‘Stichting het Nieuwe Parool’ (The New Parool Foundation), a number of Amsterdam financiers and De Persgroep will divide the shares between themselves. The initial capital is 17 million euros, of which De Persgroep is taking 4 million euros and the New Foundation 7 million. In Flanders, De Persgroep publishes, among other things, the newspapers Het Laatste Nieuws, De Morgen and the family magazine DagAllemaal and also holds half the shares in the commercial broadcaster VTM. De Persgroep also has a strong reputation for marketing and sales in the Netherlands, according to Parool Editor-in-Chief Gruijthuijsen in De Morgen (14 November), but Persgroep boss Van Thiillo is also well known for daring to cut costs dramatically. According to De Morgen, 25 editors at Het Parool are being laid off, and in the whole Parool group - which also includes door-to-door papers - 50 of the 280 employees.

Taking stock of Brugge 2002

The choice to organise three main exhibitions was the right one

From February to November Bruges, together with Salamanca, was the cultural capital of Europe. After the weekend of 16 and 17 November the cultural year will be over. Time therefore to take stock. Manager Hugo de Greef is a happy man. The choice to organise three main exhibitions that drew in the general public but still displayed quality products was the right one, he feels. ‘Jan van Eyck’, ‘Hanze@medici’, and ‘Closed world, open books’ had large numbers of visitors each day, who also dabbled in other parts of the programme. Of the 450,000 visitors to Brugge 2002 there were a great many who also appreciated the modern architecture, the contemporary art installations, or the music programme. In all, 700,000 tickets were sold (FF).

SASKIA VEREEENOOGHE • TIJD CULTUUR • 13 NOVEMBER

The base was there and De Greef and Co. wanted to build a programme on it that did not just refer to history, but also to today. ‘A great many initiatives were based on this, with one being rather more successful than the other. The two main poles were contemporary art and contemporary architecture. In my opinion, the contemporary architecture project was a complete success. The projects were relatively integrated into the city, by analogy with the Concertgebouw. I am thinking in particular of the two bridges, one from Conzett and one from West-8, and obviously also Toyo Ito’s pavilion on the Burg.’ Things did not go quite as well with contemporary art. The works were pretty much integrated into the city, and a number of cases are certainly worthy of comment. De Greef: ‘Modern art involves a certain degree of difficulty anyway. Also, we assumed that people mainly came to Bruges for the major exhibitions, and could also dip into other things while here. That turned out to be not so obvious: people chose beforehand what they wanted to see and what they did not.’ And yet Hugo de Greef thinks that we can generally be positive about Brugge 2002, even where the performing arts are concerned. ‘There we clearly chose to explore the far corners in terms of music, dance, and theatre. And we were completely successful.’ To what extent was this cultural year able to reach the public from the Bruges region, to whom great importance was attached? De Greef: ‘In an event like this you always have to distinguish between three levels of public. We called them the three Bs: Bruges, Binnenland (Domestic) and Buitenland (Foreign). Everywhere you see that when something is organised the largest percentage of visitors comes from the region. Here too there was considerable interest from the Bruges region. I felt it was very important that people from the region could take part in as many things as possible that were happening in the region. Hence the Poorters pass, a discount card for residents of Bruges. Secondly it was extremely important for us to communicate on a national level, to make it clear to the Belgian people via campaigns and adverts that Bruges has more to offer than they previously thought. The image of Bruges across the country had to be completed: Bruges is alive. So, on a national level we have certainly altered people’s perception of
the city. Internationally that is less the case: we communicated via tourist channels, and then you have to deal with the fact that Bruges is a product to be sold. Mediaeval Bruges, with the Minnewater park and the little boats, is much easier to ‘sell’ to people than contemporary architecture, for example. And yet there was also considerable interest from abroad. I noted, for example, that the Fnac in Paris had a huge number of tickets.’

**Diary**

- 20 November to 1 December: Fiddle o’ by Van Beethoven directed by Francisco Negrín, Flanders Opera, Ghent; info: 09/225.24.25 www.vlaamseopera.be
- 21 to 23 November: Eduoard Lock.La La Lula Human Steps, dance, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 22 November: Violent Femmes, Royal Circus, Brussels; info: 0900/26060
- 22 to 24 November: La Traviata by Verdi, directed by Frank Van Laecke, Vorst Nationaal, Brussels; info: 0900/00991
- 24 November: Uberto Tozzi, Royal Circus, Brussels; info: 0900/26060
- 24 November: Youssou N’Dour, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 25 November to 8 December: Festival Nordic Scene, 26 performances from N orway, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark. In De Botterij/KVS, Kaaitheater, PSK, Hallen van Schaarbeek etc.; info: www.nordicscene.be
- 21 November: Les musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble, conducted by Marc Minkowski, compositions by Haendel, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24
- 20, 21, 22 and 23 November: Salsa Cetica, the great Scottish Latin Adventure, De Handelsbeurs Gent; info: 09/265.91.65, CC Leuven
- 22 November: Vloere & Grenoble, conducted by Marc Minkowski, compositions by Haendel, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24
- 22 November: Tempera String Quartet with work by Sibelius, Ravel, and Swerts; Villain XIII castle, Maaseik; info: 089/76.97.97
- 23 November: Koninling Elisabetha, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/422.14.50
- 23 November: Meslier N’degocello, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 27 November: Kreisp, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 29 November: Amon Tobin, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 30 November: Foo Fighters, Hallen van Schaarbeek, info: 0900/26060
- 30 November: The Cranberries, Vorst Nationaal, info: 0900/26060
- 26 November: Ensemble Explorations with JS Bach: Sonatas, traverso in and basso continuo, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 27 and 30 November: Institute for Living Voice with David Moss and Greetje Bijma (27 Nov.) and Joan Ladermann and Sancho Namtchlyak (30 Nov.) De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/225.17.02 www.transparant.be

**EXPO**

- **Bruges 2002:**
  - Until 30 November:
    - 1 November: Johannes Vermeer, exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent; info: 09/240.07.00
    - 12 November: De el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings, exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.30
    - 21 September to 16 February: Selection 2/Backstage, Fashion exhibition, Antwerp Modemuseum (MoMu), Antwerp; info: 03/470.27.71
    - Until 8 December: Between city palaces and castles in the country, engravings and paintings by Hans Vredeman De Vries (1526-1609), exhibition, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp; info: 03/422.14.50
    - Until 12 December: De el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings, exhibition, Jubelparkmuseum, Cinquantenaire, Brussels; info: 02/741.73.11
    - Until 5 January: 7000 years of Persian art, exhibition, Sint-Pietersabdij, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.30
    - Until 16 February: The work is a garden, exhibition, garden architecture (prints) by Hans Vredeman De Vries, Brussels; info: 09/252.01.03
    - Until 1 December: Magistral Middle Ages, miniatures and manuscripts from Chartres to Charles the Brave (800 - 1475), City Museum, Louvain; info: 015/34.20.00
    - Until 1 December: Oscar Niemeyer, architect, survey of his works, exhibition at the CIVA, in collaboration with the Niemeyer Centre of São Paulo (Brazil); info: 02/642.24.50 www.civa.be
    - Until 5 January: 50 portraits of the artist, exhibition, Deiuyers, Brussels; info: 02/222.57.37
    - Until 24 November: ‘Paramount Basics’ by Richard Verlet and Guy Mes, exhibitions, Muhka, Antwerp; info: 03/238.59.60
    - Until 14 December: Symptomania, Finnish contemporary art in Kunsthalle Lophem, Loppem-Zedelgem; info: 0477/832.370
    - Until 1 December: The Misfits (film with Marilyn Monroe), 9 Magnum photographs, Caermerklus, Ghent; info: www.filmfestival.be
    - Until 2 February: Gaude succurei vitae, exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03

**CULTURE**

- **Foci 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, Kasteelstraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.