Technology Day launched amid great interest

On 18 December, in Technopolis (the technological ‘doing centre’ in Mechelen), the Authorities of Flanders gave the kick-off for the ‘Technology Day’ scheduled for 30 March. Seven hundred representatives of companies, educational establishments and research centres attended the launch. The Flemish Minister-President Patrick Dewael (VLD), who had already announced the new initiative in his September statement, called on Flemish companies, research centres and laboratories to take part. Some fifteen companies and research establishments have already signed the participation charter. These include Imec, Opel Belgium, Asco Industries, EDS Benelux, Real Software and Sidmar. With the Technology Day, Dewael wants to raise Flemings’ awareness of the importance of knowledge and innovation. The new initiative is the link with the Flanders Technology Trade Fairs that were held in Ghent in the 1980s and 1990s (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT • DE FINANCIEEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 19 DECEMBER

Know-how is our only raw material, Dewael said in his speech. Therefore we have to increase investments in research and development, innovation and technology still further. The Technology Day is aimed at convincing the general public of the strategic importance of this. Dirk Frimout and Frank de Winne, the two Flemish astronauts, agreed to be godparents. The participating companies, research centres, universities, colleges of higher education and government departments are invited to make their technology ‘visible’ for the general public on Sunday 30 March, and for third-grade secondary-school pupils on Monday 31 March. Dewael called on all companies and SMEs, research institutes and laboratories to take part. Those interested have until 1 February to register. A scientific committee will screen the registrations. On Saturday 29 March there will be an academic session, at which the government will present three prizes for innovation, one of which will be for a start-up company. During the session Dewael hopes to be able to sign the innovation pact on increased investments in research and development, on which he is currently holding consultations with the business community and the universities. The logo for the Technology Day is a high-tech eye with the caption ‘The amazement continues’.

www.dayvandetechnologie.be

INTRODUCTION

Some 7,500 general practitioners, pharmacists, nurses, physiotherapists and other so-called ‘front-line care providers’ marched through Brussels on Saturday 14 December. The banners and signs they were carrying made clear their displeasure at the current state of their profession. Doctors feel that they work too much and earn too little. Physiotherapists feel that they cannot work enough on account of the restrictions on patient numbers and consultations, and are therefore not earning enough. Pharmacists feel that the profit margins on their medicines are too low. Just about all care providers feel that they are not earning enough, that the red tape has become too much and that social regard for their job is pathetically low. Het Nieuwsblad (16 December) warns that Flanders could regret this in the future. More and more Flemish doctors and nurses are already leaving for the Netherlands, where they are better paid. If that trend continues, we will be faced with a shortage of doctors here before long, according to the paper. The demonstrators’ ire was chiefly targeted at Minister for Social Affairs Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA). But Vandenbroucke did not let himself be thrown off his balance, and passed the hot potato on to the professional associations. He recalled that he had made EUR 282 million (+ 6.3%) more available for fees to be distributed among general practitioners and specialists. But it is doctor’s associations and health insurance funds that distribute this money – and it is they that should see to it that the underpaid general practitioners get a fair deal, he says. This week an agreement appears to be in the making: general practitioners see the price of a consultation gradually rise from EUR 15.80 to EUR 18, and that of a house call from EUR 20.48 to EUR 25. Only the BVAS, a doctor’s association dominated by specialists, is still attempting to make the amount to be distributed bigger by increasing the basic amount that has to be borne by the patient for patients who ask for a house call. The pharmacists have a different problem. The measures taken by Vandenbroucke in support of the cheaper generic medicines are eating into their profit margin. Vandenbroucke wants to prompt patients into a more rational use of medicines and has thereby made a number of generic medicines cheaper and a number of original brand-name medicines more expensive. The pharmacists cannot take this. Therefore they blew up the agreement with Vandenbroucke this week. Here again, Vandenbroucke presents the pharmacists with a choice: either they remain a semi-commercial sector that lives on profit margins and the number of pharmacists will inevitably fall, or they opt for a role as health workers remunerated with a fee (De Morgen, 16 December). For many pharmacists, this is probably akin to choosing between cholera and the plague.

Frank Vandecaveye • editor in chief
New remuneration and multi-stage career path in education

The Hay report sets just about the entire current wage and personnel policy on its head.

Teachers have been complaining for years about the lack of career opportunities in their profession. With the exception of principals, teachers are not really under-paid, it is true (at least that is what studies show us), but the teaching profession does have a flat career path, as it is termed. The teacher is paid according to his degree and the number of lessons he gives, and pockets his seniority increments with clockwork regularity over the years. This makes teaching anything but attractive as a profession. Education Minister Marleen Vanderpoorten announced some time ago that she wanted to work on making the job more appealing. She commissioned the Hay research consultancy to produce a blueprint for a new remuneration policy, grafted more onto that applied in the private sector. Hay has now completed its report, which will no doubt be the subject of passionate debate between teachers, trade unions and politicians over the months and years to come. After all, the report sets just about the entire current wage and personnel policy on its head. The importance of the teacher’s degree and seniority are reduced substantially, and skills become more important. The boards are given greater freedom and responsibility for the local personnel policy. The flat career path is replaced by a three-step career ladder. A five-yearly evaluation becomes an essential component of the wage policy. If the teacher passes this, a pay rise is granted. However, if the teacher obtains a negative result twice running, he or she will be removed from the education system via oustplacement. The Hay Group puts the cost price for its blueprint at EUR 500 to 600 million, or some 10% of the current total wages paid to teachers. Minister Vanderpoorten regards the document as the basis for the education sector’s collective labour agreement negotiations that are scheduled to start at the end of 2003. But the report is causing a fair deal of suspicion in union circles. The unions fear that favouritism will raise its head, that teachers will have to wait much longer for their permanent appointment, and they are wondering where the government is going to get the money from for such an expensive reform (FF).

Alexandra de Laet • de Standaard • 18 December

The basic assumption is that teachers’ pay should be ‘market-related’. That means that it is at least as high as the pay in half of all companies or organisations. ‘We are talking here at all times about total remuneration’, stressed Koen Van Hee of Hay. ‘That is more than merely salary and pension. The working environment, the job content, the balance between work and private life and other factors also count’. This market-based approach is problematic in particular for positions on governing bodies. Nonetheless, according to the blueprint it is precisely the members of schools’ governing bodies who have to bear a large part of the new remuneration policy. They are being given very considerable responsibility and a limited budget with which they can grant a number of teachers a senior bonus. For the principals themselves, there will be a five-year term of office. After a positive evaluation, they will be able to take up a further five-year mandate, and so on successively. For this, according to Hay, the principals should receive not only a remuneration for their mandate, but also a higher fixed salary, linked to the size of their school. There are plenty of changes afoot for teachers, too. Whilst these days they usually see their job expressed in terms of lessons, the blueprint holds out the prospect of an ‘overall assignment’. This of course contains lessons and preparatory work and marking, but also all other school-related tasks such as consultation, supervision, further training, and so on. A 38-hour working week, for example, would then be introduced in the education sector. Furthermore, the blueprint proposes a ‘career ladder’. Those who come straight from school or from another sector will start out as ‘beginner teachers’, and will be accompanied in the school by a supervisor. After three to seven years (or one to two years for those forming part of a sideways intake) comes the step up to ‘experienced teacher’, at least if the evaluations are positive. If they are not, the beginner teacher should be excluded from the education system, according to Hay. The third rung on the career ladder is that of ‘senior teacher’. The latter may, among other things, be an expert in his or her discipline, an excellent organiser, an officer responsible for the supervision system, or a grade co-ordinator. In principle, the senior teacher continues to give lessons.

The school will decide how it interprets the senior position. The principal will have a budget at his/her disposal for this, which should be large enough to grant a third of the teachers a ‘senior bonus’ of at least 10% extra salary. According to the blueprint, teaching staff and members of governing bodies will therefore be paid far more on the basis of their performance than is the case at the moment. Degrees continue to play a role as the admission ticket to a job in education and a particular salary scale. Seniority continues to assure linear growth in the salary, but teachers will only be able to make real progress after a positive evaluation.

DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES TO ACHIEVE KYOTO TARGETS

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SOURCE: TIJD GRAPHICS

Focus on Flanders • 14 December - 20 December 2002 • Number 44
De Batselier proposes Charter for Flanders

In an address given on the occasion of the Flemish National Holiday (11 July), the Speaker of the Flemish Parliament Norbert De Batselier had called on the federal authorities to grant the federal states constitutional powers in the constitution, after the fashion of the American states or the German Länder. At the time he also announced that he would be producing a draft constitution by the end of the year. De Batselier has kept his promise and presented his text on 16 December. De Batselier calls it a draft charter which lays down the basic rights of Flemings and the policy principles of the government. Critics such as VLD chairman Karel De Gucht or former Minister-President Luc Vanden Brande noticed substantial evidence of the SP.A’s ideas in the text. De Batselier does not deny this, however, stressing that he had opted for a political text rather than a vague consensus text. Anyway it is still only a discussion text, whereas CD&V and VLD have just decided to delegate all powers to the sub-regions. ‘That debate about a federal or a confederal Belgium really is crazy’, says De Batselier. ‘The Belgian system has characteristics of both systems. That is unique in the world. Let us further develop that’. Former Minister-President Luc Vanden Brande (CD&V) has different views on this. ‘It’s good that De Batselier has taken this initiative’, he says. ‘But I find the content disappointing. He remains minimalistic on the state reform and does not take any step towards federalism.’ Vanden Brande is not happy about the SP.A emphasis running through the text, either. Among other things, De Batselier adopts the SP.A’s free-of-charge policy, and at times cites ‘in-house philosopher’ Mark Elchardus word for word. Vanden Brande will have ample opportunities for airing his criticism, since De Batselier’s charter is being submitted as a resolution in the Flemish Parliament.

www.vlaamsparlement.be
www.vlaamshandvest.be

ELECTION POLL

LLL quarterly poll: gains for SP.A and N-VA

There were no spectacular shifts vis-à-vis September to be seen in the quarterly poll published by La Libre Belgique. The Liberal VLD remains the largest party in Flanders but falls back 0.6%, putting it at 23% - barely 0.4% more than at the time of the elections in 1999. The CD&V also loses ground slightly and comes out at 21.4%, i.e. 0.8% below its 1999 result. The SP.A and N-VA show the best results this month. With a 0.4% gain on the September figure, the socialists have reached the 17% mark for the first time. This is 2% better than their showing in the 1999 elections. Given that Spirit still accounts for 3% of the electorate, the SP.A-Spirit alliance represents 20%. The N-VA is also doing conspicuously better. With 4.4% the Flemish nationalists are still hoping that they will be able to attain the 5% electoral threshold. The Greens of Agalev cannot complain either, since they have moved up to 10.7%. Perhaps the most noteworthy result of the poll is the slight loss recorded by the extreme right-wing Vlaams Blok. The poll by the poll institute INRA was carried out in the middle of the period marked by immigrants’ disturbances in Antwerp and the hype surrounding AEL leader Abu Jahjah, and yet the Blok was unable to take advantage of this. It fell back 0.4%, although, all dailies added, by way of precaution, that the Blok always fares better in elections than in polls. In any case, with 16.9%, the Blok is still 1.6% above its result in the last elections. In the poll sounding out the popularity of Flemish politicians, Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt heads the list, ahead of Socialist standard-bearer Steve Stevaert (SP.A) and former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene (CD&V), although the latter is not a candidate for the federal elections in 2003.

THE QUARTERLY POLL BY LA LIBRE BELGIQUE

Source: DE FINANCIÈLE MORGEN

Focus on Flanders • 14 December - 20 December 2002 • Number 44
Debate on noise emission standards postponed

The Flemish government first wants to consult with the Brussels region on Brussels strict noise emission standards

The debate within the Government of Flanders on Flanders’ own noise emission standards for air traffic is being postponed. There has been considerable discord since the Environment Minister Vera Dua (Agalev) announced that strict noise emission standards were to be imposed on all Flemish airports. These standards were designed to put an end to the noise pollution caused by the 27 night flights operating out of Zaventem over the Flemish northern periphery of Brussels. However, this would also mean that the two night flights operating out of the airport of Ostend would disappear, and that would as good as signal the end of the regional airport. Minister-President Patrick Dewael (VLD) did not agree with the plans of his environment minister. As he himself has put it, he wants to reconcile the noise emission standards with a healthy economy. The SP.A of Ostend minister Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A) was also fiercely opposed to Ostend’s airport being closed, particularly now that the city has a further 200 unemployed persons on its hands in the wake of the closure of the Ostend-Dover Hoverspeed line. According to the responsible minister, the Flemish Minister for Transport Steve Stevaert (SP.A), the two night flights in Ostend are necessary in order to keep the airport profitable, although in July Stevaert himself was still saying that Ostend’s night flights had to be scrapped. So, on 18 December the Government of Flanders decided to postpone the fixing of the Flemish noise emission standards. It first wants to consult with the Brussels Region on Brussels’ strict noise emission standards. Officially, it might not be until the middle of January before a decision is taken on the issue in the consultative committee bringing together the federal and regional governments, for the results of the new measurements first have to be computed. The night flights out of Ostend are kept on [FF].

The noise emission standards currently applied by the Brussels Capital Region are so strict that applying them to Flanders would quite simply imply the banning of all night flights there. Because Dewael wants to ‘maintain the balance between economic and environmental considerations’, the Flemish plea for harmonisation should be viewed as an explicit request for the Brussels Capital Region to relax the noise emission standards. ‘In the federal airport agreement the two regions officially stated that they were in agreement that a harmonisation of the noise emission standards should be reached. If Brussels is not prepared to make a compromise, we have a major problem’, says Rudi Daems, assistant principal private secretary to Vera Dua. However, everything points towards the Brussels government sticking to its guns. ‘We’re not backtracking on what we have achieved. As far as we are concerned, there is no margin for negotiation’, said the spokesperson of the Brussels Minister-President Xavier de Donnea (MR). In addition to the stalemate surrounding the noise emission standards, the persistent noise pollution over Brussels’ northern periphery is leading to mounting tension. The Government of Flanders cannot tolerate the fact that the federal government is not abiding by the conditions laid down in the federal airport agreement. On top of that, there is also the discontent over the ‘questionable’ increase in the number of day flights over the northern periphery. ‘Federal decisions falling outside the scope of the night-flight agreement have led to an increase in the number of day flights over the northern periphery, too’, according to Rudi Daems. The bickering in the government, the constant noise pollution, and the increase in the number of day flights are putting the Government of Flanders in an awkward position.
Flemish venture capital from ‘ARKimedes’ fund

There is a shortage of venture capital in Flanders and nonetheless there is a great need for it, since the average Fleming does not come up to scratch when it comes to a sense of enterprise, according to research. Simulations have revealed that there is a shortfall of EUR 60 to 80 million per year in venture capital for SMEs and enterprises that are starting up. With a view to filling this gap, the Government of Flanders recently approved a draft decree for the establishment of the ‘ARKimedes’ Fund (Activation of Venture Capital in Flanders), which hopes to raise this amount from private individuals and institutional investors. Any Flemish taxpayer will be able to buy shares in it and will then be entitled to a tax cut in his or her personal income tax. The Government of Flanders hopes to get the ARKimedes Fund up and running by the summer of 2003 (FF).

The Government of Flanders is hoping that ARKimedes will have a lever effect on the provision of venture capital to SMEs and start-up businesses in Flanders. Over a period of five years ARKimedes should lead to the financ-  ing of 750 to 1,125 start-up businesses and SMEs, conceded the Minister of the Government of Flanders for Finance and the Budget Dirk van Mechelen (VLD). It will be possible for capital or a loan to be granted from the ARKimedes Fund to ARK investment companies. An umbrella ARK agency is to be set up within the Flanders Venture Capital Company (PMV) to assume responsibility for the recognition of the ARK investment companies on the one hand, and the management of the ARKimedes Fund on the other. An ARK investment company will be able to benefit from a capital contribution or a loan from the ARKimedes Fund if it itself also brings in a part of the capital. From the ARK investment companies, capital or a convertible loan can then be granted to companies in Flanders with fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of less than EUR 40 million. The European Commission will most probably set a maximum amount that can be furnished from the investment companies to SMEs. In order to encourage private individuals to invest in the ARKimedes Fund, their investment will be made tax deductible. A private investor will be able to invest a maximum of EUR 250 ten times in an ARKimedes fund. Minister Dirk van Mechelen wants to grant a tax benefit of 35% over a period of four years on the investment. Institutional investors will be able to count on a regional guarant- ee. Of course the intention is for the ARKimedes venture capital to yield a capital gain, thanks to the profit from the capital holdings and the interest on the loans granted. It is also the intention to float the ARKimedes Fund, so that the investors can realise their contribution. The costs associated with the launch of the ARKimedes structure and the tax benefit granted will be borne by the Flemish budget.

The British shipping company Hoverspeed is shutting down its ferry service between Ostend and Dover, putting 197 people out of a job. The number of pas- sengers carried from Ostend on the daily ferry service once operated by the Belgian RMT (which went in liquidation in 1997) has fallen over the last five years from 1.5 million to 700,000 passengers a year. In 1998 the British company Hoverspeed took over operation of the Ostend-Ramsgate route from the Aus- tralian-Finnish joint venture Holyman Sally, which in turn had taken over the service from the RMT. Hoverspeed scrapped Ramsgate and returned to Dover. The abolition of duty-free shopping in 1999 was the first heavy blow for the line. The year 2001 was also a disastrous year, with the line having to cope with a marked downturn in pas- senger numbers as a result of the foot- and-mouth epidemic in the United Kingdom. What is more, the Super Sea- cats used by Hoverspeed proved too costly to run. That year the net loss already ran to EUR 10.7 million. Last summer the company began sailing with just one ferry instead of two. The line expects a net loss of EUR 6.6 mil- lion this year, and according to the management it will be impossible to achieve break-even next year either. For this reason, Hoverspeed decided to ini- tiate the mass redundancy procedure for the 197 employees and to shut down the Ostend-Dover line. The manage- ment hopes to come to an agreement with the trade unions by March.
The Belgian electricity producer Electrabel is acquiring the European assets of its parent company Tractebel. The assets in question are Tractebel’s holdings in the natural gas companies Distrigas and Fluxys and in the industrial services suppliers Fabricom and Elyo. The acquisition means a quadrupling of Electrabel’s workforce, bringing its number of employees to 71,000 in Europe and 30,000 in Belgium, and a doubling of its turnover, to more than EUR 20 billion. Electrabel had earlier already taken over the European power stations from Tractebel. Tractebel’s chief executive Hansen would not reveal any details of how the enormous amount of cash (more than EUR 1 billion) coming into the company’s hands as a result of this operation would be used. It is not yet clear whether it is to be invested in Tractebel’s non-European activities or, conversely, used to make good the losses of its parent company, the French holding company Suez (FF).

ERIK DE LEYE • DE FINANCIËL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 14 DECEMBER

The acquisition of Tractebel’s European assets should give Electrabel better opportunities for growth in Europe. The acquisition of the stake in the Belgian natural gas seller Distrigas is useful because Electrabel is a major consumer of natural gas and will thus be able better to arm itself against fluctuations in the price of natural gas. A sizeable stake in Fluxys, which owns and operates the Belgian natural gas infrastructure, also strengthens Electrabel. Tractebel has a 43.43% holding and the majority of the voting rights in Distrigas and Fluxys. The two companies are listed on the Brussels stock exchange. Electrabel is not planning to offer more than the stock exchange price, because it would then have to make a public offer for all shares. According to Friday’s closing prices, Tractebel’s holding in the two natural gas companies is worth EUR 461.5 million. Electrabel is also taking over Tractebel Engineering, Fabricom and Elyo. Fabricom installs electrical systems and manages and maintains technical plants. Elyo provides for energy services such as burner maintenance or the operation of small total energy plants. Fabricom and Elyo are wholly-owned subsidiaries of Tractebel. The assets of Elyo and Tractebel Engineering outside Europe remain in Tractebel’s hands.

Due to the nature of their activities, Fabricom and Elyo have a finely-knitted commercial network in Europe, which the electricity producer will be able to use in order to improve substantially its contacts with potential customers. ‘Up until now we have experienced horizontal geographical expansion, which is aimed at large-scale consumers’, explains Willy Bosmans, Electrabel’s managing director. ‘The acquisitions mean we will be able to add depth to our expansion’, he adds. Electrabel is very interested in SMEs in countries like France, Italy and Spain, and hopes to win over a large number of customers in this sector. Electrabel has asked a committee of independent directors to calculate the correct acquisition price. This will in any case be well over EUR 1 billion and will be paid in cash.

www.electrabel.be

Mercator Banking & Insurance Services is cutting 250 of its 1,150 jobs. Mercator Insurance’s share portfolio has been hard hit by the poor stock market climate since July this year. Given that Mercator is also a venture capitalist, this portfolio was especially vulnerable because it also contained a large number of risk investments. The insurance activities have also suffered from the storm damage of the last few months. The banking subsidiary Mercator Bank is suffering from the effects of the contracted interest rate margin. The group has also speeded up the switch-over of its bank offices to a self-supporting status. The 16 bank branches will be made self-sufficient next year, resulting in 100 of the 250 jobs disappearing. The other redundancies will be in the insurance activities, chiefly in the head office in Antwerp (FF).

JOHAN VAN GEYTE • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 14 DECEMBER

At the beginning of October managing director Ronald Everaert was still formally denying that any major streamlining was in the pipeline. ‘Our results this year will be worse than we had estimated at the end of September. Both the banking and the insurance lines are heading for a loss, although how great that will be I cannot yet say’. Everaert points to the disastrous evolution on the stock market. ‘As an insurer, we normally have two sources of income: our clients’ premiums and the revenue we obtain from the investment of these premiums. You should realise that this latter item has saddled us with heavy losses.’ Some 30 to 50 people can be accommodated in the Mercator Bank offices. At the moment the institution still has 16 sales outlets with salaried staff. These employees are having their status changed to self-employed persons, and they will then in turn be able to take people on. On the financial front there will be an injection of EUR 30 million in the bank. This contribution was necessary in order to restore the company’s financial stability.
Market gardeners want to recruit East Europeans

Following the inland shipping trade and the haulage sector, the ornamental plant and fruit and vegetable sector is requesting permission to recruit thousands of East European workers for temporary work. The sector is unable to find enough seasonal workers at home. The Farmers’ Union (Boerenbond) is of the view that if the Authorities of Flanders (more specifically, the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency - VDAB) are unable to fill the vacancies through their own channels, they should let market gardeners and fruit farms to go round the law, says the Farmers’ Union. Barge masters and hauliers had previously already urged for work permits to be granted to East Europeans. The Minister of the Government of Flanders for Employment Renaat Landuyt (SPA) is not exactly jumping at the suggestion. He feels that the employers have not invested enough in training for Flemish job-seekers, who could just as well fill the vacancies (FF).

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 16 DECEMBER

Landuyt arrived at a compromise with the haulage sector and the inland shipping trade. The VDAB will be organising fast-track training courses so that enough ‘of our own people’ can be recruited in the short term. Now, too, Landuyt is reacting sharply. ‘We are seeing that some sectors that have problems finding workers at home are trying to take advantage of the poverty in Eastern Europe. We can hardly blame unemployed Flemings for not wanting to work under very poor conditions. As long as people dream of paying East European wages, it will be difficult to find Flemish seasonal workers’, the minister said. Moreover, the sector already has a more flexible social regulation. The PWA (local employment agency) scheme has been broadened and the social security contributions for temporary workers have been cut. Despite the personnel problems, ornamental plant cultivation (flowers and plants) is a growth sector. Over the last three years, the number of companies has risen by three hundred and almost 1,300 new jobs have been created. In order to protect that growth, the sector now also wants a permanent exemption from excise duties on heavy fuel oil.

The aim was to give private bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce a place alongside government services. ‘But we didn’t want to wait any longer,’ said the Flemish Minister for Economic Affairs, Jaak Gabriëls (VLD).

Figures about the perception of Culture in Flanders

MINISTER VAN GREMBERGEN [SPIRIT] NO LONGER WANTS A POLICY BASED ON ‘FINGERSPITZENGEFÜHL’

From experience, culture ministers know that every pressure group from the cultural field is able to come up with the necessary figures in order to lend force to its applications for higher subsidies. That is indeed so, concurs the co-ordinator of Re-Creatief, Hans Waege. By playing with the measuring instruments, you can actually prove any policy option you want. For this reason there was a need for Re-Creatief - an official central office with the task of supplying figures in support of decision-making for the delineation of cultural policy. Minister Van Grembergen (Spirit) no longer wants a policy based on ‘fingerspitzengefühl’ (FF).

GEERT SELS • DE STANDAARD • 17 DECEMBER

As of yesterday, the Re-Creatief Vlaanderen central office is the official supplier of figures on culture in Flanders. The Minister for Culture Paul Van Grembergen (Spirit) wants to have the course he follows geared to the data collected by this centre. One of the assignments with which the office has been entrusted is that of ‘measuring society’. Three universities (The University of Ghent, the State University of Leuven and the Free University of Brussels) and one college of higher education (Ehsal) are together conducting research into the perception of culture in Flanders. At the moment they are fine-tuning their instruments for a first major study, which will begin in the autumn of 2003 and cover an entire cultural sea-
of the legislature. We knew the keys to participation, such as training and so-

cially, and were already more or less working on these. Now we will be measuring them and seeing if they still
tally. We are presently developing a measuring instrument for the whole to be used every so many years, so that the results will be perfectly comparable. The instrument is more akin to that

used by our neighbouring countries, so that comparisons in that respect will also be more realistic’.

www.re-creatievflaanderen.be

Focus on Flanders provides a weekly overview of articles from the Flemish press and appears in English, French and German. This newsletter is published by Uitgeverij Lanno nv, Kasteelstraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.

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Focussur la flandre

• 5 to 10 January: Sasha Walz. Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, 5 and nobody, dance, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

• 8 and 9 January: Both Sides Duet by Jonathan Burrows, Studio’s Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be


• 7 January: Uri Caine and Concerto Köln, Diabelli Variations by van Beethoven, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02

EXPO

• Until 12 January: Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings. The artists of the Pharoa, exhibition, Jubielparkmuseum, Cinquantenaire, Brussels, info: 02/741.73.11

• Until 5 January: 7000 years of Persian art, exhibition, Sint-Pietersabdij, Ghent; info: 09/243.97.97

• Until 18 January: Luc Tuymans with exhibition ‘Niks’(‘nothing’) Galery Zeno X, Antwerp; info: 03/216.16.26 www.zeno-x.com

• Until 16 February: Selection 1/Backstage, Fashion exhibition, Antwerp Modemuseum (MoMu), Antwerp, info: 03/470.27.71 www.momu.be

• Until 5 January: 50 portraits of the artist, exhibition, Dexia Gallery, Brussels; info: 02/222.57.37

• Until 2 February: Gaude succurre vitae, exhibition: drawings and films by Jan Fabre, SMAK, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be

• Until 5 January: Europaalia, Guest country: Bulgaria, The Gold of the Thracians, exhibition, PKS, Brussels, info: www.europaalia.be 02/507.85.94

• Until 30 March: Twins, the fascination by scientists, artists and the public, exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumguislain.be 09/216.35.95

• Until 12 January: Finnish Symbolism, exhibition, Museum of Elsene, info: 02/515.64.22

• Until 16 February: The gardens of the Alhambra, exhibition with Pedro Garciares, Maria Teresa Maria Martin Vivalid, Paco Lagares, José Maria Sicilia and Soledad Sevilla, Jan Vanriet, Jan De Vlieger, Jan Van Mechelen, Museum of Modern Art, Ostend; info: 059/50.81.18

• Until 5 January: Construction and Decon-struction. A collection of paintings from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek from Copenhagen (Danish EU-chairmanship), City Hall, Brus-
sels; info: 02/279.64.45

• Until 5 January: Rosas XX, exhibition: 20 years of Rosas dance company, PSK, Brussels; info: 08/ 351 91 85

• Until 8 March: Rosas, exhibition, Brussels; info: 02/507.84.66 www.rosas.be

• Until 6 April: Maria Magdalena, sinner from the Middle Ages until today, exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent; info: 09/222.17.03

• Until 19 January: Antoon De Clerck, retrospective exhibition, The Museum of Deinze de Leiestreek

• Until 16 February: Beaches and glances, a photo exhibition about Ostend, Venetaanse Gaandereien, Ostend; info: 059/56.20.15

• Until 9 January: Benoit, cartoonist, Zwarte Huis, Knokke

• Until 23 February: ‘First Marriage’ by Suchan Kinoshita, exhibition and projects by Gert Robins, Joël Audibert, Nathalie Brevet and Hughes Rochette (Fr), MUHKA, Antwerp, info: 03/238.59.60

• Until 6 January: Snow & Ice Sculpture Festival, Bruges, info: 050/20.46.65 www.jissculpttuur.com

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