Federal elections on 18 May
THE DATE HAS BEEN BROUGHT FORWARD BY A MONTH FOR PURELY PRACTICAL REASONS

The elections for the Federal Chamber and Senate will be held on 18 May. This was announced by Federal Prime Minister Verhofstadt (VLD) on 8 January. For a long time, the Premier stuck to the proposed date of 15 June to show that his Purple-Green government was able to finish its government term. The Prime Minister says the date has been brought forward by a month for purely practical reasons (FF).

ERIC DONCKIER • HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG • 9 JANUARY

There is both a political and a technical explanation for the date being brought forward. The political explanation is that the politicians of the majority parties expect that this time they will need a little more time to form a government and negotiate a coalition agreement. If they still want to be able to go on holiday in August, the elections had to be brought forward. This also benefits the holiday plans of the population as a whole. After all, many people without children go on holiday in June. In this way they avoid the summer rush and high-season prices. And students, who are in the middle of their exams on 15 June, will no longer be disturbed now the election date has been brought forward. In addition to the political there is also the technical explanation, which also has to do with holidays, namely the Easter recess in the Chamber from 5 to 27 April. That recess lasts three weeks because the Easter holidays in Flanders and Wallonia do not overlap completely. The aim is to draft a declaration on the revision of the Constitution before Parliament is dissolved, such a declaration being necessary to be able to continue state reforms during the next legislature. According to Verhofstadt, this will require three weeks. Once that declaration has been voted on and published in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees, the elections must take place within 40 days. If discussions began after the Easter recess, the elections could only be held at the end of June. Too late. Discussions must therefore begin before the Easter recess, which ultimately gives the following timing: final vote in Parliament 4 April, publication 8 April, elections 18 May. This also means that the majority still has until the end of March to complete its programme. Thus, Parliament still has to vote on a series of acts (among others, the act on supplementary pensions, the act on road safety, the new arms export act and the act on insurance against natural disasters) and the first budgetary control is due for the end of February.

CONTENTS

Politics
No state reform before 2004, says Dewael 2
CD&V denounces strategy of Dewael 2
Federal budget remains in the black 3
Cardinal suspends pro-Flemish priest 3
Ex-senator launches new liberal party 4
Christmas addresses for peace 5

Environment
Disaster insurance becomes urgent 4
Floods spoil New Year 5

Economy
Kinepolis pulls out of Italy 6
Flanders Language Valley bankrupt 6
More bankruptcies in 2002 6
Less industrial investments in 2002 6
Bel 20 loses 27% in 2002 7

Culture: Traditional popular culture on the rise 7

INTRODUCTION
The die is cast. To put an end to all the speculation and for a number of practical reasons, Premier Verhofstadt has brought the Federal elections forward by a month. That means that the Purple-Green coalition still has a lot of work to do before the Easter recess (5 to 17 April). Thus, a declaration on the revision of the Constitution, necessary to be able to continue state reforms during the next legislature, has to be drafted. Also, a series of urgent acts - around fifteen according to Verhofstadt - has to be voted on, ranging from supplementary pensions to withdrawing from nuclear energy and compulsory insurance against natural disasters. After all, Verhofstadt continues to insist that bringing the elections forward in no way means that the government’s work is done or that the coalition is too divided to complete its term. The Chairman of the CD&V, Stefaan De Clerck thinks differently. He believes the fact that the elections have been brought forward confirms that the majority parties have mutually entered into an electoral pact, because for some time the discord in the run-up to the elections has not been under control. De Clerck also refers to turbulent dossiers such as the noise pollution caused by night flights, arms exports and tobacco advertising. For most newspapers it is crystal clear that continuing the Purple-Green project is now what is at stake in the elections. At his press conference the Premier did not mince his words. He is aiming to continue the current coalition, at least if the election results of the majority parties allow. De Standaard and De Financieel-Economische Tijd (9 January) point out that a war in Iraq could throw a spanner in the works. After all, the Greens on both sides of the linguistic border have explicitly spoken out against Belgium’s involvement in a “preventive war”. Whether, however, they will be prepared to bring the government down over the matter is doubtful, as then they would be seriously jeopardising their participation in the next cabinet, claims De Financieel-Economische Tijd. De Standaard points out that the fact that the current coalition still has a majority without the Greens is making them nervous. According to the paper the fight in Flanders now promises to be much more exciting than the one on the Francophone side. The Christian Democrats (CD&V) and Liberals (VLD) are fighting for leadership of the electoral market and the score of the Vlaams Blok - as always a great unknown - could have a major part to play.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
The real negotiations on the next steps in state reform will only be held after the ‘Flemish’ elections in 2004. So say VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht and Flemish Minister-President Patrick Dewael. In an interview in De Financieel-Economische Tijd (7 January) De Gucht says that his party wants to work towards more Flemish powers with regard to transport, healthcare, fiscal autonomy and labour market policy. Talks with Francophones on this further state reform will, however, be held outside the government’s negotiations after the Federal elections of 2003.

In a speech at the New Year’s reception of the Flemish Employers’ Federation (Vlaams Economisch Verbond), Dewael said that an agreement had to be reached during Federal formation talks ‘on the method and the agenda’ of the actual community negotiations (FF).

**FILIP ROGIERS • DE MORGEN • 7 JANUARY**

The VLD wants more Flanders. So wrote Patrick Dewael in his Flemish manifesto and the November Declaration, the text that was approved last year at the anniversary conference of the ten-year-old VLD, also provides for a series of new demands. According to that text, the party will ‘definitively’ vote in favour of ‘a confederal model’. For the time being that remains far in the future, partly because the Francophone MR boss Louis Michel said on 6 January in De Morgen that there would be no new state reform. Yet on 7 January Dewael tabled a memorandum in the Flemish Parliament with priorities for a subsequent round in the (con)federalisation of the country. In that ‘Twelfth Night’ memorandum Dewael embroilers further on the Flemish demands which the Parliament approved in 1999 in the form of five resolutions, on the eve of the elections. Then too the demands concerned, among other things, healthcare and child benefit. The resolutions were reached after a year of preparations in a specially established committee. The CD&V wanted to rush through a similar programme of demands annexed to the Flemish front before the Federal Government negotiations of 2003. But times, along with the coalition, have changed. In 1999 the VLD and CVP (now the CD&V) supported the entire package of demands, Agalev abstained from all resolutions and the SP (now the SP.A) from two. These parties now form the majority with the VLD. Opinions on further state reform are therefore divided. And there is a minor rebellion in the VLD on the party’s ‘confederal’ bent approved last year. The VLD is therefore counting on time. Dewael is seeing to it that talks can only be held on the method and agenda of community negotiations after the Federal elections and that those negotiations themselves only have a chance after the Federal Government elections of 2004. ‘After all, one year before the elections no politician will want to take the risk of having to make concessions in the eyes of his own community.’

- The Regions must have control over the rail infrastructure and the regional operation of this infrastructure and for Zaventem airport.
- Healthcare and family policy must be federalised, including the funding thereof.
- Fiscal autonomy must be extended to include a say in personal income tax and participation in the taking of corporation tax. In exchange, the Federal States will take on part of the national debt.
- The solidarity between areas will remain in place, but will be mapped out.

In an initial discussion in the Flemish Parliament Spirit and the SPA added, respectively, the federalisation of the legal system and the empowerment of the Federal States to draw up their own constitutions.
Federal budget remains in black

While most EU countries are wrestling with rising deficits

Despite three successive years of falling economic growth figures, the Federal Government seems to have managed on each occasion to achieve its budgetary objectives without too many problems. That is also the case this year. The Belgian budget remains in the black, while most EU countries are wrestling with rising deficits. Economic growth expectations were, however, halved by the Government compared with September, when it drew up its budget for 2003. At the time the government still expected growth of 2.1%, but that has now been revised to 1.05%.

At a press conference, Budget Minister Vande Lanotte (SPA) pointed out that the budgetary control, which traditionally falls in March, may well be brought forward because of the elections. In the meantime every possible excessive expense will be cut, according to the minister (FF).

IVAN BROECKMEIER • DE FINANCIeel-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 7 JANUARY

For 2002 the Government aimed for a balance for all authorities together, and that objective was achieved. The Federal Government and social security together performed slightly better than forecast. The regions, communities and local authorities fared a little worse. Overall that even produced a very small surplus of 114 million euros. According to Vande Lanotte, it is possible that this surplus will grow even more over the next few weeks. Together with Finance Minister Reynders (MR), he emphasised that this meant our country was one of the best pupils in the European class. Only Finland, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg managed to submit a budget without deficit.

In 2002, government debt fell from 108.5 to 106.1% of GDP. That is still a considerable sum, but since 2001 our country is no longer the one with the highest level of debt in the EU. This dubious honour now belongs to Italy. Vande Lanotte said that the government could achieve its objectives by creating sufficient buffers and making timely adjustments. The budgetary control saved 0.21 billion euros. The lower-than-expected interest rates and EU contributions and higher social security income resulted in a bonus of 0.8 billion euros. This saving of 1 billion euros was enough to cope with the consequences of weak growth (0.7 instead of 1.3%), without the Purple-Greens having to take back their promises. Minister Reynders also pointed out that fiscal revenue had also remained on course last year. The CD&V’s budget expert, Herman van Rompuy, is much less impressed with the results. The CD&V member claims firstly that under the Purple-Greens the process of reducing deficit and debt has slowed down considerably. Whereas in the past three years the deficit fell by barely 0.2 BBP-% per annum, that figure was 1% during the 1992-1999 period of the Dehaene government. It was originally the government’s ambition to drop below the magic 100% mark for debt this year, but it will remain stuck on 102 BBP-%.

‘But the biggest problems will come after this legislature. Studies by the Planning Bureau have already showed that the Purple-Greens have already squandered the next government’s entire policy leeway with their promises,’ says Van Rompuy.

BUDGET 2002: FINAL RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Budgetary control estimates</th>
<th>Definitive result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federale authority</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional and local authorities</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All authorities together</td>
<td>+0.0</td>
<td>+0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: TIJD GRAPHICS

Cardinal suspends pro-Flemish priest

It was unusually busy at the last Sunday Mass in Wezembeek-Oppem - a Flemish facilities municipality near Brussels. Journalists and camera teams jostled for places. The reason: the pro-Flemish priest Jos Verstraeten was holding his last Mass. Cardinal Danneels has suspended him because he refused to accept that a Francophone priest would occasionally come and hold Mass in the Sint-Pieterskerk. Father Verstraeten, also known for his strongly pro-Flemish articles in ‘Church and Life’, the widespread parish newsletter, is also accused of using the pulpit for political ends. At the end of the Mass the priest called his suspension ‘a slap in the face for all Flemings’ and called on the faithful to sing the Flemish hymn ‘de Vlaamse Leeuw’. Outside the church he was met with warm applause. According to CD&V parliamentary party leader in the Flemish Parliament, Eric Van Rompuy, also a fellow countryman of Verstraeten, the Cardinal allowed himself to be provoked by Francophones. According to CD&V Chairman Stefaan De Clerck, the Cardinal allowed himself to be blackmailed and has given in to Francophone lobbying. He cannot see any religious reason for suspending the priest, merely political motives (Het Nieuwsblad, 30 December). A few days later Cardinal Danneels appointed Herman Boon, chaplain of civil aviation, as Verstraeten’s successor. Boon also comes from a pro-Flemish background. Before the war his father was editor-in-chief of De Standaard and a pioneer of BRT, the public broadcasting company. ‘I am a Flemish Brussels man,’ says Boon in De Morgen (7 January). ‘I am a national airport chaplain. I presume that adjectiv did not creep into the Archbishop’s press release by chance.’ According to De Morgen, the Cardinal has saved himself from a community hornet’s nest with this delicate political balancing act. Parishioners, however, are still calling for the return of Father Verstraeten.
Leo Goovaerts establishes new liberal party

FORMER VLD SENATOR BREAKS SILENCE ABOUT A LOAN OF 50,000 EUROS TO GUY VERHOFSTADT, ‘THAT WAS NEVER PAID BACK’

The former VLD Senator and Party Treasurer Leo Goovaerts intends establishing a new liberal party. He already claims to have a list ready for this year’s Senate elections. He is also seeking contact with Antwerp-based Ward Beysen and his right-wing pressure group within the VLD, Liberaal Appèl. According to Goovaerts, the VLD of Guy Verhofstadt and Patrick Dewael is going to the bad. Now that the party has again become a tax party and above all a power party, according to Goovaerts there is no more talk of the VLD’s liberal principles. According to Goovaerts, there is therefore a need for a liberal alternative. He is targeting those liberals who no longer feel close to the VLD and the growing group of protest voters who vote for the Vlaams Blok or abstain.

Just before the 1999 elections the party leaders let Leo Goovaerts go. He was removed from third place on the VLD Senate list; he was shown the door of the party offices. The reason was trivial: an article in Gazet van Antwerpen, in which Goovaerts expressed open criticism of Guy Verhofstadt. For the party leaders this was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Four years after the incident, in a comeback interview in De Financieel-Economische Tijd (4 January), Goovaerts breaks silence and reveals ‘the background’ to his disappearance. In 1988 he granted a loan of 50,000 euros to Guy Verhofstadt, but in 1998 he claims he was forced by Verhofstadt, after more than a year of pestering and considerable moral pressure, to stop asking for repayment and signed a document to this effect. The sidetracked Goovaerts brought the case before the courts and the VLD’s ethics committee.

The spokesman of Verhofstadt and the VLD Party Chairman De Gucht strongly deny Goovaerts’ story and claim that the loan was a gift to the party. According to them, the evidence for this is a letter in which Goovaerts actually refers to the sum of money as a gift to the party. But Goovaerts now claims that he put the declaration down on paper in exchange for an electable place on the VLD Senate list. The Premier himself calls Goovaerts’ statements ‘a sequence of lies from someone who is trying to discredit people with “discrete practices”.’ According to his spokesman, Goovaerts can no longer make a claim. On 18 January 2001 all the parties signed a statement waiving any legal claim. Goovaerts, however, does not accept the First Minister calling him dissolute and is threatening to publish further details.

A disaster insurance becomes urgent now

ALL RESIDENTS MUST CONTRIBUTE, EVEN THOSE WHO ARE AT VERY LITTLE RISK

After the last wave of floods, Premier Verhofstadt (VLD) promised that the act instituting compulsory insurance against disasters and floods would be ready by 1 January. Now there are more floods and no sign of the act. According to Economic Affairs Minister Charles Picqué (SP), the earliest the dossier will be ready is March or April. But by then Parliament may well have been dissolved with an eye on the elections. Such disaster insurance is based on solidarity: all residents must contribute, even those who are at very little risk. Those who are at risk will pay more. The risk areas will be designated by the Regions. A delicate and far from popular operation, as houses that lie within a risk zone could well fall in value. According to CD&V opposition member Ansoms, Picqué, who is from Brussels, is hardly interested in collaborating on such insurance, because then he would have to ask his Brussels flat-dwellers, who live high and dry, to contribute (FF).

WILFRIED EETEZONE/BART ECKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 6 JANUARY

At the Federal Council of Ministers the floods will be recognised as a disaster. So promised Premier Guy Verhofstadt at the end of a meeting with nine affected East Flanders municipalities. With this undertaking Verhofstadt wants to counter the noisy complaints of waterside residents. Verhofstadt also wants the Disaster Fund to settle any compensation claims quickly and not hang around, as in the past. He did not specify how that was to be achieved. Some victims of the floods in 1999 have only recently received compensation. In addition, Verhofstadt wants better consultation in the future between municipalities and regions on infrastructure work. In some places the flooding was partly made worse by infrastructure work in neighbouring municipalities, which must be avoided in the future. In Flanders, Public Works Minister Steve Stevaert (SPA) is questioning the solidarity principle of the announced disaster insurance. ‘There are limits to solidarity,’ said Stevaert: ‘We cannot ask people to stand by their fellow citizens who have built a house without a permit.’ According to Stevaert, insurance also does not offer a solution to those who live in areas that flood repeatedly. ‘Insurance covers risks, not certainties.’ Stevaert therefore claims that in a limited number of cases, people will have to move house. ‘Everything you take away from the river you have to give back elsewhere, otherwise you get problems.’ ‘It isn’t enough to build dykes or dredge rivers.’ The SPA minister is calling for tough measures and a sustainable water policy, but he anticipates strong resistance.
Floods spoils New Year for thousands of Flemings

W

While most Flemings were out celebrating the New Year, for a number of residents living close by rivers or basins the transition into 2003 had a much more bitter taste due to the incessant rains. In particular, residents from the Leie and Dender districts of East Flanders, more specifically in the vicinity of the towns of Ghent and Gerardsbergen, had to cope with massive rises in water levels. Dozens of homes were flooded and residents had to be evacuated. The provinces of Antwerp (Puurs) and Limburg also had their share. Only in the night of 4/5 January did the waters recede. Around Ghent a disaster could be avoided by opening the sea locks in Terneuzen. Via the Ghent-Terneuzen sea canal the swiftly rising waters of the Scheldt and Leie were diverted to the Westerscheldt. At least as long as the sea tides allowed. The New Year floods are not exceptional. Flanders is flooding more frequently and more quickly every year. And although 2002 was a wet year, the water misery is down to much more than just the abundant rainfall. After all, Flanders has a poor heritage: over-quick water drainage, a failing sewerage policy and the injudicious building of homes in overflow areas are responsible for a great deal of water misery. As yet no solutions have been found, not least because there is no agreement as to what approach to take (FF).

Much is expected of the ‘integral water management’ decree. According to the Bond Beter Leefmilieu [BBL], this decree is an important first step, but things must be pushed along. According to the office of Flemish Environment Minister Vera Dua (Agalev), plans are currently being drawn up for the Nete, the IJzer and rainwater. ‘Flanders has mixed sewers: wastewater and rainwater are carried together. Because of the smell and pollution that water has to be stored underground. This costs a great deal of money. Hence the policy: let the thing overflow regularly. When constructing sewers and collectors, insufficient consideration is given to rain levels.’ Minister Dua replies that the municipalities already receive subsidies to set up systems of separate water management. ‘But it will take decades to switch.’ Apart from modifying the sewers, more space urgently needs to be created for natural overflow areas. ‘Each municipality must also be forced to accept its responsibility in this area. Otherwise those municipalities on higher ground are not doing what they should be doing.’

ANNE DE GRAAF • DE MORGEN • 4 JANUARY

Vander Stadt: ‘The floods are not happening because it has rained too heavily, but because we do not give the soil time to process so much water. Twenty litres per square metre is not in itself that much. But the sponge function of the soil is up to the spout as a result of massive hardening of the surface of the ground. After all, Flanders has three times as much hard surfaces as the Netherlands.’ The solution? ‘We must work towards separating the waters, on the basis of a ‘water sorting project’ that provides municipalities with their own affordable, decentralised and autonomous prevention plan. Such a project must go hand in hand with a national water sorting awareness campaign. The emphasis is on the flooding of watercourses, rather than preventing water from entering these watercourses. Nevertheless, the solution is simple: if you sort wastewater, you are left with pure rainwater. And that can be stored cheaply above ground, as used to be done in municipal lakes.’

Christmas adresses of king and cardinal

As is customary, both King Albert II and Cardinal Danneels gave their Christmas addresses this year. What was striking was that both the Sovereign and the Cardinal indicate that the population should not expect that the political world was able to solve all social integration problems. While the King expects much from artists, the Cardinal says that this country’s three monotheistic religions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity can help solve the social problems, which in 2002 culminated in the murders of Moroccan Belgians in Antwerp and Brussels. In an interview in De Standaard [26 December] he indicates that a deeper ethical and moral basis must be found for such social problems. ‘And ideologies and religions have a specific part to play in this,’ says the Cardinal. The three religions still have a long way to go before they can reach a basic ethical consensus, the Church leader feels, but they all recognise the figure of God the Father. A few days earlier the Cardinal had spoken out in no uncertain terms against an American war in Iraq. A preventive war is in no way justifiable, he feels, just like the Vatican, for that matter. It was also striking that Danneels was severely critical of the fact that President Bush ends each speech that is full of war rhetoric with the phrase ‘God Bless America’. He says that is ‘unacceptable’.

DE MORGEN • 3 JANUARY

Dominique Minten • De Standaard • 3 JANUARY

FF EDITORIAL STAFF

Focus on Flanders • 4 January - 10 January 2003 • Number 1
Number of bankruptcies rises in 2002, Brepols just reaches 2003

**FF EDITOR**

In total some 7,215 Belgian businesses went bankrupt in 2002. That is the highest number since 1997. As a result of these bankruptcies, 20,200 people lost their jobs. This appears from figures published by the information agency Graydon. That barely 1% fewer businesses than last year went bankrupt is due to the fact that fewer companies have been set up in recent years. After all, at least one quarter of new businesses go bankrupt within four years. The most significant bankruptcies this year were the printing press manufacturer Xeikon, the printer Casterman in Francophone Doornik, the glass fibre network Ebone and Delsey Airlines. The bankruptcy of Drukkerij Brepols from Turnhout is not one of these. The company folded on 2 January 2003. Some 327 jobs are now under threat, although the management is stressing that a plan has been worked out to save 220 jobs. The Commercial Court agreed that the activities of the profitable division Brepols Graphic Products, which produces diaries, should continue. However, the rescue plan has yet to be approved by the banks and creditors. Since October Brepols has been operating under judicial settlement.

www.graydon.be  www.brepols.be

---

Kinepolis pulls out of Italy

**FF EDITOR**

Kinepolis, the Belgian cinema group listed on the stock market, is pulling out of the Italian market. In Pioltello (near Milan) the group is selling a complex to Europlex Cinemas for 25 million euros. Negotiations are under way with potential buyers on the 55% interest in the cinema complex in Treviso (near Venice). The complex in Schaffhausen in Switzerland may also end up in the shop window. Kinepolis has already sold its activities in the Netherlands. This is because the group wants to concentrate its activities in Belgium, France and Spain. The company still intends opening one new complex each year. In 2003 this will be in Granada, Spain, in 2004 in Nancy, France and in 2005 in Ostend. In 2002 the group attracted a total of 27.3 million cinema-goers, a rise of 6%. In Belgium alone there were 12.3 million, of which 3 million in Metropolis Antwerp and 2.59 million in Kinepolis Brussels. In France the complexes at Metz (1.2 million visitors) and Lomme (near Lille, 2.4 million) are the highlights. Last year the Kinepolis group’s biggest complex, in Madrid, pulled in 3.4 million visitors.

www.kinepolis.be

---

Industry invests 15% less in 2002

**FF EDITOR**

A survey by the Nationale Bank also shows that the processing industries invested 15% less in 2002. According to *De Financieel-Economische Tijd* (21 December), this confirms that there is still considerable uncertainty surrounding an economic recovery, although the industry does intend to invest 8.3% more in 2003. However, according to the paper, experience shows that industrials generally overestimate such investments.

---

**ECONOMY**

Focus on Flanders • 4 January - 10 January 2003 • Number 1
Thousands of people, mainly over-50s, are actively working on journals on family and local history, compiling lists of old crafts, participating in local archaeology or organising historical parades. Their numbers are rising sharply. Archives are hurriedly being consulted by genealogists and amateurs who want to trace the history of their house or village.

‘Nostalgia for the good old days and for authenticity is a major motivation,’ says Marc Jacobs, Director of the VCV. ‘But don’t underestimate the historical thrill, the contact with old sources, the kick you get when you come across a new clue or an ancestor, or a document that tells us how our forefathers lived.’ Traditional culture has a stuffy image, but the figures reveal a lively sector.

Traditional culture and local history booming

Disciplines such as family history and genealogy are becoming popular.

The social life that practises traditional popular culture, local and family history, local sports and games, archaeology and regional cookery is on the rise. A study by the Flemish Centre for Traditional Culture (VCV) counts 1,500 associations, with ten thousands members. The ageing of the population appears to be benefiting popular culture. More over-fifties are well educated, through the redistribution of work and (early) retirement they have the time, and the interest in one’s own past increases with age. The Flemish Centre for Traditional Culture has mapped this social life (FF).

Bel20 loses 27% in 2002

The Brussels Bel20 index is looking at a loss of 27.2% for 2002, the biggest fall since its launch in 1991. For Belgian shares, 2002 was the fourth loss year in succession. Since its peak at the start of 1999, the Bel20 has lost 45%, exactly the same as the MSCI World Index, according to De Financieel-Economische Tijd (2 January). As a result of the ailing stock markets, Belgians have again begun saving en masse. A survey carried out by De Financieel-Economische Tijd (3 January) of the main savings banks reveals that 14% more money is held in savings accounts than twelve months ago. This represents their strongest growth since 1996.

The VCV focused specifically on the 600 associations that are concerned with family history, local history, industrial archaeology and disciplines such as puppetry, historical shooting, lace, folk music and popular sports and games. These have some 166,000 members, of which 11,000 are active members. These associations manage 150 museums and supply around 200 documentation centres. In addition, there are hundreds more small, local museums and several hundred enthusiasts are building up their own treasure-troves, one-room collections that form museums in themselves. The VCV has already found 700, but suspects there are many more. That is a mass of historical information. These associations also publish a great many things, mainly journals and yearbooks.

The VCV focused specifically on the 600 associations that are concerned with family history, local history, industrial archaeology and disciplines such as puppetry, historical shooting, lace, folk music and popular sports and games. These have some 166,000 members, of which 11,000 are active members. These associations manage 150 museums and supply around 200 documentation centres. In addition, there are hundreds more small, local museums and several hundred enthusiasts are building up their own treasure-troves, one-room collections that form museums in themselves. The VCV has already found 700, but suspects there are many more. That is a mass of historical information. These associations also publish a great many things, mainly journals and yearbooks.

Traditional culture remains primarily the domain of elderly Flemish men. One quarter of board members are over 65, 61% are aged 45 to 65, 8% are women. 70% have a diploma in higher education.

www.vcv.be
Diary

MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE

• Until 21 January: Cosi fan tutte by WA Mozart, Flanders Opera, Ghent, director: Guy Joosten, conductor: Jos Van Immerseel; info: 09/233.66.85 www.vlaamsopera.be

• 16 January: Flemish Symphonic Orchestra conducted by David Angus with Pieter Wispelwey, Cello Concerto by Dutilleux, The Dances of Maroszcek by Kodaly and 6th symphony by Dvorák, Concertgebouw Bruges; info: 050/84.05.87

• 10 to 31 January: Arabian Heights, multiculticular festival, Borgerhout, Antwerp; info: 03/235.04.90 www.rataplanzyw.be

• 18 January: Garth Knox, Ugorski with compositions by Berio, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02

• 15 January: Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui with a dance piece by Wim Vandekeybus, Het Stuk, Leuven; info: 016/32.03.20

• 15 January: Isabelle Hupert and Gerald Wiesner with 4.48 Psychos by Sarah Kane, director: Claude Régy (in Dutch), Staatskapelle Berlin conducted by Daniel Barenboim, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00

• 22 January: Ensemble Tirana, Greek and Albanian songs; De Bijloke, Ghent; info: 09/233.68.78 www.debijloke.be

• 25 and 25 January: Random Scream, Fading Fast, Davis Freeman and Lilia Mestre in a mix of dance, theatre and plastic arts, Kaaitheaterstudio’s, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be

• 25 January: Dejan Lazic, compositions by Chopin, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: 09/233.68.78 www.debijloke.be

EXPO


• Until 16 February: Selection 1/Backstage, Fashion exhibition, Antwerp Modemuseum (MoMu), Antwerp; info: 09/470.33.04 www.momu.ac.be

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

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

• Until 5 January: Europalia, Guest country: Bulgaria, The Gold of the Thracians, exhibition, PSK, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be 02/507.85.94

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

• Until 12 January: Finnish Symbolism, exhibition, Museum of Elsene; info: 02/516.45.22

• Until 16 February: The gardens of the Alhambra, exhibition with Pedro Carciaras, Maria Teresa Martin Vivaldi, Paco Lagares, José Maria Sicilia and Soledad Sevilla, Jan Vanriet; info: 09/233.68.78 www.debijloke.be

Modern Art, Ostend; info: 059/50.81.18

• Until 5 January: Construction and Deconstruction, A collection of paintings from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek from Copenhagen (Danish EU-chairmanship), City Hall, Brussels; info: 02/279.64.65

• Until 5 January: Rosas XX, exhibition: 20 years of Rosas dance company, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.84.66 www.rosas.be

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

• Until 19 January: Antoon De Cleerck, retrospective exhibition, The Museum of Deinze en de Flandern, Tongeren; info: 012/67.03.55

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

• Until 9 March: Benoît, cartoonist, Zwarte Huis, Knokke

• Until 25 February: ‘First Marriage’ by Suchan Kinoshita, exhibition and projects by Gert Robijns, Josël Audebert, Nathalie Brevet and Hughes Rochette (Fr), MUHKA, Antwerp; info: 03/238.59.60

• Until 6 January: Snow & Ice Sculpture Festival, Bruges; info: 050/20.04.65 www.ijssculptuur.com

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

Focus on Flanders • 4 January - 10 January 2003 • Number 1

Editor in chief: Frank Vandecaveye
Advisory panel: Luc De Meester [Lannoo], Rik Van Cauwelaert [director Knock], Koen Clement [Managing director, De Morgen], Frans Crots [Director, Trends], Francis Decoster [Information Officer, Flemish Community], Mark Deweerdt [journalist, Financieel-Economische Tijds], Michael Stabenow [Correspondent, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung], Luc Standaert [journalist, Belang van Limburg], Jan Van Doren [Deputy Director, Vlaams Economisch Verbond], Bernard Bulcke [De Standaard]
With thanks to: Concentra nv, De Vrijt nv, de Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij nv, De Persgroep nv, Uitgeversbedrijf Tiid nv and Roularta Media Group nv and their editorial teams for supplying the articles.

Focus on Flanders is a project of the Flanders Foundation for Cultural Promotion with the KBC in Roeselare.

• Translation: Eurologos
• Printing: Druckerij Lannoo nv, Tielt
• Responsible editor: Luc De Meester, Marke
• Subscription rate by post and e-mail: 220 euro
• Either transfer the sum to account no.: 473-1010001-19 with the KBC in Roeselare
• Or give us the number and expiry date of your credit card (Visa/Eurocard)
• Telephone: 051/44.42.99
• Fax: 051/40.51.32
• E-mail: frank.vandecaveye@lannoo.be