

focus on FLANDERS

THE DUTCH SPEAKING PART OF BELGIUM

PRESS REVIEW

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Jobcard for Flemish school-leavers

IT GUARANTEES SCHOOL-LEAVERS BELOW THE AGE OF 25 WHO HAVE BEEN UNEMPLOYED FOR SIX MONTHS A MONTH'S PRACTICAL TRAINING WITH AN EMPLOYER

Between 2000 and 2002 the number of unemployed young people aged below 25 in Flanders rose by 32% to 58,000, while total unemployment only rose by 17%. Today they represent 23% of all unemployed. Flemish Employment Minister Landuyt concludes that they are the first victims of the economic malaise. He does not want to launch new job plans, but does feel that the existing policy, with its first-time jobs, training and work experience projects, must concentrate on young people. For the 4,500 school-leavers who have already been without a job for six months he is launching the job card (FF).

PETER RASKING • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 17 JANUARY

What is striking is that the rise can also be seen among the highly qualified. In October 2000, 2,322 university graduates below the age of 25 were unemployed. In October 2002 this figure was 3,382, an increase of 46%. In addition to structural measures, such as the first-time jobs and integration via temping work, economic measures are now being introduced to tackle the sharp rise. The JOB card is a striking new addition. It guarantees school-leavers below the age of 25 who have been unemployed for six months a month's practical training with an employer. As compensation, the employer receives a saving of up to 45% of the wage bill from the government. Renaat Landuyt: 'These are not artificial new jobs. The starting point is a genuine vacancy. We are encouraging businesses to give priority to young school-leavers when recruiting. We estimate that this will give some 4,500 young people a chance on the shop floor. If companies abuse this system we will remove them from the list and they will lose their wage bill benefits.'

INTRODUCTION



On 17 December the Federal Parliament's Trade and Companies Committee unanimously approved the bill on the introduction of a fixed book price. The bill, which was tabled by the

Greens (Agalev, Ecolo), the Francophone Socialists (PS) and the Christian Democrats, headed for an overwhelming majority in the Parliament, because only the Flemish Liberals were strongly against it. Supporters argue that a fixed price will benefit smaller, independent bookshops and allow the decrease in the diversity of book titles to be stopped. They see the larger book chains (Standaard Boekhandel and Fnac) and department stores, which give discounts and are mainly interested in offering a smaller range of best-sellers, as the main villains of the piece. The Flemish Liberals announced they would vote against the bill, not only through their liberal aversion to price agreements, but also out of a fear that a fixed book price will make books more expensive. Although the SPA voted in favour of the fixed book price on the 17 December, the party recently announced, entirely unexpectedly, that it would vote against it. According to SPA Chairman Janssens (*De Standaard*, 17 January), a fixed price does not so much disadvantage less well-off readers as those who are less well-educated culturally, who mainly read bestsellers and never visit bookshops. According to former Culture Minister, Bert Anciaux, who it should be noted is going to the elections on a joint list with the SPA, the SPA is erring. In his view a fixed book price contributes to the wealth of titles and the chances of survival of independent book shops. He is supported in his criticism by the association of the book trade, boek.be, which suspects electoral opportunism in the SPA's change of course (*De Morgen*, 14 January) and by the employers' federation, Unizo. Janssens does not deny that the independent book shops are going through difficult times, but wants to develop other instruments to support them. Despite the opposition of Flemish Liberals and Socialists, the bill appears to be heading for a changing majority with the support of the opposition, although the vote on 16 January has been postponed. After all, the Francophone Liberals are prepared to approve the bill, but have submitted an amendment. They want an exception to be made for comic strips. Meanwhile, Janssens is encountering opposition not only from his alliance partners but also from within his party. Many mandataries are hoping that the party leaders will use the postponement of the vote to adjust their standpoint (*De Morgen*, 16 January).

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief

CONTENTS

Politics

- 18 May: what will the next government look like? 2
Leo Goovaerts resigns from the VLD 2

Environment

- Noise pollution: Dua wants rid of federal airport agreement 3

Mobility

- Dedecker's campaign against road safety act diverted 4

Economy

- Textile group Sofitex bankrupt 5
Telenet increases cable TV subscription 5
Koramic sells roof tiles division 6

- Justice: Genocide act amended 7

- Culture: decree must keep art collections in Flanders 7

18 May: what will the next government look like?

A COALITION BETWEEN LIBERALS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
IS GIVEN LITTLE CHANCE

There is already plenty of speculation in the press about the possible coalition that will take over the helm after 18 May. Premier Verhofstadt (VLD) has no intention of basing the elections on a chancellor's duel between himself and CD&V Chairman Stefaan De Clerck, as his party Chairman Karel De Gucht announced some weeks ago at a VLD conference. The Premier wants the present coalition to continue, 'if the voter allows'. But if Purple-Green I was centred on the active welfare state, Purple-Green II will be centred on 'the responsible welfare state', with the emphasis on the ethics of 'rights and duties'. That is understandable, says *De Morgen* (11 January). The economic adagio to activate the welfare state – by allowing more people, mainly the over-55s, back into work – has failed. With the current poor economic climate it no longer appears viable to activate the welfare state at all. Voices within the CD&V are calling for a coalition with the VLD. Better to join a coalition with Verhofstadt as Prime Minister than remain in opposition for another four years, says the éminence grise of the CD&V, Mark Eyskens.

In *Het Laatste Nieuws* (14 January) he is therefore calling on dissatisfied VLD voters to vote CD&V at the elections, just this once. It is the only way to force a VLD-CD&V government, he claims.

For VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht the main objective is still for the VLD to remain the biggest party in Flanders. De Gucht says frankly in *Knack* (15 January) that he feels there is very little chance of forming a government with the CD&V if CD&V Chairman Stefaan De Clerck, just like Cardinal Danneels, continues to support the policy of Catholic hospitals – which, it should be noted, are financed publicly – to impose their philosophical convictions in connection with abortion and euthanasia on their patients and doctors. As far as *Knack* is concerned, a CD&V/VLD coalition is almost out of the question (FF).

Opinion

RIK VAN CAUWELAERT • KNACK •
15 JANUARY

With the direction indicated by De Gucht the only choice open to the VLD is to continue the current Purple-Green coalition. At least if the voter leaves this option open and if the Socialists do not admit to their increasing aversion to their Liberal partners. Should the participation of the CD&V in the next government still become an option, then several elements are stacked against the Flemish Christian Democrats. To begin with, the Royal entourage, which has a firm finger in the pie during the information round, will not allow an asymmetrical government (different coalitions in Flanders and Francophone Belgium, ed). This is because, they argue, such asymmetry means the end of Federal Belgium, because then the centrifugal forces already emanating from communities and regions will become even greater. The CD&V can no longer guarantee that the Federal government will remain symmetrical because its Francophone counterpart, the CDH, no longer has any political relevance. And then there is the confederal position of the CD&V of Stefaan De Clerck. If political lightweights within the VLD such as Jean-Marie Dedecker or Vincent Van Quickenborne extol the virtues of confederalism, it will make little impression in Laken. Even though because the influence of the court has refused to lie down during Verhofstadt's period of office. But if Luc Vanden Brande (former Flemish Minister-President) starts talking of confederalism on behalf of the CD&V, then the shutters will be lowered in Laken. They know that he still means it. Consequently, every effort will be made there to keep the CD&V out of the next government.

Leo Goovaerts resigns from the VLD

All is not well with the VLD in the run-up to the elections. The party is not only having to deal with loners such as senator Jean-Marie Dedecker, it is also having to suffer yet again the negative publicity of a former senator who claims he still has a score to settle with his party. Leo Goovaerts says he is resigning from the party off his own bat and wants to participate in the elections with a 'genuine Flemish, Liberal and Democratic party'. On 13 January Goovaerts was brought before the party's Statutory Committee following a complaint by VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT • DE FINANCIËLE-
ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 14 JANUARY

In connection with De Gucht's complaint, Goovaerts explained to the Statutory Committee why in his eyes the VLD no longer complied with the contract that was concluded in 1992, when the party was formed, with the members of the PVV (the VLD's predecessor) and why the party was not fulfilling various points of 1992's Declaration of Principles. He confirmed he would be setting up a new party based on the original VLD manifesto and returned his party card to the Statutory Committee. By resigning himself, Goovaerts anticipated his expected exclusion from the VLD. This was also announced later on the same day by Party Chairman Karel de Gucht.

Later on Goovaerts reiterated that he would take part in the Senate elections on 18 May with a 'genuine Flemish, Liberal and Democratic party'. In the course of the week he will hold a meeting with several dozen sympathisers from across Flanders. No decision has yet been taken as to the submission of Chamber lists.

Whether Euro-MP Ward Beysen signs up to Goovaerts' project will become clear after Sunday. Beysen has said that on Sunday he will give a clearer indication of his political future. 'If Ward Beysen sees his political future outside the VLD, we must sit down round the table, as it would be senseless to set up two new Liberal parties,' claims Goovaerts.

NOISE POLLUTION

Dua wants rid of federal airport agreement

ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, THERE IS ONLY ONE SOLUTION, NAMELY TO SPREAD THE FLIGHTS IN ALL DIRECTIONS

Flemish Environment Minister Vera Dua (Agalev) no longer believes in the Federal Airport Agreement. The concentration of night flights is creating more and more noise pollution above the Flemish northern edge of Brussels. The starting points of the agreement: fewer people affected, no new people affected and no extra noise pollution for those who already suffer from it, are good, but unrealistic, she feels. Even if the flights are divided between a northern and an eastern corridor, they cannot be achieved. According to her, there is only one solution, namely to spread the flights in all directions. Flanders must not be the only one to put up with noise pollution, Brussels and Wallonia have to as well, she believes. In other words, Brussels has to abandon its much stricter noise standards, otherwise Dua is threatening to introduce the same strict standards in Flanders and that means night flights will no longer be possible. She also has a big stick: the environmental licence for BIAC, the airport operator, also contains noise standards. If measurements show that BIAC is failing to keep to the standards, the Flemish Government can force the airport operator to ground a number of aircraft. Dua is hoping that BIAC is prepared to keep part of the night free from noise pollution. With her firm standpoint Dua is also diametrically opposed to her Federal colleague for transport in the Federal Government, Isabelle Durant, likewise a Green Minister, but from the Francophone sister party, Ecolo. Durant wants to preserve the existing airport agreement and in so doing protect the mainly Francophone residents of Brussels from more noise pollution. Meanwhile the residents of the northern district, united in the action group Daedalus, have lost their first battle with the courts. The judge dismissed their call for the concentration of night flights to be reduced on certain routes. According to the judge, their interests are outweighed by those of the Belgian State and the airport.

The Mayor of Vilvoorde, Jean-Luc Dehaene (CD&V), earlier proposed introducing a period of rest during the night

via negotiations with the courier firm DHL, which makes 50 flights a night. However, according to DHL that is impossible. Without night flights we will have no other option but to move to Bierset, Cologne or Paris, says the American courier firm. The Flemish Socialists are against a ban on night flights. They fear a new social drama, since night activities provide around 4,000 to 5,000 mainly semi- and unskilled jobs (FF).

GEERT SCIOT • DE MORGEN •
14 JANUARY

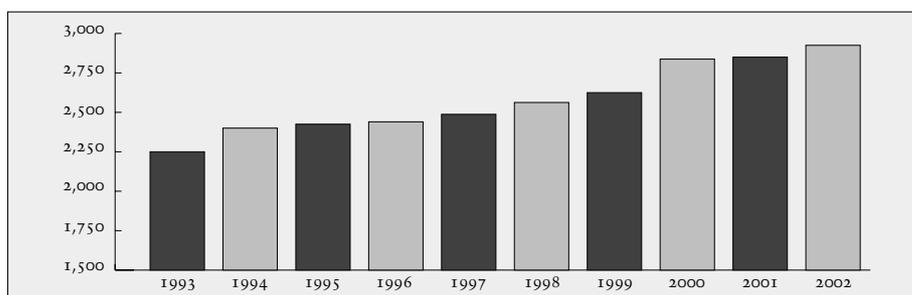
More than twenty years ago DHL set up shop in Zaventem and built a major sorting centre close by the departures terminal. The firm also set up a Belgian airline, European Air Transport. It is on those aircraft that the packages and items of mail arrive and depart again. By night the firm is all but inactive. Only after 10 p.m. do the more than 2,000 employees get to work. The first aircraft are not long in landing, and from 3 a.m. the planes take off one after the other. Of the 750 tonnes of 'courier freight', less than 50 tonnes is sent to or from Belgium. The vast majority of items are only flown to Zaventem at night to be transferred from one aircraft to another and then carried on to almost all European Member States. Two aircraft come from the US, one from the Middle East.

The number of night flights is falling each year. 'Larger machines have replaced smaller ones, which allows us to carry more freight and serve two destinations at once', according to Commercial Director Xavier De Buck of DHL Belgium. In the UK, Spain and Italy, three smaller sorting centres were built, taking some pressure off the DHL hub in Brussels, and all flights less than 350 km were scrapped. These journeys are currently made by lorries. Getting rid of night flights at Zaventem would be a disaster for DHL. 'Our service stands or falls by night flights. The customer wants to send his packages and mail as late as possible and see them reach their destination as quickly as possible,' says De Buck. According to DHL, the night flights are also necessary to remain competitive. De Buck: 'Federal Express operates at night from Paris. TNT flies out of Liège and is encouraged to do so by the local airport, and UPS is active in Cologne.'

The loudest aircraft, the Boeing 727s, are now gradually being removed from the fleet. By the end of March no more 727s will call at Zaventem, resulting in 40% less noise pollution. In addition to the 2,200 people at the airport, DHL also employs a further 900 in its Belgian courier activity. In addition, the group recently set up its worldwide headquarters in Diegem (near Zaventem). This employs a further 400 people.

A few weeks ago DHL became the property of Deutsche Post, which is merging with Danzas, the world's largest freight group. This merger will create a multinational with a turnover of 21 billion euros. The economic interest in the night flights dossier is therefore considerable.

FLANDERS INLAND SHIPPING: EVOLUTION OF TONKILOMETRES 1993-2002 (X 1000,000)



SOURCE: SHIPPING SERVICE

Dedecker's campaign against road safety act diverted

IN THE END THE VLD SENATOR WAS GIVEN A CHOICE:
STOP THE CAMPAIGN OR GET OUT

Motorists are depicted as criminals and the super-fines in the new Road Safety Act are far too high and therefore anti-social. That is the crux of the argument of SOS Chauffeur, a campaign launched on 8 January by VLD Senator Jean-Marie De Decker with a press conference and what many see as a tasteless poster showing a coin being pushed into a bare backside and the slogan ('Are traffic fines used to plug the hole in the Treasury?'). Dedecker was able to rouse the interest of other well-known TV Flemings of a VLD persuasion such as Walter Grootaers and Margriet Hermans in his campaign. But before he could hold his press conference, he had to have a short meeting with Prime minister Verhofstadt. After all, the VLD is behind the new Road Safety Act, and that is true of all VLD mandataries, was the message Dedecker was given at the meeting. Dedecker therefore openly promised his support for the new Act, but did not initially feel that this was a reason to stop his campaign. To begin with, the VLD officially distanced itself from the campaign, but did not ban it. Chairman Karel De Gucht felt it was in bad taste, but Dedecker pressed on.

His campaign triggered a wave of protest from almost all other parties, but also from organisations such as 'Ouders van verongelukte kinderen' ('Parents of children involved in accidents').

SP.A member Daan Schaleck organised a counter-campaign and also rallied a number of well-known TV Flemings around him. The main driving force behind the new Road Safety Act, Transport Minister Steve Stevaert (SP.A), is accusing Dedecker of having destroyed the painstakingly created basis for doing something about the road safety problem with his campaign. At the weekend Premier Verhofstadt asked Dedecker to withdraw his campaign. On 11 January the campaign was discussed in detail by the VLD leaders and in the end Dedecker was given a choice: stop the campaign or get out. Earlier, Flemish MP Margriet Hermans

had distanced herself from the campaign and said she felt she had been exploited by the campaigners (FF).

BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD •
14 JANUARY

In a year, VLD Senator Jean-Marie Dedecker seriously affected VLD Chairman De Gucht's nerves. After his visit to the cell of Marc Dutroux and comments on RTBf on the republican conviction of De Gucht, his campaign SOS Chauffeurs is once again causing the Chairman considerable embarrassment. And De Gucht does not trust the populist approach of the former judo coach. Yesterday, Jean-Marie Dedecker's defenders were nowhere to be seen during the meeting of the executive. The Senator himself was far away in Hanoi. But Premier Guy Verhofstadt himself informed him of the party leaders' decision. Dedecker is to be given one more chance. In the meantime he should immediately distance himself from the contested campaign.

So it was. In a press release Dedecker 'recognised' that he 'no longer imagined that the campaign had been hung up on public opinion'. The Senator had also understood that the new Road Safety Act was not intended to immediately impose super-fines. He undertook to argue in favour of 'realistic penalties' during the Senate debate on the Act. Meanwhile, Flemish MP Margriet Her-

mans had also pulled out of the campaign. She felt exploited by the 'disgusting campaign' and spoke of 'shocking comments' by her colleagues at last week's press conference. De Lier Events Alderman Walter Grootaers (VLD) felt it was normal to drive at 211 kph 'because there are no children playing on the motorway at night'. For Margriet Hermans the whole affair has turned 'into a blunder which she can no longer support'.

The VLD is going to have to accept the consequences of the conflict. Various political parties denounced the 'café atmosphere' among the Liberals, where almost everyone was able to express a different opinion. Even the presence of Luc Beaucourt, the doctor who has made it his goal in life to reduce weekend accidents, in this same VLD was cause for hilarity.

Opinion

BART STURTEWAGEN • DE STANDAARD •
14 JANUARY

For a politician such as Dedecker the party is merely a casual vehicle that can be exchanged for another at any time. He is the owner of his own votes. These votes go with him, wherever he goes. Votes the party cannot take away from him and which otherwise may well end up largely outside the democratic camp. He knows that and the party knows it too.

The freelancer can only maintain his electoral capital by kicking up a fuss. He targets recognition and acknowledgment among a public that does not hold politics in particularly high esteem and sympathises with anti-intellectual swagger. It is therefore an uncomfortable marriage of convenience that reels structurally from crisis to crisis. ■

DIAMOND TRADE ROSE BY 14% IN 2002

CUT DIAMONDS	carat	dollar	% carat	% dollar
EXPORT	9.2 MILLION	6.4 BILLION	+9%	+10%
IMPORT	9.1 MILLION	5.6 BILLION	+7%	+10%
ROUGH DIAMONDS	carat	dollar	% carat	% dollar
EXPORT	175 MILLION	7.0 BILLION	+21%	+21%
IMPORT	176 MILLION	7.2 BILLION	+15%	+16%

SOURCE: RUG-PDH

COMPANIES

Court declares textile group Sofitex bankrupt

COURT CHOSSES A RIGOROUS INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW GOVERNING JUDICIAL SETTLEMENTS

After two periods of judicial settlement, the West Flanders textile company Sofitex was given the coup de grâce on 14 January. Kortrijk Commercial Court declared the company bankrupt. Judge Van Iseghem was not prepared to grant a new request for judicial settlement. According to him, the application was only made to avoid bankruptcy and 'have the last death throes of the company financed by its creditors'. The Court appointed thirteen administrators, whose job it is to find potential buyers for the nine companies of the group. They promptly made 380 employees redundant. Only the 100 members of staff of Van Marcke NV, the only profitable company, are being allowed to keep their jobs. Back on 31 December things were not looking good for Sofitex. Then the judicial settlement granted to the group was terminated after a spirited discussion about the group's cash flow. Nor do jobs seem to have played any major role in the granting of the judicial settlement, claims

De Standaard. Kortrijk Commercial Court appears to have chosen a rigorous interpretation of the law governing judicial settlements. Sofitex, once the largest lining weaver in Western Europe, has met an inglorious end (FF).

PASCAL DENDOOVEN • DE STANDAARD • 15 JANUARY

The case of Sofitex points to a breakdown in communication between company and court. This breakdown in communication was highlighted when the company began to dispute the costs incurred by 'the auditors for retracting the suspension (CIOs)'. Also, the Court did not believe the company had a chance of recovery. According to the auditor's figures, Sofitex had a particularly bad December. According to the company, confidence in the group had been undermined by the request by the CIOs to revoke the judicial settlement. In any event, Sofitex's bankruptcy represents quite a job for thirteen solicitors

of the Kortrijk bar. As administrators, these have to realise the company's assets. Because Sofitex constitutes a single economic entity (despite the nine subsidiaries), the question is whether the large number of administrators can guarantee that the company will be sold in its entirety. The spinning mill is expected to have the least potential for the future. Since time immemorial Sofitex (formerly Sofinal-Cotesa), Concordia Textiles and Uco Leon Declercq have been the three main lining weavers in Belgium. In recent years, all three companies have gone through a considerable process of adjustment because their major customers - the clothing trade - relocated to the Far East. For Sofitex, which for a long time was plagued by family feuds, the turnabout came too late. In 1990 the company became the potential target of Japanese groups, which at the time wanted to pay 5 billion old BEF for a 50% interest in the group. Benoît Devos, who ran the company with his brother, Bernard Devos, was against a (partial) sale and bought his brother out. Thereafter, things went downhill for Sofinal-Cotesa.

MEDIA

Telenet increases price of cable television subscription

The Flemish telecommunications company Telenet, which last year bought out ten Flemish mixed cable companies (in which participated municipalities and the private company Electrabel), has again been heavily criticised. The company, which has since held the monopoly of TV cable distribution across most of Flanders, coolly announced that it was increasing the charges for cable TV this year by 26% in two stages. Last year the company did the same thing with its Internet charges and telephone charges. As a result, the one-and-a-half million subscribers of Telenet subsidiary MixtICS will have to pay significantly more to watch TV than subscribers of the pure communal cable companies (Interelectra, Integan, WVEM, etc). Telenet wants to use the revenue from the price increase to modernise its cable network, according to boss, Duco Sick-

inghe. As a consolation prize, the viewer is getting two extra channels: Cartoon Network and TCM. Deputy Minister-President Steve Stevaert (SPA) is up in arms over Telenet's policy (FF).

FRANK DEREYMAEKER/STEVEN SOMERS • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 16 JANUARY

According to Sickinghe, the increase has to be viewed in context. 'A local supermarket puts its prices up each year, we are doing it for the first time in nine years.' Sickinghe attributes the change in charges to the sale of the ten mixed intercommunal distribution companies. 'Those distribution companies employed a completely different pricing policy. Their rates had to be brought into line.'

Flemish Deputy Minister-President Steve Stevaert has reacted with indignation at the price increase. Stevaert

was himself chairman of the pure intercommunal company Interelectra for eight years, which involves only Limburg municipalities. 'Telenet is justifying its price increase with the argument that it has to make one-off investments to adapt their infrastructure. I worked my fingers to the bone to push through the abolition of the TV and radio licence fee and now they're knocking 20 euros off. I've always argued strongly against the sale of the cable companies. The ten mixed cable companies have still not received their money, because Telenet is saddled with a mountain of debt. A service such as cable TV can't be given to a private company as a monopoly. Either you make sure that the customers can choose between different companies or the government has to take charge of such a basic service itself. The advantage of that is that the revenue finds its way back into the municipal treasury.'

Table, see page 6

www.telenet.be

COMPANIES

Koramic sells roof tiles division

CHRISTIAN DUMOLIN, KORAMIC'S BOSS, HAS THUS ABANDONED HIS AMBITION TO TAKE OVER WIENERBERGER

The West Flanders building materials group, Koramic, is selling its roof tiles division, Koramic Roofing, to the Austrian building materials group, Wienerberger. Seven years ago Koramic also sold its bricks division, Terca, to Wienerberger. In exchange the group gained a controlling interest of 25.1% in Wienerberger. Now there is just 20% left. Koramic Roofing has 13 factories, 2 of which are in Belgium (Aalbeke and Moeskroen). In 2001 its sales amounted to 250 million euros. Wienerberger is paying 211.5 million euros for 50% of the division. Initially, therefore, Koramic Roofing will remain a joint venture between Koramic and Wienerberger. In a second phase (after three years), Koramic will sell the remaining 50%. Koramic is to retain its concrete division, Koramic concrete, which has a turnover of 205 million euros, and its floor and wall tiles division, Koramic Finishing (turnover: 100 million euros). Over time Koramic wants to cut its participation in Wienerberger to 10%. Christian Dumolin, Koramic's boss, has thus abandoned his ambition to take over Wienerberger. Austrian law obliged him to take over the full 100%. This required 750 million euros. Neither appeared it any longer viable to finance the growth of the roof tiles division via the banks. He therefore decided to sell it (FF).

MARC DE ROO • DE FINANCIËLE-
ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 11 JANUARY

Dumolin denies that he is selling the roof tiles division under pressure from the banks. 'I assume the banks would like us to reduce our debt of 500 million euros. But I wasn't forced to sell. I realised that Koramic didn't have the resources to allow the roof tiles division to grow. Terca's contribution to Wienerberger had been successful, so I only wanted to sell Koramic Roofing to Wienerberger. I wanted to avoid the same thing happening to Koramic Roofing as happened to the Desimpel group, which completely fell apart after being sold to the British Hanson and ended up being partly owned by us. Because we intend retaining at least 10% in

Wienerberger the umbilical cord hasn't been cut and we're continuing to follow Wienerberger's strategy.'

Dumolin admits that it was not the ideal time to sell. 'But Koramic got a good price.' Dumolin wants to use part of the money from the sale to reduce their debts. The other part will be used to invest in the 'new' Koramic. 'Eventually we will evolve into a financial industrial group with interests in several companies. We are still in concrete, but there is a chance that we'll also seek a partner.' Koramic had a satisfactory year last year. In the first six months it achieved a net profit of 2.2 million euros. The second half of the year was better operationally, but Dumolin is afraid that the cost of closing the inundated factory in Dresden (around 12 million euros) will adversely affect the net result.

into an Austro-Flemish building materials group with a European presence. Dumolin has not been able to fulfil his ambition. The economic climate and Koramic's share price were against him, and at the moment of truth the banks backed down. The experience of the former West Flanders family business is not unique. Not a single Flemish company from the golden class of companies that floated on the stock exchange in the 1990s has managed to take on a European dimension. The very low score is not down to a lack of ambition. However, a number of companies have developed into European or world market leaders, but these are niche players. Many companies have also fallen into foreign hands. There are very few successors around who are willing to try the same. The economy is in a deadlock, the stock market climate is not friendly towards entrepreneurs and the banks are doing all they can to limit their financial risk by refusing or calling in loans. Consequently, the banks are not exactly falling over themselves to lend money to entrepreneurs.

www.koramic.be

Opinion

ERIK DE LEYE • DE FINANCIËLE-
ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 11 JANUARY

Christian Dumolin had intended merging Koramic with Wienerberger

TELENET

TELENET	TELENET CUSTOMERS
TURNOVER IN 2002: 246 MILLION EURO (+38%)	CABLE TELEPHONE: 212,000 (+3%)
CASH FLOW IN 2002: 45 MILLION EURO, SUFFICIENT FOR INVESTMENTS OF 130 MILLION EURO IN 2003	INTERNET CABLE CONNECTIONS: 303,000 (MARKET COVERAGE OF 55% IN FLANDERS)
STAFF: 1,156 EMPLOYEES	CABLE TV: 1,56 MILLION

PRICE OF A CABLE SUBSCRIPTION IN FLANDERS

INTERELECTRA	115,28 EURO
WVEM	121,91 EURO
INTEGAN	127,78 EURO
TELENET	138,06 EURO
PBE	115,59 EURO
HAVI-TV	121,91 EURO

SOURCE: HET LAATSTE NIEUWS

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Genocide act amended

THE FEDERAL PUBLIC PROSECUTOR WILL DECIDE WHETHER ACCUSATIONS OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY ARE JUSTIFIED OR MERELY POLITICALLY INSPIRED

The Belgian Genocide Act is internationally renowned and feared. The Act gives Belgian courts universal power to prosecute perpetrators of crimes against humanity. But the 28 genocide dossiers currently before the Brussels courts have been blocked since the Brussels Court Indictment Division (Kamer van Inbeschuldigingstelling, KI) declared the prosecutions against Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon and former Congolese Foreign Affairs Minister Yerodia inadmissible. According to the KI, the suspects must be on Belgian territory and that is not the case. Premier Verhofstadt has now reached an agreement with the senators of the Purple-Green majority on the amendment of the Act in question. The Federal Public Prosecutor's Office will decide whether accusations of crimes against humanity are justified or merely politically inspired. In the latter case, the Public Prosecutor can dismiss the complaint. What is new is that the accusers can then lodge an appeal with the Court Indictment Division. For the existing dossiers the condition of presence on Belgian territory does not apply to the Genocide Act (FF).

BART BEIRLANT • DE STANDAARD •
15 JANUARY

'This is a balanced compromise that largely retains the system but still introduces filters for situations that have no point of contact with Belgium.' This is how Jan Wouters, Professor of International Law at KU Leuven, describes the compromise that Premier Guy Verhofstadt reached with senators yesterday on the Genocide Act. Wouters first pointed out that it was important that current proceedings from before 1 July 2002 were not jeopardised. Among others, the case against the murder of ten Belgian paras in Rwanda in 1994 risked having to be stopped after several rulings given by the Court Indictment Division (Kamer van Inbeschuldigingstelling, KI) last year. Consequently the end almost seemed near, for example, for the investigations into the murder of Belgian fathers Walter Voordeckers and Serge Berten in Guatemala at the beginning of the 1980s. This could not be defended politically by this government.

But in addition the International Criminal Court, which has power to deal

with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, came into being in The Hague on 1 July 2002. The legislator had to take this into account, says Wouters. 'Otherwise you could have imagined a situation in which everyone continued to refer cases to Belgian courts. These might then have been seen as a sort of 'court of first instance' by the International Criminal Court.' The senators who had tabled two bills on 17 July last year to save the Genocide Act had perhaps been thinking of victims in countries that did not ratify the Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court - such as the US, China and Israel. They are still going nowhere. 'The senators had formed the idea that the Genocide Act should still serve as a safety net for the holes in the international system. They wanted to keep pure universal jurisprudence in the Genocide Act for crimes committed in countries that did not ratify the Treaty establishing the Criminal Court. That has now been scrapped,' Wouters points out. Probably this (the scrapping, ed.) happened under pressure from Foreign Affairs.

www.belgium.be

CULTURAL POLICY

Decree must keep valuable art collections in Flanders

ANYONE WHO WANTS TO EXPORT AN ART COLLECTION WILL REQUIRE THE APPROVAL OF THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

In 2000 the Flemish Government and the cultural sector as a whole had to watch helplessly as four paintings by 17th century painter Joachim De Beuckelaer were sold abroad. The owner had lent the paintings to the Ghent Museum of Fine Art, but when he wanted to sell them, there did not appear to be enough money available in Flanders to buy them. The paintings are now hanging in London's National Gallery. The then Culture Minister, Bert Anciaux (Spirit), promptly announced a 'Top Pieces Decree'. This was approved by the Flemish Parliament on 15 January. Henceforth, any-

one who wants to export an art collection will require the approval of the Flemish Government. If the Government does not give its consent, then the owner of the work may ask it to make an offer to purchase the collection (FF).

ERIC RINCKHOUT • DE MORGEN •
16 JANUARY

A list will shortly be drawn up of concrete works that the Flemish Community feels should remain in Flanders because of their archaeological, historical, cultural-historical, artistic or scientific significance. Anyone wanting to take

these top pieces out of Flanders will have to obtain the government's approval. If the export is refused the owner may still ask that Flanders itself purchases the work. A Top Pieces Fund will be set up to finance the scheme. The sum of 2.5 million euros has provisionally been set aside. By opting for this formula of purchase by the government the purpose of the Decree is to respect the rights of the owner and those of the community and prevent illegal exports. A Council of Experts will be set up to advise the government. Antwerp University Ufsia and the Rubenianum, the centre for research into 17th century art in Antwerp, have recently completed an investigation into the criteria that will be used to determine which objects or collections are 'top pieces'.

Diary

MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE

- Until 31 January: *Arabian Heights*, multicultural festival, Borgerhout, Antwerp; info: 03/235.04.90 www.rataplanvzw.be
- 18 to 26 January: *World Folk Festival* with The Levellers, Rag Foundation, Stacey Earle, Nickel Creek, Heather Myles etc, De Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: 09/265.91.65 www.handelsbeurs.be
- 23 January: *Staatskapelle Berlin* conducted by Daniel Barenboim, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00
- 23, 24 and 25 January: *Random scream, Fading fast*, Davis Freeman and Lilia Mestre in a mix of dance, theatre and plastic arts, Kaaithheaterstudio's, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaithheater.be
- 25 January: *Dejan Lazic*, compositions by Chopin; De Bijloke, Ghent; info: 09/233.68.78 www.debijloke.be
- 23 January: *Christiane Oelze (soprano) and Eric Schneider (piano)*, Lieder by Schönberg, A. Mahler-Werfel and Wagner, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 24 January: *Philharmonia Orchestra London* conducted by Lorin Maazel, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02
- 24 January to 2 February: *Eine Florentinische tragödie @ der Zwerg* by Alexander von Zemlinsky, conductor: Markus Stenz, Regie: Andreas Homoki, De Munt, Brussels; info: 070/23.39.39 www.demunt.be
- Until 26 January: *17^e Festival du film gay et lesbien*, Botanique, Brussels; info: 0474/47.38.11
- 25 January: *Yellowman*, VK, Brussels; info: 02/414.29.07
- 28 and 29 January: *22 bld Lafayette* by Samir Akika, dance & video, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.24.24 www.vooruit.be
- 25 January: *Tirana*, Greek-albanian polyphonic singers, Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be

- 27 January: *Trio Fontenay* with compositions by Chostakovitsch, Roslavets and Tchaikovsky, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 27 January: *Recital Dietrich Henschel* with Mahler and Schumann, Flanders Opera, Ghent; info: www.vlaamseopera.be
- 29 January: *Alban Berg Quartett*, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00
- 30 and 31 January, 1 February: *Parrots @ Guinea Pigs*, Jan Fabre, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.24.24 www.vooruit.be
- 31 January to 14 February: *Werther by Jules Massenet*, conductor: Patrick Fournillier; Flanders Opera, Antwerp; info: www.vlaamseopera.be
- 1 February: *Flemish Radio Orchestra* conducted by Youri Levi, Symphony nr 6 by Mahler, Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be
- 2 February: *Eva Zylka, Eric Baeten, Daniel Schmitt and Ilja Laporev*, string quartets by van Beethoven and Schubert, Chambermusic Het Elzenveld, Antwerp; info: 03/.213.54.15 www.defilharmonie.be
- 2 February: *Billy Bragg, Ancienne Belgique*, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 3 and 4 February: *Van Morrison*, Koningin Elisabethzaal, Antwerp; info: 0900/260.60
- 4 February: *Beth Gibbons @ Rustin Man*, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be

EXPO

- Until 16 February: *Selection 1/Backstage*, Fashion exhibition, Antwerp Modemuseum (MoMu), Antwerp; info: 03/470.27.71 www.momu.be
- Until 2 February: *Gaude succurere vitae*, exhibition: drawings and films by Jan Fabre, SMAK, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be
- Until 30 March: *Twins*, (the fascination by scientists, artists and the pub-

- lic) exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be 09/216.35.95
- Until 16 February: *The gardens of the Alhambra*, exhibition with Pedro Garcias, Maria Teresa 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 16 March: *Roman Juwels*, Provincial Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren; info: 012/67.03.55
- Until 31 August: *The big Experiment*, scientific exhibition, Technopolis, Mechelen; info: 015/34.20.00
- Until 23 February: *From Bakelite to Composite*, exhibition, Museum of Design, Ghent; info: 09/267.99.99
- Until 29 June: *Music Planet*, one century of pop music in an exhibition, Brewery Belle Vue, Molenbeek; info: www.euroculture.be 02/513/29/84
- Until 9 March: *Who's sweet, gets sweets*, exhibition KMSK and City Library, Antwerp;
- Until 6 April: *Maria Magdalena, sinner from the Middle Ages until today*, exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent; info: 09/222.17.03
- Until 16 February: *Beaches and glances, a photo exhibition about Ostend*, Venetiaanse Gaanderijen, Ostend; info: 059/56.20.15
- Until 23 February: *'First Marriage' by Suchan Kinoshita, exhibition and projects by Gert Robijns, Joël Audebert, Nathalie Brevet and Hughes Rochette (Fr)*, MUHKA, Antwerp; info: 03/238.59.60
- Until 16 February: *The Gardens of Granada* (photography and art) and ceramics by Claudi Casanovas (Catalonia), exhibitions PMMK, Ostend; info: 059/50.81.18 www.pmmk.be
- Until 30 March: *Synesthetics - Pop @ Art in Belgium*, pop music and visual arts, De Garage, Mechelen; info: 015/29.40.00 www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be



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