Time bomb under Flemish environmental policy?

Frits Bolkestein, European Commissioner for the Internal Market, claims that for the past thirteen years Flanders’ environmental policy has been violating European competition rules. The spearhead of that environmental policy was the Vlaamse Milieuholding (VMH, Flemish Environmental Holding), 100%-owned by the Flemish Region. According to the Commission, the VMH chose without competition from its private partners to set up mixed (public-private) companies such as Aquafin (water treatment), Indaver and Oost-Vlaams Milieubeheer (waste processing) and Vera (waste processing with energy recovery in the Province of Antwerp). These mixed companies, which distorted all the competition in themselves because they were financed with government money, were awarded contracts by the government for which no public invitation to tender were issued. In 2001 the Flemish government decided to dismantle the VMH. That solves problems in the future, but cannot prevent a fine of 2.5 billion euros from hanging over Flanders, says De Standaard [10 April]. The Commission already asked Minister Dua (Agalev) for an explanation in October 2002. At the beginning of this month Dua gave her answer, which is currently being examined by the Commission [FF].

PETER DUPONT • DE MORGEN • 10 APRIL

‘Strange that this story is cropping up in the media just now,’ says Dua’s Principal Private Secretary Chris Steenwegen, referring to the article in De Standaard. ‘The government has already taken several decisions on the matter. Certain objections in this legal procedure are therefore un-founded. For example, the government decided in 2001 to put a stop to the Vlaamse Milieuholding and its activities. Furthermore, participation in the subsidiary Indaver was significantly scaled down and our role in Aquafin was reviewed. We also stepped down from the Oost-Vlaams Milieubeheer. These are mistakes that were made before this legislative period. Steenwegen finds it tenuous that they are now speculating whether a formal investigation will be opened following a possible negative advice to the response from Minister Dua and whether a complaint will be filed with the European Court in Luxembourg. ‘The European Union must impose reasonable limits on the deregulation drive,’ says Herman Matthijs, Economics Lecturer at the VUB. ‘Deregulation of utilities is not desirable. Apart from the UK the whole European Union is at fault as far as the distortion of competition is concerned.’

INTRODUCTION

Even the Parliamentary party leaders of the Flemish majority parties felt the last session of the Federal Chamber was a shameful performance. At this extra session, the Purple-Green majority only managed to mobilise 72 MPs. When the opposition noticed this it left the auditorium with a smile, so the requirement of 75 MPs was not achieved and the Session was no longer legally valid. Chamber Chairman Decroo had to put away his farewell speech in response to the fiftieth period of office. The Socialist Party leaders of the SPA and Agalev were indignant. They suspect that a number of Liberal VLD MPs stayed away because the Chamber was due to vote on a bill forcing MPs to submit a statement of their assets to the Court of Audit at the start of each legislative period and publish a list of their mandates in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees. This bill, dating from 1994, was intended to make politics more transparent, but it was never voted on. The opposition triumphed and depicted the whole spectacle as the umpteenth evidence of the internal division of the Purple-Green majority. De Financiele-Economische Tijd [9 April] also views the spectacle in the Chamber as a low point in the ever-worsening relationships between the parties in government. Earlier the Greens/Reds and Liberals had been diametrically opposed to each other on the amendment of the Genocide Act and very recently the Francophone Socialists blocked the final piece in the reform of the Federal Civil Service, traced out by the Flemish Socialist Luc Vanden Bossche, while American weapons transports created dissent among the Greens. With the performance in the Chamber the Purple-Greens lost not only their beauty, but also their dignity, as De Standaard [9 April] put it. But perhaps the press simply has to keep a closer eye on the presence of MPs and how seriously they take their jobs, says De Morgen, putting its money where its mouth is by referring to the survey of professional merits of every single Federal (Flemish) MP they published on 4 April. Chance or not: fifteen of the MPs absent without a valid excuse had already received a below-par assignment of quotas from this newspaper. The politicians themselves have since turned their thoughts to their election campaign, but here too they are more and more dependent on the media. After all, the Election Expenditure Act (1989) largely curbed the use of financial resources and propaganda material and the campaign increasingly takes place in the media.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Flemish environmental policy in breach of European competition rules?

Frits Bolkestein, the European Commissioner for Internal Market Policy, maintains that the public companies that have implemented the Flemish government’s environmental policy for the past thirteen years are in breach of European competition rules. When the Flemish government entered into agreements with companies such as Aquafin or Indaver, both subsidiaries of the Flemish Environmental Holding [Vlaamse Milieuholding], other European companies were not allowed to compete, claims Bolkestein. The Flemish Environment Minister, Vera Dua [Agalev], refutes the accusations in her reply to the European Commission, but is not prepared to provide any further details of the Flemish defence ‘because the dossier is legally charged’ (FF).

There is a chance that our country will ultimately be summoned before the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. The possible penalties include a sentence and massive fines. The public companies concerned would have to pay these, even though the government struggles with a lack of funds. For example, 7.5 billion euros are still required for water treatment. Bolkestein has placed a significant dossier on the table. It concerns no less than thirteen years of Flemish environmental policy. All told, government expenditure in excess of 2.5 billion euros is at issue. No fewer than three ministers are involved. Theo Kelchtermans (CD&V and originator of our environmental policy in the nineties), Norbert De Battelier [SP.A] and Vera Dua [Agalev].

Bolkestein is fondering on the set-up and operation of Aquafin [water treatment], Indaver [industrial and domestic waste], the Vlaamse Afvalrecuperatieattemaatschappij [Vlar, recycling] and two public enterprises for the management of a tip in Ghent’s Canal Zone. The redevelopment of Antwerp’s Hooge Maey tip and the establishment of a company for alternative waste processing is a striking example for Europe: apart from the Flemish Government, the provincial administration, the City of Antwerp and the municipal companies Isvag and Igean are in breach of the rules of free competition. WWW.VLAANDEREN.BE

Copernicus plan for reform of federal administration damaged

Now level A has been blocked, the whole reform of the civil service is missing its final piece

The Copernicus Plan for the reform of government administration was blocked by the Francophone Socialists (PS) and Greens [Ecolo] at the last Federal Council of Ministers. There they objected to a proposal by Civil Service Minister Luc Vanden Bossche (SP.A) to force Federal civil servants of university level A (senior and middle executives) to sit difficult competence tests to examine, among other things, their skills of operating computer programs. The objections also applied to the new careers and their associated remuneration. In the Copernicus Plan the old pay scales, based purely on the principle of seniority, are replaced by new ones that also take account of the extent to which the civil servant improves his/her qualifications through training and performance. In September 2002 the reform was approved for the lower levels B, C and D. Most civil servants of these levels have already sat their tests and those who succeeded have already received their raise in pay. Senior top administrative managers, mostly members of ministerial cabinets that had to undergo assessments, have already been recruited. But now level A has been blocked, the whole reform of the civil service is missing its final piece. The agreement that the Federal level-A civil servants would get their competence raise from 1 January 2004 therefore appears to have become unenforceable. According to De Standaard [8 April], they will have to wait until the next government has produced Copernicus II. The CD&V’s people’s representative Servais Verherstraeten, who has followed the whole Copernicus reform closely, points out that only two ministerial cabinets were abolished, whereas the intention was to abolish them all and replace them with policy boards. Furthermore, he can understand the PS and Ecolo’s criticism of the competence tests (FF).
Does the revision of the constitution get to the core of institutional questions?

In the night of Friday 4 to Saturday 5 April the Senate voted on those articles of the Constitution that are eligible for revision. The list of articles was approved by the Council of Ministers on Saturday. The declaration appears in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees on Wednesday 9 April. From that day on Parliament is dissolved and the government will only concern itself with current affairs. The main revisions of the Constitution concern the reform of the Senate, the reduction of the age for electoral candidates, referenda and a more flexible revision of the Constitution. However, these revisions do not get to the very core of this country's institutional questions, claims De Standaard (FF).

Opinion

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 7 APRIL

The very core concerns relationships between the Federation and the Federal States (Flemish and French speaking communities, ed.). For the welfare of the Belgians the key question is how closely manacled together the different parts of the country will remain, how long the two diverging Federal States, one of which is now one quarter poorer than the other, will remain obliged to apply the same economic and social policy. In simple terms, one needs high wages and the other high social contributions. Both Federal States (Communities) are manacled together, therefore each other's needs are added together, creating the highest wage bill in the world, which is ruining both of them. That is the first key problem. The second key problem has also been pushed aside. This does not involve constitutional rules, but constitutional habit. The habit from which this country suffers is the excessive politicisation of administration. This concerns not only political appointments, but also the excessive 'political' examination of each component of policy and policy preparation. Nothing gets done here without being politically negotiated. The political bickering of recent months by the Purple-Greens has shown that excessive politicisation is still alive and well and that 'la politique politicienne' still governs administration and policy. An agreement to put much less staff on 'la politique politicienne' and thus cut down on ministerial cabinets would be a good start.

BELGIAN FOREIGN TRADE
AN TRADE BALANCE 2002
(IN BILLION EURO)

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<td>Inside the EU</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the EU</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>(-9.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dirk Vander Maelen (SP.A) was particularly angry that many members of the majority had stayed away. But he was just as unhappy with the opposition. ‘The CD&V has also chosen a strategy of decomposition, and is therefore playing into the hands of the Vlaams Blok.’ Joos Wauters (Agalev) said that the Liberals (VLD) clearly wanted to sink the bill on assets returns and mandate records. VLD Parliamentary Party Leader Hugo Coveliers was indignant about his absent Parliamentary party colleagues (as many as 13 of the 24 failed to turn up, ed.). ‘80 to 90% of the VLD Parliamentary party is in favour of the bill (on assets returns, ed.). Those who are against it should therefore come and vote accordingly. This is not good for Parliamentary democracy.’ According to Coveliers, being an MP is a full-time job. Ecolo felt that the opposition also deserved some of the blame, but Frieda Brepoels, Parliamentary Party Leader of the N-VA, responded: ‘30 members of the majority were not present and the opposition gets it in the neck.’ Yves Leterme, Parliamentary Party Leader of the CD&V, also laid the responsibility with the Purple-Green majority. ‘Hope the voter realises there is no sense in entrusting the government of this country to these people. The dissolution of the Chamber also implies the dissolution of the Purple-Green majority.’
Only three new faces on Antwerp’s new city council

Opinions vary in the press as to whether these minimal changes are sufficient to be able to win back the confidence of the people of Antwerp.

At the start of the Antwerp crisis, right after the resignation of the bench of aldermen, the cry went up in all parties for a new bench and a new mayor. Three weeks later, following the reconciliation between the two biggest parties of the Antwerp SP.A and VLD, the new mayor and bench of aldermen is known and contains only three new faces.

In the SP.A, former Mayoress Leona Detiège and Education Alderwoman Kathy Lindekens made way for Patrick Janssens and Robert Voorhamme, Chairman of the Antwerp division of the SP.A. In the VLD, Ann Coolsaet was replaced by Ludo van Campenhout, Chairman of the Antwerp division of the VLD. In both parties the replacement was upheld at a party conference on 4 April. The CD&V (Marc Van Peel, Eric Antonis) and Agalev (Edwin Pairon, Chantal Pauwels) simply sent the same aldermen back to the bench. In concrete terms this means that the big four (Voorhamme, Van Campenhout, Pairon and Van Peel), who spent the past few months preparing policy decisions behind the screens, will now all sit on the bench of aldermen. Opinions vary in the press as to whether these minimal changes in the administrative team are sufficient to be able to win back the confidence of the people of Antwerp. The return of Agalev alderwoman Chantal Pauwels is generally seen as a mistake (FF).

BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 7 APRIL

Sell. That is the current buzzword of future Mayor Patrick Janssens. Janssens knows that the city introduced a number of positive measures under Detiège’s leadership. But unlike, for example, the Mayor of Mechelen, Bart Somers, the bench failed to communicate that in a lasting way. Janssens is considering that communication from two angles. If a city cannot deliver the goods or has failed in some respect, the Mayor also wants to make that explicitly clear.

FRANK WILLEMSE/WIM WILRI • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 6 APRIL

‘We deal in authenticity. Just as the VLD stands for tax cuts. But it’s incomprehensible that the same people should return to the same positions after the Visa affair. I fell off my chair when I heard about it,’ says Johan Byttebier, Agalev Municipal Council Member in Antwerp. At the Agalev members’ conference (3 April) he called for one of the two Agalev aldermen to be replaced. Dirk Geldof, in an earlier bench a valued alderman, was a candidate to replace one of the two, but he is not objecting to both of them remaining. ‘They’ve paid back all the disputed money (Pairon: 1,000 euros, Pauwels 2,500 euros) and it appears they didn’t break any of the rules that applied at the time. They did make a poor political assessment. They have apologised for this blunder. Because their work cancels out this blunder, 58% of the members’ conference decided that they should get a second chance under Janssens.’ Agalev Political Secretary Jos Geysels is also aware that this could cause trouble at the elections.

Opinion

KURT TUERLINCKX • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 5 APRIL

Janssens looks very much like Detiège II. Kathy Lindekens, Ann Coolsaet and Detiège herself are leaving the bench ‘in the interest of Antwerp’. The eight others are returning ‘in the interest of Antwerp’. They call this political logic. The question remains as to whether the people of Antwerp are not able to reason more logically. They will simply wonder why the aldermen are resigning and then coming straight back.

It is still incredible that no one is taking political responsibility for the complete failure of financial control in the city. It is precisely that shaky policy that played into the hands of political instability and resulted in Antwerp being without an administrative and political leadership.
Co-operation agreement between the ports of Ghent and Terneuzen

They wanted to go much further and merge the port authorities into a single authority, but the Flemish Ports Decree makes it impossible.

The Port of Ghent on the one hand and Zeeland Seaports, which co-ordinates the Dutch ports of Terneuzen and Vlissingen, on the other, are to collaborate more closely together. This has been laid down in a far-reaching co-operation agreement. According to the two port authorities, the agreement is the first step towards a unified port for Ghent and Terneuzen, which are linked by a sea canal. However, the Flemish Ports Decree currently makes cross-border mergers between port authorities impossible. Ghent’s Alderman for Ports, Daniël Termont (SP.A), hopes that this will change in the near future (FF).

MARC DEROO • DE FINANCIELE•ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 8 APRIL

The port authorities are to engage in joint promotional work abroad, extol the virtues of the Gent-Terneuzen canal zone as a maritime cluster, collaborate on a cross-border basis and promote investment, refer potential customers to each other’s ports, mediate between the various companies in the canal zone and consult on port and infrastructure projects. In concrete terms two people will be employed with a budget of 100,000 euros. Every two months a meeting is planned between the management of both port authorities, a website will be developed and an annual report produced.

‘Even at Flemish level there is no such co-operation between ports,’ stresses Ghent Ports Alderman Daniël Termont (SP.A). ‘We wanted to go much further and merge the port authorities into a single authority, but the Flemish Ports Decree makes it impossible to transfer port authority powers or port concessions to a new company. In the Netherlands that isn’t a problem. We are hoping that the current agreement initiates a debate in the Flemish Parliament to amend the Ports Decree. In principle an amendment must be possible by 2006. Many agreements, such as the current co-operation agreement between Zeebrugge and Antwerp, are paper tigers. Not ours. In our case both parties have clearly expressed the wish to make something of it. Further cross-border co-operation can give us more elbow-room to make more creative use of government money. Professionally speaking, Ghent and Terneuzen are obliged to work together. The Gent-Terneuzen canal zone is a geographical area. If in ten years’ time all the land at the Kluizendok is given in concession, Ghent’s port will be full and the future of Ghent will lie in the Netherlands.

There is an area of 750 hectares between Zelzate and Terneuzen waiting to be developed.’ Daan Bruinooge, Chairman of Zeeland Seaports: ‘We also stand to gain from the agreement. Terneuzen-Ghent can be promoted as a zone, we can consult on infrastructure projects like the tunnel under the canal at Sluiskil, on rail links and on optimising traffic to and from the Westerscheldt Tunnel. We are, as it were, condemned to each other.’ The contract between Ghent and Zeeland Seaports runs until the end of 2006.

WWW.HAVENGENT.BE
WWW.ZEELANDSEAPORTS.NL
DEREGULATION OF ELECTRICITY MARKET

Electricity bills can only fall

The Federal Government has also decided that Electrabel must terminate its historic contracts with Electricité de France (EdF) on imports from France and auction off part of its production capacity.

On 1 July the electricity market is to be deregulated. But two conditions for allowing the new operators to compete on the open market have still not been met. Firstly, new electricity suppliers cannot yet set their own rates because they themselves do not yet know what the distribution rates for low voltage electricity will be. The Committee for the Regulation of Electricity and Gas (CREG) hopes to have the distribution rates ready before June this year, but first it has to submit its proposals to the 28 distribution companies on which the municipalities sit. For the municipalities, energy distribution was a major source of income. New operators such as Watt Plus will have to buy cheap electricity in France, but the transport capacity from France to allow the smooth import of electricity is limited. 75% of capacity on the Franco-Belgian border is predestined for the Netherlands, says De Financieel-Economische Tijd (8 April).

The Federal Government has also decided that the Belgian electricity producer Electrabel must terminate its historic contracts with Electricité de France (EdF) on imports from France and auction off part of its production capacity. The government has also decided to set maximum rates for the first six months of the open market (FF).

JOHSE ABRAHAMS • DE MORGAN • 7 APRIL

At the last Council of Ministers the government decided to impose a maximum bill for gas and electricity. However many new suppliers there are, following deregulation on 1 July the price per kilowatt-hour or cubic metre will not be higher than on current bills. For a time there were fears in political circles that the deregulation of the market would lead not to a reduction but to an increase in electricity and gas bills. That was partly due to government policy, which imposed a number of additional levies on players, and partly to the position of Electrabel, which is dominant as regards the production, transport and sale of electricity. The new maximum price will be limited until the end of this year. By then the historic contracts between EdF and Electrabel must have been annulled and part of Electrabel’s production capacity assigned to other players. Newcomers are complaining of the lack of high-voltage lines between France and Belgium, which means insufficient electricity can be traded between the two countries. The contracts between EdF and Electrabel, which give the two preferential treatment, are blocking part of the transport capacity and must be rescinded, the government claims. Electrabel’s wings are also being clipped in another way. The company controls more than 90% of the production of electricity in Belgium. This is preventing the market from being truly deregulated, claim the newcomers. The government is now agreeing with them by electing to auction off virtual production capacity. That means that some of the current produced in Electrabel’s power stations will be assigned to the highest bidder. The CREG has until 1 September to draft a plan for this auction. The measure is clearly intended as compensation for the maximum bill, which the new operators on the market are not happy about.

WWW.ELECTRABEL.BE
WWW.CREG.BE

In 2002 the Belgian Post Office posted a loss of 47 million euros. In 2001 it made a profit of 39 million euros. Managing Director Johnny Thijs attributes the loss to the drop in sales from postal traffic and to rising costs. Sales from normal postal deliveries fell by 46 million euros to 1.258 billion [-3.53%], and according to Thijs is due to the increasing use of e-mail, fax and mobile phones. Nevertheless, the Post Office’s overall turnover continues to grow. This is mainly due to the strong growth of the package division Taxipost and the International Mail division (+28.38 and +19.59% respectively). The increase in operating costs (1.9 billion euros) is mainly attributable to increased staff costs (1.45 billion euros). Since Thijs expects income to continue to fall, he wants to put the savings and reform plans that are sitting in the wings into practice as quickly as possible. In 250 of the 556 post offices the post must be delivered more efficiently using the computer system GeoRoute. A restructur- ing plan has already been negotiated with trade unions, according to which 8,500 workers must be laid off by 2007. In 2002 those workers who took early retirement were no longer replaced by new ones. This caused staff numbers to fall from 39,956 to 39,326.

Www.depost.be

ECONOMY

ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION IN THE EU

(IN TWH, 1 TWH=1000GWH)

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Balance in GWh: Belgium-The Netherlands: +684 • Belgium-Luxembourg: +1,618 • Belgium-France: -11,407
What does the port think about weapons transports?

Since the Second World War, Antwerp has been one of the main transit ports for the American army. This was also the case during this Gulf War. Some 24 ro-ro ships with 22,000 pieces of rolling stock were loaded and unloaded in Antwerp during the military build-up to the Gulf War. This works out at fifteen days’ work for one hundred port-workers. That the Americans recently re-activated Rotterdam as a transit port has only increased concern amongst transport workers’ unions, concludes Trends (FF).

Luc Huysmans • Trends • 10 April

During the first Gulf War in 1991 the [much larger] flows were neatly divided between Antwerp, Rotterdam and Bremerhaven. In 2003 the Flemish port handled all transports until last week. At the Vrasenedok, the transshipment company Hesse-Noord Natie had reserved an area of 35 ha exclusively for the storage of military equipment. But last week the storage quay has been abandoned. On 3 April the American Military Traffic Management Command decided to re-activate Rotterdam and is transshipping 3,000 pieces of rolling stock, including several hundred tanks, via Rotterdam. ‘A direct consequence of the comments made by Louis Michel and his Green colleagues’ is the word in port circles. ‘I am a pacifist, but also a realist. If these American weapons do not come through Antwerp, they will simply go a hundred kilometres further north,’ says Secretary Marc Loridan of the Belgian Transport Workers’ Union. So saying, he is expressing the view of the maritime sector. Most observers are not so concerned about the direct loss of jobs, in the form of the twenty-four extra ships. According to rough estimates, in 2002 Antwerp handled 65,000 tonnes of army equipment, about the same as has already been conveyed in recent weeks. In addition, some 50,000 containers were loaded or unloaded, including a not insignificant number with army supplies of Heinz Tomato Ketchup. In terms of the total traffic between Antwerp and North America (23.7 million tonnes, market leadership as far as the traffic with North America is concerned) that is not much. But the fact that the American army is chartering ships fully from carriers such as Grimaldi and Wallenius remains exceptional. Generally, army transports are no more than the basic to fill a commercial ship. Last year, for example, forty-two ships of carrier America Roro Carriers called at the port of Antwerp. Some of the space was leased to the US Army, the rest was filled with commercial traffic. Container carriers are also able to make their commercial rates more attractive thanks to the basic military traffic. The main fear in Antwerp port circles is that this flow of goods will also relocate if the American army decides to have its transports brought in through another port. And then we are talking much larger figures.

Loridan: ‘Sometimes it can take years to entice a customer back. We’re keeping a particularly close eye on any comments by moral crusader Louis Michel.’ www.portofantwerp.be

2003 Beaufort: the sea laps at the Museum

For six months, holidaymakers will see art whichever way they turn in every major coastal district

Just as the wind brings life and movement to the sea, so must it be in art. That is the idea behind the large open-air exhibition 2003 Beaufort, which is exhibiting sculptures, installations and billboards with blown-up photos along the whole Belgian coast throughout spring and summer. With this Triennale for Contemporary Art by the Sea the curator Willy Vandenbussche is aiming at a wide public. A committee of experts consisting of Klaus Buxmann (Münster), Rudi Fuchs (Amsterdam), Jean-Hubert Martin (Düsseldorf) and Vandenbussche himself selected thirty international artists who set to work in the coastal districts. In Nieuwpoort there is the already familiar picture of the coastal panorama must possess considerable potential. David Mach crossed the canal to place a hyper-realistic image of a woman diving in the sea on the beach at De Haan. He has thus created a work that would not look out of place in the genre, separate in Flanders, of art on roundabouts.

Winter&Hörbelt and Dirk Braeckman, on the other hand, are standing firm. The tunnel created from empty Spa crates on the beach at Zeebrugge by Winter&Hörbelt has to be seen to be believed. Probably thanks to the strong wind that awakened the sublime qualities of the North Sea, but still. It was extremely impressive to stand alone in this tube while the wind whistled through it and the waves crashed into it.

In the ‘Triennale’ Dirk Braeckman responds to the acute shortage of critical comment with a series of twenty-nine open-air exhibitions by artists who would not look out of place in the genre, separate in Flanders, of art on roundabouts. All of which can be seen in the newest wing of the Koninginnewegalerij in Ostend. Actually it is an obvious work, but no less successful for it. Just like the excavator of...
Wim Delvoye. I have not yet seen the work in Middelkerke, but it seems like the clearest symbol of the sickly 'every Belgian wants to own his own home' syndrome. Info: 2003 Beaufort-lijn 070/22.50.04. www.2003beaufort.be

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- 11 to 22 April: Ariodante by GF Haendel, conductor Christoph Poppen, Director: David Alden, Flanders Opera, Antwerp, info: www.vlaamseopera.be
- 13 and 15 April: Camera Musica Mosata, Johannes Passion, CC Leopoldsburg and Velnix, Tongeren, info: 011/34.65.48
- 17 April Daniel Reuss, conductor, Claron McFadden (Soprano), Stella Doufexis (Soprano) and others with Deus Passus by Rihm, PSK, Brussels, info: 02/507.82.00 www.psks.be
- 21 April: Skating, Sportpaleis, Antwerp, info: 0900/260.60
- 7 to 16 April: Domingo festival, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcercts.be
- 16 and 19 April: Brice Laroux with Drum and Gravitations, David Hernandez with Box, dance, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.24.24 www.vooruit.be
- 18 April: Marco Parker, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 19 April: Scala 'On the Rocks', PSK, Brussells, info: 02/507.82.00 www.psks.be
- 25 April: Detillharmonic conducted by Philippe Herreweghe with Igor Roma (piano), Brahms, Schumann, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 15, 16 and 17 and 18 April: Collegium Vocale conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, Johannes Passion by JS Bach, Karmelietenkerk, Ghent, PSK Brussels and De Singel, Antwerp and Concertgebouw, Bruges, info: 09/233.77.88-02/507.82.00-03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be – www.concertgebouw.be
- 17 April: Renegades Steel Orchestra [Trinidad], Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp, info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
- 18 April: Changui de Guatanamo (Cuba), Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp, info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
- 22 April: Orchestre Baobab, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 22 April: Nassyma & Ensemble [Algeria], De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 18, 19 and 21 April: DJ Grazzoppa's Big Band, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 24 April: Selve Amoralite – Montevertedi Revisited, project, De Biolke, Ghent, info: www.biolke.be
- 25 April: Kammerensemble für Alte Musik mit Bach, Monn, Beck and Mozart, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 24 April: Quartet Mosaiques with van Beethoven, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 24 April : Luz Casal, PSK, Brussels, info: www.bozar.be
- 25 April: Kelly Bowland, Vorst Nacional, Brussel, info: 0900/260/60
- 26 April: The Phiharmonic Orchestra of Rotterdam conducted by Valery Gergiev with symphonie fantastique by Berlioz and compositions La Mer by De Bussy and La Valse de Ravel, Concertgebouw, Bruges, info: www.concertgebouw.be
- 27 April: L'Arti di Alterva and Mariissa Academy, arias, Concertgebouw, Bruges, info: www.concertgebouw.be
- 30 April: Daniel Quartet with string quartets by Beethoven, Concertgebouw, Bruges, info: www.concertgebouw.be
- 28 April: Calexico, De Hallen, Scharbeek, info: 0900/260/60
- 28 April: Luka Bloom, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- 15 to 3 May : 1 Due Foscari by Verdi, director : Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, De Munt, Brussels, info : 070/233.939

**EXPO**

- From 22 March to 17 January: Jacques Brel, 'the right to dream', exhibition, Anderlecht, info: 02/338.67.30
- Until 29 June: I Due Foscari by Verdi, director: Franco Zeffirelli, PSK, Brussels, info : 02/338.67.30
- Until 31 August: Music Planet, one century of pop music in an exhibition, Brewery Belle Veu, Molenbeek, info: www.euroculture.be 02/513/29/84
- Until 20 April: 'Aroud', exhibition with work by Raveel, Richter, Pistoletto and Tanies, Roger Ravelmuseum, Machelen aan de Leie (near Deinze), info: www.rogeravelmuseum.be
- Until 20 April: Nanoclogy, retrospective exhibition with work by Dave Mc Kean, Auditorium Tweebronnen, Leuven, info: www.beelden.be
- Until 4 May: Louis Van Lint, retrospective exhibition, Museum of Elseen, info: 02/371.94.74
- From 1 March onwards: The Groeninghemuseum in Bruges reopens after facelift; info: 050/44.87.12
- Until 25 May: Presents from the Muses [Greek exhibition linked to the Greek chairmanship of the European Union], Royal Museum of Art and History, Jubelpark, Brussel, info: 02/743.72.11
- Until 1 June: Horizons of reality, Russian contemporary Art, Muhka, Antwerp, info: 03/238.59.60 www.muhka.be
- Until 31 May: Louise Bourgeois and Hans Op de Beeck, exhibition, Galery Xavier Hufkins, Brussels, info: 02/639.67.30
- Until 19 April: Inside outliers, sixteen artists about identity: video, film and computer art, Kunsthalle Loppem in Loppem-Zedelgem, info: 047783.23.70 www.kunsthalhellem.be
- Until 30 August: 50 Years of Matchbox, Toys museum, Mechelen, info: 015/55.70.75 www.speelgoedmuseum.be
- Until 11 May: Aluminium by design, exhibition, Wielenmanshuis, Brussels, info: 02/544.08.33
- Until 1 June: Social Housing, exhibition, PSK, Brussels, info: 02/507.82.00 www.psks.be
- Until 1 June: An arbitrary History, Cia Guo-Qiang, exhibition, SMAK, Ghent, info: www.smak.be

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