Agalev raises tension in Government of Flanders

The senior ministers of the federal government and the party chairmen of the majority parties have agreed to introduce an electoral threshold of 5% for the regional and European elections in June, as well. That decision has to be taken in the federal parliament, because the regional parliaments are not competent for this. Applied to the result of 18 May 2003, this means that Agalev will not retain a single seat in the Flemish Parliament. Without an electoral threshold, it could still have retained two seats. In fact the Greens feel that this is a move aimed at their removal from the political scene. They are therefore threatening to leave the Flemish Government. According to the majority parties, the intention was only to have the electoral system for federal and regional elections brought into line. The introduction of provincial constituencies will be voted on in the Flemish Parliament. The Flemish-National party N-VA has prepared a proposal for this, because the party might not win a single seat without the introduction of provincial constituencies in June. But the motion requires a two-thirds majority, and therefore they might have to count on the votes of the Vlaams Blok, since the other opposition party, CD&V, is in favour of the current district constituencies and has already said that it will vote against.

Agalev, which is still a member of the Government of Flanders with two ministers (Sannen and Byttebier), had earlier announced that it would also refuse to approve the regional part of the tax amnesty (FF). Agalev is threatening to leave the Government of Flanders if it is decided that the electoral threshold is also to be introduced for the Flemish elections. It was Agalev's parliamentary party leader Jos Stassen who made the announcement. According to Agalev, the 5% electoral threshold jeopardises the party's continued existence. If Agalev withdraws from the Government of Flanders, a new majority will have to be sought or the administration will have to continue with a minority cabinet.

Stassen is reacting to the plans of the federal government, which is going to table a bill for a special law to have the five electoral threshold applied to the regional elections. Moreover, the system with 'follow-up candidates' on the lists would also be introduced again. In addition, the age for eligibility for election will be lowered to 18.

INTRODUCTION

A memo from the KBC study department shows that EUR 5.4 billion flowed out of Flanders to Wallonia or Brussels in 2002 via the social security system, the federal budget and financial arrangements between the regions. To put it in slightly more concrete terms, the Flemish Employers' Association (Vlaams Economische Verbond - VEV) calculated that this costs the individual Fleming EUR 900 every year. The employers' organisation claims that these transfers hamper the further economic development of Flanders and that in actual fact they are not beneficial to Wallonia, either, since there can hardly be talk of the Wallon economy 'catching up'. It is therefore arguing in no uncertain terms for a drastic reduction of these transfers. Minister-President Bart Somers (De Tijd, 5 November) sees in the memo an exhortation to pursue further the transfer of competencies from federal level to the regions and communities. He does not contest the fact that in a federal nation there has to be solidarity between the regions, but he feels that the growth in the transfers shows that there is an urgent need for more transparency and objectivity to be built into the system. He wants this to be discussed next year, after the regional elections, in the forum on the further progress to be made on the state reform.

The chairman of his party, Karel De Gucht, is also urging for this, but he makes a distinction between fair transfers – for example as a result of the demographic structure – and unfair ones. De Gucht especially targets the latter. He regards it as unfair that Walloon GPs need twice as many X-rays to make a diagnosis than Flemish doctors, or that the federal budget is used to pay railway staff who are evidently far more dispensable in Wallonia than in Flanders, as shown in the plan drawn up by railways boss Karel Vinck. According to René De Feyter, founder-chairman of the Flemish think-tank De Warande and one-time director/manager of the VEV, quoted in Trends (6 November), Flemish economic progress is being crippled by being coupled to the Wallon economy. He feels that there are two economies in the country and at the moment they cannot develop at their own rhythm, among other things because Flanders lacks autonomy in tax matters. He denies that he is thereby refusing solidarity with the poorer Wallonia; rather he wants Flanders to be able to decide on that solidarity itself.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Transfers of funds from Flanders to Wallonia and Brussels rise again

In 2002 EUR 5.4 billion flowed out of Flanders to Wallonia, according to a report by the KBC study department. That is EUR 0.55 billion more than in 2000, and some 3.6% of the primary income of Flemish families. (Primary income is the income earned before tax and redistribution.) These and other findings are presented in a report by the KBC study department on the inter-regional flows of funds in Belgium. Thanks to this flow of funds from Flanders, Wallonia saw its primary income rise by 6.7% and Brussels by 3.5%. The transfers from Flanders are effected via three channels: via the federal authorities (EUR 1.23 billion), via a financing arrangement for the federal states (EUR 1.29 billion) and via the social security system (EUR 2.91 billion). Although Flanders is ageing more quickly than Wallonia (the number of over-65s increased by 3% between 1990 and 2002, as compared to a 1.7% increase in Wallonia and a 1.2% fall in Brussels), and this has therefore caused greater social security expenditure (in particular pensions), this has been offset by a higher level of growth in social security revenue in Flanders (4.2% compared with 3.8% in Wallonia and 3.3% in Brussels). Whilst the transfers from the social security system fell in the nineteen nineties, they are now stabilising at around 2.3% of Flemish primary income (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT/STEEFAN HUYSEN-TRUYT • DE TIJD • 4 NOVEMBER

Flanders’ share in social security financing has increased further in recent years to reach its current level of 64%. On the other hand, Flanders’ share in the benefits has further risen, to stand at 57.9% in 2002. Due to Flanders having ‘caught up’ in benefits, the regional shares in the social security benefits in 2002 virtually tallied with the regions’ respective share of the population (Flanders and Brussels 0.2% below the population share, Wallonia 0.4% above it). The latest shifts in the regional distribution of social security benefits are largely attributable to demographic and labour-market developments. The relatively faster ageing of the Flemish population is reflected in a growing Flemish share in total pension expenditure, which has partly been offset by a more reduced share in child allowances. The divergent labour-market situation in the regions has been reflected in recent years in increasing Flemish money flows. Between 1995 and 2001 the number of out-of-work job-seekers fell by an average of 7.3% per year in Flanders, as compared with only 1.7% in Wallonia and 0.9% Brussels. On the other hand, Flemings make relatively more use of early retirement and career breaks/time credit, with Flanders’ share in these expenses even increasing in 2002 to 66.5% and 71.4% respectively. But the development of the unemployment figures hits harder, so that the Flemish share in labour market expenditure fell continuously between 1995 and 2001. The recent turn in the labour market halted this trend in 2002. The Flemish Region’s share in total expenditure for unemployment, early retirement and career breaks/time credit amounted to 50.6% last year (as compared with 57.9% population share). The Flemish share in the largest social security item, expenditure for illness and invalidity (‘ZIV’), have systematically increased in recent years (and now stand at 3% more than the Flemish proportion of the population). The average ZIV payment in Flanders last year was 5.2% above the national average.

The expenditure and income of the federal authorities also led to flows of funds. The transfer within the federal budget transactions from Flanders increased in the period 2001-2002 by an average of EUR 0.105 billion per year.

The increase is a result of both a smaller Flemish share in federal public expenditure and a growing Flemish share in federal public revenue. On the expenditure side, Wallonia’s growing share in public federal employment is conspicuous. In 2002 it is estimated that 39.9% of federal expenditure (civil service, railways etc.) for public wages, pensions and social security charges ended up in Wallonia (7.3% more than that region’s population share). In federal public revenue, Flanders contributed 8.4% per inhabitant more than the national average in 2002, with Brussels contributing 10.9% more. In Wallonia the contribution was 15 to 18% less than the national average in the period 1990-2002. The positive Brussels figure is solely linked to Brussels’ large share in the gross added value of companies.

Finally, the financing of the federal states also leads to a relatively stable transfer from Flanders. The federal states are financed chiefly by means of the transfer of a part of the revenue from the income tax and VAT to the communities and from income tax to the regions. In addition to this, the regions can count on their own regional taxes. These regional taxes and a part of the income tax are partly collected at federal level but transferred on to the regions on the basis of the place of levying, so that they do not result in flows of funds. But an important part of the federal states’ funds is distributed according to other ratios and thus does lead to transfers. For example the VAT transfer to the communities is allocated on the basis of the number of pupils per community. There is also the national solidarity agreement between the regions, which can be called upon by regions in which the revenue from income taxes per inhabitant is lower than the national average.

**TOTAL TRANSFERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMOUNTS (in billion euro)</th>
<th>IN % OF PRIMARY INCOME OF PRIVATE SECTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLANDERS</strong></td>
<td><strong>WALLONIA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** TIJD GRAPHICS
Verhofstadt argues in favour of a purple government in Flanders

While the Minister-President of the Government of Flanders Bart Somers (VLD) still refused to pronounce any preference for (a) coalition partners in an interview in De Standaard (4 November), Guy Verhofstadt, quoted in an interview in De Tijd (3 November) makes no secret about the fact that he would choose a continuation of the ‘purple’ coalition at Flemish level. Somers understands Verhofstadt’s point of view. The same coalition at federal and Flemish level would make federal administration a good deal easier, he says. What is more, Verhofstadt firmly believes in the Socialists’ and Liberals’ chances of electoral success and is still convinced of the purple formula. Verhofstadt says that the political work that now can be done was inconceivable in the previous ‘Roman Catholic-red’ and ‘Roman Catholic-blue’ governments. Verhofstadt argues in his copy of the federal coalition, but denies that the Liberal and Socialist coalition partners are having problems getting on together in his second term of office: ‘I firmly believe that both the Liberals and the Socialists are still convinced that we can accomplish much more together than with other parties.’

Opinion

STEFAAN HUYSENTRUYT • DE TIJD • 3 NOVEMBER

The question is whether the purple game isn’t also characterised by catenaccio. Socialists and Liberals are holding each other hostage. The explicit rule is that the Liberals keep their hands off social security, whilst the Socialists are not allowed to touch the tax cuts. If Verhofstadt is indeed in favour of ‘work, work and even more work’, that rule must die sooner rather than later. Reductions in the labour costs and higher expenditure on social security simply don’t go together. And that is not a question of competitiveness. As a country you can be very competitive and still have high labour costs. But as a country you can also be very competitive and have low labour costs. The Socialists make eyes at the Scandinavian model, whilst Verhofstadt and the Liberals are in favour of the second option. At the heart of it are two visions of society, between which a choice has to be made - something that is not being done due to the catenaccio.
Somers wants to encourage people starting up their own business

Over the last five years the number of start-up entrepreneurs has fallen in Flanders to 4% of the working population

Just before the Flemish employers’ conference, Minister-President Bart Somers (VLD) is coming up with a number of ideas to encourage Flemings who want to start up their own enterprise to take the big step involved in setting up a business of their own. He feels that start-up entrepreneurs should be guaranteed an unemployed person’s income in the first year, and should not have to devote all their valuable time to the transacting of their administrative file. He wants to see the administration handled by the Federal Enterprise Counter or organisations such as Unizo and the Chamber of Commerce. Last week Somers already argued in favour of co-ordinators taking over the entire administrative burden of files involving investments of more than EUR 5 million from the companies. His colleague, Government of Flanders Economic Affairs Minister Patricia Ceyssens (VLD) has been busy doing some brainstorming on the subject of entrepreneurship. With a ‘docusoap’ on the public broadcasting network, she wants to improve the image of the entrepreneur. Ceyssens, who has noticed a clear link between a docusoap and the sudden huge increase in the number of women applying to become midwives, states that Flemish TV productions tend to present entrepreneurs in a rather negative light and wants to do something about that with a new docusoap. Indeed, figures show that Flanders has lost the knack of entrepreneurship. Over the last five years the number of start-up entrepreneurs has fallen in Flanders to 4% of the working population. In 15 other European countries, that percentage is twice as high (FF).

BART DOBBELAERE • DE STANDAARD • 4 NOVEMBER

Minister-President Bart Somers (VLD) wants to see the number of people starting up their own business double in the relatively near future. He has a number of measures up his sleeve designed to do away with potential entrepreneurs’ fear of taking the plunge. Many young people do not dare start up a business venture because they are afraid they will end up without any money. Employee status with a wage cheque at the end of the month is so much safer. Somers therefore also wants to give start-up entrepreneurs a guaranteed income, corresponding to the minimum unemployment benefit of around EUR 800. Even if the enterprise proves to be a complete flop, start-up entrepreneurs are thus guaranteed a monthly income during the first year. To be eligible for this, start-up entrepreneurs have to submit a financial file to the Flemish Houses of Economy (Huis van de Vlaamse Economie) for evaluation during the first months after start-up. An auditor will screen their file and carry out a double check via the so-called Crossroads Bank. If the file is OK and the new self-employed person earns less than an unemployment benefit paycheque, he will be paid the balance.

Somers has other ideas, too. For example, he wants to do away with the administrative burden for start-up entrepreneurs. Preparation of their dossier will be handled free of charge by the Authorities of Flanders. Cost price: some EUR 350 per start-up entrepreneur. This measure alone should lead to 3,000 new start-up entrepreneurs every year.

The Minister-President also wants the education system to encourage young people to take the step. He wants to see entrepreneurship included in the cross-discipline final attainment levels in the next academic year, both in primary and secondary school. Somers wants to send university students on placements of two to three weeks in companies. The aim is to double the number of start-up entrepreneurs, which is currently around the 27,000 mark, in a relatively short period of time in order to reach the European average level. After all, everyone who starts up a business has a job, and if things go well, also offers jobs to others.

Somers believes that his plans can be implemented quickly. The handling of the red tape and the guarantee of income security would have to come into effect in the current period of office.

Little enthusiasm for Somers’ proposals

Neither the coalition partner SPA nor the opposition party CD&V reacted with enthusiasm to the proposals made by Bart Somers on the eve of the entrepreneurs’ conference. In particular the idea of start-up entrepreneurs being given a year’s wage guarantee came under attack. SPA parliamentary party leader in the Flemish Parliament, Bruno Tobbback, reminded the Minister-President that unemployment benefits and minimum wages are a federal matter. CD&V opposition leader Eric Van Rompuy fears that the plan is too expensive and will lead to unfair competition (FF).

BART EECKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 5 NOVEMBER

‘What a young start-up entrepreneur needs is support, assistance with administrative charges and above all capital. You’re not going to convince young people to start up a business with the promise of a minimum wage’, says Tobbback. SPA is even putting forward its ‘talent bank’ - public financing for new enterprises that cannot secure venture capital elsewhere. CD&V opposition leader Van Rompuy fears that the plan ‘is especially attractive for entrepreneurs who have not drawn up a good business plan’. The CD&V aims to be able to stimulate enterprise in Flanders through a federalisation of the corporation tax and of the financing of health care and the child allowance. The CD&V feels that a corporation tax ‘made Flemish’ should be 5% lower than it is at the moment. The party repeats the old Flemish demand for the child allowance and health care to be removed from the wage cost and for these to be financed according to the regular tax system and allocated to the federal states.

ECONOMY

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

focus on Flanders • 1 November - 7 November 2003 • Number 38
Antwerp diamond sector holds conference

‘Branding’ of diamonds and the switchover to jewellery are the new magic words in the diamond sector

On 3 November none other than Bill Clinton was the guest of honour at the gala dinner given by the High Council for the Diamond Sector in Antwerp. The 1,250 guests included not only diamond traders but also a number of domestic politicians, such as mayor Patrick Janssens (SP.A), the federal Interior Minister Patrick Dewael (VLD), and the Minister-President of the Government of Flanders Bart Somers (VLD). In his speech Clinton praised the Kimberley process that was set up to track down ‘conflict’ or ‘blood’ diamonds on an international scale, but feels that the efforts still have to be increased. The Kimberley process sees to it that diamonds can no longer be traded without certificates. The major world players in the diamond trade - Belgium, the USA, Canada, South Africa, Russia and India - made strict agreements on this. No trade is pursued with countries that have not signed the Kimberley process. The Antwerp diamond sector is thereby hoping to be able to negate all accusations of ‘unethical trading’.

In addition to the mediagenic gala dinner, the second diamond conference of the High Council for the Diamond Sector was also held in Antwerp, on 3 and 4 November. It was the first conference since De Beers, the largest diamond producer in the world, overturned its sales strategy. With the introduction of the ‘Supplier of Choice’ label, De Beers began to introduce a strict selection of its buyers (‘sight holders’). Because De Beers increasingly wants to target the consumer, it expects its suppliers of choice to devote themselves actively to diamond marketing. That De Beers is serious about its orientation towards the customer became clear when it entered into a joint venture with Bernard Arnault’s luxury goods empire, with the aim of setting up an exclusive chain of jewellery stores. The High Council for the Diamond Sector has therefore reviewed its role. Antwerp is now already the hub for uncut diamonds and the international supermarket for polished diamonds. A third role must now be added to that. We must also become the supermarket for jewellery, according to Peter Meeus of the High Council for the Diamond Sector. ‘Branding’ of diamonds and the switchover to jewellery are therefore the new magic words in the diamond sector, although by no means all diamond traders are in agreement with this and the switchover will lead to considerable financial problems among traders (FF).

A great many traders and manufacturers are sceptical about De Beers’ initiatives - not only because they have fallen by the wayside as preferential buyers or because they suspect the giant of using the whole marketing story as a cover for increasing its own market share, but also because they feel that diamonds do not need any marketing. ‘The word diamond is in itself the best brand name you can think of’, says diamond cutter Gabi Tolkowski, a former De Beers employee. Gary Ralfe, the CEO of De Beers, sees things differently: ‘If you buy an Oriental rug or a pair of walking shoes, the brand is not so important. But a diamond is such a special product that the brand must be the guarantee of integrity. We must be exemplary, both in the ethical and financial field’.

Another question that the sector is asking itself is whether the consumer is indeed waiting for brand diamonds. ‘Almost all initiatives in this field have failed’, says Pierre Gurdjian, who monitors the diamond market for McKinsey. ‘The dozens of cutting and polishing types with which they now want to distinguish themselves are not recognisable to the average consumer. And the association of a brand name with diamonds as a special jewellery ingredient, as Intel has done for computers, only works for the upper echelon of the market’. Nonetheless, De Beers and its wholesale subsidiary DTC continue to believe in it. Gareth Penny, the manager of DTC and the driving force behind all marketing initiatives, points to figures to show why. Between 1980 and 2000, the turnover of the luxury goods segment grew by 400%, whereas sales of diamonds only increased by 300%. He says that that is because since time immemorial the sector has been orientated too much towards the supply side. ‘We must switch over from supply management to demand management’. In other words, better to find out what the customer wants and react to that. ‘Anyone who buys a diamond doesn’t do so because of the stone’, Penny knows. ‘He buys it because of the symbolism’. DTC wants the suppliers of choice and the jewellers to think more about the way in which the product is offered to the consumer.

Supplier of choice means that De Beers no longer wants to control the pricing on the markets, but leaves the initiative to the market itself. This also implies that the raw materials producer targets the supply of uncut diamonds more to sight holders (privileged traders) that offer strong quality guarantees. A lot of traditional sight holders that have received uncut diamonds from De Beers for years fall by the wayside as a result of this - with all the consequences that that brings with it. Peter Gross of the ABN-Amro Bank said at the conference that this means that diamond traders are no longer able to buy cheap uncut diamonds or are saddled with sizeable stocks. The financing charges are therefore increasing alarmingly. In diamond centres such as Bombay or Antwerp, the problems are perceptible. According to Gross, the total outstanding debt burden in Antwerp has risen to EUR 2.3 billion. What is more, the market is turbulent and the prices unstable, so that the problems will increase further in the coming months. Gross warns the diamond traders that the financial institutions will demand greater transparency of the diamond companies in the future, to ascertain whether their financial solvency is guaranteed.

WWW.DIAMONDS.BE
WWW.HRD.BE
Belga cigarettes no longer to be produced in Belgium

Tabacofina cigarette factory in Merksem will be closing next year, with the loss of 230 jobs. For the workers the announcement of the closure, which was made at the end of a special works council meeting, came as a bolt out of the blue. Last year the company was still making a profit. However, the production installations had become obsolete and the cost price for modernisation (EUR 10 million) could not be justified. The closure in Merksem means that Belgium loses the last cigarette factory and also the production of what was once Belgium’s most popular brand of cigarette, Belga. For years Belga had a market share of 30% and the group also produced the Richmond and Johnson brands. Today market share has shrunk to 13% and the company is owned by British American Tobacco (BAT) (FF).

The discontinuation of the Belga production in Merksem is the umpteenth episode in the tobacco group’s gradual downsizing. Jobs were lost in the commercial establishment in Edegem when Rothmans merged with BAT in 1999. At that time BAT still had around 1,400 employees in Belgium, almost 1,000 of whom in the former Tabacofina-Vander Elst plants. In March 2001 BAT announced a reorganisation operation in which 360 jobs were axed. The production of twist was moved from Merksem and Molenbeek to the Netherlands, and production of BAT’s Lucky Strike and Barclay brands of cigarette was relocated from Molenbeek to other BAT plants in Europe. Now that Merksem is closing, all that is left of the former Tabacofina group is the cigars factory in Leuven (300 jobs), the distribution centres and the commercial head office in Edegem (250 jobs). All told this represents 710 jobs - around half the figure of four years ago.

DE STANDAARD • 6 NOVEMBER

Conference on self-employed opens with ultimatum

After a meeting with Prime Minister Verhofstadt Unizo chief Peeters declared that his organisation was prepared to sit round the table after all this government intended to stop that gap with a EUR 120 increase in contributions for the self-employed, it was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Unizo demanded that the government make good the EUR 82 million deficit itself. Moreover, the organisation pointed out that the government had declared itself willing to place the statute of self-employed persons on the same level as that of employees, but had not earmarked a single euro for this in its 2004 budget. Unizo has calculated that a step-by-step plan for bringing the self-employed persons’ statute into line would cost some EUR 680 million and demanded that the government release EUR 100 billion for this already next year. After a meeting with Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, during which the Premier gave the necessary guarantees, Unizo chief executive Kris Peeters declared that his organisation was prepared to sit round the table after all the package of demands tabled by the self-employed persons’ organisations involves the pension being brought into line with the minimum pension of employees [cost price: EUR 300 million], the same equal treatment as regards disability benefit [cost price. EUR 22.5 million] and the same health insurance [cost price: EUR 300 million], and the same level as that of employees. However, the group also produces the Richmond and Johnson brands. Today market share has shrunk to 13% and the company is owned by British American Tobacco (BAT) (FF).

The roundtable conference on the reform of the self-employed persons’ statute opened on 6 November. For a moment it looked as though the most important interlocutor, the Flemish Union of Self-employed Entrepreneurs (Unizo) was going to default. The Unizo was furious because the previous ‘purple-green’ government did increase the lowest pensions for self-employed persons, but never forked out any money itself, with the result that the Self-employed Persons’ Social Security Fund (RSVZ) went deep into the red. When

www.bat.com

www.unizo.be
More child-minders again in Flanders

For the first time in years, the number of child-minders in Flanders is on the rise again. Since April of this year there are once again more reception families starting than there are stopping. According to the Government of Flanders Welfare Minister Adelheid Byttebier (Agalev), this is attributable to the new statute for baby-sitters/child-minders. Parents who babysit other people’s children receive insurance against illness and accidents and a small pension. However, they do not (yet) receive the full rights of an employee (FF).

WIM WINKELMANS • HET NIEUWS-BLAAD • 5 NOVEMBER

In the first quarter of 2003 Kind & Gezin (the Child and Family Department) had 195 child-minders starting and 345 stopping. Half a year later the trend has been bucked, with 140 starting and only 44 stopping. ‘I’m still cautious, but it looks as though the decline in the number of parent child-minders has stopped’, says Byttebier. ‘That can only be the result of their social statute’. Byttebier is also experimenting with formulas whereby two parent child-minders work together, so that if one falls ill the other can step in. One hundred and ten parent child-minder ‘couples’ have already taken up a similar form of co-operation since August last year. These kinds of experiments are necessary in order to gain greater variation in the kinds of day-nursery facilities,’ says Byttebier. ‘Day-nursery facilities should be more customised’.

These new kinds of day-nursery facilities should by preference be small scale and neighbourhood oriented: local residents, for example, who arrange amongst themselves to look after children in turns during the holidays. The minister wants to support this form of child minding. The local residents could, for example, recruit a qualified child-minder who would be paid with ‘service cheques’. Byttebier also wants to support municipalities that make child-minding infrastructure available in districts where there is the greatest need for it. Recognised day-care centres and initiatives for out-of-school crèche facilities will receive more funding in order to make care of children possible early in the morning or late in the evening. At the moment this is only possible in the thirteen central cities (Aalst, Antwerp, Bruges, Genk, Ghent, Hasselt, Kortrijk, Leuven, Mechelen, Ostend, Roeselare, Sint-Niklaas and Turnhout).

British invasion in Ypres

since the ‘In Flanders Fields Museum’ in Ypres was opened in 1997, the number of tourists has tripled.

For Britons, the Flanders Fields around the city of Ypres in West Flanders are ‘holy ground’. More than 200,000 soldiers of the British Empire died here during the First World War. After the war, which came to an end on 11 November 1918, more than a hundred cemeteries and monuments were established here, and some war veterans even returned to the area to work tending the graves, giving guided tours or running little shops selling war souvenirs. In this way a genuine British community came into being in Ypres. In 1940, when the Germans invaded, most of these people fled back to Great Britain. However, the tourists kept coming after the Second World War. In fact, since the ‘In Flanders Fields Museum’ in Ypres was opened in 1997, the number of tourists has tripled. The exhumation of British soldiers is also proving to be a draw (FF).

ANNE DE GRAAF • DE MORGEN • 3 NOVEMBER

According to the Ypres tourist office, the sudden avalanche of British visitors is all to do with the opening of the ‘In Flanders Fields Museum’ in 1997. Since then the number of tourists visiting the city has increased from 70,000 to 200,000, and a fifth of these are students. ‘There are hardly any eye-witnesses left now. The First World War is in the process of becoming history’, says manager Peter Slosse. But according to Ray Jones, head of the Saint George’s Anglican Church in Ypres, there is more to it. ‘The tourist invasion has a lot to do with the recent discovery of mortal remains. That always hits the news on the other side of the Channel’, says Jones, who has to give all the soldiers solemn reburial in Ypres. ‘This year there really were a lot: fifty, of whom we were able to identify two. However, identifications are rare. After all, up until 1917 soldiers wore paper name tags which have long since rotted away, although in the last two years of the war they were given metal badges. Whenever a War Graves Commission authorised to this end identifies a lost great-grandfather or great-great-uncle, it contacts the family and the soldier is given an honourable reburial in Ypres, with his family in attendance’. Schools account for a fifth of the British visitors. Jones: ‘Ypres is an established part of the curriculum in the UK. Hundreds of school-age soldiers perished in the various battles. People want to keep reminding the young of that fact. For this reason Queen Elizabeth made an official visit to Ypres and to my church two years ago.’

WWW.INFLANDERSFIELDS.BE

De Financieel-Economische tijd becomes De Tijd

FF EDITOR

As the attentive reader may have noted, from this week onwards articles will no longer be taken from De Financieel-Economische Tijd, but in its stead, from De Tijd. As of 3 November the paper in question has changed name, to become De Tijd, and from now on also appears on Mondays. The old name had long since ceased to be an accurate description of the content, for the paper was more than a purely financial-economic newspaper for business people and investors, and contained extensive coverage of political and social affairs as well as financial and (micro-)economic news. As of 3 November, culture, sport, radio and television and science will also be added. So will De Tijd be a newspaper like any other? No, claims the editorial team in an editorial on 3 November. All these other fields will be reported in the same manner as for the financial-economic subjects in the past: clearly, factually, matter-of-factly, critically and reliably – and all this under the motto: ‘there has to be at least one paper that doesn’t take part in ‘newspaper entertainment’”.

WWW.TIJD.BE

focus on FLANDERS • 1 November - 7 November • Number 38
**Focus on Flanders**

**Diyary**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **11 and 12 November**: Mountains are mountains by Philip Gohmacher, dance, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.28.28 www.vooruit.be
- **12 November**: Baby Guy - Annunciation and Tobias Delus - Punigling, jazz, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.28.28 www.vooruit.be
- **12 November**: Missa Mengelberg and the ICP Orchestra, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **12 November**: Mauro Pawlowski @ The Groomos, AB, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **12 November**: 16 Horsepower, AB, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **12 November**: Glil Shaham, Akina Eguch and Aaron Copland with JS Bach and Gabrieland Faure, PSK, Brussels, info: 02/507.82.00 www.bozar.be
- **13 November**: Dedonderagen # 2 with Giorgio Battistelli and Studio Azzurro, Heine Avdal and Christoph De Bock, Kris Verdonck and Aernoud Jacobs, Mario Caroli, Anne Daems and others, experimental word and music, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **14 November**: Symphonic Orchestra of De Muntr conducted by Kazushi Ono, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **14 November**: Anthony Braxton Standards Quartet 2004, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.28.28 www.vooruit.be
- **Until 13 November**: Les Contes d’Hoffmann by Offenbach, directed by David Me Vicar, Flanders Opera, Antwerp, info: www.vlaamse-opera.be
- **Until 19 November**: Homo and Lesbian Filmfestival, Leuven, Corso, Filmmuseum
- **12 November**: An evening with Dave Brubeck, Bozar, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00 www.bozar.be
- **12 November**: Sandra Luna (Arg). Tango AB, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **13 November**: Ensemble Meral Uğurlu, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be
- **13 and 16 and 22 November**: The symphonic Orchestra of Flanders conducted by Etienne Siebens with Egmont Van Beethoven, Dvorak and Tas, Concertgebouw, Bruges, De Singel, Antwerp and De Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.concertgebouw.be, www.bijloke.be and www.desingel.be
- **15 November**: DeFiliharmoniek conducted by Rudolf Barshai with Chostakovich and Tchaikovski, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be
- **14 and 15 November**: Het Muziek Lod @ Quatuor Daniel, Conversations, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be
- **15 November**: Teatro delle Albe directed by Marco Martinelli, L’Isola di Alcina by Nevio Spadoni, French translation, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **15 November**: Goethockerl with Tanzvurt, Die Apokalyptischen Reiter, Dementi, AB, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **16 November**: Horace Andy, AB, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **16 November**: Tobias Delius - Pingeling, vocal polyphony, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **20 November**: Octurn Electric Quartet, Sounds Jazzclub, Brussels; info: 02/511.10.20 www.bijloke.be
- **20 November**: Tenores de Bitti (Sardenga), AB, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **20 November**: They Lau duo, Musa Latina, De Bijloke, Ghent, info: www.bijloke.be
- **21 and 22 November**: Xavier Leroy with Project (dance), Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be

**EXPO**

- **11 September to 30 November**: Urban Dramas, photo and film exhibition on urban life, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **Until 29 February**: Vietnam, Art and culture from Prehistorian times to today, exhibition, Royal Museum of Art and History, Jubelpark, Brussels; info: www.museumpark.be
- **Until 21 December**: Art-deco Jewels, Diamond museum, Antwerp, info: 03/202.48.90
- **Until 10 March**: Icons of Flemish Design, Lokettenzaal, Flemish Parliament, Brussels; info: www.vlaamsparlement.be
- **Until 11 January**: Giott o and the art in 14th century Padova (La Capella degli Scrovegni), ING CC, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be
- **Until 21 December**: In search of the perfect lover, exhibition with Louise Bourgeois, Paul McCarthy, Marlene Dumas and Raymond Pettibon, Museum Dhondt-Daenens, Deurle; info: 09/282.51.23
- **15 to 23 November**: Cocoon, House and Inte- dictions, Brussels; info: 02/219.19.80 www.europalia.be
- **Until 18 January**: Luoghi di affezione, exhibition, City Hall, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be
- **Until 7 December**: Corpsus, Glass like you never saw it before, Fragile durability, exhibitions, Museum of Design, Ghent; info: 09/224.45.22 www.design.museum.ghent.be

**CULTURE**

Editor in chief: Frank Vandecaveye
- **Advisory panel**: Luc Deemeester (Lannoo), Rik Van Cauwelaert (director Knack), Koen Clemen (Manager director, De Morgen), Frans Crois (Director Trends), Francis Deceuster (Information Officer, Flemish Community), Mark Deweerd (journalist, Financiel-Economische Tijd), 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 Vijf nv, de Vlaamse Uitgevermaatschappij nv, De Persgroep nv, Uitgeversbedrijf Tijd nv and Roulatia Media Group nv and their editorial teams for supplying the articles.

- **Translation**: Eurologos
- **Printing**: Drukkeri Lannooy nv, Tielt
- **Responsible editor**: Luc Deemeester, Mark
- **Subscription rate by post and e-mail**: 220 euro
- **Either transfer the sum to account no.**: 472-101001-19 with the KBC in Roeselare
- **Or give us the number and expiry date of your credit card**
- **Telephone**: 051/43.42.99
- **Fax**: 051/40.11.52
- **E-mail**: frank.vandecaveye@lannoo.be

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