Brussels Region sinks plan for the spreading of night flights

The Brussels Region is to adapt its noise standards to those of the World Health Organisation (WHO). In doing so, Brussels is mounting a head-on attack on the federal plan of Transport Minister Anciaux (Spirit) to have noise pollution spread uniformly over Brussels and its surroundings (see p. 2). Although their party colleagues Michel and Reynders had approved the plan in the Federal Government, Brussels Minister-President Ducarme (MR) and Environment Minister Didier Gosuin (MR) are not considering giving up their opposition. Gosuin points out that he is only implementing the judgement of the Brussels Court of Appeal. According to the Zaventem airport operator BIAC, compliance with the WHO recommendations would imply the closure of the airport at night (FF).

Brussels' noise standards are to be brought into line with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The federal authorities and the regions agreed last year to use these as a guideline in the issue of night flights. But everyone agrees that the recommendations are 'elastic' and open to interpretation. Gosuin is letting it be known that he will be transposing the recommendations very strictly into Brussels legislation. These norms go further than the already strict Brussels noise standards, which were suspended at the end of the previous legislature. Gosuin is taking refuge behind a recent judgement given by the Brussels Court of Appeal on aircraft noise. The judgement states that 'noise pollution peaks may not exceed the WHO standards'. In specific terms, this means that peak noise in a bedroom with the window ajar may not exceed 45 decibels. This value corresponds to the noise in a sitting room with the television on at low volume. Noise outdoors may not exceed 75 decibels – comparable to the noise produced when a car is being driven. 'The strict compliance with these recommendations is only feasible if the airport is closed at night,' says Elisabeth Peeters of airport operator BIAC. Gosuin and Ducarme are also announcing that they will be calculating noise pollution district by district. 'If this noise register shows that the noise is not distributed fairly, Brussels residents and those living in the eastern periphery can go to court,' they warn.

INTRODUCTION
There has been lengthy comment and analysis on the tax amnesty in the press, but up until now everything has been highly speculative, for nothing had been set down in black and white about the future regulation. However, on 29 November the waiting was over. Unanimity was reached in the Finance and Budget Committee on the 'one-off relief tax return' ("EBA") bill. The text has to be approved in a full session of parliament before the end of 2003. As is already known, the regulation allows undeclared money held abroad to be 'regularised', subject to a 9% fine if it is simply invested, or subject to an advantageous rate of 6% if it is invested in the European economy. Demanding repatriation of the capital after the declaration was not possible, because this was in violation of the free movement of capital in Europe. The surprise in the text is the extension of the regulation to include 'bearer securities'. All shares, cash vouchers and bonds, irrespective of whether they are held in Belgian or foreign bank vaults, are eligible for the EBA. The many small investors who would head off to Luxembourg every year to nab their dividends have a unique opportunity to make their money 'visible'. The condition is that they must demonstrate that they were in possession of these securities before 1 June 2003 and that they are placed in a bank account for three years. Financial Minister Reynders (MR), who was an advocate of giving the regulation this wider scope, is delighted with the enlargement. It means that the law now applies not to EUR 80 billion, but to EUR 160 billion. In order to arrive at the expected amount of EUR 850 million in revenue for the treasury, only 7% instead of 14% of the amount has to be regularised (De Tijd, 1 December).

Firstly, a heavier fine of 'at least 100%' for those who are caught with money abroad after 2004. According to Trends (4 December), this description is important in order to be able to make a distinction between tax dodgers who are only evading the advance levy on income derived from securities ('grey money') and tax dodgers who have money that is 100% undeclared ('black money'). In addition, bearer securities will be abolished after 2004 – something the Socialists have been demanding for 25 years. They regard them as 'an archaism' that no longer exists elsewhere in Europe. However, even the most ardent supporters of this amnesty do not deny that most of the major frauds will ignore the amnesty and take their money off to Liechtenstein, Switzerland or the Seychelles.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief

KATRIEN VERSTRAETE • DE TIJD • 5 DECEMBER

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Anciaux satisfied about plan that spreads flights

From 3 December the federal authorities had to pay a pressure group a daily fine of EUR 50,000 as long as there was no plan.

Transport Minister Bert Anciaux (Spirit) at last has an ‘operational’ plan for the spreading of daytime and night flights from Zaventem International Airport that pass over Brussels and its surroundings. On 3 December the Federal Government agreed to the plan. From that day the federal authorities had to pay a pressure group consisting of residents from Brussels’ northern periphery (Vilvoorde, Grimbergen, Meise, Strombeek, and Wemmel) a daily fine of EUR 50,000 as long as there was no plan implemented for the spreading of flights. The penalty was imposed on 18 November by the Brussels Court of Appeal. On 3 December the Court was immediately notified of the agreement. The residents of the northern periphery call the plan a step in the right direction. In Anciaux’s plan the flights are geographically spread over all areas of Brussels and its surroundings. It is an adapted and improved version of the plan he had already proposed on 30 September (FF).

BART DOBBELAERE • DE STANDAARD • 2 DECEMBER

The Brussels Environment Minister, Didier Gosuin (FDF), distrusts Anciaux’s plan. He’s playing it technically. In his view, Anciaux still does not have a reliable noise register in which very detailed indications are given of what noise levels each region has to contend with. According to Anciaux, that register is available since Friday. And according to Gosuin, what Anciaux presented on Friday is not a noise register, but a theoretical model. Gosuin has another problem with Anciaux. He does not understand why the minister is letting himself be rushed in this way by the penalty. ‘The Federal Government can easily intercede through the courts in order to avoid the payment,’ he says. Strictly speaking, the federal authorities can approve the plan for the spreading of flights independently, without the agreement of the Brussels Region. The only thing is that Brussels has already announced that in that case it would go to court to oppose the night flights. Moreover, Brussels has quite strict noise standards, which the flights that currently pass over Brussels often do not meet. Flanders criticises Brussels for its overly strict standards, but Brussels feels that those reproaches are grossly exaggerated. ‘Our standards are below those of the World Health Organisation,’ says Gosuin.

Opinion

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 2 DECEMBER

Despite their reputation for being skilled in the art of compromise, Belgian politicians and in particular the Belgian political structures have been failing to get anywhere in this matter for four years now. The Court of Appeal rightly regarded this failure as being so serious that it put a knife to the federal government’s throat. A greater censure of the political structures in our country is scarcely conceivable. This is not a reproach directed at one politician (the responsible minister), but one aimed at the Belgian Federal Government and the regional governments with which this agreement has to be found. All are partly to blame, since all have caused blockages. Our complicated political structures are evidently not capable of overcoming such blockages.

ISABEL ALBERS • DE STANDAARD • 4 DECEMBER

The reintroduction of the Chabert route (directly over Brussels southwards) is the most striking new feature in the agreement, compared with Anciaux’s earlier plans. This reintroduction, which was put forward by Verhofstadt, sees Brussels take (a little) share of the noise pollution. But that is indeed all it is - a little, for the Chabert route is only used at weekends, during the day, chiefly for technical reasons, according to Anciaux. ‘This means Brussels has made its increased contribution,’ says Anciaux. This agreement is not a definitive one, but does enter into force now. New measurements are being taken on the basis of a more extensive measuring network around the airport. New sound meters will be installed in Brussels and in Wezenbeek-Oppem and Kraainem. Next year the agreement will be assessed and adjustments will be possible.

Changing purpose of houses in areas earmarked for other purposes becomes possible

The owners of approximately 150,000 private houses located in areas not earmarked as residential zones and 23,000 companies in Flanders will soon be able to give the building a more contemporary function by means of a simple building permit. Houses located in areas not earmarked as residential zones have a legal building permit, but are located in the wrong spatial zone, with the result that they are subject to numerous restrictions. For example, a large number of industrial companies have been established in agricultural zones.

The Flemish Town and Country Planning Minister Dirk Van Mechelen (VLD) bases himself on the premise that it is best for the buildings to continue to be used, and not necessarily for the originally intended purpose. He says that his is a proposal that opts for common sense. The condition for this so-called ‘change of intended purpose’ is that there are no objections as regards building physics and that no excessive costs are incurred, the minister explained in Het Laatste Nieuws (29 November). As examples, he cited a warehouse in an industrial zone that is converted into a party venue, castles in park areas that are fitted out as offices or restaurants, and buildings in rural areas that are used as depots or trades and crafts businesses. Any house located in an area not earmarked as a residential zone, wherever it is, may now also be converted into an office or a business concern provided that the surface area does not exceed 100 square metres. The ultimate aim is for the owners of buildings located in areas earmarked for other purposes to have greater certainty as to the future of their property. Many of these buildings are currently falling into disrepair because they are not allowed to be used for any other purpose, says Van Mechelen.
**Public Holdings**

**Flanders sells public holdings**

The sale of Staal Vlaanderen and Textiel Vlaanderen should help reduce the Flemish Region's debts.

The repayment is to be effected with the sale of the 4.3% stake that the Flemish Region acquired in the major steel merger around Arcelor, at which time the Flemish Region acquired 20.5 million Arcelor shares. Finally, the Flemish Region is also selling its stake in the environmental group Indaver, through the De Groo Bank (FF).

**Pascal Dendooven • De Standaard 3 December**

Textiel Vlaanderen is the smallest public holding company with interests in the textile sector to the tune of some EUR 40 million. Indicative bids should be submitted to the broker KPMG Corporate Finance by 23 January. Simultaneously, the Flemish Region is involved in shutting down Staal Vlaanderen. Staal Vlaanderen and Textiel Vlaanderen are both successors to what was once known as the National Company for the Restructuring of the National Sectors [NMNS]. The sale of Staal Vlaanderen and Textiel Vlaanderen should help reduce the Flemish Region's debts.

Staal Vlaanderen, the PMV's steel subsidiary, is selling shares in the steel group Arcelor in order to settle the debts. Thus far Staal Vlaanderen has already received EUR 200 million for the sale of half of the shareholding in Arcelor. This means that repayment of the bank debt is guaranteed. Staal Vlaanderen is now engaged in 'very difficult talks' with the steel group Arcelor on the buying off of non-voting shares in the steel group Sidmar by Arcelor. That should yield EUR 112 million. Debt settlement at the Flemish Region is also the aim of the intended sale of Textiel Vlaanderen. The amount involved here is EUR 16 million. Moreover, the Flemish Region is selling its interest in the environmental group Indaver, via the Degroof Bank, and is also busy selling off its participation in the water company VMW. That money will be used to subsidise the building and modernisation of the municipal sewer systems.

WWW.ARCELOR.COM
WWW.SIDMAR.BE
WWW.INDAVER.BE

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**Tax Policy**

**Tax office to have easier access to bank accounts**

A court of first instance in Ghent has obliged the bank KBC to provide the tax office with information about a customer. In the name of bank secrecy, the KBC had refused to pass on the information and had even gone to the court, but the ruling on the merits went against it. According to De Tijd (3 December), the judgement clears the way for the tax administration itself to go to court to ask for tax information. Hitherto, if the tax office had suspected a company of committing tax fraud, it had to try to secure the incriminating information through the circuitous route of a legal procedure. The tax office would lodge a complaint with the public prosecutor's office, which opened an investigation, so that the tax office could consult the criminal file. With the ruling in Ghent, the tax office can access customer information held by banks more easily and swiftly, by approaching the judge itself. The fact that a further 160 or so similar dossiers are pending with the KBC, in addition to the one in question, shows that it is not an isolated case. The judgement reportedly comes in the context of an investigation into taxpayers that had not declared their income from assets and had, according to the VRT, used offshore structures in the process (FF).

**Opinion**

**Kris Van Hamme • De Tijd • 3 December**

Tax experts are of the opinion that with this judgement at the back of its mind, the tax office will now be inclined to take the shorter route of opting for a direct duel in the court. With its ruling, the court appears to be gnawing away at fiscal bank secrecy. In any case, bank secrecy in Belgium is not absolute, since there is no criminal protection of bank secrecy in the country. In Luxembourg, there is. However, the Belgian legislator does see to it that the tax authorities cannot simply go and knock at a bank's door and ask for figures relating to a particular customer. That can only be done in the framework of an investigation, if the tax authorities have specific indications pointing to the existence of mechanisms for tax evasion. Furthermore, the senior members of the tax office have to give their approval, something that is not done lightly. When all is said and done these are quite strict conditions, which means that savers need not fear a sudden witch-hunt by the taxman.

The judgement must be music to the government’s ears. After all, the tax amnesty can go hand in hand with a boost in the fight against tax fraud. The tax authorities, which have nowhere near enough staff to carry out such controls, now have an extra tool. The judge’s ruling is also helpful to the tax regularisation operation itself. Fraudulent savers do not like to read about fiscal bank secrecy being put under pressure. Anxiety may lead some savers to regularise their semi-declared or totally undeclared savings.
Bankruptcy and unemployment figures point to economic improvement

In November unemployment in Flanders fell by 4.2% compared with October, a fall that is greater than the normal trend in November. Intrinsically, the figures are not really good, but according to the Flemish Employment Minister Renaat Landuyt (SP.A) they confirm the turnaround that was initiated in October.

At the end of November the number of unemployed people entitled to benefit in Flanders rose by 12,177 (up 8.8%). The number of unemployed people looking for a job totalled 208,679 at the end of November, 8.1% higher than in November 2002. But in September (+12.4%) and October (+11.5%), the rise compared with 2002 was much greater. The trend is less marked in Wallonia. There, the number of unemployed people looking for a job was up 7.9% on November 2002, compared with a 7.7% rise in October.

Flanders now has 208,679 unemployed people looking for a job, as compared with 252,791 in Wallonia and 85,874 in the Brussels Region. The rate of unemployment in Flanders is 8.2%, compared with 18% in Wallonia and 21.3% in Brussels.

A second indication that the economic climate is improving is the first fall in two years is perhaps more important to describe the trend as a cautious turnaround. Limited liability partnerships constitute the bulk of new companies in difficulties draw up their balance sheet for the previous year, and not infrequently the decision is taken at that point to discontinue and wind up, or if necessary, file for bankruptcy.

The number of bankruptcies fell by 4.2% compared with October. There was also a fall in the number of bankruptcies back in January, but from February many more companies again collapsed and this year a new record may be set. The hope of recovery was a lot slimmer then than it is now and there was also the threat of war in Iraq at that point. The fact that the number of bankruptcies of limited liability partnerships fell in November for the first time in two years is perhaps more important to describe the trend as a cautious turnaround. Limited liability partnerships constitute the bulk of companies in the country, are chiefly SMEs and family concerns, and suffer most from slumps and recession.

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Ryanair pulls out of Ostend

The Irish low-cost airline Ryanair is discontinuing its scheduled service between Ostend and Stansted on 14 January. The Ostend-London route is one of the nine European routes that Ryanair is scrapping because they are not profitable enough. According to De Tijd, the flights to London only had a 52% seat occupancy rate of 80%. Charleroi, the other Belgian airport served by Ryanair flights, loses Liverpool as a destination, but gains Valladolid instead (FF).

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OPINION

KRIS BARREZEELE • DE TIJD • 2 DECEMBER

The number of bankruptcies fell in November for the first time in many months. It is still too soon to shout victory, and to state that the economy is doing well again. The 5% fall at least calls for a confirmation in December and especially in the first few months of 2004, just after New Year many companies in difficulties draw up their balance sheet for the previous year, and not infrequently the decision is taken at that point to discontinue and wind up, or if necessary, file for bankruptcy. There was also a fall in the number of bankruptcies back in January, but from February many more companies again folded and this year a new record may be set. The hope of recovery was a lot slimmer than it is now and there was also the threat of war in Iraq at that point. The fact that the number of bankruptcies of limited liability partnerships fell in November for the first time in two years is perhaps more important to describe the trend as a cautious turnaround. Limited liability partnerships constitute the bulk of companies in the country, are chiefly SMEs and family concerns, and suffer most from slumps and recession.

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BELGIAN LABOUR MARKET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Belgian</th>
<th>EU-foreigners</th>
<th>Non-EU-foreigners</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Employed</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>Self-employed</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>235</td>
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<td>Border region employments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional population</td>
<td>2,792</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>4,176</td>
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</table>

Source: FOD ARBEID | DE STANDAARD

TOP 10 BELGIAN SHARES ON STOCK MARKET IN 2003 (price/share)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Price (€)</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhaize Groep</td>
<td>17.77</td>
<td>+127.8%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mobistar</td>
<td>32.39</td>
<td>+92.1%</td>
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<td>Kinepolis</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>+87.3%</td>
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<td>Lg</td>
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<td>Telindus</td>
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<td>+80.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E5V Broadcast</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>+70.0%</td>
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<td>Arinso</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>+68.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMB</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>+61.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melexis</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>+58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulaart</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>+57.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: HET LANZOTEBORU

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FOCUS ON FLANDERS • 29 November - 5 December • Number 42
Vandenbroucke adopts tough stance against social security fraud

Labour Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SP.A) means business in the fight against social security fraud. He wants to see the social security system’s databases interlinked in order to track social security fraud. An experiment at the National Employment Office (RVA) has already resulted in the successful tracing of a number of people who were in registered employment but were fraudulently claiming temporary unemployment benefits. To tackle workers in the black economy, he wants to deploy a small army of social security inspectors who, with laptop at the ready, will be able to check online, at the workplace, whether employees are also registered. Dimona, the database with the electronic report of the job performances of all registered employees, makes this possible. For the rest, Vandenbroucke has some very gloomy comments to make about the state of the Belgian job market (FF).

BART EECHOUT/JOHAN CORTHOUS • DE MORGEN • 29 NOVEMBER

Vandenbroucke firmly believes in the combination of repression and prevention in the fight against social security fraud. On the prevention side, he cites the relaunch of the ‘services voucher’ as an alternative to working in the black economy. Moreover, Vandenbroucke is promising ‘social security rules that can be applied more effectively’. In the construction sector there has been a ban on working on Saturdays since 1960. The result today is that undeclared work is being done on Saturdays on a huge scale. Therefore we’d be better off lifting the ban on Saturday work’. Those who nonetheless persist in breaking the law, despite the relaxation, should expect tighter controls. Vandenbroucke is recruiting an extra 80 inspectors to that end. In order to tighten the controls, Vandenbroucke wants to have the government’s data files more effectively geared to each other. In this sense, the minister is going further than his predecessor Laurette Onkelinx (PS), who never wanted to apply the relatively simple computer solution. The minister is extremely gloomy about the state of the job market, predicting a twofold ‘social oil crisis’: the ‘grandpa boom’ of 2010 and the enlargement of the European Union with the mass influx of cheap labour. ‘Belgium is a tanker, and if we continue to sail straight on, we’ll hit the rocks’. Short careers and the trend of older people leaving the labour market early are problems that should be of particular concern to us. New figures from the OECD demonstrate this. In Belgium an average career lasts 36.6 years. In the Netherlands, people work an average of 43.5 years, whilst in Germany the figure is 42 years and in Switzerland, it is as high as 45.3 years. Belgian men devote 48.3% of their life to working time, and thereby come out at the very bottom of the OECD table.

Handicapped persons sector receives only 60% of salaries in December

Due to financial problems at the Flemish Fund for the Social Integration of Persons with a Handicap, institutions for handicapped persons will only be receiving EUR 25 million in December. That means that the institutions for handicapped persons can only pay 60% of the salaries. They are therefore being invited to pay the remaining 40% themselves or to borrow the money from a bank. On 1 January they will get that money back, plus the interest paid, from the Authorities of Flanders. The fact that it was impossible to earmark an additional EUR 25 billion in the Government of Flanders’ 2003 budget is the Fund’s fault, says Minister-President Bart Somers (VLD). After all, the Fund only indicated on 23 October that there was a risk of a shortage of funds in December. On 23 October the budget control was already under way, which meant that no additional expenses could be registered, according to Somers. Therefore they had to be carried over to the 2004 budget. The Fund is a Flemish public institution that is allocated EUR 943 million by the government every year. Welfare Minister, Adelheid Byttebier (Groen!) announced that she would be having the Fund audited. However, the handicapped persons’ sector is still unhappy (FF).

ILSE DEVOOGHT • DE TIJD • 29 NOVEMBER

The institutions for handicapped persons receive an advance every month from the Flemish Fund for the Integration of Persons with a Handicap. They use this to pay the staff’s wages and to cover their operating costs. Subsequently the real subsidy owing is calculated and the Fund pays the overdue money. The payment of these arrears is suffering a considerable delay. The handicapped persons’ sector says that it should still receive EUR 90 million, whilst the government is stopping at EUR 80 million. The sector is unhappy because nothing is being done about the late repayment of the arrears. It claims that it should still receive EUR 90 million, whilst EUR 10 million is frozen. The social workers in the handicapped persons’ sector are therefore refusing to submit to the agreement. ‘If we are only going to be receiving 60% of our funds in December, then next Friday we’ll only be working with 60% of the staff. The other 40% will come to Brussels,’ says Frank Cuyt, general manager of the Flemish Welfare Union.
**POLITICS**

**FOREIGN POLICY**

**Michel sparks row with press at European summit**

**The EU Member States will co-operate in a more structured manner in the field of defence**

France, Germany and Great Britain have reached an agreement in Naples on the basis for a European defence system. The joint text of the accord contains three agreements. Firstly, the EU Member States will co-operate in a more structured manner in the field of defence; secondly it states that an EU country that is attacked will receive the support of the other Member States; and finally, the text also talks of an autonomous European headquarters being set up for military operations. However, that headquarters will not be established in Tervuren, as had been suggested at the ‘praline summit’ in April between France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. It will be a separate unit for planning and management of military operations, in which NATO will have no involvement, and will be housed on the Kortemberglaan in Brussels, where the Union now already has a General Headquarters of some 130 officers. On the fringe of the summit, Foreign Affairs Minister Louis Michel caused a row in the presence of the assembled Belgian press. Tensions between himself and Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) were reportedly disclosed after consultation with Verhofstadt, and after consultation with Michel, the Belgian diplomatic memorandum to the media. Michel is reportedly also having an increasingly difficult time of things with the ever more important role that government leaders are playing at European level.

**PIETER LEURIDAN • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 2 DECEMBER**

Former European commissioner Van Miert on Louis Michel’s outburst of anger: ‘I’d never do something like that, but on the other hand I can understand his displeasure to some degree. I know from a very reliable source that the German Government did indeed keep Belgium abreast of the negotiations on a European defence system, because it recognises the courageous role our country has played on this issue. In the end, for practical reasons, they did not invite our government to the negotiating table, since had they done so they would have had to have included Luxembourg and the Netherlands as well. And Blair would have had difficulties explaining that to his partners within the European Union.’ Van Miert also does not agree with the criticism that there is nothing left of the initial Belgian proposal.

**Opinion**

**RIK VAN CAUWELAERT • KNACK • 3 DECEMBER**

The last week has been a thoroughly disappointing one for Belgian diplomacy. Prime Minister Verhofstadt, who has in the meantime built up a generous financed unit around himself in order to keep his candidacy for the presidency of the commission intact within the European Union, has not been helped by the events of the past week, either. There was even something ludicrous about his address at the Humboldt University in Berlin, for as he was explaining his plans for an independent European defence system, the French, Germans and British were discreetly discussing how such a European defence system could be fitted into the NATO framework. A little later, in Naples, Louis Michel was ‘informed’ of the result of the Franco-Anglo-German talks. The text still had to be submitted to US president Bush for approval. In the Naples agreement, Verhofstadt’s plans is reduced to nothing more than ‘a planning unit with a military staff of three, in a prefabricated hut at Shape (in Mons)’, in the words of former foreign affairs minister and prime minister Mark Eyskens.

**WWW.FGOV.BE**

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**EMISSION OF GREENHOUSE GASES (see p. 7)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Schedule (%)</th>
<th>Forecast (%)</th>
<th>Difference (%)</th>
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<td>11.5</td>
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<td>11.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9.5</td>
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**GRAFIEK DE MORGEN / SOURCE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

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**focus on Flanders • 29 November - 5 December • Number 42**
Air pollution will cost Belgium a fortune

THE EU WANTS TO REDUCE THE EMISSIONS OF GREENHOUSE GASES TO 8% BELOW THE 1990 LEVEL, BUT THE ANNUAL EU ‘PROGRESS REPORT’ SHOWS A WORSENING FOR THE SECOND YEAR RUNNING

European Environment Commissioner Margot Wallström yesterday rang the alarm bell. The EU wants to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases to 8% below the 1990 level, but the annual EU ‘progress report’ shows a worsening for the second year running. In 2001, emissions of greenhouse gases, which are responsible for global warming, were again up 1% on the previous year. With that result, the Union is now 2.1% behind the forecast schedule. Overall, emissions are nonetheless 2.3% lower than in the base year, 1999. Thirteen of the fifteen EU countries are failing to meet their objectives, according to calculations by the European Environmental Agency. Belgium risks ending up at no less than 23% below its obligations by 2010. Greenhouse gas emissions here must have fallen by 7.5% vis-à-vis 1999 by 2010. But now that Russia has announced that it probably will not ratify the protocol because it puts too great a curb on economic growth, the protocol looks like being doomed to die, particularly since the USA, which accounts for a third of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, had earlier pulled out. If the bad news from Russia is officially confirmed, it will mean that there are not enough countries remaining to back the protocol. Wallström reiterated that the Union’s political credibility was on the line. She has written all the Member States a letter urging them to take extra measures. For even if the Kyoto protocol does not enter into force, the EU nonetheless wants to meet the objectives imposed. In concrete terms, that means that Belgium may float its idea of buying clean air in Russia.

Speaking in De Morgen (3 December), Bart Martens, the policy co-ordinator of the Association for a Better Environment, thinks that Belgium might well have to seek in the much smaller and therefore much more expensive European market for ‘clean air,’ and will itself have to make greater efforts to curb its emissions. However, this risks pushing the economic cost of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Belgium skywards.

Van Hecke finally general manager for television at the VRT

On 2 December Guy Peeters, chairman of the board of directors of the public broadcasting corporation VRT and managing director Tony Mary presented the evaluation of their management contract with the Flemish government for 2002 in the Flemish Parliament’s media committee. The MPs, including those of the opposition, had to concede that the public broadcasting company had achieved its objectives with flying colours. Every week 77% of television viewers in Flanders watch the channels TV1, Canvas or Ketnet for at least a quarter of an hour, and no fewer than 96% listen to a VRT radio station. The target figures were 70% for television and 65% for radio.

One of the architects of the television station’s success, Aimé Van Hecke was appointed general manager for television last week. Up until recently he had been acting manager. Previously, he had worked for many years as an external adviser, helping to work out VRT’s successful strategy. However, a row over his appointment had broken out between the board of directors and Tony Mary. Members of the board discovered a conflict of interests, based on the fact that Vanhecke’s wife also runs a firm that is involved in the sponsoring of VRT events. The board members criticised Mary also for not having had the necessary procedures followed and assessments carried out. In the end a compromise was reached between the board and directors and Tony Mary, who has always supported Vanhecke’s candidacy 200% (FF).

BRAM VAN MOORHEM • KNACK • 3 DECEMBER

Everyone seems to be happy with the compromise. Tony Mary has the general manager for television he always wanted, the board is relieved that the stalemate is over (and in a letter thanks the media minister Marino Keulen (VLD) for his effective intervention), the shareholders are satisfied and the VRT staff finally know who their boss is. Evidently unruffled by the management crisis, Van Hecke recently unveiled his strategic business plan for the VRT, which aims to see its market leadership guaranteed next year, too. The ‘Xi’ project (‘ik zie’ [I see]) should result in a completely revamped TV1 in the autumn of 2004. Canvas and Ketnet will undergo a reprogramming the following year. Also high on the list of priorities is the revamping of the news service, an operation that should be completed by the time the elections come round next year. There are also plans for ‘the mother of all sporting summers’ (Roland Garros, Wimbledon, European Championship football and the Olympic Games) and a reorganisation of the management structure. Two days after his appointment, Van Hecke appointed acting editor-in-chief of the news service Leo Hellemans to the post of general editor-in-chief for television.
**CULTURE**

**DIARY**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

• 5 to 13 December: Jan Fabre and Troubleyn with Angel of Death, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

• 13 and 14 December: Symphonic Orchestra Conducted by David Angus, Russian Passion with Symphony, nr. 5 by Tchaikovsky, Bijloke Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be 09/269.92.92

• 14 December: Recital with Vesselina Kasarova with Cunoud and Bizet, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Rossini, Flanders Opera, Antwerp www.vlaamseopera.be

• 15 November: M. Praetorius (1571-1621); De Singel, Antwerp; info: 070/22.02.02 www.vlaamseopera.be

• 13 December: Triolò Gattu Trio (Indian percussion), Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be

• 16 December: Collegium Vocale, Ricercar Consort and Philippe Pierlot, Solennische Friedt und Freuds Konzert with music by M. Praetorius [1575-1621]; De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

• 16 December: Madjid Khudali (Ir) and Michel Debraule with percussion music, Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.28.28 www.vooruit.be

• 17 December: Macart by Osama Abdurrahim and Melike Tarih (Iraq/Turkey), Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.28.28 www.vooruit.be

• 17 and 18 December: Christmas concert by the Choir of Flanders Opera, Saint-Paululisten und Sint-Stefanuskerk, Ghent; info: www.vlaamseopera.be

• 17 December: Cecilia Bartoli and the Freiburger Barockorchester with Lieder by Salieri, PSK Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 17 December: Cluster # 1, Peer Gynt after Henrik Ibsen, Marianne Pouisset, Enrico Bagnoli, Gay Cissiers, Musical theatre, Brussels; info: www.dcibiokke.be

• 19 December: Cluster # 1, Peer Gynt After Henrik Ibsen, Marienne Pouisset, Enrico Bagnoli, Gay Cissiers, Musical theatre Transparant, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

• 19 December: Oratorium Ichango (compositions by Daniel Schell and Cris Joris), Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be

• 20 December: Cluster # 1, Matthew Barney, The Cremaster Cycle (film), De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

**EXPO**

• From 22 March to 17 January: Jacques Brel, ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, Schildknaapstraat 50, Brussels; reservation required; info: www.jacquesbrele.nl 02/511.10.20


• Until 30 May: Christmas concert, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be, www.bozar.be

• Until 11 January: ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, City Hall, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be

• Until 19 January: Luogo d’affezione, exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be

• Until 31 March: Undercover, The Prinzhorn Collection. The collection was abused by the Nazis, you build the exhibition ‘Degraded Art’, exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be

• Until 28 December: Genovanversaeversaeversae, exhibition, Antwerp and Antwerp, Genova, Fashion Museum, Antwerp, info: 03/470.27.70 www.momu.be

• Until 29 February: Vietnam, Art and culture, ‘Van Looy’ today, exhibition, Royal Museum of Art and History, Jubelpark, Brussels; info: www.kmkg-mrah.be

• 3 to 10 January: Europalia, Italy: a particular Renaissance, Ferrara and the dukes of Este, exhibition, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be


• Until 30 December: Art-deco jewels, Diamond museum, Antwerp; info: 02/202.48.90

• Until 10 March: Icons of Flemish Design, lick, exhibition, Flemish Parliament, Brussels; info: www.vlaamsparlement.be

• Until 11 January: Venus Unveiled, PSK, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be, www.bozar.be

• Until 11 January: ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, City Hall, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be

• Until 30 December: Art-deco jewels, exhibition, City Hall, Brussels; info: www.europalia.be

• Until 1 September: Expositions in SMAK, Ghent: Luigi Orlandi with Gentheta (europalia) – Fosse Italia [young Italian artists, europalia]); Until 11 January: Johan Tahon, ‘Self, self, sculptures – Silvia Schreiber, Head Quarters, Smak, Ghent; info: www.smak.be

• Until 30 May: Human, all too human, photo exhibition, psychiatry, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be

• Until 25 December: ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be

• Until 25 December: ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be

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• Until 11 January: Ever Meulen, drawings, Zwarte Huis, Knokke; info: 050/315.35.65 www.hetzwartehuis.be

• Until 19 September: Neanderthal Men in Europe, exhibition, Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren; info: 012/67.03.30 www.neanderthaler.be

**FOCUS ON FLANDERS**

Focus on Flanders provides a weekly overview of articles from the Flemish press and appears in English, French and German.

This newsletter is published by Uitgeverij Lanno van, Kasteelstraat 97, 8000 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.

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• With thanks to: Concentra nv, De Vlijt nv, de Vlaamse Uitgeverijencentraal nv, De Persgroep nv, Uitgeveriedienst Tijs nv en Roularta Media Group nv and their editorial teams for supplying the articles.

• Translation: Eurologos

• Printing: Druckerij Lanno nv, Tielt

• Responsible editor: Luc Demeester, Markr

• Subscription rate by post and e-mail: 220 euro

• Either transfer the sum to account no.: 473-1001001-19 with the KBC in Roeselare

• Or give us the number and expiry date of your credit-card (Visa/Eurocard)

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