BELGACOM FLOATATION OVER-SUBSCRIBED MORE THAN TWICE

TODAY, 19 MARCH, IS THE FINAL DAY FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR SHARES IN THE BELGIAN TELECOMS COMPANY BELGACOM. FROM INFORMATION GATHERED FROM THE FINANCIAL WORLD AND IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES, DE TIJD’S EDITORIAL TEAM CONCLUDES THAT THE INTEREST IS CONSIDERABLE. APPARENTLY THE BID WAS OVER-SUBSCRIBED BY MORE THAN TWICE ON 18 MARCH. INTEREST FROM PRIVATE AND INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS IS PRETTY MUCH EQUAL. THE INTRODUCTORY PRICE IS EXPECTED TO BE BETWEEN 25 AND 26 EUROS (FF).

PIERRE HUYLEBROECK/BERT BROENS/SERGE MAMPAEY • DE TIJD • 19 MARCH


Because demand is now outstripping supply, the bankers may well exercise the over-allocation option. Including this ‘green shoe’, a maximum of 147.4 million shares will be put on the market. Via the over-allocation option the banks KBG and Dexia will sell their interest in Belgacom. Trading begins on Euronext Brussels at 9.30 a.m. on Monday. Euronext announced on Thursday that Belgacom may well be included in the Euronext100 index at 1 April, the indicator of the 100 biggest shares on the merger stock exchange. On 29 March, after the stock market closes, Belgacom will make its entrance into the Bel20 index.

WWW.BELGACOM.BE

INTRODUCTION

ON 18 MARCH THE FIRST PHASE OF THE EXPANSION PLAN FOR FLIGHTS OVER ZAVENTEM FINALLY BEGAN. FEDERAL MOBILITY MINISTER BERT ANCIAX (SPIRIT) HEADED A SIGHT OF RELIEF. HE HAD ANXIOUSLY AWAITED THE DECISION OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE AFTER THE AUDITOR HAD ADVISED THE COUNCIL TO SUSPEND HIS DISTRIBUTION PLAN. THE SUSPENSION CALL CAME FROM THE RESIDENTS OF THE EASTERN OUTSKIRTS OF BRUSSELS. BUTafortunately for Ancauax the Council did not take the auditor’s advice. Thus closes another chapter in an emotive dossier that was the constant pawn in the political and legal tug-of-war.

The protest began as far back as the end of 2002 when under Ancaux’s predecessor Isabelle Durant (Ecolo) night flights were concentrated above the main Flemish municipalities of the Brussels northern outskirts. That was the best compromise between noise pollution and economic interests and employment at the airport, the then Purple-Green government felt. However, a well-informed working group, Deadalus, put the government under so much pressure that it dropped the ‘concentration model’, partly with the help of a ruling by Brussels Court of Appeal (June 2003) ordering the distribution of flights. Durant tried extremely clumsily to throw a night route diagonally over Brussels, but in so doing triggered a government crisis and her own resignation.

In the next government Ancaux came up with an initial version of his distribution plan that had to be approved in double-quick time because - again at the request of the residents of the northern outskirts - the Court of Appeal had imposed a penalty of 50,000 euros per day that it was not approved. In December 2003, however, this was suspended by the Council of State for ‘safety reasons’, this time at the request of the eastern outskirts. Ancaux adapted his plan, mainly by tinkering with wind standards. It is in this version that the plan is now to be applied. The new flight paths will ensure flights are fanned out, partly by making alternate use of the two runways depending on whether it is day or night, week or weekend. This will reduce noise pollution not only in the northern municipalities of Dessel, Haren and Heembeek, but also in Brussels Centre, claims Ancaux. But as a result they will now be flying more frequently over the Flemish eastern outskirts (Kraainem, Wezembeek-Oppem, Seraing, Tervuren). Few, including De Standaard (18 March), do believe that the opposition in the eastern outskirts will now cease. In Brussels itself Francophone MR politicians such as Didier Gosuin or Jacques Vandenhaute are siding with the ‘wealthy’ eastern outskirts. This is because for them it was immediately clear that Ancaux, who himself is a resident of the Flemish northern outskirts, would favour these northern outskirts de standard believes.

Also few will envy Ancaux his job. The Flemish and Brussels Regions will now have to harmonise their noise standards, and that again will be a very hard balancing act indeed.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Free education

Stevaert calls for new pact over free primary education

Stevaert also wants this to contain an agreement on a maximum bill for after-school activities

Thanks to the last state reform, the budget of the next Flemish Government will show a surplus of as much as 1.34 billion euros. That has given the campaigning Flemish party chairmen ideas. A few months ago former VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht announced the Liberals’ intention to devote the whole amount to new cuts in personal income tax. CD&V Chairman Yves Leterme wants to use the money to gift families a thirteenth month of child benefit, but also to make education free. In its election manifesto the SPA also calls for free education. But according to the Higher Institute for Labour Studies of KU Leuven, the total cost for free nursery education to free secondary education is approximately 616 million euros a year. Therefore both the CD&V and SPA want to stick to free primary education for the time being. That costs ‘only’ 220 million euros a year. On the VRT programme ‘The Seventh Day’ Stevaert made a firm proposal to enter into an education pact with the CD&V and VLD on the matter. Stevaert also wants this to contain an agreement on a maximum bill for after-school activities (FF).

BART ECKHOUT/TOM COCHEZ • DE MORGEN • 15 MARCH

Stevaert also realises it will not be possible to simply make everything free. Hence his proposal to agree a timespan in a new ‘school pact’ with Liberals and Christian Democrats to first make primary education gradually free, followed if necessary by the rest. ‘This must not become a new pact on net-works and structures,’ explains Stevaert. ‘This must be about children.’ CD&V Chairman Yves Leterme yesterday immediately sided with the SPA. ‘I’ll happily accept this offer,’ he said on De Zevende Dag. VLD Chairman Dirk Sterckx felt he had to follow suit: ‘This isn’t about for or against free. This is about getting rid of exclusion in the education system, so that everyone has the same opportunities’, he said. But Stevaert wants to go even further. ‘There must be a maximum bill for the costs of after-school activities,’ he explains to De Morgen. Schools currently have to explain to parents at the start of the year what amounts are expected of them. Some boards use this to install new mechanisms of exclusion. Earlier Education Minister Marleen Vanderpoorten (VLD) spoke out against such a ceiling for contributions. ‘That’s a matter on which the schools decide autonomously,’ she said on this occasion.

Els Deweert (Spirit) wants to reform teacher career

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 16 MARCH

There are arguments to consider for putting permanent appointments in education up for discussion, certainly. Once appointed, you are stuck in a flat career, unless you reach management level. So, therefore there is no real motivation. And there are a great many disadvantages to consider. But you cannot therefore say Spirit’s proposal to abolish this status has been well thought-out. The symbolic value of the permanent appointment, the security of the job, is along with the many holidays the main material reason for not chasing everyone away from the blackboard. The symbolic value of the acquired right is so great that only kamikaze politicians would wish to tinker with it less than a hundred days before the elections. Even if they mean well, even though not much will change for teachers, even if the status improves: that will never be explained. It therefore came as no surprise that all the other parties almost fell over themselves to be the first to burn down the Spirit idea. We will not hear any more about it.

EDUCATION LEVELS IN FLANDERS AT THE AGES 25 TO 64 DURING THE PERIOD 1990-2002

- University level
- Polytechnic/higher education level
- Secondary school
- Secondary school, lower classes
- Primary school/no diploma

Source: MS WAP
Leterme (CD&V) also wants to govern at federal level

He wants to incorporate a set of Flemish demands into a Flemish coalition agreement.

In an interview with De Morgen (13 March) PS Chairman Elio Di Rupo confirms that he wants to continue governing at federal level together with the Liberals. In so doing he has stifled the rumours that the PS is heading for a change of coalition and advanced federal elections. But now the Flemish Liberals have given up their opposition to immigrant voting rights, the conditions for continuing serenely are met, claims Di Rupo. That the CD&V-N-VA cartel may well become the biggest party in Flanders does not worry him. According to Di Rupo, the cartel does not extend beyond the Flemish Government. In an interview with the weekend edition of Gazet van Antwerpen, CD&V Chairman Yves Leterme also believes that the Purple Government is firmly resolved to continue. In the Flemish Parliament the Liberals and Socialists will if need be invite the Greens to a new coalition in order to obtain the necessary 64 seats. Leterme, however, finds participation in a government at Flemish level and not at federal level a formula that does not guarantee stability. Therefore his party will also try to join the federal government. Leterme is also refusing to budge on the regionalisation of a number of areas of social security, including child benefit and healthcare refunds, the regionalisation of taxation, employment, wage policy, the judicial system and the police. He wants to incorporate this set of demands into a Flemish coalition agreement (FF).

BART EECKHOUT • DE MORGAN • 15 MARCH

For CD&V Opposition Leader Leterme it is clear that the Purples are chaining themselves together in the last three months before the elections. ‘The governing parties want to continue together, whatever the voter decides,’ he said on De Zevende Dag (VRT). ‘It’s clear that Elio Di Rupo would rather govern with a lame VLD than with CD&V members who know what they want.’ Leterme announced in Gazet van Antwerpen that if it were up to the CD&V-N-VA, there would be long community negotiations after the elections. ‘The negotiations can take a hundred days if need be, it makes no difference to me.’ Also striking is that Leterme explicitly says that in the event of participation in a Flemish government he also wants to make inroads at federal level. ‘I’m against a system of co-government at Flemish level but not at federal level. That is not a stable formula. This is an important point for us.’ Leterme does, however, admit that no agreement has yet been reached with cartel partner N-VA on the federal level, where the demands of regionalisation also have to be achieved.

www.cdenv.be

Approach to crime gets results in Antwerp

Precisely those crimes the police had targeted fell sharply.

For the first time in many years the number of recorded crimes in Antwerp fell in 2003. All in all the police counted 7,493, or 12.4% less than in 2002. Mayor Patrick Janssens, Security Alderman Dirk Grootjans and Chief of Police Eddy Baelenmans had reason enough to be satisfied at their press conference on 17 March. In particular the conclusion that it was precisely those crimes the police had targeted with their Zonal Security Plan that fell sharply seems to suggest that police policy is on the right track. These crimes included, among others, theft with violence and weapons, bag-snatching, house and car break-ins. Home Affairs Minister Patrick Dewael (VLD) even popped down to Antwerp to express his satisfaction with the approach of Antwerp’s spate of attacks. The collaboration between forces had borne fruit, he concluded. The Vlaams Blok, which in the past was invariably first to publish crime figures to illustrate the police’s failing policy, now suddenly appears to have little confidence in these figures. On 16 March the party announced at a press conference that it wanted a ‘security index’ for each district to gauge the feeling of security among residents, after the Rotterdam model (FF).

TOM COCHEZ • DE MORGAN • 18 MARCH

The press conference on the positive crime figures had not yet finished when Patrick Janssens, Dirk Grootjans and Eddy Baelenmans were joined by Patrick Dewael and a number of representatives of the various police forces and public prosecutor’s offices who have worked together over the past few months to nab the so-called ‘Bende van den Dikke’ (‘Fatso Gang’). This successful campaign closes the door on the recent spate of attacks. Yesterday another five people were arrested in the investigation into the attacks. Dewael: ‘Thirty-two extra federal officers were deployed and equipment such as tracker dogs and a helicopter provided. The number of patrol teams was increased by thirty, with zonal and federal officers working together. This approach not only had a dissuasive effect, it also resulted in the perpetrators being caught. There was a similar fluent collaboration within the judicial division of the police where a sort of taskforce was set up. This involved the various zones working together constructively. If we combine this with the recent figures on crime in Antwerp, I think we are gradually becoming more efficient in the fight against crime.’

RECORDED CRIME RATES IN ANTWERP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>50,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>56,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>58,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>60,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>53,290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: DE MORGEN

www.cdenv.be
The Vlaams Blok has launched its election campaign for Flanders and Europe at a conference in Ghent. In their addresses, the Blok leaders Dewinter and Vanhecke again called on the N-VA-CD&V cartel to jointly form a broad conservative Flemish coalition. Earlier the cartel had already firmly rejected such an offer. But Dewinter maintains that the cartel is now faced with a choice: ‘collaborate with the Purple SPA and VLD parties or opt for a radical about-turn with the Blok.’ The Blok can smell the chance of a spectacular victory on 13 June thanks to the mass opposition to immigrant voting rights in Flanders. Vanhecke could not resist using the Muslim attacks in Madrid to demand a stricter approach to Muslim extremism in Belgium. Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx (PS) got it in the neck because several days earlier she had warned of the consequences of a Blok victory in Brussels. According to her, this would increase insecurity in the capital. Meanwhile it is becoming more clear that the Blok is disavowing its Flemish programme to win Francophone votes in Brussels. It needs these Francophone votes to gain a majority in the Flemish linguistic group. Ultimately the Blok is heading for a blockage of political institutions in Brussels, but denies that in its bilingual publications ‘Feiten/Réalités’ in the capital so as to avoid scaring off Francophone voters (FF).

ISABEL ALBERS • DE STANDAARD • 15 MARCH

‘Insecurity is that situation in which 80% of crimes are committed by foreigners.’ Vanhecke used the attacks in Madrid to criticise the approach to Muslim extremism in Belgium, before lashing out directly at Verhofstadt: ‘How is it that seven Muslim extremists identified by State Security are appointed to the Muslim Executive? Who is hiding among the 200,000 regularised foreigners? Verhofstadt, get rid of the Centre for the Fight against Racism and spend the money on an investigation into Muslim extremism. And stop subsidising Islam!’ The tirade was greeted with several minutes’ applause.

WIM VANDE VELDEN • DE TIJD • 15 MARCH

The Vlaams Blok is keeping as quiet as possible in the capital about the fact that it is striving for an independent Flanders with Brussels as its capital. In the Brussels Region, the Blok is targeting the votes of Flemish voters with the former Police chief of Schaerbeek, Johan Demol, but increasingly also those of Francophone voters. The Francophone votes could make the difference and help the Blok to a majority, an absolute majority, in the Dutch linguistic group. From this position the party can block the formation of a Brussels government and institutions, which would halt the institutional cogwheels across the whole of Belgium.

One problem for the Blok is that the Francophones in Brussels are not seeking a merger with Flanders, let alone the end of Belgium. Therefore the party is playing the insecurity card in Brussels. In the capital the Blok presents itself almost exclusively as an anti-immigrant party. Demol & Co. are going to great pains to gloss over and suppress the programme for an independent Flanders with Brussels as its capital and language facilities for the Francophones. Demol, however, is now going one step further. Without batting an eyelid he is disavowing the Flemish programme. This is evident from his comments on the front page of the bilingual Blok brochure ‘Feiten/Réalités’. Under the heading ‘Voor alle duidelijkheid/Soyons clair’ Demol in his own words is dotting the i’s. ‘We have no intention of making Brussels Flemish. For us, Brussels is a bilingual city where the Francophones are in the majority and we do not want to change this status,’ writes Demol.

The Second Technology Day on Sunday 14 March attracted around 112,000 visitors. This is 40,000 more than last year. Some 150 companies, research institutes, universities and colleges opened their doors to allow Flemings to learn about the latest technologies. In terms of public attendance, Flanders Drive in Lommel, the Deurganck Dock on the left bank of the Scheldt in the port of Antwerp, Sanisol in Gavere and the space travel company Verhaert in Kruielbeke were the highlights. It was this last company that received the innovation prize from the Flemish Government on 10 March. Focus Research, an inter-university organisation for researchers, used the opportunity to ask for more funds for scientific research. These funds and grants must put a stop to the flood of scientists abroad, says the organisation.

During the European Business Summit in Brussels, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Fientjie Meeerman (VLD) announced that from 1 January 2005 companies that collaborate for their scientific research with other companies or with the government will have their tax on the wages of their researchers halved. This has been already applied to the wages of scientific staff at universities since October 2003 and on 1 July 2004 the measure will be extended to 72 scientific institutions.

www.dagvandetechnologie.be
Flanders opens 10,000 ha of heathland to the public

By 2008 some 10,000 ha of heathland in Flanders will again become accessible to ramblers and cyclists. The heathland is currently spread over twelve military areas. Heath used to be considered pretty worthless for agriculture and was therefore grabbed as land for military exercises. But nowadays it is viewed quite differently. With its natural richness heathland has become of inestimable value in a region like Flanders where untouched landscape has become pretty scarce. Flemish Environment Minister Jef Tavernier (Groen!) was therefore delighted when he was able to announce an agreement in this respect with federal Defence Minister Flahaut (PS) (FF).

BART DOBBELAERE • DE STANDAARD • 17 MARCH

The heathland areas are not simply ready to be re-opened to the public. Where necessary the military areas will be restored by mowing or removing certain plants. Constant management of the landscape is also frequently essential. This is done, for example, via grazing or meadowland management. Such things clearly cost money: in total 15.5 million euros. The Flemish Government is paying, just as National Defence itself. 6.6 million euros is also coming from Europe. The European Commission is apparently calling the Flemish project ‘an example’. After all, the military areas will form part of the European Nature 2000 network, a network of useful natural areas. “With this project Flanders is displaying its knowledge in the field of nature conservation,” claims an enthusiastic Environment Minister Jef Tavernier. “The area is to be made accessible to ramblers and cyclists. We will re-open to the public many heathland treasures that lie hidden in military areas.”

www.natuurbeheer.be
www.mina.be
www.emis.be

Virgin Express and SN Brussels airlines conclude agreement

both airlines come under the aegis of SN Air Holding, but will continue to exist alongside one another

SN Brussels Airlines (SNBA) and Virgin Express nv are to come under the aegis of SN Air Holding. The shareholders of both airlines have reached an agreement to this effect. Virgin Express Holding (VEX), a Richard Branson group, will acquire an interest of 29.9% in SN Air Holding, which already controls 92% of SN Brussels Airlines. VEX will also acquire a sell or put option on its 29.9% at a price of 64 million euros (13% above the closing price of Virgin on 15 March). A four-man committee headed by SNBA Chairman Rob Kuijpers must now examine how both airlines can work together to save money. Both airlines will, however, continue to exist alongside one another: SN Brussels Airlines as a commercial airline with more expensive tickets and traditional service and Virgin with its budget formula for tourists (FF).

GUIDO MEEUSSEN • DE TIJD • 17 MARCH

Virgin Express and SN BA are currently competitors. If the preliminary agreement of the shareholders results in a definitive agreement within a few weeks, they will be no more. The idea of a merger, which was still being talked about at the beginning of 2002, is dead and buried. In its place, the two companies will retain their identity and continue to offer two different products. In any case SNBA has completed its threefold assignment from its shareholders: it has again linked Brussels as European capital with the key European centres; it has provided jobs for more than 2,000 people, without taking indirect employment into account; and it has also not blown the 180 million euros it received from Belgian bankers, government holdings, insurance companies and utility companies.

The challenge now facing Rob Kuijpers, Chairman of SNBA, and Neil Burrows, Managing Director of Virgin Express, is this: how do we preserve two different companies in a holding company and can we still manage to save money and achieve a synergy? And yet the construction now being produced appears chiefly inspired by the concern of Richard Branson to make the best of a bad job. Virgin has lost ground in recent months, while SNBA has consolidated its position. Whereas in 2002 Branson was still thinking about gaining the ascendancy in a merger with SNBA, he must now be satisfied with one third of a joint holding. And the shareholders of SN Air Holding are now neutralising a troublesome competitor at a soft price. Because the two airlines will continue to exist, they cannot make any price agreements, as Europe does not like that. The savings will therefore have to come from harmonising the two networks.

www.virgin.be
www.flysn.com

NEW SHAREHOLDERSHIP SN AIR HOLDING

SN BRUSSELS VIRGIN EXPRESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN BRUSSELS</th>
<th>VIRGIN EXPRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of passengers</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of destinations</td>
<td>69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seat occupancy</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*US DESTINATIONS NOT INCLUDED
EXCEPT FOR CHICAGO
BIDDING WAR

Base scraps 200 jobs

KPN has agreed to underwrite a capital increase of 600 million euros, but in return there must be concessions. Parent company KPN therefore made a capital increase of 600 million euros, but in return there must be concessions on the Belgian side. Thus, 200 jobs will have to go over time and the company will have to pull out of a number of activities. The announcement to trade unions was made in accordance with the terms of application of the so-called Renault Act, whereby social partners must be informed before measures are actually implemented. It is also not yet known whether the cuts will involve simple redundancies. Due to the fact that the average age at Base Belgium is 32, there are unlikely to be many early retirements. Base-spokesman Bart Van Sompele: 'We will outsource a number of non-core activities to partners with whom we are currently in negotiations. This could mean that a number of jobs are relocated to these partners.'

MARC BALDUYCK • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 16 MARCH

Major shareholders of Ubizen join forces

The battle for Leuven-based network protector Ubizen appears to be over. The major shareholders of Ubizen, Ubidco and Betrusted, are together increasing the company’s capital by 2 million euros. The capital increase was approved at the extraordinary general meeting of shareholders (EGM) on 16 March, which was called by Ubizado. Initially Ubizado wanted to gain control via a capital increase at this EGM. However, Ubizado’s Board of Directors decided that Betrusted was also eligible for a capital increase. This decision ensured that both main shareholders stopped their bidding war. After the capital increase Ubizado holds 37.4% of Ubizen shares while Betrusted, the American fellow sector member of Ubizado, controls 44% (FF).

BERT BROENS • DE TIJD • 17 MARCH

In London Herman Schueremans, the organiser of Rock Werchter, received the Arthur Award for best festival. In 1997 he won the prize for best promoter. Schueremans was awarded the prize by the International Live Music Conference (ILMC), which represents music agents, concert promoters, music producers and festival organisers from all over the world. Of the estimated one thousand ILMC members, two-thirds come from the Anglo-Saxon countries. The fact that a Belgian festival has won the award is according to Schueremans all the more conclusive.

FF EDITOR

Rock Werchter named to Best Festival

In London Herman Schueremans, the organiser of Rock Werchter, received the Arthur Award for best festival. In 1997 he won the prize for best promoter. Schueremans was awarded the prize by the International Live Music Conference (ILMC), which represents music agents, concert promoters, music producers and festival organisers from all over the world. Of the estimated one thousand ILMC members, two-thirds come from the Anglo-Saxon countries. The fact that a Belgian festival has won the award is according to Schueremans all the more conclusive.

www.rockwerchter.be
ECONOMY AND CULTURE

CAR INDUSTRY

Flanders Drive must keep car manufacturers in Flanders

In 2001 the platform Flanders Drive was set up. The initiative was the brainchild of companies that in one way or another supplied the car sector, such as the steel cord producer Bekoart, the exhaust manufacturer Bosal, the shock-absorber manufacturer Monroe and the Leuven-based LMS. The aim was to develop Flanders Drive into a knowledge network in which technological knowledge is exchanged and to establish a research and development centre for car technology. On 12 March the Engineering Centre of Flanders Drive was opened in Lommel. This houses a series of complex test and simulation installations for technology that is used in cars. The aim is that suppliers from the car sector will use these to develop new products. The Flanders-based car industry can use the technological innovations that are developed at Flanders Drive to consolidate its competitive position and encourage car manufacturers to keep their assembly plants in Flanders (FF).

JEROEN LISSENS • DE TIJD • 13 MARCH

The company network Flanders Drive already has more than 120 members. These include almost all the major suppliers in the sector, but also hi-tech niche firms such as the Leuven-based spin-off companies Krypton and Materialise. The Flanders Drive dossier again became current news with the drastic round of redundancies at the car plant of the American Ford in Genk. At the end of last year, 3,000 of the 8,400 jobs disappeared. The plant’s suppliers were also hard hit.

With 8.9 million euros the Flemish Government is the main sponsor of Flanders Drive. A further 3.07 million euros has come from the European Regional Development Fund. The Province of Limburg invested 2.94 million euros and companies who are members of the Flanders Drive knowledge network a further 1.5 million euros. The total amount of around 16.5 million euros will later be topped up to 22 million euros. Lommel was chosen because the members of Flanders Drive can use the nearby Ford testing grounds. There, new discoveries can be tested in practical conditions.

www.flandersdrive.be

PHOTOGRAPHY

Renovated Photo Museum opens its doors in Antwerp

The purpose of the photography museum has also been revised: it is now home to visual culture in the broadest sense of the word.

In 1986 the Photography Museum of the Province of Antwerp was given a home in a warehouse on the Waalse Kaai right by the Museum of Contemporary Art (MUHKA). Despite its collection of international standing (50,000 photos, 60,000 negatives, 35,000 books and 8,500 old cameras), its pulling power was not particularly great. This was largely due to the dark halls and unappealing layout. Therefore an extensive renovation was undertaken three years ago, headed by architect Georges Baines. The result is impressive, says De Standaard. But the purpose of the Photography Museum has also been revised: it is now home to visual culture in the broadest sense of the word. The renovated Photography Museum opens its doors to the public on 21 March (FF).

JAN VAN HOVE • DE STANDAARD • 18 MAART

The expansion and renovation has done wonders, primarily thanks to a monumental glass façade that lets daylight into almost all the rooms in the museum. Baines opted for a sober, modern architecture, with a spectacular, large exhibition hall, a library, a gallery, two auditoria, a museum shop and a spacious museum café. The work cost 6 million euros. Apart from the building, the Photography Museum also got several new partners. The link with the former Centre for Visual Culture and the Film Museum was vital. Photo and film join forces in the museum: in the auditoria visitors can discover classic films, forgotten genres and experimental work. The programme begins on 20 March with a Stanley Kubrick retrospective, recent Chinese films and works by French pioneer Georges Méliès. The Photography Museum no longer wants to be a coastal temple with a static installation of old cameras and work by hallowed photographers,’ says Christophe Ruys, the museum’s new director. ‘Above all we want to take into account the huge impact of visual culture on the whole of society. For example, our collection contains fantastic ensembles with photos of amateur theatres, boxing clubs and advertising agencies from the twenties and thirties. It’s not art, but they are extraordinarily interesting documents.’ Several pieces from the pioneering era will be on permanent display: a camera obscura, optical prints, early cameras. But the rest of the collection will only be shown in thematic presentations that will change every four months. The first installation is devoted to covers of magazines from 1910 to the present: the ‘Wochenschau’ from the First World War, fashion photos from Vogue in the 1950s, issues of Esquire, Playboy, Rolling Stone and even the Time of 7 May 1945 which announced the death of Hitler. The first major exhibition will be called Short Stories and will be on narrative photography. It will include work by Cindy Sherman, Inez van Lamsweerde and Olav Breuning, but also a delightful advertising photo of the Italian jeans brand Diesel. In the gallery, where the emphasis will be on work by young Belgian photographers, there is an ambitious series on the life of women in Afghanistan. The photographer Lieve Blanquaert and the journalist Annemie Struyf wanted to get to know the reality behind the burkas.

www.fotomuseum.be
**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE**
- 23 March: Silent collisions, Charlot/dances, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- 23 March: Kassandra by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Rosas, dance, script by Oscar Van Woesen; Kaaithéâtre, Brussels; info: www.kaaithéâtre.be
- 27 March: Rain by Rosas, dance, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.demunt.be
- 24 March: The King’s Consort with GF Haendel, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- 24 March: Elbow; Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be
- 02/548.24.24
- 25 March: Shining (Norway), free jazz, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/267.28.28
- 25 March: Ensemble Explorations (Dieetiens and Busch) with Haydn and Bocherini; De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28
- 26 March: Patti Smith and Band, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- 26 March: Tambours du Burundi, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- 23 March: Yunn, OL-Vrouwekapel Elzenveld, Schaffrath, Matthews, Telemann and Bouwel (Norway), free jazz, Shining, PSK, Brussels; info: www.springsessions.be
- 03/470.27.70 www.momu.be

**EXPO**
- Until 28 March: Genovanverseviceversa, exhibition about Fashion, Antwerp and Genova, Fashion Museum, Antwerp; info: 03/470.27.70 www.momu.be
- 30 March: Human, all too human, photo exhibition on psychiatry, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be
- 31 March: Undercover, The Prinznhorn Collection. The collection was abused by the Nazi’s to build the exhibition ‘Degraded Art”; exhibition, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be
- 24 March: II Fondamento, Choeur de Chambre de Namur and Dombrecht with Jan Dismas Zelenka, Gesu al Cervario, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.debijloke.be
- 24 March: Musica Rivelata conducted by Dominik Riepe with Lamentazioni per la Settimana Santa by Scarlatti, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 30 March: Elliot Lawson, Jill Lawson and David Cohen with Ravel, Bartok and Ysaye, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- 30 March: Ursula Rucker, Botanique Rotonde, Brussels; info: 02/218.37.32
- 1 and 2 April: Da Lata, VK, Brussels (042/414.09.07) and De Kreun, Kortrijk (056/370.644)
- 08 April: Cesaria Evora, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00 www.bozar.be
- 6 to 8 April: Map me by Charlotte Van den Eynde, performance, Kaaithéâtre studios, Brussels; info: www.kaaithéâtre.be
- 25 to 27 March: Hopefully someone will carry out great vengeance on me by Impure Company (dance), Kaaithéâtre studios, Brussels; info: www.kaaithéâtre.be
- 01 April: Mala Punica with Paola da Firenze, Madrigali, Kaaithéâtre, Brussels; info: www.kaaithéâtre.be
- 31 March: Recital Christopher Maltman with Purcell, Butterworth, Loewe and Wolf, Flanders Opera, Ghent; info: www.vlaamsopera.be
- Until 17 April World Musical theatre Festival, Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp with The Kiss and the rose by Rast (Turkish Gypsy Opera), Africa Non Stop, Madre Teatro Flamenco de la Tati, Lady Adi by Kanze Rye Noh-no-Kai (Japanese Nô theatre); info: www.zuiderpershuis.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 Lannoo nv, Kasteelstraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.

**Translation:** Eurologs
**Printing:** Drukkerij Lannoo nv, Tielt
**Responsibility editor:** Luc Demester, Marke
**Subscription rate by post and e-mail:** 220 euro
**Either transfer the sum to account no.:** 472-101001-19 with the KBC in Rolserail
Or give us the number and expiry date of your credit card (Visa/Eurocard)
**Telephone:** 05142.42.99
**Fax:** 05140.11.52
**E-mail:** frank.vandecaveye@lannoo.be

This newsletter is published with the permission of the KBC and the Bankers of Belgium.

**CULTURE**