Onkelinx wants to prevent another Fourniret case

The Federal Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx (PS) has announced measures aimed at ensuring that a new Fourniret case can be prevented. Between 1966 and 1987 Michel Fourniret was convicted three times in France for 15 kidnappings and rapes of under-age girls. When he settled in Belgium in the 1990s, nobody knew anything about his judicial past. He was even given a certificate ‘of good conduct and morals’, which helped him to secure employment in a school. There is no form of control if, after their conviction and punishment, someone goes and settles in another country. International cooperation between police and judicial authorities is currently limited chiefly to the tracing of criminals who are the subject of an ongoing investigation (FF).

In order to avoid the complete lack of any control when a former offender moves to another country, a European police record should be introduced, which can be consulted by police and judicial authorities. At the European summit at Tampere in 1999 the European Council asked the Commission to work out a framework for such a police record by the end of 2004. Onkelinx yesterday said in parliament that she had contacted the president of the European Commission to urge that the framework memorandum be forthcoming as soon as possible. In the meantime the Justice Minister is herself taking measures to avoid a repeat of the Fourniret case. She will be turning the 1964 European Convention into law. This convention stipulates that someone who has been convicted of an offence, and has been released on probation and moves to another country, must be monitored by that host country as regards the compliance of the probation conditions. Onkelinx also announced that she was currently working on a bill for a DNA database of people who have been committed for trial. The text is currently with the heads of the prosecution departments at the Courts of Appeal, awaiting their opinion. On the proposal advanced by Child Focus for the creation of a database of paedophiles, she would only say: ‘That proposal is being given serious consideration. All measures for a better exchange of information have to be tested for the protection of privacy’.

Gwen Declerck • De Tijd • 2 July

More hideous than Marc Dutroux. That is perhaps the criterion for drawing the profile of French psychopath and sex killer Michel Fourniret that appeals most to the imagination. According to his own confessions on 30 June and 1 July, Fourniret had raped and murdered eight young women since 1967, three of whom were not older than 12 or 13. Fourniret decided to confess after his wife had gone to the police and revealed her husband’s secret life. Fourniret committed most of the offences on French territory and will therefore be tried for his crimes in France. For the moment, Elisabeth Bribchet, the girl who had been missing without trace since 1989, is his only Belgian victim. According to Belgian judicial sources, she is buried in the vicinity of the castle of Sautou, near Sedan in France. Like Dutroux, Fourniret had the habit of burying his victims. The grim pictures of the digging work will certainly give many TV viewers an unpleasant feeling of déjà vu. There are other similarities with the Dutroux case. Like Dutroux, Fourniret had prior convictions for sexual violence against minors and had been granted early release on the grounds of a dubious psychiatric report. He then continued his life of crime undisturbed. Like Dutroux, he abducted his victims in a white delivery van and was able to count on the silent complicity of a subservient wife. Like Dutroux, he is not an out-and-out paedophile, as most of his victims were in fact young women, and like Dutroux, he substantially broadened his geographical field of action after his first convictions. And finally, just like the Belgian judiciary in the Dutroux case, the French judicial authorities also made a good number of gaffes due to a poorly co-ordinated approach, with the result that there should be some thorough soul-searching going on there, too, says De Standaard (1 July).

The indignation in the Flemish press is directed first and foremost at the fact that a French citizen with this kind of police record was able to go and live on the other side of the border in Belgium, with a clean criminal record. The organisation Child Focus has long been calling for the introduction of co-ordinated databases in which convicted paedophiles would be registered, and which could be consulted by the police and mayors. The Belgian Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx, who had to answer a number of awkward questions in Parliament, said that she had urged the Netherlands, which holds the presidency of the European Union, to work on an urgent introduction of a European police record. De Standaard and Gazet van Antwerpen (2 July) are pressing for a database of convicted paedophiles that at least the police must be able to consult. The end of the long drawn-out Dutroux trial had brought about a feeling of catharsis in Belgian public opinion. However, barely a week later Fourniret has reminded Belgium that the trial of the century has not served to rid the world of psychopaths.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
A new Dutroux case surfaces

 Barely a couple of weeks after the conviction of Marc Dutroux, Belgium has another monster on its hands, albeit a Frenchman. Michel Fourniret, a forest ranger who moved from the French village of Donchery to Sart-Custinne in Belgium at the beginning of the 1990s, committed supposedly 8 sex murders and the murder of one man. His victims included seven French girls and Elisabeth Bricet, the Walloon girl who disappeared in 1989 and for whom her parents have been looking continuously ever since. Fourniret was arrested last year, when his umpteenth kidnapping attempt failed, and has been in prison in Dinant since then. Questioning yielded nothing until last week his third wife, Monique Olivier, went to court and accused him of the kidnapping, rape and murder of eight girls and the murder of one man in the period between 1987 and 2003. Fourniret has since confessed to six of these crimes. In the press reference has been made in particular to the similarities between Dutroux and Fourniret, but some commentators are asking how it is possible for a man who had been convicted in France for sexual abuse and kidnapping to be able to continue his criminal life undisturbed on the other side of the border (FF).

Opinion
LUC VANDERKELLEN • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 1 JULY

Vlaams Blok not willing to participate in government

In the party, meanwhile, people are looking forward to the Court of Cassation ruling on 9 November with mixed feelings.

After the election victory of the Vlaams Blok on 13 June, politicians and journalists wondered whether the extreme right-wing party ought not to be taken back on board, as the OVP took Jörg Haider’s FPÖ back on board in Austria - and in the end let it drown. After all, government responsibility proved devastating for the FPÖ, which managed to poll 6% in the European elections. In an interview with De Tijd, Vlaams Blok leader Filip Dewinter stated that he did not want to fall into that trap. The Vlaams Blok has to grow further and become ‘indispensable’, so that it can negotiate from a government formation from a position ofstrength, Dewinter explained. In the party, meanwhile, people are looking forward to the Court of Cassation ruling on 9 November with mixed feelings. If the Court does not quash the Court of Appeal’s judgement condemning the party as racist, the party will change its name and issue a new declaration of principles, said Dewinter in Gazet van Antwerpen (29 June) (FF).

WIM VANDE VELDEN • DE TIJD • 26 JUNE

The Vlaams Blok is learning from the mistakes made by extreme right-wing parties in other countries, according to figurehead Filip Dewinter. He explained that his party would not fall into the trap that its opponents were trying to spring. Only when the Vlaams Blok is ‘indispensable’ for the formation of a government will the party jump at the chance. ‘Our formula consists in negotiating from a strong position and not from a weak one,’ he added. The message is that it is not the Vlaams Blok, but the other parties, that will fall flat on their faces. Another trap into which, according to Dewinter, the Vlaams Blok will not walk is the call for a new leadership. The reasoning is that new leaders are necessary if the Blok wants to become a credible, respectable right-wing party. ‘That’s all too obvious,’ says Dewinter. ‘Set Dewinter aside, and we get an FPÖ scenario. In Austria the FPÖ relinquished everything for the sake of participation in office. Jörg Haider was banished to Carinthia, whereupon half the voters disappeared, too.’ He also pointed out that his party has developed its own model, the ‘Vlaams Blok model’. ‘We have become the example for the others; in Austria, people talk about the Vlaams Blok as the “Erfolgmodell”, the success model. Flanders is now the right-wing/nationalist model country in Europe’.

PAUL GEUDENS • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 29 JUNE

‘We will not give in in our attempt to become accepted. On 13 June the voters did not say that there should be less Vlaams Blok. On the contrary. We were found guilty by the court, but were acquitted by the voter,’ says Dewinter. ‘If the Court of Cassation does not overturn the Court of Appeal’s judgement on 9 November, then the conviction for racism will stand. Then, under the pressure of that ruling, we will be forced to change our name. That is also what our lawyers say. But we certainly do not want to create the impression that we are throwing in the towel before the Court of Cassation hands down its ruling.’ Dewinter goes on. ‘At our conference at the end of November we will clearly show that we are continuing the broadening of the party without making any concessions. That includes the principle of the direct election of the party chairman.’
Unanimity on the Flemish budget

in 2004 the Flemish government will have to make one-off cuts to the tune of EUR 300 million and recurrent cuts to the tune of EUR 150 million

According to formateur Yves Leterme the Flemish budget is sound. Leterme wanted budgetary clarity before continuing the talks for the formation of a Flemish government with the VLD-Vivant, CD&V-N-VA and SPA-Spirit alliances. Alarming reports from the Auditors’ Office and from the Flemish administration had cast a dark shadow over the budget situation last week. That proved to be largely a false alarm. Flanked by Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA), Eric Van Rompuy (CD&V) and resigning Budget Minister Dirk Van Mecelen (VLD), Leterme explained to the press that Flanders can start with a balanced budget. However, in 2004 the Flemish government will have to make one-off cuts to the tune of EUR 300 million and recurrent cuts to the tune of EUR 150 million (FF).

LIESBETH VAN IMPE • DE MORGEN • 1 JULY

The Flemish government has made a commitment to the Federal Government to achieve a budgetary surplus. That is necessary to reduce the overall Belgian debt and to comply with all the European requirements. An initial discussion focused on the specific figure to be put on that surplus. The federal authorities said more than 600 million, and the Flemish administration said 404 million, perhaps even a little less, according to Van Mecelen. In the end it was agreed yesterday that the objective would be set at 404 million. “In his way we can honour all our agreements. This figure is perfectly defensible at federal level”, Leterme said.

However, the government will not achieve that surplus without ‘structural and one-off measures’ – Rue de la Loi jargon for cuts. Cuts via ‘recurrent measures’ will have to be made to the tune of EUR 150 million - meaning cuts in expenditure that recurs every year. On top of this some EUR 300 million in one-off savings will have to be found for this year and next. The negotiators were not prepared to say in which sectors this amount would be sought or which measures would come into consideration for this. ‘We have not talked about that yet’. During the campaign the CD&V systematically warned of the disastrous budgetary situation, something which Van Mecelen did not exactly appreciate. He continued saying that there were certainly no major problems, and that merely thorough budgetary control was necessary. Immediately after the elections, reports from the Auditors’ Office and the administration appeared to confirm the CD&V’s apocalyptic scenario.

So who has now been proved right? As a matter of fact, everyone, to some degree, and during the press conference everyone hastened to highlight their standpoint again, without stepping on the others’ toes. Van Mecelen defended his policy, which incidentally had been appreciated on all sides up until the elections, Van Rompuy and Leterme said they had never doubted that good work was being done with the halving of the debt, but that there was nonetheless a problem. How much pain the cuts will eventually cause will only become clear when they are coughed in concrete measures.

Political centre of gravity lies in the regions

regions seem to hold the key to the country’s political future.

The most important political news last weekend came not from Flanders, but from French-speaking Belgium, where PS Chairman Elio Di Rupo reshuffled the cards. He dumped his Liberal government partner MR in the Walloon and Brussels government and exchanged them for the CDH, the successor to the former Francophone Christian-Democratic party PSC. In Brussels that duo is supplemented by the Green party Ecolo. Di Rupo says that in so doing he is following the will of the voters. After all, the MR lost heavily in the regional elections. Moreover, with his choice he is opting, again as he himself says, for more policy coherence and a pronounced left-wing project. He added that the exchange operation had no consequences for the federal level, where Liberals and Socialists rule the roost. Given that in Flanders a tripartite government of Liberals (VLD-Vivant), Socialists (SPA-Spirit) and Christian Democrats/Flemish Nationalists (CD&V-N-VA) is presently in the pipeline, this is the most multi-coloured collection of coalitions in Belgian history. In literally every government, a different coalition is coming into office. Another thing that is already clear is that the federal government is emerging from these government formations substantially weakened. The political centre of gravity is clearly moving to the regional governments (FF).

STEVEN SAMYN/GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 28 JUNE

The regional governments used to reflect the federal coalition’s composition. This is not happening now, and the autumn may see a reverse trend occurring: the federal coalition may then become the mirror image of the Flemish tripartite on the one hand and the Walloon PS-CDH coalition on the other. In Flanders the purple team may be supplemented by the CD&V, on the French-speaking side the CDH may take the place of the MR. Such a PS-CDH-CD&V-VLD-SPA team has a narrow Francophone and an ample Flemish majority in the federal House. As if by coincidence the renewed federal majority can boost a federal two-thirds majority, with 101 of the 150 seats in the House. This is necessary for further steps in the state reform.
Verhofstadt relegated to the role of onlooker

Former Minister-President Bart Somers, federal State Secretary Vincent Van Quickenborne and Brussels MP Sven Gatz made a conspicuous call in a number of Flemish papers (De Morgan, Het Nieuwsblad, De Standaard) at the weekend for a radical revamping of the VLD. They want the VLD to adopt a more pro-Flemish and more liberal position, and be more attached to principles. In particular they want to see their generation finally emerge from beneath the wings of the Verhofstad-Dewael-D Gucht leadership troika. For the troika itself, the interviews came at a most inopportune moment. Chairman Karel De Gucht felt that now was not the time to talk about renewal and modernisation. He feels that his party needed peace and quiet and that it must now concentrate on the talks for a coalition agreement. Guy Verhofstadt kept quiet, but it was clear that the criticism from the up-and-coming generation was chiefly aimed at his undisputed leadership. After his party’s electoral defeat and after the failed bid for the presidency of the European Commission, he needed this little uprisingle like a hole in the head. But that same weekend he had to take an even harder sock on the jaw. His Francophone Liberal coalition partner was removed from all Francophone regional governments by Elio Di Rupo (FF).

PATRICK MARTENS • KNACK • 30 JUNE

Verhofstadt will henceforth be sitting at his federal cabinet table with a frustrated and sulking Deputy Prime Minister Louis Michel (MR). The VLD would also be best advised not to enrage Michel completely by weighing up his foreign affairs ministerial portfolio against a post in the European Commission - for that is but one of the prizes that the PS is asking the Flemish Liberals for for that. Finally, to crown it all, came the announcement that his employment and pensions minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA) was moving over to the Flemish Government. Thus the Prime Minister not only loses his trusted right-hand man in the debate on the reform of the social security system and the financing of the expenses occasioned by the ageing of the population. The Flemish Socialists also immediately made it clear that they too are aware that as of 13 June, the political shots are being called at regional level and no longer at federal level. It clashes with his political character, but Verhofstadt has indeed lost the initiative. In the new balance of power, he has been relegated to the role of a notary-public, able to record what Yves Leterme (CD&V) and Elio Di Rupo (PS), responsible respectively for forming the Flemish and Walloon Governments, decide between themselves in the formation of the new regional governments.

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Standpoints harden on both sides of the linguistic border

At federal level the French-speaking Liberals are still in office, but MR figurehead Louis Michel has already let it be known that he will be obstructive now that his party has been thrown out of the Walloon, Brussels and French Community governments. It is expected that, under pressure from its radical Francophone FDF wing, the MR will adopt a tougher stance in the negotiations from linguistic community to community. On the Flemish side the government-to-be is also including in its coalition agreement a whole host of requirements for greater Flemish autonomy. And Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. And Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance. Flanders is also tired of constantly footing the bill for the Belgian budgetary balance.

Opinion

KOEN VIDAL • DE MORGEN • 26 JUNE

Now, pay attention for a moment. The federal government remains Purple (Red and Blue). The Flemish Government becomes Roman Catholic-Red-Blue. The Walloon Government becomes Roman Catholic-Red. The French Community government is also Roman Catholic-Red. The Brussels Government becomes Roman Catholic-Red-Green and the German council could become Roman Catholic-Blue. All this providing the negotiations go off smoothly at all these levels. If not, then there will be even more colour shifts. A cold fish like Yves Leterme might say that that is the logic of a federal state. But you cannot help but feel that Belgium is increasing land itself in a doom scenario. For in addition to the asymmetry, a whole host of other forces have been unleashed since 13 June - a Flemish front for a new state reform, for example. All democratic Flemish parties appear to agree that there should be a new community round, not that most of these demands are without logic. It is indeed a fact that Flanders and Walloon set different priorities in fields such as employment, the policy on traffic fines and health care. And if reasonable people such as Leterme and Vandenbroucke (SPA) raise healthy questions about these issues, there is in principle no reason to assume that a community round will lead to an anti-Walloon witch hunt. The problem is that the Francophones do not need a new state reform now. They have no complaints and therefore no scope for making concessions. In a nutshell, in Wallonia there is no material for negotiation, and this means that the Belgian model of give and take cannot work. Should the Francophones nonetheless come to the negotiating table, then the Louis Michel factor will weigh heavy. After his electoral defeat Michel has practically no scope for making concessions to Flemish demands. Moreover, ‘big Loulou’ will probably be quite angry with Di Rupo after this weekend. Even without a community round, we can expect Michel to be placing a booby trap or two for Di Rupo in the Federal Government.
Vandenbroucke advocates the splitting of employment policy

In his view, the entire employment policy, including the unemployment benefit of the National Employment Office (RVA), should be outlined by Flanders.

Frank Vandenbroucke, the current federal Employment Minister, will head the talks for the SPA for the formation of a Flemish Government. If the negotiations are successful, Vandenbroucke will probably become the number 2 in the Flemish Government, after Yves Leterme. Vandenbroucke is laying down one condition, however, namely that Flanders and Wallonia can pursue their own social policy. In his view, the entire employment policy, including the unemployment budget of the National Employment Office (RVA), should be outlined by Flanders.

Quoted in Het Laatste Nieuws (28 June), Vandenbroucke says that at the moment the approach to this policy is subject to totally different emphases in Wallonia and in Flanders. Flanders opts for early retirements and ‘time credit’, Wallonia for unlimited unemployment benefit. Therefore employment policy, just like education policy previously, must be split. A far-reaching state reform is required for this. But Flanders must stop to represent a state reform as a raid on Wallonia, he said on the VRT programme ‘De Zevende Dag’. However, Vandenbroucke’s radical proposal runs counter to the SPA’s official party standpoint, and so there was some criticism from within his party. Freddy Willockx, the Socialist mayor of Sint-Niklaas, called it a confederal proposal that, with the exception of Vandenbroucke himself, is only supported by the Vlaams Blok. The Socialist and Christian unions also shot down his proposal. According to the unions, the proposal undermines the solidarity principle underpinning the social security system. But the following day party chairman Steve Stevaert took his minister under his wing (FF).

After years of donkey work by the speaker of the Flemish Parliament Norbert De Batselier, the SPA is officially a supporter of a transfer from Belgium to the regions of so-called ‘top-up income’, such as child allowance. What was and is taboo is the transfer of ‘replacement income’: pensions and unemployment benefit should continue to be managed at federal level, in the SPA’s view. The critical questions at yesterday’s meeting of the party executive therefore came not only from Socialists who had previously grudgingly gone along with De Batselier’s Flemish course, but also from pro-Flemish ‘communitarians’. ‘I don’t know what has possessed Vandenbroucke to come up with this brilliant idea,’ says Xavier Verboven, who attended the SPA party executive meeting on behalf of the Socialist union ABVV. ‘We have no problem with the idea of some of the unemployment money being used to get the unemployed into work. But regionalisation of unemployment benefit is going a step too far. If you split that budget, you are opening the door to a renunciation of the principle of solidarity.’ Another SPA member quoted what the well-known Belguicist Freddy Willockx said about De Batselier’s state reform plans ten years ago: ‘It’s spitting in the face of the militants’. But other SPA members feel that the party, with Vandenbroucke, should resolutely opt for the expansion of social democracy in Flanders - and should no longer fixate Socialists, ‘as Karel Van Miert wanted to do in the nineteen eighties’. The upshot of the discussion yesterday at the party executive meeting is that Vandenbroucke has been asked to write everything down in a detailed memorandum. Various SPA members are of the view that Vandenbroucke has let himself be guided too much by his personal negative experiences in the federal government. There he fell foul of the PS, first over social affairs, which he had to give up to the PS member Rudy Demotte, and then also in his newly acquired employment portfolio last year.

Steve Stevaert defended his besieged party colleague. He pointed out that Vandenbroucke had been appointed to head the talks on the Flemish Government and he would thereby be aiming for ‘more work and more social justice’. ‘There is no questioning that aim, whilst the way in which it can be achieved can subsequently be discussed in greater detail’.

The SPA chairman said that his party was opposed to a split in the social security system, and was ‘certainly opposed to the idea of the social security system’s financing being split’. Stevaert went on to say that the SPA would not oppose regional spending of unemployment benefits that led to more employment and greater social justice. ‘A serious discussion should be possible on this.’ Stevaert added that the SPA rejected the confederal model for the organisation of the Belgian state. ‘In our party there have always been discussions between pro-Flemings and unitarians, but there are no dogmas and no taboos in the SPA’.

**EVOLUTION OF FLEMISH UNEMPLOYMENT**

- June 2000: 153,730
- June 2001: 150,605
- June 2002: 166,972
- June 2003: 191,531
- June 2004: 203,666
Half of Flemish managers want the Vlaams Blok in the government

An ample majority of managers also feel that the new Flemish government should urgently set about working on the splitting of the social security system and greater tax autonomy for Flanders.

Fifty-two percent of Flemish managers (132 of the 254 valid answers) are of the view that the Vlaams Blok should form part of the Flemish government. This was revealed in the latest edition of a poll held among company managers, accountants and tax consultants every quarter by the weekly news magazine Trends and De Standaard. An ample majority of managers also feel that the new Flemish government should urgently set about working on the splitting of the social security system and greater tax autonomy for Flanders. Finally, they also feel that Flemish collective labour agreements ought to be introduced (FF).

FRANS CROLS • TRENDS • 1 JULY

More Vlaams Blok means, among other things, a jerk towards the secession of Flanders. The French-speaking respondents were therefore asked: does the accession of nationalist and even separatist parties in Flanders make you fear that the social security system will be regionalised? 78.7% answered yes, 20.9% no.

In the next few days the theme of the (as)ymmetry of the coalitions in the federal and federated-state governments will echo further. The Flemings do not believe that strongly that an asymmetric government in Flanders will make the government work at federal level more difficult. They are hoping for decisions from the Flemish government on the splitting of the social security system and Flemish collective labour agreements. Sixty percent feel that it is important that the new Flemish government split the social security system, whilst 45% want the new government team to work on specific collective labour agreements for Flanders. Three months ago a narrow majority of company managers were in favour of a continuation of the Purple-Green coalition. Bart Somers (VLD) and his team won support of 50.4% in this respect and the federal team of Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) scored 51.8%. 44.3% of the leading employers wanted to see a change in the Flemish and Federal Government teams.

Opinion

PIET DEPUYDT • TRENDS • 1 JULY

There goes the federal solidarity so desired by the unitary Belgian trade unions. Or to put it better: the much-coveted status quo. Recent figures from the High Council of Finance show that Flanders achieved a cumulated surplus of EUR 4.3 billion on its budget in the period 1995-2000 (EUR 4.1 billion more than had been aimed for) and thus made a faster contribution to the reduction of the Belgian debt, and that in the same period Wallonia was allowed to go EUR 153.6 million deeper in the red. That speaks volumes about solidarity.

40-hour working week is almost in existence in Belgium

At two Siemens factories in Germany, the working week is being lengthened from 35 to 40 hours, without any wage increase. In exchange, the Siemens management is guaranteeing that 2,000 jobs will be maintained. The relocation of part of the production to Hungary is not going ahead. If an extension of working hours is negotiable in Germany, then it should also be possible here, reckons Pieter Timmermans, director-general of the Federation of Belgian Businesses (VBO).

The trade unions ACV and ABVV feel that the work regulation at the German Siemens plants is not comparable with that of Belgian companies. In Belgium the norm is the 38-hour week, not the 35-hour week. They do concede that the VBO is right in saying that overtime is taxed too highly here.

De Standaard (29 June) also points out that real working time in Belgium is in fact a good deal higher than the statutory ceiling of 38 hours. According to figures from Eurostat, the average Belgian working week in 2002 was 39.3 hours. That is one hour more than in 1997. This rise was also seen in Denmark and Greece, whilst in all other EU Member States, working time fell. The same Eurostat statistics show that 16% of male full-time workers and 13% of their female counterparts regularly put in overtime, most of which is unpaid. Finally, De Standaard recalls the high productivity of Belgian employees, as demonstrated by figures from the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

With a turnover of 54,333 dollars per worker, Belgium is, after the USA, the most productive country in the world.

www.i-lo.org
http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat

focus on FLANDERS • 26 June - 2 July 2004 • Number 27
Anti-semitic incidents in Antwerp

The Islamic community feels it is being targeted

On Thursday 24 June Noach Schmahl, a Jewish boy, was walking home after his lesson in the Rabbi school of Wilrijk. He was set upon by a group of young men of North African origin who were lying in wait, and stabbed him in the back. He was taken to hospital, seriously injured. Three days later, students from the same school were shot at from a car, but none were injured. The next day at a demonstration against anti-Semitism in the Jewish district, Eli Ringer of the Forum of Jewish Organizations demanded that the authorities take both repressive and preventive measures to combat anti-Semitism (Gazet van Antwerpen, 29 June). Julien Klener, chairman of the Central Jewish Consistory, fears that some fundamentalists within Antwerp's Muslim community are attempting to import a conflict from the Middle East (Knack, 30 June). On 28 June Antwerp's mayor Patrick Janssens (SPA) announced zero tolerance in respect of any kind of anti-Semitism and racism. In the meantime, two further reports had been received of anti-Semitic violence. The Islamic community feels it is being targeted (FF).

LUC VAN BAKEL • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 30 JUNE

Mayor Patrick Janssens feels that the high number of anti-Semitic acts of violence is to be taken very seriously. But they are also the result of his call during the demonstration for people to report any case of racism. ‘I expect there to be more incidents over the next few weeks. But it is a good development. In this way we get to ascertain the size of the phenomenon,’ MP Claude Marnower hopes that the police take someone in soon. ‘It’s a matter of sending out a signal that such behaviour is no longer tolerated. Enough thresholds have already been exceeded. At football matches you already hear people chantings things like “Let’s go Jewish bashing”’. Representatives of Islamic associations have felt targeted in the last few days. Mohammed Chakkar of the Federation of Moroccan Associations feels that it is unacceptable for the Jewish community to advise the Islamic community about better education: ‘We do not have to take lessons from anyone about how to bring up our children.’ Chakkar’s remark that the Jewish community works with a hidden agenda also went down badly with many Jews. MP Marnower: ‘If that means: walking the streets in greater safety, then yes, we do have a hidden agenda. That man is pouring oil onto the fire.’

www.jewishantwerp.com
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17th century masterpieces no longer allowed to leave Flanders

These chiefly concern works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens, most of which are kept in museums and churches

In 2003 the Flemish ‘masterpieces’ decree was approved, which contains a series of protective measures for Flemish works of art. The decree aims to protect all movable heritage that is of exceptional importance for Flanders. This includes, among other things, musical, ecclesiastical and industrial heritage, the decorating arts, the Flemish Primitives, archives and documents, scientific heritage, and fine arts from the period 1789-1950. The most important stipulation in the decree is that these pieces may no longer leave Flanders. On 28 June the Government of Flanders culture minister announced a trial list of some one hundred provisionally protected pieces from the seventeenth century. These chiefly concern works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens, most of which are kept in museums and churches. Twenty-five of the items are to be found in the Royal Museum or Fine Arts in Antwerp (FF).

ERIC RINCKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 30 JUNE

 Provisional lists are being drawn up in most areas, and these will be refined over the coming months. Works are tested for their archaeological, art-historical, historical, artistic or scientific importance. Then an examination is carried out to assess whether they are rare and indispensable. With the provisional list for the seventeenth century, the recently installed advisory board can get to work. This board, the Board for the Preservation of Movable Cultural Heritage, to give it its full title, consists of experts with various backgrounds and knowledge. In six months’ time the board must have a reasoned and definitive opinion ready on the provisionally protected works from the seventeenth century, whereupon the Flemish government has a maximum of three months in which to take a decision on the definitive protection of the works of art and the collections. From that moment the subsidy regulation for conservation and restoration works is applicable. Yesterday Minister van Grembergen stressed that a co-operation model had been chosen and that the aim was not to set collectors and art dealers ‘against the decree’. The decree should be good news for everyone. If a masterpiece is not given an export permit, Flanders will be obliged to purchase. That’s where the shoe pinches somewhat as regards the financial picture. At the moment, the Flemish Community has only EUR 2.5 million at its disposal to purchase works of art. That means surprisingly little on the international art market. Two years ago Rubens’ The Murder of the Innocent Children went for EUR 79.5 million at auction. Van Grembergen was therefore talking of an ‘amount in principle’. At the moment he is looking into what possibilities a tax shelter, for example, might offer.
Diary

MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• 8 July: Suzanne Vega, Openluchttheater Rivierenhof Deurne; info: www.openluchttheater.be
• 10 July: Summertime: HNK Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy with Shostakovitch and Tchaikovksy, Concertgebouw Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
• 17 July: Summertime: Piotr Anderszewski, piano with Bach and Chopin, Concertgebouw Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be

• 11 July: De Gulden Ontsporing (The golden lapse), Celebration day of the Flemish Community, Brussels with concerts in the Ancienne Belagique, the Brussels Parliament, De Markten, The Music Villege and Brass band parades and street theatre acts; Final party on the Grande Place with Lais, Admiral Freebee, Jo Lemaire and Boudewijn De Groot; info: www.opbrussel.be
• 24 July: Summertime with Toots Thielemans Quartet, Concertgebouw, Brussels; info: www.concertgebouw.be

Summer Festivals:
• 9 to 11 July: Cactus Festival with Macy Gray, Patti Smith, Elvis Costello, Heather Nova, Sergent Garcia, M'mnewpark, Bruges; info: www.cactusmusic.be
• 15 to 25 July: Blue Note Festival, Bijloke, Ghent; Jazz with Joe Lovano Quartet, John Mc Laughlin, Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Zap Mama, Branford Marsalis Quartet, Wynston Marsalis & The Lincoln Jazz Orchestra, Marc Moulin and others; info: www.bluenotejazzfestival.com
• 16 to 18 July: Belgium Rhythm & Blues Festival, Peer (Limburg) with Bonnie Raitt, Tony Joe White, Durango, The Stripes and others; info: www.brbf.be
• 17 to 26 July: Gentse Feesten, Festival in the city centre with street theatre, acts, performances, concerts on different places; info: www.trefpunt.be
• 17 to 26 July: Polé Polé Ghent with Gabriel Rios, Los Bombenos, Los Carios, Tune, Yusa, Bonson, Dushi and others; Ghent; info: www.polepole.be
• 18 to 25 July: Knokkefestival with Admiral Freebee, Urban Trad, Flip Kowlier, The magnificent 5 and Praga Khan; Knokke-Heist; info: www.knokke-heist.be

EXPO

• Until 28 August: The Realm of the Dragon, exhibition, St Pietersabdij, Ghent
• Until 17 October: Animals in Architecture, Museum of Architecture, Brussels
• Until 5 September: Speaking Sculptures, the Songye, Museum of Africa, Tervuren; info: www.afrikamuseum.be
• Until 3 October: Marcel Breuer, Design & Architecture, exhibition CIVA, Brussels; info: www.civa.be
• Until 22 August and 5 September: SMAK exhibitions: Juan Usle, Open Rooms and Sam Durant with ‘12 Signs. Transposed and illuminated, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
• Until 1 August: The invention of Landscape, exhibition, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp; info: www.rubens2004.be

• Until 22 August: Flee from the War, historical exhibition, Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres
• Until 31 July: The Bruegel track: exhibitions on locations in Bruegel’s paintings, Brussels
• Until 5 September: Sam Durant, 12 Signs, SMAK, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be
• Until 26 September: Olympic Games for animals, Museum of natural sciences, Brussels; info: 02/627.42.38 www.natuurwetenschappen.be
• Until 26 September: The Thomas Neyrinck Collection, exhibition, Belaveemusea, Brussels; info: 070/23.37.28
• Until 18 August: Honoré d’O and Toon Tersas, Muhka, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be
• Until 27 September: The fall of the New Troy, exhibition Venetiasean-Gaanderijen, Ostend; info: 059/56.20.15
• Until 3 October: Armando, exhibition, Museum Constant Permeke, Jabbeke
• Until 12 September: Copyright Rubens, KM SK, Antwerp;
• Until 29 August: Not Done!, exhibition, MUHKA, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be
• Until 29 August: Unvarnished, photo exhibition by Carl De Keyzer, PMMK, Ostend; info: www.pmmk.be
• Until 29 August: Vic Gentils, exhibition; PMMK, Ostend; info: www.pmmk.be
• Until 30 September: Witslag, Roger Raveelmuseum, M achelen-Zul te
• Until 19 September: Scandinavian design, exhibition, the story behind the myth’, Ghent Design Museum; info: www.imudesign.org