KPMG pays 115 millions $ to LHSP shareholders

The accountants KPMG intend paying compensation of 115 million dollars to the investors who from April 1998 to November 2000 bought shares in the Flemish speech-technology firm Lernout & Hauspie (LHSP) on the American Nasdaq exchange. For this, KPMG reached an amicable settlement with the solicitors Berman DeValerio in Boston and a syndicate of let-down investors who had initiated a class action suit. They accused KPMG, which audited Lernout & Hauspie’s accounts, of being jointly responsible for the accounting fraud, aimed at pushing up artificially the price of the share. When the first reports of the embezzled figures appeared in the press, the share collapsed and the company ended up going bankrupt. In Belgium the let-down L&H shareholders united around the Deminor office. A large number of them bought their shares on the European technology exchange Easdaq. KPMG Belgium, however, is waiting for the conclusions of the criminal investigation before also considering a settlement (FF).

RENÉ DE WITTE • DE TIJD • 8 OCTOBER

The proceedings in which KPMG is implicated involve a so-called Class-Action Suit, whereby lawyers collect mandates from discontented investors who then unite in a “Class”, a syndicate. If compensation is paid, the money is divided: some for the lawyers, some for the victims. In the case of the Flemish technology firm Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products (LHSP), proceedings were initiated back in August 2000. One of the most targeted parties was LHSP’s company accountant: KPMG. The members of the Class filed a claim for some 5 billion dollars, the amount at which their shares had once been valued on the stock exchange. The syndicate and KPMG have now reached an agreement on an amicable settlement for the sum of 115 million dollars, or 2.3% of the original claim. The agreement was submitted to the US District Court of Boston for approval yesterday. Marketing and Communications Director Jos Hermans of KPMG in Belgium stressed that the settlement does not include any acknowledgement of debt. “Such a Class-Action Suit is a legal war of attrition that costs a great deal of money in the US, takes up a lot of time and continues to damage our image,” says Hermans.

WWW.KPMG.BE

INTRODUCTION

One of the tasks of the Court of Arbitration is to examine whether acts and decrees are in line with the Constitution. In the settlement of the far right Vlaams Blok and N-VA member Matthias Storme with the Anti-Discrimination Act that came into force in 2003. The Blok demanded nothing more or less than the complete annulment of the Act. The Court of Cassation did not agree to their demand, but did scrap four not unimportant passages because they appeared far from legally watertight. Certain discriminations (on the basis of race, religion, sex, age) were abolished in the Act appeared punishable, others, such as on the basis of language and political conviction, not. The Court of Arbitration emphasized that in order to maintain the legal system no longer be maintained. Furthermore, discrimination can never only be punished if someone is actually disadvantaged. In addition, the boundary between permissible freedom of speech and discrimination was made clearer. The Court is afraid that public debate will be undermined, and has therefore ordered that the dissemination of discriminatory texts is no longer a punishable offence. The legal team of the Vlaams Blok is claiming a victory for its party and for freedom of speech because discriminatory comments in texts can no longer be punished and the Act imposes stricter conditions on complaints of discrimination. The Act is also applying the fact that political conviction has also become a reason for discrimination. That will mean that Vlaams Blok members can no longer be banned from trade unions and other organisations, it claims. Strangely enough, the defenders of the Anti-Discrimination Act, Minister for Social Integration and Equal Opportunities Christian Duport (PS) and Jozef De Witte, Chairman of the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism, also called the ruling of the Court of Arbitration a victory. The minister points out that the Act has largely been retained, that its scope has even been extended and that the burden of proof has been split between perpetrator and victim. De Witte points out that the principle of reprehensible grounds - e.g., racism - which doubles the sentence, remains unchanged. Furthermore, the powers of the Centre have not only been strengthened, but also extended once again, says De Witte.

For the Vlaams Blok, which in April was convicted of being in breach of the Anti-Racism Act 1981 by the Ghent Court of Appeal, this ruling is a windfall of being in breach of the Anti-Racism Act 1981 by the Ghent Court of Appeal, this ruling is a windfall. It is asking that the Court put a preliminary question to the Court of Arbitration. This must then determine whether the Anti-Racism Act is also in breach of the Constitution and can decide the trial for a year. Electoraly that benefits the party, De Morgen (8 October) reminds us, because then it will fall within the preparations for the local elections of 2006. And as emerged from the last election results, such a trial does not harm the Blok in the least, on the contrary.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Virgin Express becomes full subsidiary of SN Brussels Air Holding
THE TWO AIRLINES WILL RETAIN THEIR OWN PROFILES AND REMAIN OPERATIONALLY INDEPENDENT

It took a year of negotiations, but they got there in the end. The two Belgian airlines, SN Brussels Airlines and Virgin Express, are to merge. The airline Virgin Express is being subsumed under SN Airholding, the parent holding of SNBA. In exchange Virgin Express Holdings (VEX), the parent company of Virgin Express, is to bring an interest of 29.9% into this holding, valued at 54 million euros. The remaining 70.1% will remain in the hands of the 35 investors (Tractebel, Fortis, Biac, ING, Dexia, etc.) set up by SN Airholding. The two airlines will retain their own profiles and remain operationally independent. Virgin Express as a low-cost airline, SNBA as a full-service carrier.

The collaboration will, however, lead to significant operational savings. It is also highly likely that the name Virgin Express will eventually disappear, since Virgin boss Richard Branson wants to reserve the name for companies where he holds the control. Finally, certain burdensome financial conditions are attached to the agreement, especially for Virgin Express [FF].

GUIDO MEEUSSEN • DE TIJD • 7 OCTOBER

Most of the synergetic effects will come from optimising the network. Virgin Express and SN Brussels Airlines are currently competing for twelve destinations. A number of routes are also clearly suffering from overcapacity. Rob Kuijpers, Chairman of SNBA, wants to have two flight plans by the start of the 2005 summer season that are perfectly attuned to each other. Co-ordinating the two networks is intended to produce a saving of 30 million. Increasing purchasing power and cutting jobs and services at group level will each produce a further 7 million euros. This should improve the operating result (EBIT) by 25 to 35 million.

For this year Virgin Express is still assuming a negative result, and SNBA is convinced it can achieve its budget, a net profit of at least 2.5 million euros. The agreement makes Virgin Express a full subsidiary of SN Airholding and gives VEX a 29.9% stake in SN Air Holding. VEX is getting two representatives on the Board of Directors, expanding this to 18 members. VEX’s voting rights are, however, limited to 24%. This does make the Virgin group the biggest individual shareholder in the holding, but it is no secret that the historical shareholders of SN Air Holding work closely together. One or two conditions are attached to the legal completion in the course of 2005, but they are not under discussion.

On 31 December 2004 Virgin Express must be entirely free of debt and its net assets must be reduced to nil. Furthermore, on that day the airline must have sufficient cash to finance its operational expenses for five days. That will require an estimated 43 million euros from the Virgin group. Virgin also wants to scrap VEX’s listing in Brussels. VEX wants to buy out investors for 1 euro per share. That is far removed from the 40.16 euros that a share cost at the company’s subscription in November 1997. Based on the put option which VEX has on its 29.9% in SN Air through the agreement, it appears that VEX is worth at most 54 million euros. But that is after the negative net assets have been settled and the debts of Virgin Express NV paid off. In the non-binding preliminary agreement of March VEX received a further put of 64 million euros on its interest of 29.9%, now therefore only 54 million. The call option of SN Air’s historical shareholders was also cut from 100 to 75 million euros. In the best case scenario the option constructions now value a Virgin share at 0.25 and 0.98 euro.

WWW.SNBA.BE
WWW.VIRGIN.BE

Restriction on alcohol advertising for young people threatens music festivals, brewers and advertising agencies

The draft Royal Decree of Minister for Health Rudy Demotte [PS], which aims to curb advertising for alcoholic drinks aimed specifically at young people below the age of sixteen, in the same way as for tobacco advertising, has encountered severe criticism. The advertising agencies fear a huge loss of income, even more so than from the ban on tobacco advertising, because alcohol’s share of the market far exceeds that of tobacco (Het Laatste Nieuws, 2 October). The brewing sector will not put up with a minister lecturing it, when for years it has observed a separate code with rules governing the advertising of alcoholic drinks. But above all the organisers of music festivals fear a massive drain on finances because beer brands could well pull out as sponsors. The Stella Artois brand, for example, which belongs to beer giant Inbev, is prominent as a sponsor at festivals such as Rock Werchter and Marktrtrock. The brand also has its own music label, namely Stella Artois Music. Another brand from the Inbev stable, Jupiter, sponsors the Belgian first-division football competition and the national football team, the Red Devils. The draft Royal Decree wants commercials banned 5 minutes before and 5 minutes after children’s programmes. Also, they must not suggest that the use of alcohol promotes social or sexual success.

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

ECONOMY
AVIATION
ALCOHOL ADVERTISING
De Post can look for a partner, the government says

In Premier Verhofstadt’s policy statement the government will allow the public company De Post to look for a private partner to help outline a strategy on the deregulated European market. De Tijd quotes the draft text of the policy statement, which explicitly calls for a ‘strategic partnership via a capital increase with industrial partners who have a long-term vision’. The restructuring which De Post is pushing through is gradually beginning to bear fruit. The first six months produced an increase in turnover (+5.6%), a drop in the EBITDA of 34 million euros and the first deficit in the group’s history (-11 million euros). The boss of the Belgian Post Office, Johny Thijs, was even recently awarded a certificate of excellence by the International Post Corporation for his international letter post sorting centre in Zaventem, the Belgian Post International. The BPI succeeded in regaining a share of the market over foreign competitors such as Spring, the Royal Mail, Deutsche Post and La Poste. Nevertheless, De Post is not performing well enough to be able to stand on its own two feet. Thijs therefore wants the go-ahead as quickly as possible to be able to start negotiations with a foreign partner, preferably before the end of 2004 (FF).

Opinion

MARC DE ROO • DE TIJD • 5 OCTOBER

The volume of post is falling by at least 3% each year, income remains stable and costs are rising. The letter is being pushed away by the e-mail and the SMS text message. Within the near future, traditional post will undoubtedly be dealt a further blow when electronic invoicing also becomes generally accepted. De Post cannot fall back on income and profits from logistical activities, like the Dutch TPG or Deutsche Post. De Post currently achieves only 40% of its turnover in a competitive environment. Over a number of years the market has been completely deregulated. Simply attempting to survive is suicide. The competitors will pick off the best bits. De Post will survive by providing a universal service. The fact that the government is giving the green light now shows that it believes the changes at De Post are going well. Everything suggests that De Post will have completed the main bulk of its restructuring by the end of next year. In this sense, the timing for the start of the search for a partner is perfect. At the end of next year the partner will be presented with a more modern Belgian Post Office. Indeed, with a weak financial structure, but that is why the government is also rightly opting for a capital increase, not for a simple sale of shares. After all, De Post urgently needs extra funds. There will undoubtedly be a large number of candidates. The Dutch Post Office announced its interest last year. Only in a majority interest, the TPG said forcefully at the time. The TPG recently acquired 25% of the Danish Post Office, so this outpouring has to be taken with a pinch of salt. Deutsche Post, Swiss Post, France’s La Poste and the Royal Mail will probably also make approaches.

www.depost.be

600 jobs to go at Volkswagen plant

In the Volkswagen plant in Vorst, 600 of the 5,750 jobs are to go, reports De Tijd (6 October). The management announced the cuts at a meeting with workers’ representatives. Of these 600, 400 are likely to find work in an external supply park, although this will have to be extended. The other 200 workers, on the other hand, would be made redundant before the end of 2004. The reorganisation plans are part of the international reorganisation that is in the air at the worldwide Volkswagen group. Last year General Manager Pischetsrieder launched a plan designed to save 4 billion euros. The main reason is poor car sales and the 20% or so overcapacity with which the group is struggling. Volkswagen builds 5 million cars a year, but has plants to build 6 million. On 6 October the news also emerged that Volkswagen had brought in senior manager Wolfgang Bernhard. Bernhard, a former consultant with McKinsey, is known for his tough restructuring. He arrives from Daimler Chrysler and will be in charge of the Volkswagen make within the group. Earlier this year the management announced that 42,000 fewer cars would be assembled in Vorst this year, so that a total of around 191,000 Volkswagen Golfs, Lunos and Audi 3s would run off the production line this year (FF).

EMMANUEL VANBRUSSEL • DE MORGEN • 7 OCTOBER

On 11 October trade unions and the management of VW Vorst will discuss how the 200 will be selected and via which social measure the redundancies will take place. The remaining 400 superfluous workers will apparently be transferred to the new ‘automotive park’, says Hedwig Declercq, trade union representative of the ABVV. That is at least if the automotive park, a large business park for the suppliers of the car plant actually appears. According to the plans that came out in February, that park should already have been ready. But because Volkswagen’s general management in Wolfsburg in Germany have not come up with the necessary investments, construction of the park has stopped. The Belgian management has promised to force a decision by the end of this year. German approval is also still required for the modernisation of the assembly division. Staff at Vorst are also waiting anxiously for the planned production which the German general management will assign each plant in mid-November. Prognoses for the plant in Vorst range from 180,000 to 230,000 cars. Finally, pressure on plant workers will be increased. The management wants to increase the productivity of each team from 300 to 340 cars a day. ‘That has to work,’ says the ABVV.

www.vv.be
The annual Voka conference took place in Ghent Conference Centre on 5 October, this time on the subject of ‘Capitalise on the ageing population’. Some 850 Flemish managers debated wage costs, the ageing population and pension schemes. Voka Chairman Ludo Verhoeven, CEO at Agfa-Gevaert, said he was ‘disillusioned’ because no progress had been made in two major socio-economic dossiers: high wage costs and early retirement. He is calling in frank terms for a wage freeze and the abolition of early retirement and time-credit. He also sees no benefit in national wage negotiations. Verhoeven claims the national average wage is outmoded because it does not take account of the differences per sector, region and between small and large enterprises (FF).

EVELYNE HENS - DE TIJD - 6 OCTOBER

Verhoeven stated that our expectations must change and be scaled down, especially given the increasing competition from Asia and Eastern Europe. He stood up for a dynamic society where daring and initiative were not punished. ‘Without this twofold change in mentality it will be impossible to create new jobs.’ And that is necessary if we want to earn an extra 9.5 billion euros a year within 25 years to be able to pay for the ageing population. Voka put forward four proposals for tackling the problem. Firstly the wage costs handicap of 8% must be done away with within three to four years. Verhoeven repeated that there was no room for wage increases, not even for automatic indexing. Secondly the financing of healthcare and pensions must be reorganised. Voka wants to abolish early retirement for a period of three to five years. It must be replaced by another system, for example with mobility pools for older workers. Finally, according to Voka, time-credit premiums must be abolished. Verhoeven questioned the current mechanism for social debate. ‘We have our doubts about the sameness of wage negotiations. That also applies to the length of the working week. Let each company and its workers choose how long they should work.’ In so saying, he took a swipe at the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (VBO) and its call for a 40-hour working week. The trade unions reacted tetchily. They announced their veto against the abolition of early retirement, time-credit premiums and automatic indexing. They also pointed out ‘that Voka is not involved in the social debate on wages and working conditions’. www.voka.be

WIM DE PRETER • DE STANDAARD • 5 OCTOBER

The link between telecoms fraud and the funding of terrorism was made some time ago by the Communications Fraud Control Association (CFCA),. ‘Terrorist organisations take full advantage of telecoms fraud to obtain funds by gaining illegal access to a network and then selling on the service,’ wrote the CFCA last year on the basis of a survey of its members. ‘In many of these call shops you’ll find most fraud techniques. They form the backbone of telecoms fraud,’ says Carlos Lowie, the Investigations & Fraud Manager of Belgacom, who was recently appointed director of the CFCA. ‘The structure of call shops indicates that it is always the same people or organisations who are behind them. Only recently the government appeared to realise that this superstructure had to be tackled. We’re talking about huge sums of money that are not declared and on which no VAT or other taxes are paid. Obviously money-laundering is also involved,’ says Lowie. As long as inspections remain one-off and local, the fraudsters will simply move, he says. In his view, therefore, the problem must be tackled internationally, more than is currently the case. www.cfca.org
Liberals put limits on multicultural society

Minister Dewael said that he would not accept women being kept at home and not being allowed to follow integration courses.

With a number of forceful comments in De Standaard (4 October), Federal Minister for Home Affairs Patrick Dewael (VLD) has stirred up ill-feeling among the representatives of this country’s immigrant community.

In the interview, Dewael said that he would not accept women being kept at home and not being allowed to follow integration courses. He also attacked the wearing of clothing that covers the whole body (the burka) and does not accept that a religion (Islam) does not accept the separation of Church and State in our democracy. Dewael claims that Flemish society needs to think about how tolerant it should actually be and distanced himself from the assumption that all cultures are equal.

Earlier this year Dewael called for a ban on the wearing of headdresses in schools and public services, in imitation of France (FF).

On Saturday in Antwerp Dewael met with his Party Chairman Bart Somers and the Flemish Minister for Integration Policy, Marino Keulen, to discuss immigrant policy. At the same time, the Liberal standpoints and actions were brought into line.

The Home Affairs minister says he still believes in diversity, but feels that immigrants should also respect borders. ‘We shall have to make that very clear to them during the integration classes, and that’s much more important than being able to speak our language.’

Ban on headdresses at school not discrimination

THE FIRST COURT RULING ON THE BANNING OF HEADDRESSES AT SCHOOLS

Barely one day after the forceful comments by the Home Affairs minister on the clothing of Moslem women in Belgium came the first court ruling on the banning of headdresses at school. Six Moslem girls from the Provinciale Handelsschool in Hasselt demanded damages of 500 euros for each day they could not wear their headdresses in class. The case of the four girls who had signed the school rules, which included the headdress ban was declared inadmissible.

There was no question of direct or indirect discrimination, he found. Religious freedom is not an absolute right, and that freedom can be subjected to restrictions that are necessary in a democratic society, states the ruling. The judge was fairly strict with the plain-tiffs: with their accusations of discrimination directed at teachers, which appeared in the press in November 2003, the Moslem girls had adversely affected the serenity of the social debate. The judge also stated that the pupils were free to sign up with another school.

The summary proceedings came about after earlier attempts at mediation - by Dewael says that the question must again be asked as to how tolerant Flemish society must be of the conduct of other cultures. Rather like the Dutch populist, Pim Fortuyn, the Home Affairs minister also believes that not all cultures are equal. According to Dewael, a number of practices from other cultures are lowering the level of civilisation of Western society.

‘The fact that in reality they do not recognise the separation of Church and State is really incompatible with living in our society. The fact that they still have forced marriages and take measures to deprive women of their freedom can no longer be tolerated.’

On Sunday evening Chairman Bart Somers announced that Saturday’s meeting with Dewael and Keulen would shortly be translated into concrete proposals in connection with a multicultural society. The three are not hiding the fact that they also want to see the Fast-Track Belgian Act repealed as quickly as possible.
Disagreement about splitting of constituency Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde

Vice-Premier Patrick Dewael believes that a credible budget deserves absolute priority in the policy statement

Scarceley had the political storm over the expansion of the courier firm DHL at Zaventem airport blown over before a new explosive dossier emerged in which the Communities are diametrically opposed. The splitting of the judicial and electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde has been a Flemish demand for forty years, but now the Flemish feel they have extra support from a ruling by the Court of Arbitration that declared the bilingual constituency on Flemish territory Halle-Vilvoorde unconstitutional. The Flemish parties have therefore already enshrined the demand in a bill and have agreed in the Flemish coalition agreement to use their numerical majority in the Federal Chamber to vote that bill. If they actually do that, they will be running the risk of the Francophones reaching for the alarm procedure. That can be done if three-quarters of their linguistic group feels that the bill will harm relations between the Communities. In that case the dossier will move to the Federal Government and if no compromise is found there, the Government will fall. The Flemish parties decided to only submit the bill after the federal policy statement on 12 October. They are giving the federal Verhofstadt government a little more time to discuss with the Francophones within the Federal Government. Vice-Premier Patrick Dewael believes, however, that a credible budget deserves absolute priority in the policy statement. In so doing, he also articulated the standpoint of the Francophone parties. In general the Liberals are not in favour of proceeding hastily. But according to acting CD&V Chairman Jo Vandeurzen, drawing up a budget cannot be an excuse for shelving the split. VLD Party Chairman Somers again reiterated that the Flemish parties cannot get around to talking with the Francophones (FF).

BART EECKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 5 OCTOBER

‘We’re hoping that a solution is found before 12 October,’ says Party Chairman Bart Somers. ‘If not, we’ll do what we have promised in the Flemish coalition agreement and table a bill that regulates the split.’ But Somers adds that that is not the end of the story. ‘If we want to achieve a result, we’ll have to talk with the Francophones anyway. If there’s a unilateral Flemish initiative the Francophones will reach for the alarm procedure and that risks bringing down the Federal Government. Then there will still be no split.’ With which the VLD is also reminding Flemish Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) and his party of their responsibility. To achieve a split of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, negotiations will have to be held anyway, is the message of the Flemish Liberals. If that fails at government level, then the CD&V, in opposition federally, will have to be brought on board. The CD&V is playing it cool for the time being. ‘We are standing by the coalition agreement. That says that a bill on the split will be submitted at the start of the political year,’ says the party spokesman. ‘For us it is about implementing a ruling of the Court of Arbitration, which does not require classic negotiations.’ The CD&V denies that in so doing it wants to bring down the Federal Government. ‘In recent weeks we’ve kept to one side so as not to complicate the federal discussions.’ At the SPA, the third biggest party involved on the Flemish side, there is already a fear of a new government crisis. ‘We hope Premier Verhofstadt can yet provide an incentive to find a solution in the State of the Union,’ says Chairman Steve Stevaert cautiously. ‘The government has to create a framework, which is then filled in by the Parliament. That is still fairly difficult. We must avoid at all costs ending up in an institutional crisis with obscure consequences.’ Premier Verhofstadt himself is still hoping for a ‘global agreement’ in his government statement.

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**SHAREHOLDERSHIP OF SN AIR HOLDING**

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Hole of 22.5 million euros at Antwerp’s social welfare centre

OCMW-chairwoman De Coninck is not discounting fraud or mismanagement

During an external audit by Ernst & Young, a comparison of the accounts of Antwerp’s OCMW (Public Social Welfare Centre) and those of Antwerp’s four hospitals revealed a hole of 22.5 million euros. The audit was commissioned by OCMW Chairwoman Monica De Coninck, who announced a large-scale clean-up operation when she took up her post in 2001. The financial well now means the OCMW budget for 2005 will have to be re-written. On top of that, the City Council has already announced that the OCMW will have to repay the debt itself, which will leave hardly any money over for policy. De Coninck is not discounting fraud or mismanagement. Earlier it had already emerged that in 2003 the independent OCMW hospitals’ deficit was 7 million more than had been estimated. The Antwerp OCMW manages a budget of 750 million euros (FF).

KURT TUERLINCKX • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN 5 OCTOBER

‘With the reorganisation we’ve started, there’s a risk that such things will happen. I really want everything to be completely sorted out. I can’t say we won’t have any more unpleasant surprises. But I hope not. We’ve now sorted out the period up to 2001. This OCMW council began in April of that year. At the time we established a number of procedures and set up an au-
dit cell. We’re now examining whether those procedures have also worked in the last three years.’ In addition to the problems with the accounts, the OCMW will bear the additional deficits of the OCMW hospitals for the years 2002-2003. ‘The hospitals’ deficit is 32 million euros, or 7 million more than estimated. We’ll bear that 7 million ourselves together with the well of 22.5 million. That could mean that because of the mistakes of the past, the OCMW will have to come up with a drastic savings plan again. We’ll find extra money by selling off the historical patrimony, saving on operating costs and cutting back on activities that are not key tasks. I don’t think staff cuts are feasible.’

www.antwerp.be

A Flemish Almodovar, please

According to Minister Anciaux the Audiovisual Fund makes too few targeted choices

On the evening of Monday 4 October, the evening before the official opening of the Ghent Film Festival, the brand-new Principal Private Secretary of Culture Minister Bert Anciaux (Spirit) held a speech which resounded long after in the Flemish audiovisual world. Normally Luckas Vander Taelen, Director of the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF), should have presented his policy document. But at the insistence of the minister himself that was postponed and he had his PPS cast doubt on the subsidy policy of the Flemish feature film, which he feels provides insufficient quality because the VAF makes too few targeted choices. Anciaux is wondering aloud why Flanders has failed to produce an Almodovar or a Lars von Trier. The next day Vander Taelen stood up for himself in the press (FF).

WARD DAENEN • DE MORGEN • 6 OCTOBER

‘I’m no great fan of the funds,’ Anciaux immediately concedes in an interview with De Morgen. ‘Despite this I believe that in the past two years the Audiovisual Fund has done some good work. The VAF is running properly.’ But in fact the culture minister expects more. ‘No one in the film sector is dissatisfied, but no one is wildly enthusiastic. That makes me ask questions. Yes, there is De zaak Alzheimer [The Alzheimer Case], a magnificent film, but one swallow doesn’t make a summer. I’m shocked that the film sector is reacting so tetchily. And so defensively. I actually want to start a debate.’ Bert Anciaux wants the debate to focus on how the VAF should search for a cinematographic equal of Anne Teresa De Keersmaker (dance), Luc Tuymans (visual arts) and Philippe Herreweghe (music). ‘I’m hoping for a strong, personal approach that can make the difference. The policy has to make feature films. ‘An Almodóvar,’ parries Vander Taelen, ‘do you think we’re not looking for one! I invite the minister to come and see what’s in the pipeline before he criticises how the Fund works. Should I name a few names of directors and scriptwriters who are currently busy with projects? Fien Troch, Frank van Mechelen, Miel van Hoogenbemt, Patrice Toye, Dorothée Van den Berghe, Felix Van Groeningen, Alex Stockman. I agree not all these names ring a bell, but I hope they will be doing within a few years. Not only in Flanders, but also in Europe. No, when Minister Anciaux says he wants a break with trends, that means he’s not expecting salvation from these promising film-makers. That’s a particular shame, because I can see potential on an international level.’ Luckas Vander Taelen hopes in time to overcome the polarisation between the Flemish popular film - for which read: the film a lot of people go to make - and the director’s film. The VAF Director has another argument with which to defend his two-track popular film-director’s film policy: ‘Because De zaak Alzheimer did so well, we’ll recover part of the government’s investment [250,000 of the 750,000 euros invested]. Anyone who claims to continue to finance both the widely
distributed popular film and give chances to cinematic show-pieces needs money. Not just from the government - the VAF is able to distribute 12.5 million euros each year - but also private money. Both Anciaux and Vander Taelen agree that more private money should be put into film. Unfortunately, Anciaux did not yet know how to actually achieve that.

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **5 to 16 October:** *Filmfestival Ghent* with concentrations on the impact on film; retrospective Attenborough, previews and World Cinema, Kinepolis Ghent, Studio Skoop, Sphinx, Capitole, Film-Plaats and Vooruit; info: www.filmfestival.be
- **6 to 16 October:** *South Africa, ten years after the apartheid*, exhibitions, debates, concerts, de Vooruit, Ghent; info: vooruit.be
- **8 to 15 October:** *The Crying Body by Jan Fabre*, curators De Deij, Théâtre de la Ville (Paris), Tramway (Glasgow) and Teatro Off (Milan), De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **10 to 11 October:** *Opera: Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi, director: Robert Wilson, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.demunt.be
- **12 October:** *Color Tango Orquesta (Argentina)* Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- **13 October:** *Oxalys with Debruyze, Schönberg and Mahler*, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **15 October:** *Andrew Staar and Christine Schornsheim (harpischord) with Luz Martin Schornsheim (harpsichord) with Luisa Martin (flute)* Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- **15 October:** *Liturgic Songs from Istanbul*, Turkey, Bozar, Brussels, info: www.bozar.be
- **16 October:** *Bart Blanca*, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be
- **17 October:** *Medeski Martin & Wood*, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24
- **18 October:** *BVSC presents Ibrahim Ferrer, Royal Circus*, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00
- **19 October:** *Zita Swoon*, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- **20 October:** *Claus Raible Trio feat. Ed Thiagen*, De Hopper, Antwerp, info: 0475/55.06.02
- **20 October:** *Champ d’action and Josse De Pauw, Nono*, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be
- **20 October:** *Neut*.performance by Anne Wolf/Max Blesin Quartet*, Flagey, Brussels; info: 02/507.82.00
- **21 October:** *Richard Galliano ‘Piazzolla Forever’*, De Munt, Brussels; info: 070/23.69.78
- **22 October:** *Danel im Herbst. 2 and 3* with compositions by Charles Mingus, Terry Riley and Steve Reich, CC Hasselt, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
- **23 October:** *Kronos Quartet*, Museum of Architecture, Brussels; info: info: 02/476.99.79
- **24 October:** *Mariinski Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev with Chostakovski and Tchaikovsky*, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **27 October:** *Jan Michiels (piano)* with Dvorak, Janacek and Ligeti, Concertgebouw, Brussels; info: www.concertgebouw.be

**Diary**

**EXPO**

- Until 17 October: *Animals in Architecture*, Museum of Architecture, Brussels
- Until 10 October: *Open air exhibition with sculptures by Rik Poot in Vilvoorde; www.vilvoorde.be*
- Until 27 February: *Tattoo, exhibition, Royal Museum for Art and History, Cinquantenaire, Brussels; info: 02/741.72.11 or www.kmkg.be*
- Until 16 January: *Exhibition: Mothers, goddesses and saints from prehistory until the end of the Ottoman empire*, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- Until 28 November: *Luc Delvaux & TOP Office – Values, Musée, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be*
- Until 24 October: *Lux. photographies by Kris De Witte*, Caermersklooster, Ghent; info: www.caermersklooster.be
- 13 October to 16 January: *Karel Appel, exhibition. Rudi Fuchs on a journey through the art of the low countries*, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- Until 19 december: *Alphaville?, exhibition by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (Fr)*, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

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