Flanders is the most fragmented region in Europe

Satellite images from the European Environment Agency reveal Flanders to be the European region that has suffered the highest degree of parcelisation. The figures also tell the tale. Built-up areas account for 25.1% or 3,999 km² of the surface area of Flanders. In Wallonia this figure is 2,271 km², or 13.5% of the total surface area. Open space has thus become a very scarce commodity in Flanders, and although the responsible authorities have been aware of this for some time, this has apparently not prevented its fragmentation from increasing still further since 1990, as evidenced by the annual Flanders Environment and Nature Report. The Flanders Structural Plan, which is designed to protect open spaces, has to a large degree remained theoretical, concludes the Association for a Better Environment (BBL), and according to warnings from this environment organisation, things risk getting worse (FF).

TOM YSEBAERT • DE STANDAARD • 26 NOVEMBER

With the aid of satellite images, the European Environment Agency has drawn up digital maps reflecting land use in 31 European countries. The results show that Belgium, and in particular Flanders, comes out on top in respect of fragmentation, followed by Luxembourg and Germany. A comparison between maps from 1990 and 2000 shows a worsening of the situation, a development confirmed by the annual Flanders Environment and Nature Report. Apart from having a devastating effect on scarce open spaces, the passion for parcelisation is also detrimental to flora and fauna. Nature reserves are being isolated, and this has an adverse effect on biodiversity. Animal species such as roe deer are no longer able to move from one area to another. The Association for a Better Environment, the umbrella body of the Flemish environment movement, paints a gloomy picture. ‘The Structural Plan made an attempt to demarcate urban and outlying areas more strictly,’ says Erik Grietens. ‘Concentration and infill development were advocated. But it didn’t get past the theoretical stage. The latest policy letter from the Flemish Government Town and Country Planning Minister Dirk Van Mechelen (VLD) states that the distinction between urban and outlying areas is being abandoned. That means even more development, even more extension of residential areas, and even more fragmentation.’ Grietens is also bracing himself for the moment when old parcelisation agreements, dating from before the regional plans, are dusted down again. These relate to plots falling within nature reserves and agricultural areas.

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INTRODUCTION

A large part of the tax ‘decoupling’ (splitting of incomes) for married couples promised in 2001 and the widening of the allowance for two children, will not be deducted from the advance company levy in 2005, according to a report in De Standaard on 24 November. Via this advance levy, which the company Withholds every month on the gross wage and paid out in two instalments, only 35% of this part of the promised tax cut is being implemented. The taxpayer will only receive the remaining 65% upon entry onto the assessment register in 2007, when the final settlement of account. Other parts of the tax reform – the abolition of the crisis tax and the indexation of the tax scales – are being implemented in full via the advance company levy. The paper concludes that this will mean large groups of taxpayers not feeling the effect of the tax reform fully in 2005, but only in 2007, and immediately sets this down in clear, easy-to-understand language. What it actually amounts to is a married couple with two children granting the State an interest-free loan of EUR 900 for two years.

Prime Minister Verhofstadt was ‘livid’ at this report, because he says it gave the impression that the whole tax reform was at risk. The paper also allegedly distorted his words when he answered a parliamentary question (see p. 6). His party chairman Bart Somers even talked of ‘inaccurate reporting’, which undermined Belgium’s economic recovery. For, as Verhofstadt went on to say, the tax cut is more and no less than the motor for economic recovery, and he made explicit reference to the latest IMF report (De Tijd, 23 November).

It should come as no surprise that this subject is such a touchy one with the Prime Minister. The tax cut is the showpiece of his Liberal VLD and of the MR, the party of Finance Minister Neyttaers. For him the report came at a bad time, too. In the current round of talks between the two sides of industry on a new interprofessional agreement, the government is hoping, together with the employers, to be able to mitigate the trade unions’ wage demands. The reasoning is that the tax cut means that the purchasing power of salaried employees has already increased, appreciably, so wage increases are actually no longer necessary. However, it now appears that in 2005 the amount of this tax cut will be EUR 1 billion less than the Prime Minister promised. De Standaard, accused of disinformation, gave as good as it got. It’s not only that, it added, the prime minister altered the paper, but about the principle that administrators can sell their illusions as truth. What is more, it is shocking that they assume that the subject is too complex and that therefore all is needed is to put up a frame of a smoke screen to be put up so that voters give up on the matter. Finally, the whole business also poses how drastic the government measure has become. Because there is no more money, only 35% of this part will be implemented via the advance company levy in the coming year. In 2006, Verhofstadt now concedes. The more reason to exclude the possibility of another tax reform, the Liberals are dreaming about aloud, concludes the paper.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief

HTTP://ORG.EEA.EU.INT
Demotte makes savings of 238 million in health care

Demotte wants to impose uniform fixed prices for certain routine operations (e.g. removal of an appendix or a hip replacement) in all hospitals.

The Federal Government has approved a package of economy measures for the health care sector. On 24 November the man behind the plan, Social Affairs Minister Rudy Demotte (PS), gave the press an explanation of his plan to make savings to the tune of EUR 238 million. Demotte wants to impose uniform fixed prices for certain routine operations (e.g. removal of an appendix or a hip replacement) in all hospitals. The aim is to get rid of the enormous price differences between hospitals. An ‘all-in reference amount’ will henceforth apply to these operations and to the relevant pre- and post-operative examinations. If a hospital charges more, it will have to pay that amount itself. Demotte is thereby continuing a long trail blazed by his predecessor Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA), who introduced the system. Cutbacks will also be made in the oversupply of extremely expensive equipment in hospitals, such as scanners. Demotte is also freezing the indexing of doctors’ fees, but may still pay this out if it emerges that the doctors are observing a stricter prescription behaviour. Half of the savings, EUR 115 million, will be made in the pharmaceutical sector, however. Antibiotics, anti-depressants and anti-inflammatory medications will from now on be reimbursed to a lower degree and the whole sector will be subject to an additional levy of EUR 27 million (FF).

DIRK CASTREL • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 25 NOVEMBER

A number of medicines are to be reclassified from reimbursement category B to category C, from 1 June (in the case of antibiotics) and from 1 July (anti-depressants). In category B 75% of the price is reimbursed by the health insurance system, whereas category C medications are only reimbursed to the tune of 50% (subject to a maximum amount of EUR 17 per patient). For antibiotics, the measure does not apply to widows, orphans, disabled persons and old-age pensioners. Not all anti-inflammatory medications are equally effective. For most people, the amount in the price that the patient actually has to pay will go up from 1 July 2005. By the middle of next year the ‘all-in reference amount’ will be introduced in all hospitals for a number of operations. At the moment it is already applicable to 16 surgical operations (groin hernia, gall bladder, hip and knee replacements, etc.) and 11 special treatments (brain haemorrhage, heart attack, etc.). This number is being significantly increased. The Multi-partite, made up of doctors, mutual insurance companies and hospitals, will determine the number and price for each operation. Hospitals that ask for more than 21% more than the reference prices now already applicable, had to pay back the excess amount since 2003. But the complex system means that so far nothing has been paid back.

In consultation with the hospitals, Demotte wants to review the planning for equipment such as scanners. The intention is for rules to be laid down per ‘care region’ (determined on the basis of the population density and needs). According to Demotte, not every hospital should have to offer the same range of care services. He advocates greater cooperation and less competition between the clinics.

WWW.RUDYDEMOTTE.BE

Leterme sticks to a split of the health care system

The health insurance funds reacted with satisfaction to the announcement of Demotte’s savings plan. They state that the savings will not be made at the cost of the patient. There will be no price increase for home visits and the amount the patient pays for antibiotics is not being subject to a linear rise. The pharmaceutical industry is a lot less happy with the package of measures. Not only is it being saddled with the bill for the bulk of the savings, but from now on it will assume greater financial responsibility in the event of budget overruns and the promotion of inexpensive or generic medicines. Leo Neele, general manager of Pharma.be, is refusing to negotiate any further with minister Demotte, and is now only prepared to talk to Prime Minister Verhofstadt (VLD). The doctors’ reaction is one of ‘wait and see’. Marc Moens, chairman of the doctors’ unions, does have serious worries about prescription behaviour being linked to doctor accreditation and the related fees. Flemish hospitals already previously criticised minister Demotte’s refusal to tackle the wayward expenditure of Wallon hospitals. On this point they are backed by Flemish Government Welfare Minister Inge Vervotte (CD&V) and Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD &V). Vervotte and Leterme want to make health care an area for which Flanders has competence. The Minister-President feels that it is not only a financial question, but that Flanders should be able to pursue its own health policy. He therefore wants to place the splitting of the health care sector on the agenda for the discussions between the federal government and the regions in the Forum for state reform.

WWW.PHARMA.BE

DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENDITURE FOR HEALTH CARE

By Dirk Castrel

Please provide a specific question or task related to the content of the image, and indicate the context or field if needed. This will help me provide a more accurate response.
De Gucht, Verhofstadt and Kabila close diplomatic incident

On Saturday 20 November the summit on the Great Lakes Region in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, was the scenario for a diplomatic incident between the Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister De Gucht (VLD) and Congolese President Kabila. The latter refused to meet De Gucht as a member of a European Union delegation. De Gucht was thereby paying the price for the remarks he had made after his first visit to Congo, about the leadership of that country. On that occasion De Gucht let slip that he had met few leaders who had made a major impression on him. De Gucht’s reaction, and a little later that of Prime Minister Verhofstadt (VLD), was not long in coming. The Premier summoned the Congolese ambassador in Brussels and made it clear that such an incident was unacceptable (FF).

WIM VANDEN VELDEN • DE TIJD • 23 NOVEMBER

A spokesman explained that according to the Prime Minister, the refusal to speak to a Belgian minister is equivalent to a refusal to speak to the Belgian government. Verhofstadt stressed that Belgium wanted to play the role of pioneer in the European Union and the international community in order to give Congo the necessary attention and support. But Verhofstadt also stressed the responsibility of the Congolese leaders. ‘Now that the transition period is at a crucial moment with the prospect of elections, the Congolese population deserves a leadership that continues to assume its responsibility, as well as further international support and encouragement’.

The Congolese ambassador Jean-Pierre Mutamba, said on leaving the Prime Minister’s office that the ‘misunderstanding’ had been cleared up. He played down the summons. ‘The Prime Minister wanted to give me a message for President Kabila and he confirmed Belgium’s willingness to support Congo in the democratisation process’, he explained. Mutamba also pointed out that Karel De Gucht had never been persona non grata in Kinshasa.

The Congolese Foreign Affairs Minister Ramazani Baya attributed President Kabila’s refusal to meet minister De Gucht in Dar Es Salaam to agenda problems. He added that De Gucht was welcome in Kinshasa.

Impressive trade mission to China

Led by Prince Philippe and the Belgian Foreign Trade minister Marc Verwilghen (VLD), a delegation of 330 Belgian businessmen is currently on a visit to China

China’s spectacular breakthrough in the international economy and the very low wages have made the country a magnet for foreign investments. Last year alone it attracted investments to the tune of USD 54 billion. For many companies China offers the ideal environment for the outsourcing of certain activities. But China imports as much as it exports, and therefore a gigantic market is opening up for Belgian and other companies. European and other steel producers can talk about that. Due to the exploding Chinese demand, they have been able to up their selling prices substantially.

Led by Prince Philippe and the Belgian Foreign Trade Minister Marc Verwilghen (VLD), a delegation of 330 Belgian businessmen is currently on a visit to China. The Flemish Government’s Foreign Trade Minister Fientje Moerman (VLD) is also in the party. After all, for large Flemish companies but also for SMEs, this trade mission is a unique opportunity to explore the Chinese market. In all, the schedule includes a signing of seven cooperation agreements, eight seminars on high technology, the environment and the Belgian services sector, and around 80 individual meetings with Chinese counterparts. On Sunday 21 November the prince and princess visited the Forbidden City and were able to admire the Flemish Barco technology, which helps to bring the cultural heritage here to the outside world (FF).

DE STANDAARD • 22 NOVEMBER

Together with a Japanese company Barco designed and installed a theatre for virtual reality. People can see a three-dimensional projection of parts of the Forbidden City, which are not accessible to the public. Built in 1420 and located in the centre of Beijing, the Forbidden City is an enormous complex that has served as the residence for 24 emperors. The prince and princess, accompanied by federal Economic Affairs Minister Marc Verwilghen (VLD) and the Walloon Minister-President Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberge (PS), were given a three-dimensional insight into the complex. The theatre is an excellent example of Barco’s success in China. ‘Since 2001 the company’s growth has tripled in China’, says Managing Director China, Frank Christiaens. ‘The Chinese market now represents five to six percent of Barco’s worldwide turnover’. The first plant for research and development and production was established in China in September 2003. By the end of this year Barco wants to have ten offices in the country.

Barco is involved in all major infrastructure projects in China, from utilities, hospitals and airports to Olympic stadiums for the Beijing Games in 2006, and the Formula 1 circuit in Shanghai.

www.export.vlaanderen.be
www.ffio.com
The Vlaams Belang: a new party or not?

According to the Speaker of the Parliament De Batselier (SP.A), the Vlaams Belang must now choose between its principles and its funding

The Vlaams Belang, the successor to the Vlaams Blok, is faced with a dilemma. According to a memorandum from the legal department of the Flemish Parliament, the Vlaams Belang is not eligible for the monthly allocation of EUR 137,000 that the Vlaams Blok was entitled to claim. If the Vlaams Belang is a new party, it has to wait until after the next Flemish elections (in 2009) before it can claim an allocation. If the Vlaams Blok (the party that was convicted of racism) has not been dissolved, then it is entitled to this sum. The Belang is thus faced with a problem. When the question was put to him in the Flemish Parliament on 22 November, Filip Dewinter was, unusually for him, stuck for an answer. On 10 November in that same Flemish Parliament, he had declared that the Vlaams Blok had been disbanded and that a new party had been founded: the Vlaams Belang. The same line was heard at the party’s ‘founding conference’. On 23 November Dewinter did have an explanation ready. In the legal/technical sense, nothing had changed. The ‘de facto association had not been dissolved’. According to the Speaker of the Parliament De Batselier (SP.A), the Vlaams Belang must now choose between its principles and its funding (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT • DE TIJD • 24 NOVEMBER

The question of funding came up for discussion on 23 November during the meetings of the parliamentary groups. The VLD group subsequently called on the other factions ‘immediately’ to stop the debate on the financing of the Vlaams Belang. ‘Otherwise we’ll be heading into a kind of new trial that could last weeks’, said parliamentary party chairperson Patricia Ceyzens. ‘Defining dissolution and legal success-

INTEGRATION POLICY

Man who threatened Mimount Bousakla exposed

at a press conference the muslim executive reacted indignantly to the death threats. the executive took also the opportunity to criticise politicians and journalists who generalise such individual excesses

The man (Philippe D.C.) who threatened to kill SPA senator Mimount Bousakla has been caught and has confessed. It turns out that he is not a dangerous Islamic terrorist, but an unemployed textile worker from Ghent who has converted to Islam and was operating on his own. He is married to a Moroccan woman and has two children. On 13 November D.C. called the secretariat of the Antwerp branch of the SPA and then, during a heated conversation, said he would murder Mimount Bousakla. He did not get to talk to Bousakla herself. The police traced D.C. by an analysis of the telephone calls. ‘After his arrest the man said that he found Bousakla’s comments (inter alia concerning the abolition of the Muslim Executive, ed.) inflammatory and intolerant. He wanted to bring her round to a different way of thinking’, said Dominique Reyniers, spokesperson for the Antwerp public prosecutor’s office. According to the public prosecutor’s office, D.C. joined the Arab European League (AEL) in 2002, via the Internet. AEL chief executive Dyab Abou Jahjah denies this. In recent months he has been chiefly active as a ‘chatter’ on Islamic websites such as the Dutch site Imaan.nl. Philippe D.C. risks three months’ to two years’ imprisonment for verbal threats. Mimount Bousakla expressed her relief.

It was also feared that the attack last Thursday that led to the death of a Hasidic Jew in Antwerp was racially motivated, although there is much to indicate that this was in fact not the case. At a press conference on Friday the Muslim Executive and the General Council of Muslims of Belgium (ARM.B) reacted indignantly to the death threats aimed at politicians. In addition to Mimount Bousakla, Laurrette Onkelinx (PS Minister of Justice) and Philippe Moureaux (Mayor of Moleneek) had also received threats. The official body representing Muslims in Belgium also condemned the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh. But the Executive also took the opportunity to criticise politicians and journalists who generalise such individual excesses, painting the whole Muslim community with the same brush. Interior Minister Patrick Dewaet (VLD) came in for special criticism. With his tough talking and radical security measures, he is lumping the Muslim Executive into the same category as the Vlaams Belang, in the opinion of deputy chairman Kisaali.
The gulf between Muslims and the autochthonous population in this country

Although we are still a long way from the climate of war prevailing in the Netherlands, the last few days have shown that little is needed for the atmosphere between the native population and Islamic community to turn forbidding. Even though De Morgen feels that it is less in the nature of Flemings to let themselves be tempted into excesses of violence. But those who set themselves the goal of pitting the indigenous population and Muslims against each other are having an easy time of it at the moment, concludes De Standaard.

There is a total lack of knowledge of each other’s customs and sensibilities, and there is also very little interaction between Muslim immigrants and locals. Therefore the paper has prepared a major series on Islam in Belgium in order to help do away with the large amounts of incorrect information doing the rounds and a number of persistent misconceptions (FF).

Opinion

BART STURTEWAGEN • DE STANDAARD • 17 NOVEMBER

It is estimated that there are 400,000 Islamites among us. That is at most 4% of the Belgian population. The two largest groups are the North Africans and the Turks, and more than half of them live in Brussels. There and in other cities they are highly visible in the streets, and this gives many people the impression that the country is pretty much being taken over by Islam. On the other hand, immigrants’ organisations complain that they are constantly the target of clichés and generalisations. All efforts to integrate, and in particular not to be conspicuous, are pointless because the discrimination, especially on the job market, is still there, they claim. That would be one explanation, even a justification, for the unruliness of immigrant youths, backwardness at school, harassment and other disruptive behaviour.

What should be done with this impasse of ever greater misconceptions? We should give up the illusion that it is all just a question of more good will. If we all do our best, we’ll overcome the problem. That noble story has come to an end. Praiseworthy initiatives are under way. Mosque associations invite locals during the month of fasting and to the Sugar Feast. That is an enriching experience. But at the same time it evokes a feeling of immeasurable distance. Even when you have contact with these moderate-minded people, the enormous difference between two worlds is strikingly apparent. Never again will it be simple. Pious calls for tolerance only have a limited impact. The need for a powerful approach to tackle misbehaviour and mechanisms of structural disadvantage can no longer be denied. The first challenge is to separate facts from fabrication and prejudices.

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 20 NOVEMBER

Less than a century ago the Netherlands split into socio-political blocks on account of impassioned theological discussions on correct interpretations of Biblical details which members of the Reformed Church and a strict branch of that same Church collected into their Utmost Right. That absolutist line in thought is typically Dutch. If a majority feels that tolerance and forbearance are perfectly right, then it is also immediately proclaimed as absolute doctrine and followed through to its most far-reaching consequences. Now the pendulum has swung the other way. Is the fact that a number of fundamentalists have chosen to spoil things reason enough immediately to turn pro-Fortuyn (in the best-case scenario) or put a lighted match to a mosque (in the worst)? In Flanders, which is Catholic by tradition and therefore flexible in doctrine, and has considerable experience in resourcefulness and compromise, we should for the time being consider ourselves fortunate. For the time being.

**Belgian Muslim Population**

77 Mosques in Brussels Region

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<thead>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Sint-Jans-Molenbeek</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaarbeek</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderlecht</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sint-Joost-ten-Noode</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sint-Gillis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsene</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sint-Agatha-Berchem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koekelberg</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorst</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evere</td>
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162 Mosques in Flanders

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<th>Turkish</th>
<th>Pakistani</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Flanders</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Flanders</td>
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<td>/</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limburg</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tax cut in advance levy postponed again**

On 12 October Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) expressly declared in his government policy statement that the government would fully implement the tax reform which would reach cruising speed from next year. This also applied to the tax cut in the advance company levy, the tax withheld every month from the gross wage and forwarded directly to the tax office. In reply to a parliamentary question, the Prime Minister assured the House that the reduction in the advance company levy would be applied in full from 1 January 2005. But according to De Standaard, a circular published on 23 November reveals that the tax-free sum for married couples is put on a par with that of single persons, and that the lower tax brackets of 30 to 40% have again not been made wider, as a result of which net taxable incomes of EUR 16,800 and more are paying EUR 200 too much in advance company levy. Taxpayers are reimbursed excess tax paid in the advance levy of 2004 and 2005 only in 2006 and 2007, respectively. Two-income households are therefore granting the State an interest-free loan of EUR 1,789, according to the paper’s calculations (FF).

**Luc Coppens • De Standaard • 24 November**

Next year an average couple with two incomes and two dependent children will pay EUR 900 more tax than is necessary. This year that figure was EUR 885. That therefore amounts to two successive interest-free loans to the government in order to keep the budget balanced.

Divorced parents with a dependent child have already been waiting more than two years for their advance levy to be adapted to the new tax rules. Next year, too, they will still have to make do with the old scales. And then there are the pensioners. In the spring of this year the government adapted Article 35 of the Income Tax Code so that a family pension can henceforth be split in proportion to ‘the individual entitlements that each partner has built up separately’. In this way they can also enjoy the full ‘splitting of incomes’ that was introduced for newly retired people at the beginning of this year. But with this adaptation no account was taken of the calculation of the advance company levy either.
**ECONOMY AND CULTURE**

**BANKS**

**KBC wants to dispose of Almanij holding company**

The bank-cum-insurer KBC is looking into simplifying its group structure, whereby Almanij, the holding company that controls 67.2% of KBC, would disappear. Seventy percent of Almanij is in the hands of three reference shareholders: the Farmers' Union (Boerenbond), the cooperative Cera and Almancoa shareholders and a number of family shareholders such as Vlerick, Donck, Vanden Avenne, Sabbe and Collin. The consequence of this anchorage is that the free float, the percentage of negotiable shares in KBC, is limited. KBC's low share price and its low weighting in indices, is attributed to this. The unwieldy shareholder structure reportedly puts off Anglo-Saxon investors. According to De Standaard, the new structure should be completed by next year (FF).

**PASCAL DEN DOOVEN • DE STANDAARD • 22 NOVEMBER**

In the plan at hand, a public exchange bid by KBC for Almanij or a merger between the two will lead to there being a single structure within the Almanij-KBC group, and the intermediate holding company Almanij disappearing. The intention is for this to happen before the end of the year, before the period (from 1 January to 30 June) begins during which Cera cooperative members can leave the group. The disappearance of an unnecessary intermediate holding company will simplify KBC’s structure, the number of free negotiable shares will increase considerably, and the KBC will be able to claim its place in European indices such as the EuroStoxx 50 or gain in importance on other indices. The group will also become more attractive for Anglo-Saxon investors.

A more flexible group should also enable KBC to take advantage of the rapidly changing European banking sector. The idea is that after the exchange operation 50% of KBC will be in permanent hands. International investors see the current structure as complex and even smacking of provincialism. The sharing of power between the Flemish families and the Farmers' Union is the result of the merger in 1998 between Kredietbank, Cera and ABB.

After this merger Almanij remained the pivotal umbrella entity and Almanij also controlled the holding company Gevaert and the Luxembourg bank Kredietbank Luxembourggoise (KB Lux). KB Lux is the linchpin of Almanij’s private banking activities and has built up an international network. Behind the scenes specialists are working out the technically correct way for the structural simplification to be carried out. This consists either in an exchange bid by KBC for Almanij or a merger between KBC and Almanij with one holding company disappearing. The simplification also makes provision for an exchange bid being made for Kredietbank Luxembourggoise, resulting in KB Lux becoming a fully-fledged subsidiary of KBC. At the moment KB Lux is a sister bank.

www.kbc.be

www.almanij.be

**EXHIBITION**

**Goya prints in the Jakob Smits Museum in Mol**

Between 1810 and 1820 the famous Spanish painter Francisco Goya y Lucientes made eighty etchings on the horrors of war (Los desastres de la guerra). The series of etchings portrayed the brutality and harshness of the war that Spanish townspeople and countryfolk fought between 1808 and 1814 against Napoleon’s occupying army. After having worked for a period as the celebrated head painter at the Spanish royal household, Goya, who had since become deaf, became increasingly critical of the abuses and wrongs in the society in which he lived. On account of the biting satire of his etchings and his belief in an authentic artistic vision, he is sometimes called the first of the Moderns. Some critics say that his uncompromising portrayal of his era even ushered in the beginning of nineteenth-century realism. The ‘Desastres’ were not even published during Goya’s lifetime. Goya's cutting indictment did not stand a chance among the Spanish restoration after the French had been driven out. They were only published in 1863. The same fate had befallen the earlier series of Caprichos, in which he targeted human weaknesses. They were printed, but were withdrawn from the trade after only a few days. The small Jakob Smits Museum in Mol is currently exhibiting a collection of prints from the Museo del Grabado de Goya (The Goya Print Museum) in Fuentodos, in the north of Spain - the town where the painter was born (FF).

**JAN VAN HOVE • DE STANDAARD • 24 NOVEMBER**

After nearly two centuries the Desastres have lost none of their impact. Today’s art lover, confronted with images of violence almost every day, still gapes open-mouthed at the explosion of cruelty and barbarity that Goya recorded in his prints. Graphic virtuosity here is at the service of a message that the onlooker receives like a slap in the face. Pessimism about the human condition holds sway.

The first 47 prints consist of scenes from the civil war. We see torture and rape, fighting and executions. A peasant carves into some French soldiers with a hatchet. A soldier leans back in satisfaction, after stringing a man up. Bodies are cut into pieces, and one man, already dead, is also castrated - just for safety’s sake. A soldier is vomiting on the battlefield. ‘Behold, human beings’, Goya seems to be saying. Goya accompanied his etchings with explanatory captions, such as ‘There’s no point in crying’, ‘What foolishness’, ‘Poor mother’, or ‘This does not bear watching’ - as if the images in themselves did not pack enough of a punch.

A smaller section of the series is devoted to the famine in Madrid, which Goya himself experienced. The contrast between the scruffy beggars and the well-fed townspeople who witness the suffering unmoved, speaks volumes. The final etchings, in which Goya mainly targets the clergy, concern the abuses in Spain after the departure of the French. Writing donkeys, flesh-eat-
Diary
MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• Until 16 January: Turkish Festival, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 30 November: Lambchop, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: 09/265.91.65 www.handelsbeurs.be
• 30 November: Carmen by Georges Bizet, State Opera of Bucharest, Timisoara; Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.verbredenburg.be
• 30 November: Blindman & Mondriaan Quartet (B/NL); Zorn, Goebbels, Andriessen, Maier, Sleatham, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be
• 1 to 9 December: Vooruit Geluid Festival ‘Etoiles Polaires’ with Shamaan, King Island Drummers, Olga Chonka (Siberia), Jaqaur (Iceland), Think of One Meets Nunavik Inuit throat Singers, Karanova, Kira Kiru, Mugun, Helvits Microphonia, Trabant, Aappar Organ Quartet and others; Vooruit, Ghent; info: www.vooruit.be
• 30 November: William Conway/Spiegel String Quartet
• 2 December: Joe McPhee Quartet
• 4 December: Akis Ensemble conducted by Mustafa Dogan Dikmen; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 4 December: Muammer Ketencoglu & his Zeybek Ensemble; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 4 December: Abdel Rahman el Bacha (piano) with 3 sonatas by van Beethoven, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 4 and 5 December: Volksbühne am Rosa Luxemburg Platz (D), René Pollesch Pablo in der Plusfiillale; Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaiunteilnet.nl
• 4 December: Proyeccion Latina, Zuidershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuidershuis.be
• 1 December: Academisch Staatsymfonieorkest conducted by Mark Gorenstein, Elisabethzaal, Antwerp; info: 0900/00311
• 1 December: Quatuor Mosaïques/Wolfgang Meyer (clarinet) with Mozart, Schumann and Brahms; De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 2 December: National Orchestra conducted by Mikko Franck, Pierre-Laurent Aimard (piano) with piano concertos 1 and 2 by van Beethoven and Symphony by Brahms; info: www.bozar.be
• 2 December: Beethoven Academy/William Conway/Spiegel String Quartet with Leja, Sajay and van Beethoven; De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 2 December: Baiba Skride & Lauma Skride with Brahms, Schnittke, Reid and Schubert, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
• 2, 3 and 4 December: Kassandra/speaking in twelve voices, Jenette & Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Rosas, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 2, 3 and 4 December: Christoph Marthaler, with ZT Hollandia, Seemannslied/oper hoop van zegen, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 3 December: Aki Ensemble conducted by Mustafa Dogan Dikmen; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 3 December: Muammer Ketencoglu & his Zeybek Ensemble; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 4 December: Abdel Rahman el Bacha (piano) with 3 sonatas by van Beethoven, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 4 December: Omar Sosa Quintet (Cuba), Jazz, Flagey, Brussels; info: www.flagey.be
• 5 December: Beethoven: Orchestral National collection conducted by Mikko Franck, Antti Siirila (piano) with piano concerto nr 3 by van Beethoven and symphony by Brahms; info: www.bozar.be
• 6 and 7 December: Mustafa Kaplan & Filiz Sizanli; Taldance company Dolap & Sek; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 6 December: Choir and Orchestra College VOCAL KOLEGIUM VOCALIEN conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, Weihnachtsoratorium by JS Bach; De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 7 December: Les Banquets Nomades, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
• 8 December: Thierry Robin & Gulabi Sapera (France/India), Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
• 8 December: Sofaa (Burkina Faso), Zuiidershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiidershuis.be
• 8 December: Joe McPhee Quartet (jazz); De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 9 to 12 December: Cindy Van Acker – Compagnie Greffe (CH), Balk: 00:49 (Dance), Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaiakteater.be
• 10 December: Eroica by van Beethoven, Symphonic Orchestra Flanders, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be

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• With thanks to: Concentra nv, De Vijtv, nv, Vanlens Uitgeversmaatschappij nv, De Persgroep nv, Uitgeversbedrijf Tijdschrift nv and Roulaart Media Group nv and their editorial teams for supplying the articles.

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.

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

Information: www.jakobsmit.be
Tel.: 014/31.74.35

EXPO
• Until 27 February: Tatu-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 sultanes from prehistory until the end of the Ottoman empire, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• Until 28 November: Luc Delef & TOP Office – Values, Muha, Antwerp; info: www.muha.be
• 13 October to 15 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: Alphavilles?, exhibition by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (Fr); De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• Until 16 January: Pacala Marthine Tayou, African art, Smak, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be
• Until 4 May: Rudolf Lange, war witness, In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres; info: www.inflandersfields.be
• Until 9 January: John McCracken, exhibition, SMAK, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
• Until 26 February: Maarten Van Severen, exhibition, Design Museum, Ghent; info: http://design.museum.gent.be
• Until 31 December: De man versierd/t, diamond jewels for men, Diamond Museum, Antwerp; info: www.diamantmuseum.be
• Until 30 January: Malign Muses, when fashion turns back, Fashion Museum (MOMU), Antwerp; info: www.momu.be
• Until 15 March: The Heart, exhibition, Museum Dr Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be
• Until 10 December: Alphavilles?, exhibition by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• Until 9 January: Goya – Los desastres de la Guerra in the Jacob Smits Museum, Mol; info: 014/31.74.35 www.jakobsmit.be
• Until 29 January: Panamarenko with Hinky Pinky Prova, Antwerps Luchtschipbouw, Antwerp; info: 03/271.06.67
• Until 20 February: Dedicated to a proposition, Extra City, Antwerp; info 0484/42.10.70
• Until 9 January: Imigongo, From dung to design, Caemmerskooster, Ghent; info: 09/216.29.10

Translation: Eurologos

Response editor: Luc Demeester, Marcel

Subscription rate by post and e-mail: 220 euro

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