Unizo moderately happy with governments’ SME policy

The organisation for self-employed entrepreneurs Unizo is moderately happy with the efforts of both the Federal and the Flemish Government in the field of SME policy. ‘There’s been progress in every domain,’ says Unizo. Unfortunately, the implementation of announced measures is failing. It takes far too long, and therefore the effect of the measures is hardly noticeable in the SMEs, they say. On the basis of a priority list of 32 measures prepared by Unizo at the beginning of the year on the basis of the respective coalition agreements, the governments assigned a score. Both the Federal and Flemish Government scored a mere 56% (FF).

EVELYNE HENS • DE TIJD • 19 AUGUST

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Unizo is concretely positive about the steps that were taken to encourage investments with own means, for example, the economic policy, the title protection of intellectual professions and the law regulating franchising.

The entrepreneurial organisation is less satisfied about the energy policy for SMEs (e.g., the Elia tax), the lack of a tax agreement with the local authorities to put an end to the flow of local taxes, and the lack of further administrative simplications, both at Flemish and federal level. In fact, Unizo concludes, progress has been made on every domain. For 18 of the 32 measures on Unizo’s priority list of January, steps have been taken. The organisation does point out some setbacks. For large economic dossiers, we have to wait for action to be taken. The dossiers involved include end of career, financing of social security or – at Flemish level – the tax agreement with the local authorities.

Another problem is the gap between the announcement of a measure and the concrete implementation of that measure on the SME work floor. ‘The unbearable slowness of the government management,’ illustrates Managing Director Karel Van Eetvelt. Unizo urges the government to be more careful in announcing measures – ‘only when there is a reasonable chance of success’ – and would like the government to restrict the number of advices and advisory bodies and to make sure decisions are quickly and efficiently implemented by the administration.

WWW.UNIZO.BE
Politician’s wealth declaration shows little or no conflicts of interests

The idea of a wealth declaration finds its origin in the New Political Culture launched 10 to 15 years ago

7202 politicians and senior civil servants complied with the compulsory declaration of their mandates and their wealth, effective 1 January. 566 did not. They risk a fine of 100 to 1,000 euros. A declaration of wealth should, in case of a judicial investigation, make it possible to check whether someone got personally richer from performing their mandate. The idea of a wealth declaration finds its origin in the New Political Culture launched 10 to 15 years ago. The NPC was supposed to bridge the gap with citizens. It had become too big in Flanders, which was demonstrated by the increasing success of the Vlaams Blok. In the meantime, the NPC has been declared dead by several politicians. Herman Decroo, chairman of the federal House of Parliament, is a self-proclaimed opponent of the declaration and thinks that it makes politicians suspicious of trickery even if they did nothing wrong. The list of mandates teaches us that most ministers are quite well-behaved and do not accept any positions that may lead to a conflict of interests (FF).

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 13 AUGUST

Most ministers do not hold any other salaried positions and resigned from incompatible or conflictual positions as soon as they became a minister, according to the list. Some are more punctual about this than others. Flemish Minister Kris Peeters (CD&V), who joined the Flemish Government as a non politician, resigned the day before his appointment from numerous social-economic positions he was occupying as chairman of Unizo, the organisation for self-employed entrepreneurs. Others wait two months before resigning. The list of mandates confirms previous claims that Karel De Gucht (VLD) remained a director of Dexia six months too long after he had become a minister. Ministers who were teaching before their appointment usually continue to do so. That is the case for Kris Peeters (Hogeschool Ghent), Frank Vandenbroucke (KU Leuven and VUB), Didier Reynders (Liège), Karel De Gucht (VUB). Most of them receive a (small) remuneration for it. Federal ministers usually remain active in local social works, institutions for the disabled, cultural and welfare institutions. Flemish ministers less so, though stopping would be the logical decision for them: they usually subsidise these institutions. Welfare minister Inge Vervotte (CD&V) is not involved in anything else. It is a bit more problematic that most politicians are keeping their positions in regional economic bodies. Marc Verwilghen (VLD) did resign from Tabacofina, but not from the Maatschappij van de Brugse Zeevaartinrichtingen (Bruges port authorities); Johan Vande Lanotte (SPA) is still involved in the management of the nv Plassendale, which develops industrial sites in the port of Ostend; Vincent Van Quickenborne (VLD) in the urban development company of the city of Kortrijk. Since he became Flemish Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) is no longer working in regional development bodies. The ministers do keep their own companies. Karel De Gucht is still working in Immo Degus, owed by himself and his wife. The lawyers among the ministers also continue to run their firms or association. It is not known whether they work for the government, as used to be the case in the past. Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt does not hold any additional positions except for his functions within the party. According to the list, the same applies to Vice Prime Minister Laurette Onkelinx, although she is also chairman of Beliris, a fund that, far away from any publicity, transfers money to Brussels to regenerate crossings and make the city more liveable. Federal Vice Prime Minister Johan Vande Lanotte is also known to be involved in his basketball team, Didier Reynders in a golf club in Liège.

FLEMISH ECONOMIC POLICY

Christ’l Joris in charge of Flanders Investment and Trade

FF EDITOR

On 15 July the Flemish Government appointed Christ’l Joris as chairman of Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT). FIT is the umbrella organisation over the previous organisation Export Vlaanderen [Flanders Export], which supports and assists the export of Flemish products and the Dienst Investeren Vlaanderen [DIV] [Flanders Foreign Investment Office], which informs and assists foreign investors who want to invest in Flanders. Joris is chairman of ETAP Lighting group. Koen Allaert, top executive at Export Vlaanderen, will be the managing director of FIT, which will count with another ten directors, who will come from employer’s organisations and trade unions. Flemish exports account for 80% of total Belgian exports (Trends, 21 July).
Why hold-up of security car with booby-trapped cases?

A money transport of the firm Brinks was the target of a very brutal hold-up on 16 August. Gangsters in a BMW fired dozens of shots from automatic guns to the Brinks car, in which a security guard sustained life-threatening injuries, and then they forced the car to a halt against the crash barrier. They placed explosives against the back of the armoured vehicle and blew up the metal doors. When they were about to take the cases containing the money, the cases started to make a loud noise. That is probably when the gangsters realised they were dealing with 'intelligent' cases, which render the money worthless when opened by unauthorised persons. They left empty-handed. The whole scene took place during morning rush hour under the perplexed eyes of dozens of motorists. Security transports using intelligent cases are not escorted by the federal police. The unions are now demanding that this type of security transport also get police escorts. There are about 220 to 250 unescorted transports a day. On 22 May Domestic Affairs Minister, Patrick Dewael, decided that all money transports have to be equipped with intelligent cases by 2009. It was the fourth (unsuccessful) hold-up on a Brink money transport this summer. Did the robbers not know that the money was in booby-trapped cases? Quite a few security agents are of the opinion that the gangsters hope to crack the cases without destroying the money (FF).

Opinion

DIRK CASTREL • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 18 AUGUSTUS

To discourage potential raiders, the armoured vehicles with intelligent cases have the words 'depreciation system' written on them, a warning that the money will be destroyed in case of a hold-up. In Dutch and in French. Over the past years not a single hold-up on transports with cash degradation systems was indeed 'successful'. No loot for the gangsters. Still, they keep on trying. It is very strange that you would plan and carry out a hold-up when you know in advance that the chances of success are very slim. There are easier ways of getting your hands on cash. Where do they get the information that makes them decide to give it a try anyway? What are they really after? Several hypothesis are brought up. Maybe they speculate about the fact that no protection system is infallible and that sooner or later they will succeed. According to their designers intelligent cases are impossible to crack and every attempt to do so is therefore completely senseless. Are the robbers so bold or downright stupid? Some people suggest that the gangsters want to get to the bottom of the cases’ mechanism. Rather doubtful hypothesis. Why would they not take the cases if that were true?

Others are of the opinion that foreign gangs are operating here who disappear across the border immediately after the robbery. They might not be aware of the increasing use of booby-trapped systems. Or maybe they cannot read that the transport is equipped with a system that makes the money worthless in a hold-up. It is almost inconceivable that the underworld would be so 'poorly' prepared. Whatever the case may be, the use of stolen cars, explosives and Kalashnikovs justifies the suspicion that Zemst was not just about amateurs trying to get their hands on some cash. Booby-trapped cases protect the money. Not the security agents accompanying security transports. After the rash hold-up in Zemst, that is something no one can deny. The call from the agents to have all money transports, including those with cash degradation systems, escorted by the police is therefore quite understandable, but probably not attainable. It is impossible to have every euro on the road accompanied by a policeman. On the other hand, it should be possible to make more resources and manpower available to hunt down these gangsters.
Is Belgium becoming a tax paradise?

Even though the Federal Government adjusted its growth forecast from 2.2% to 1.5%, the Ministry of Finance is still conveying optimistic messages about a growing tax income. Budget Minister Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A) even carefully suggested that the economic forecasts may be more pessimistic than necessary. According to ING analyst Van de Cloot the additional tax earnings are mainly due to the European savings directive that took effect on 1 July (FF).

LIESBETH VAN IMPE • DE MORGEN • 16 AUGUST

While most economists predicted negative growth for the second quarter, i.e., a recession in official terms, the Belgian economy clocked a growth of 0.3%, the average of the entire eurozone.

In government circles one of the major factors that contributed to the increasing income is considered to be the tax amnesty rule. The measure did indeed end on 31 December last year, but the repatriated money still provides a major injection into the Belgian economy. For example, it can partially explain the rise in real estate taxes and gift taxes.

The impact on a number of incomes even raises the suspicion that a lot more cash came back than what is officially accounted for under the tax amnesty rule. ‘The government likes to think that the tax amnesty brought the money back, but it is actually more a result of the European savings directive,’ says Ivan Van de Cloot (ING). ‘Lots of people anticipated the savings directive.’

As of 1 July of this year the European Member States have to inform the tax authorities about fixed interest investments of EU citizens abroad. While they escaped tax levies in the past, this will no longer be the case in the future. Countries such as Luxembourg, which do not exchange information, apply a 15% advance levy and later 35% and are therefore becoming less interesting to foreign investors. ‘Belgium has become a tax paradise for Belgians,’ says Van de Cloot. ‘There are not many good reasons left to keep your money abroad.’

So, people with perfectly legal money abroad, may be forced to bring it back to Belgium due to the savings directive. But even black and grey money would have found its way back to Belgium, even without the tax amnesty rule. The possibility to store the cash in a Belgian safe and then deposit it gradually to a current account, has been suggested by some bankers. As long as relatively small amounts are involved, the bank does not have to ask difficult questions.

BELGIAN ECONOMY clocked a growth of 0.3%, the average of the entire eurozone.

WOUTER VERVENNE • DE TIJD • 17 AUGUST

In the first place the interest in Belgium and the eurozone is very low. That is probably why investors are buying more foreign bonds. The dollar was more attractive in the beginning of the year, because for the first time in a couple of years American interest rates are significantly higher than European interest rates. Furthermore, the dollar had become relatively cheap after its sharp fall. Anyway, money disappearing abroad is not necessarily illegal money. People who buy foreign bonds or shares from their bank, are exporting money. But that does not make them a tax evader. Tax motives do sometimes play a role, though. Luxembourg and Dutch banks are trying to convince Belgian customers not to take their money back. They mention that some financial instruments, such as insurance products, are not governed by the savings directive. Some Belgian investors are undoubtedly buying those products. Therefore, there has been talk of expanding the European savings directive to all financial instruments. But that will probably not happen before 2008.

Groen! severely criticises Aquafin.

FF EDITOR

Opposition party Groen! is requesting a committee of inquiry on the doings and dealings of Aquafin, the Flemish water purification company. Europe blew the whistle on the partial privatisation of Aquafin by means of a partnership with the British firm Severn-Trent (20%), also water purifier in London, and the sale of a 29% stake to institutional investors because Flanders never let the market play. After the conviction by the European court, the Flemish government will have to buy out the 20% share of its industrial partner – Severn-Trent – and probably pay them compensation. The Green party is afraid that after that, Minister Peeters (CD&V) will privatised Aquafin again, this time for 100%.

The Greens are also not at all happy about the services provided by Aquafin. Flanders does not live up to the European standards with respect to wastewater treatment and Flanders scores worse than Poland in the statistics. According to quite a few ecologists, the concept applied by Aquafin is wrong. Aquafin is blindly copying the methods of its private partner Severn-Trent, in which wastewater and rainwater are discharged together to large water treatment plants. The problem is that such plants are unable to deal with this diluted wastewater, because it is not dirty enough. They reprehend the total lack of supervision from the Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (Flemish Environmental Company) on the water treatment firm. Groen! wants to put the dossier at the top of the agenda of the Flemish parliament in the autumn.

Www.groen.be

Belgians again invest more abroad

According to National Bank figures it is not entirely true that Belgians are massively returning foreign money home. At least not in 2005. The foreign capital of Belgian families again increased by 2.6 billion euros up to 159 million euros (21% of the total assets), De Tijd reports. In the fourth quarter of 2004 about 9.9 billion euros came back to Belgium. There are different reasons why investors are again exporting capital in 2005 (FF).
Is the Federal Government discriminating against waste water purificator?

Aquafin charged 6% VAT for years while it should have been 21%

At the end of June the court of first instance of Antwerp sentenced the Flemish waste water purification company to pay 287 million euros of VAT arrears. Aquafin charged 6% VAT for years while it should have been 21%. CD&V Environment Minister Kris Peeters promised Aquafin that Flanders would reimburse that amount. The dispute is the result of a non-transparent and whimsical VAT legislation, a dispute between the Flemish Government and the VAT administration and the public-private structure of Aquafin itself. A consultative committee acting between the federal and regional government recently reduced the invoice to 230 million euros. Flemish-nationalist circles descry an additional transfer from Flanders to Wallonia. Quite rightly so? (FF).

Eric Pompen • Trends • 18 August

The truth is subtler. In the first place the consultative committee reduced the invoice to avoid further appeal procedures. Furthermore both Flanders and Wallonia and Brussels pay VAT for the treatment of domestic waste water. Luc Bossyns, Managing Director of Aquafin: ‘Since the programme decree of 22 December 2005, we may officially charge 6%, like the other regions. The invoice is now sent through the drinking water companies, which are legally entitled to a reduced tariff. Moreover, the charged amounts are no longer considered an environmental tax, but a compensation for provided services [retribution]. Companies can from now on deduct those expenses from their taxes.’

Higher oil price costs Belgians 270 euros

75% increase of the oil price since the beginning of this year, corresponds to a wage increase of 3%

The higher oil price cost Belgium 3 billion euros this year, money flowing to the oil companies and oil-exporting countries, an ING economist calculated. Every consumer spends 270 euros extra on heating and fuel for the car, which keeps him from spending those 270 euros elsewhere. For companies the high oil price is also a serious cost factor that weighs on their growth, according to Remi Boelaert, chief economist with the employer’s organisation Agoria, who represents the technology businesses. 75% increase of the oil price since the beginning of this year, corresponds to a wage increase of 3%, he calculated (FF).

Philippe Ghysens • Het Laatste Nieuws • 13 August

While consumers are already experiencing the consequences of the oil prices, the impact on the economy is not yet noticeable. But we will notice at some point, that is for sure. ‘The effect is now smothered by the low interest rates and the fact that consumers are saving less,’ says Geert Noels of Petercam. Ivan van De Cloot also believes that the economy will eventually suffer from the high oil prices. ‘We have to make sure not to let the favourable macro figures mislead us. The economy is indeed still growing. But a high oil price only has a delayed impact on overall figures. Studies show that the oil price has always been the major driving force of the economy over the past 30 years,’ the economist says.

The immediate effect on the costs of companies is already weighing, though, says Remi Boelaert, chief economist at Agoria, the organisation of technological industry companies.

‘Since the beginning of this year the oil price rose by 75% and the wages by 3%. In combination with the high electricity and gas bills and more expensive raw materials, that is quite some weight on companies. It does not lead to a recession, but it does lead to a lower growth.’

There is also good news in the expensive oil story. ‘The search for alternative energy will be accelerated, for example bio diesel and wind energy,’ according to Geert Noels from Petercam. ‘It makes no sense to reduce the excise on diesel, as the government is doing now. By doing so, it creates the illusion that it can restrain the rise in oil prices. We should invest in measures to reduce consumption. If Belgium were to use the insulation standards of the Scandinavian countries, energy consumption would fall by 15%.’

By means of that kind of measures, the oil countries will finally be presented the bill. ‘Now they are deliberately increasing prices, because they believe that the demand also stays high. But the more the West looks for alternative, the more the price will drop,’ says Van de Cloot.
Electrabel takeover: authorities want to accelerate the liberalisation of the energy market

FF EDITOR

The reactions to the takeover of electricity producer Electrabel were initially rather reassuring. Competitors Essent or Nuon said they did not lose too much sleep over it. The decisions were already being made in Paris, they say. Consumer organisation Test-Achat does not see why the takeover should lead to an increase in electricity prices. There seem to be no special consequences for Electrabel personnel either. Electrabel’s decision centre headed by Belgium’s Jean-Pierre Hansen will remain in Brussels, Suez promised, and the Electrabel brand will also be maintained. Apart from that, Electrabel will not become a French but a European company. Even Eric Knight of activist investor group Knight Vincke said to be satisfied with the takeover plans and announced that he is calling off his legal action against Suez. Most stock analysts recommend Electrabel shareholders to accept Suez’ bid. Suez offers 322 euros and four Suez shares for one Electrabel share and they think it is the right price. The price corresponds to 20 times Electrabel’s expected profit for this year. It took a while, but with a slight delay the reactions and comments on the takeover of Electrabel by the French Suez appeared in the newspapers. In the government, liberals and socialists apparently do not agree. Budget Minister Johan Vande Lanotte pleaded to rise to the occasion and use this opportunity to accelerate the liberalisation of the Belgian energy market and to restrict the investment options of Electrabel in new plants and to auction more of the company’s production capacity. SP.A energy specialist Bart Martens thinks it is a problem that Electrabel still has too much influence in the high-voltage grid operator Elia (30%) and in the distribution networks. He suggests that the communes, who can now sell 4.65% of Electrabel shares, further buy into Elia and the mixed association of local authorities for distribution. Intermixt, the umbrella of communes and association of local authorities with interests in Electrabel, said it would decide in September.

WWW.INTERMIXT.BE

Minister Peeters pleads for the abolition of additional Elia tax

Kris Peeters, Flemish Energy Minister (CD&V) wants to use the Electrabel takeover to abolish the Elia tax. The tax was introduced on 1 July and amounts to 4.91 euros per megawatt hour. The tax is federal, but is only implemented in Flanders and is intended to compensate for the loss of income of the communes due the liberalisation of the energy market. If the communes sell their Electrabel shares, they will get lots of additional income, he concludes (FF).

ISABEL ALBERS • DE STANDAARD • 17 AUGUST

‘If the communes were to retain a participating interest in Electrabel, what on earth would they be able to do with it?’ Peeters wonders. ‘No matter what, I want to put the Elia tax up for discussion again. In the autumn we will have to decide whether the tax will still apply in 2006. It is an additional financial burden for companies and private individuals, which cannot be underestimated. Adequate economic policy has to make sure that the energy prices are not higher than in our neighbouring countries.’ Peeters already opposed the Elia tax in his first days in office, but he was soon forced to back down. Different cards are on the table now, he says. He is also against the fact that communes have to pay VAT on electricity now. The Flemish Energy Minister regrets that the Flemish Government was not informed about Suez’ takeover bid before the public announcement, while Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt had already been conducting talks with Suez top executive Gérard Mestrallet for some time.

Peeters is also of the opinion that Verhofstadt has to involve the regions in this important matter, because they have great competence with respect to energy.

WWW.MINISTERKRISPEETERS.BE

SP.A not backing Peeters in abolishing Elia tax

FF EDITOR

Even though they are a coalition partner of Minister Kris Peeters in the Flemish Government, the Flemish Socialists are not backing the proposal of the minister to abolish the Elia tax. This tax has to compensate the communes for the electricity dividends they are losing out on since the market was opened up. It amounts to about 25 to 35 euros per family and is effective until 2007. It is to be applied in a more restricted form until 2010, but Peeters wants to abolish it in 2006. CD&V was one of the parties to introduce the tax. SP.A chairwoman Caroline Gennez remembers. According to her it is much more important for the government to get a grip on the high-voltage and distribution grid by acquiring a majority interest in the grid operators. She believes that will be much more efficient than reducing electricity tariffs. The VLD is moderately enthusiastic, but warns that the abolishment should not make holes in the budget of the communes. Federal Minister Marc Verwilghen points out that the Elia tax was implemented upon proposal by Flanders, not by the Federal Government. He underlines that the Federal Government will under no circumstances compensate for the loss of income.
Electrabel’s wind farm project rejected

The Federal Government cancelled the environmental permit for the construction of a wind farm consisting of 50 turbines, which Electrabel and dredger Jan De Nul had planned at the coast near Knokke in the Raan plain. That decision probably puts an end to the fiercely disputed windmill project. Whether the rejection to allow new production means to Electrabel, which is already a dominant force, has anything to do with it, remains an open question (FF).

DAVID ADRIAEN • DE TIJD • 16 AUGUST

Seanergy, a concern of Electrabel and Jan De Nul, was granted the most important licences to build a wind farm on the Raan Plain in 2002. Right from the start residents and local authorities criticised the wind farm. They say the windmills obstruct the sea view. Environmentalists and fishermen feared a negative impact on the environment. The Council of State suspended the licences for the wind farm at the beginning of 2003, but last month the Council reconsidered the suspension in an unexpected decree. Therefore, it looked like Seanergy would finally be able to build the windmills. But due to the cancellation of the environmental permit, just a few days after the decision of the Council of State, the government again obstructed the plans for the sea windmills. This is the end of the project, says a spokesperson for the minister for the North Sea Johan Vande Lanotte (sp.a). The government thinks the wind farm on the Raan plain is not durable, because there is too much protest against it. Moreover, the Thornton bank, a sandbank further away from the coast, was designated as an exclusive location for windmills at sea. Other arguments may possibly have an effect, such as the refusal to grant Electrabel, which is already in a dominant position, new production means.

Flanders on the Rhine

The Kunstpalast museum shows the Dutch and Flemish collections of Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz-Neuberg and some contemporary art as well.

The Kunstpalast museum on the Rhine bank in Düsseldorf exhibits an extensive collection of baroque paintings from the Netherlands and Flanders, which have been slumbering in the depot for years. Only a part of the city’s art collection is on permanent display. However, the depot houses a solid stock of Flemish and Dutch paintings from the 16th to 18th century, which was largely collected by art-loving Elector Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz-Neuberg. The museum is simultaneously displaying an anthology of contemporary art from the north and the south, including work by Jan Fabre and Luc Tuymans (FF).

JAN VAN HOVE • DE STANDAARD • 11 AUGUST

Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz shared his passion for art with his wife, a scion of the famous Medici family from Florence. They built an additional wing to their palace, especially for their collection. They also kept numerous paintings in their hunting lodge Bensberg near Cologne. The fame of the royal collection soon grew and attracted prominent visitors from across Europe to Düsseldorf. Unfortunately for the city, most of the works, the most interesting ones, moved to Munich in 1805, where they would be the centre pieces of the Alte Pinakothek. However, what was left in Düsseldorf is still worth seeing. The exhibition at the Kunstpalast is not randomly called Ein Fest der Malerei, because it really is a treat to the eye. Flemish and Dutch paintings are presented as a unit, even though the traditional differences between the clear realism of Dutch masters and the more baroque Flemings can easily be seen. Different works were recently restored and re-studied. That is how some pieces ascribed to expensive names, turned out to be copies or studio work.

The collection mainly offers works of lesser known masters. You will not get to see a Frans Hals canvas, but a brilliant Happy company by his brother Dirck Hals. No Rembrandt, but the snappy biblical scene, Jonas and the whale by Rembrandts’ teacher Pieter Lastman.

Among the Flemings Rubens steals the show, but there is also an excellent mountain landscape by Joost de Momper and a nice sea view by Bonaventura Peeters.

The museum seized the presentation of this collection to show the living art of the Low Countries to the German public. With the title of Slow Art, an astonishing selection of works of major figures from both countries was composed, including names such as Marlène Dumas, Rineke Dijkstra, Luc Tuymans and Jan Fabre.

The title Slow Art refers to a saying by Romantic painter and author Johan Heinrich Füssli, who claimed that ‘life is fast, but art is slow’. According to the curator Tijs Visser the most interesting contemporary Dutch and Flemish artists react to the hectic pace and the abundance of visual stimuli in our times by making works that invite people to meditate, slow down and contemplate.

Most selected works have a connection with the genres of old painting: landscapes, portraits and still lifes. The exhibition is part of a broad cultural programme. In October authors Cees Nooteboom, Hugo Claus, composer Wim Mertens and a whole range of performance artists will be visiting.
CULTURE

MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• Until 11 September: The summer of Poetry, Watou, *Nouss le passage*, Watou (near French border); info: www.poetzieomerswatou.be
• 27 August: Defilharmonie/Piet Van Bogaal (Oboe) with Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss; info: www.concertgebouw.be
• Until 28 August: *Laus Polyphoniae*, 27 concerts, central composer: Jacob Obrecht (15th century) and his contemporaries; Flanders Festival-Antwerp; info: www.bijloke.be
• 1 to 9 September: *Die Zauberflöte* by WA Mozart, director: William Kentridge; De Munt, Brussels; info: www.de.munt.be
• 3 September: *Laus Polyphoniae*, with the influence of the contrapunto alla mente; concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
• 2 September: *Fête Congolaise* (independence day), Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
• 4 September: *Idyl*, exhibited by Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• Until 31 December: *Master pieces from the Dutch treasure room*, KMSK, Antwerp; info: www.kmsk.be

EXPO

• From 5 February onwards: *The memory of Congo, the colonial period*, exhibition, Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren); info: www.175-25.be
• Until 4 September: *Hidden worlds*, art from artists with various backgrounds; Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent; info: www.museumdrguislain.be
• Until 9 October: *Congo: Nature and Culture*, exhibition, KMKG, Tervuren, +32 (0)2 769 52 11 www.africamuseum.be
• Until 31 December: *Master pieces from the Dutch treasure room*, KMSK, Antwerp; info: www.kmsk.be
• Until 30 September: *Renato Balestros Fashion museum*, Hasselt
• Until 2008: *Art at the Frontline 1914-1918, Royal Army and Military History Museum*, Brussels, info: 02 737 78 33 www.klm-mra.be
• Until 31 December: *Art nouveau and Art Deco 1890-1960*, Photomuseum, Brussels, info: 02/741.72.11 www.klm-mra.be
• Until 4 September: *Kinshasa, imaginary City*, with texts by Filip De Boeck and photos by Marie-Françoise Plissart (golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for Architecture), exhibition, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• Until 4 September: *Retrospective of portraits by Hans Memling*, Groeningemuseum, Bruges; info: www.brugge.be/musea
• Until 11 September: *Ensor to Bosch*, exhibition by Vlaamse kunstcollectie, an overview of the collections of the art museums of Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• Until 11 September: *Christian Dotremont*, Museum of Elsene (Ixelles), info: 02/515.64.22
• Until 2 October: *The most beautiful paintings by Spilliaert*, KMSKA, Antwerp; info: 03/204.78.09
• Until 23 December: *The art nouveau front as a complete work of art*, Museum for Architecture, Brussels; info: 02/642.24.75
• Until 18 September: *Lois et Francesiska Weinberger*, SMAK, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
• Until 31 August: *Belgian photographers 1840-2005*, Photomuseum, Brussels; info: 02/422.93.00
• Until 25 September: *Idyl*, Open air museum Middelheim, Antwerp; info: 03/827.15.34
• Until 18 September: *Roy Liechtenstein*, Samuel Vanhoegaerden Gallery, Knokke; info: 050/62.28.33

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