Major diamond dealers step down from High Diamond Council

After the departure of Peter Meeus as Director-General of the Antwerp High Diamond Council, the Council appears to be losing representativeness again. On 12 January, only a few days after the resignation of Meeus, Dilip Mehta, the Indian boss of Antwerp's biggest diamond firm Rosy Blue, resigned as director. In an announcement Mehta said that major players are clearly no longer welcome. He is referring to the resistance of the small diamond dealers to the predominance of the big firms, the sightholders. Claim Pluczenik, the representative of the international Pluczenik group, was also not re-elected. Following the changes the influence of the major diamond firms in the Board of Directors has been significantly reduced (FF).

MARC BALLIEU • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 13 JANUARY

The two major players are now no more and as a result Antwerp risks dropping into the ‘third division’ as a diamond city. There have been rumblings for months in the High Diamond Council. The Board of Directors includes representatives of dealers, industry, diamond exchanges, banks, diamond producers and the government. The representatives of the smaller traders refused to allow major firms such as Rosy Blue and the British De Beers to try and determine the High Council’s policy. That resulted in legal action. The Association of Cut Diamond Dealers (Vereniging van Handelaars in Geslepen Diamant, BVGD) mainly targeted Dilip Mehta. His appointment as representative of the dealers was not carried out correctly, they claimed. Mehta had enough and stepped down. The Indian accuses his fellow dealers of ‘closing their eyes to the economic reality. The HRD risks becoming an organisation that continues to dream of yesterday. When the wind blows, some look for air-raid shelters, others build windmills.’

WWW.DIAMONDS.BE

CONTENTS

Politics
A purple passion in the Federal Parliament 2
Fons Borgignon succeeds Rik Daems as VLD parliamentary party leader 2

Economy, environment and budget policy
Antwerp Diamond Council rudderless after departure of Peter Meeus 3
Household waste will no longer be dumped 3
Daily purchases give the impression of a higher cost of living 4
Belgacom acquires 91% of Telindus 6
Federal budget is balanced again 6

Social Policy
Dewael wants stricter application of law on aid to illegal immigrants 6
Van Velthoven wants quota for the recruitment of immigrants 6

Media and Mobility
Record year for use of public transport 7
VRT boss Mary fuels media war 7

INTRODUCTION
From 12 to 22 January the 84th Motor Show will be held at Heizel in Brussels. Febiac, the federation of the motor industry and organiser of the show, expects as many as 750,000 visitors. On 11 January the official opening took place in the presence of Prince Filip and Premier Verhofstadt and a whole host of VIPs. While the Prince let himself be led from one impossibly expensive racing car to the next, the Premier stressed in his speech the importance of environmentally friendly technology. Finance Minister Reynders was also able to announce an environmentally friendly first. The EU Commission has allowed Belgium to cut the duty on ‘biodiesel’ and biofuels, for the same price as ordinary diesel. Biodiesel will initially contain nearly 2.45% biofuel, but from 2007 this quantity will be increased to 4.29%. That same year petrol containing bioethanol, the environmentally friendly alternative for petrol cars, will also become available. That perhaps did not make much of an impression on those present. Just like road safety, environmental friendliness is not the first thing that interests the average potential buyer, according to a Febiac spokesman in De Standaard (12 January). The customer is interested in comfort, luxury and prestige and since the motor show is first and foremost a showroom, these are also the most important sales arguments. Perhaps an even greater sales argument is price. In that respect the car sector is beginning increasingly to resemble the textile sector, fears De Tijd (12 January). The motor show month of January appears to be becoming the bargain month. European car manufacturers in particular are trying to get the better of each other with special campaigns and super-discounts of 20% and more. In this way they are trying to buy a share of the market, but are actually bringing the entire sector into difficulties, the paper claims. After all, the bargains are not unconditional. Shrinking margins are transferred to the supplier firms of the car manufacturers and to dealers. That explains, for example, the loss of plastics supplier for car interiors Recticel in 2005 or the halving of the number of car dealers in recent years. De Tijd fears that car manufacturers themselves will be next. Then there will be no choice but to follow the textile producers to the low-wage countries. Nonetheless, manufacturers should not complain about the interest from consumers. In spite of the growing traffic queues each year, the high fuel prices, the speeding cameras and the 30 zones near schools that spoil the pleasure of driving, Belgians do not appear moved to leave their cars at home. There is a fascination with them against which fiscal incentives and free public transport are clearly no remedy. In a year when the government abolished the tax benefit for off-road vehicles by prohibiting them from being registered as light goods vehicles, more than ever have been sold. The aura of the automobile appears unassailable and that also leaves its traces in the family budget. After the home, it still remains the second biggest expense item.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Fons Borgignon succeeds Rik Daems as VLD party leader in the Federal Parliament

Opinion

STEFAN HUYSENTRUYT • DE TIJD • 11 JANUARY

There was an exception to the unwritten rule: if the private life affected the political actions of the man/woman in question, it could be reported. In recent years the media have given an increasingly broad interpretation to this exception. Once again the continued political activity of Rik Daems is the official reason for the ups and downs of the man’s love life appearing in the media. But the real reason is the high entertainment value of the amorous escapades of the VLD man from Leuven. Newspapers, radio and TV stations are governed by circulation, audience and viewing figures. Juicy stories boost these figures. Information has evolved into infotainment; democracy has deteriorated into emacry. Politicians are at least partly to blame for this development. The end of ideologies means that parties are becoming more and more exchangeable. Ideological profiling is being exchanged for emotional positioning. In their search for the voter and reader-listener-viewer the interests of politicians and media often run parallel. But sometimes they collide, as now with the reports of Rik Daems’ new love. These reports need not damage the man’s political career. If he wanted to, Daems could easily continue to lead the Flemish Liberals in the Chamber. Just like Patrick Dewael, after the leaking of his relationship with Greet Op de Beeck, remained in office as Home Affairs Minister. The fact that the Daems affair has damaged him politically is not down to the media but to his political ‘friends’. For a great many of his fellow party members, Daems’ amorous escapades are a grateful reason to give him the coup de grâce. For far too long Rik has remained the eternal political promise. Order to fare better at the next poll. After the municipal elections not much more should be expected of the Federal Government, which has to have the 2007 budget prepared by 10 October. On the evening of 8 October the campaign for the 2007 elections will be kicked off.
**ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT**

### Diamond Sector

**Antwerp diamond sector rudderless following departure of Peter Meeus**

**Meeus is also questioning publicly whether the collective leadership of the HRD is still viable**

Peter Meeus, Director-General of the Diamond High Council, is stepping down. His decision was brought about by the persistent conflicts that have landed the Council in a slump. This even resulted in the Antwerp Diamond Conference not being held this year. Meeus believes that under such circumstances it is difficult for him to still create ‘added value’. He is also questioning publicly whether the collective leadership of the HRD is still viable. Developments in the diamond trade have meant that it is becoming more and more difficult to have the interests of all parties in the sector defended by one organisation, he concludes. Directors began to question the mandates of other directors (among others of Dilip Mehta, CEO of the Indian diamond company Rosy Blue), resulting in legal proceedings and even more division, against which Meeus claims he had little remedy. Dramatic calls from himself and Provincial Governor Camille Paulus to close ranks were to no avail (FF).

### Opinion

**TOM PEETERS • DE TIJD • 7 JANUARY**

The fact that Meeus is stepping down is a drain on the Antwerp diamond trade. Meeus introduced much-needed transparency to a sector that is chiefly known to the general public for its intrigue and shady dealing. Meeus clearly saw the challenges facing the Antwerp diamond district. He also reformed the Board of Directors to give it more clout. Ironically that became the final nail in Meeus’ coffin. The Antwerp diamond sector, which has a turnover of 34 billion dollars and still accounts for almost 7% of Belgian exports, has become ungovernable. This ungovernability is partly ingrained in the structure of the Diamond High Council. Dealers in uncut and cut diamonds sit on the HRD’s Board of Directors alongside diamond cutters. The unions have got their seats, likewise the banks and major diamond groups. The interests of these various groups do not always run parallel, to put it mildly. But more than the diversity of the Board of Directors, shortsightedness and self-interest are behind the impasse in Antwerp’s Hoveniersstraat. Diamond dealers will never get a medal for strategic, long-term thinking. They will remain first and foremost merchants for whom a euro is a euro. In particular, dealers in cut diamonds have been kicking up a real fuss in recent months. A complaint was lodged against De Beers with the European Commission, because the largest diamond producer’s new sales strategy would restrict competition. Appointments to the Board of Directors were systematically opposed. This pestering and the infantile litigious culture are damaging the entire Antwerp diamond district.

Peter Meeus called 2005 an annus horribilis. If the Antwerp diamond dealers do not quickly shake hands again and stop making each other’s life hell with futile proceedings, 2006 will undoubtedly be an annus horribilis for the whole sector. They are already laughing themselves silly in the other major diamond centres of Dubai, Tel Aviv, Mumbai and New York.

**www.diamonds.be**

### Environment

**Household waste will no longer be dumped**

From 2006 no more household waste will be dumped in Flanders and the dumping of industrial waste will be significantly reduced. According to the Flemish waste management regulations (Vlarea), there has actually been a ban on dumping for years, but up to now departures have been granted each year. This year there is no need, because two new processing plants can process all dumped household waste and some of the industrial waste. These are a fluid bed plant belonging to the waste-processing companies Indaver and Sita in Beveren with a capacity of 460,000 tonnes and a mechanical-biological pre-treatment plant in Geel with a capacity of 150,000 tonnes belonging to the intermunicipal companies IOK and Ivarem. Flemish Environment Minister Kris Peeters (CD&V) points out that the Flemish Region will thus be the first region in Europe where all household waste is processed or incinerated (FF).

**DOMINIQUE MINTEN • DE STANDAARD • 10 JANUARY**

In 2005, 80,000 tonnes of household waste and 511,500 tonnes of industrial waste were still taken to dumps instead of to the incinerators. But now two large incinerators have been opened in Geel and Beveren, so that Flanders no longer lacks processing capacity. ‘I therefore do not intend continuing to grant departures for household waste. And for industrial waste the permitted departure will be reduced significantly,’ says Peeters. ‘Instead of the 551,500 tonnes of 2005, only 440,500 tonnes of industrial waste will be able to be dumped in 2006.’ In addition, the waste mountain is being capped. ‘In 2007 Flanders may only produce as much waste as in 2000. And next year each Fleming may only produce 150 kilos of unrecycled residual waste. Up to now only slightly more than half of the municipalities have achieved this target. To improve this I want to step up prevention, improve selective collection further and fully honour the principle of “the polluter pays”.’

**www.indaver.be/www.sita.be**

**www.ivarem.be**
Daily purchases give consumer impression that cost of living has gone up

A study by ING Bank shows that at the end of December the general level of prices was 15.5% higher than when the euro was introduced at the beginning of 1999. That corresponds to an average annual inflation of 2.4%.

It is mainly daily purchases that have risen sharply since the introduction of the euro. A pint of beer, for example, has gone up by 35%, a bag of chips 24%, bread or a bread roll 25%. These frequent small purchases give people the feeling that life has in fact become much more expensive. But perception and reality are often quite different.

Durable electrical products such as microwave ovens (-16%), washing machines (-5.1%), colour TVs (-25.5%) or printers (-29%) have fallen significantly in price. The same is true, albeit to a lesser degree, of clothing. This is cheaper, or only fractionally more expensive. A ladies’ dress costs 3% less, a ladies’ coat 1% less, a leather jacket 5% less, while an off-the-peg suit costs 1% more and a men’s shirt 11% more. In any event the price increase is way below the inflation level of 15.5%, according to ING Bank’s survey. ING attributes the drop in the price of clothing to the mounting competition from China and other Asian countries.

According to ING economist Ivan Vande Cloot in De Morgen [10 January], the price rises for daily products explain why consumers are getting the impression that life has become much more expensive. The large sums for household goods or clothing are paid out much less frequently.

Dewael wants law on aid for illegal immigrants to be applied more strictly

Home Affairs Minister Patrick Dewael [VLD] wants to step up the expulsion policy for failed asylum-seekers. Now a special committee, the so-called Vermeersch Committee, has produced a report in which it describes the procedures to be followed when forcibly returning asylum-seekers, the time has come to speed up the number of expulsions again, claims the Minister. Because anyone living illegally in Belgium need not count on the Minister for clemency. In any case, Dewael is also hoping that imminent agreements with Russia and the Congo on the repatriation of refugees will boost the number of expulsions. In 2005, around 12,000 asylum-seekers returned to their home country, about the same as in 2004.

Home Affairs also wants to introduce the electronic identity card which a European directive makes compulsory for all Foreigners (882,000) living in Belgium and even for asylum-seekers by 2008. Checks could determine at what stage the asylum application is. Over the weekend a discussion also ensued between the Minister on the one side and certain refugee organisations and the Groen! party on the other on the punishability of people who shelter illegal immigrants. On this point the Minister is changing his tune. Only officials who systematically evade the law. ‘I cannot accept that people sometimes have to wait up to six years for a verdict as to whether or not they are to be expelled. In such cases I would regularise immediately on a personal level. Otherwise it’s up to people who systematically evade the law. Then I’d deal with people who after eighteen months receive an expulsion order and go underground, or knowingly sail around the law, for example by spreading the members of a family across the whole country. If such people are hoping that they can be regularised after five years, they will come away empty-handed. You cannot derive any rights from crime.’

WWW.IRB.Z.F.GOV.BE/
WWW.GROEN.BE

WWW.IRB.Z.F.GOV.BE/WWW.GROEN.BE
Van Velthoven wants quotas for recruitment of immigrants

While unemployment fell in Flanders last year, it is still rising among foreigners.

Federal Employment Minister Peter Van Velthoven (SPA) no longer wants to preclude quotas for the recruitment of foreigners. If other measures are of no use next year, the government will simply have to force employers to recruit a fixed percentage of foreigners (or Belgians of foreign origin), says Van Velthoven in an interview in Het Belang van Limburg.

Unemployment among foreigners is a time-bomb, claims the Minister. While unemployment fell in Flanders last year, it is still rising among foreigners. Both Groen! and Spirit defend the idea. The VLD is strongly opposed to it. According to the Liberals, such obligations will chase businesses away. Employers are also against the idea. They want to recruit on the basis of quality. However, Van Velthoven does not attach much credence to that argument. He claims figures show that quality is not always decisive and that foreign applicants regularly fall by the wayside. In December 2002 employers concluded an agreement with trade unions in which they committed themselves to supporting the ‘proportional participation of all sections of the population’. This will involve the use of diversity consultants whose job is to convince employers to take on foreigners.

Belgian Employment Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA) is currently holding talks with employers’ organisations and trade unions to extend the diversity action plan. De Standaard is calling for the government to take further steps in this direction (FF).

Opinion

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 10 JANUARY

Parents who constantly threaten punishment but never actually apply them are poor parents. That is no different for politicians who repeatedly threaten businesses with quotas for the recruitment of foreigners. They are driven by figures that do not significantly improve things. They get a kick out of measures that create an energetic impression. Quotas, however, are guaranteed to get bogged down in a bureaucratic swamp.

The fact that some of our business leaders are refusing to take on foreigners as workers is, however, a time-bomb. There can be no sympathy for it. These are frightened and above all stupid employers. Systematically rejecting talent that could create wealth and profit is the last thing a clever employer does. But a government that points a pedantic finger is not much better. The promise of political parties to do away with the nationality requirement for permanent government jobs is dead and buried.

While quotas are threatened federally, Flemish policy is continuing to convince and inspire. In 2002 the Flemish umbrella employers’ organisations and trade unions signed a platform text in which they agreed to recruit more foreigners (later extended to groups such as the handicapped and the over-50s). Diversity must become the norm, is the motto.

Employment and unemployment of immigrant population

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<td>60.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>EU15 (TOTAL)</td>
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Source: TID Graphics

It has not yet met with much success. The Flemish Minister Frank Vandenbroucke is working on extending and improving its instruments. That is good. But it will probably only work if the commitments are brought closer to the shop floor: trade unions and employers must enter into agreements not only at Flemish level, but for each area of industry and each firm. Collective Labour Agreements. It is up to the unions now to press for this. They must fulfill their emancipatory role. But the knots are not only in the world of work, they are also in education. At the end of basic education, young Belgians are already twice as advanced academically as young foreigners. In secondary education the waterfall system only widens the gap. Education must tackle this, just as passionately as when fifty years ago it tackled the democratisation of education for working class children. It must do that with the same partners: with trade unions and large social organisations.

And with the self-help organisations of the immigrants who, just like the workers’ movement did fifty years ago, must convince and mobilise parents and children to make full use of education.

www.petervanvelthoven.be

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 7 January - 13 January 2006 • Number 2
The federal budget is balanced, but debt reduction is slowing down

On 5 January Federal Budget Minister Freya Vanden Bossche (SP.A) received a bouquet of flowers from Finance Minister Didier Reynders (MR). This was because Vanden Bossche was able to present a balanced budget for the sixth time in a row. According to Reynders and Vanden Bossche, a comparison with other European Member States speaks volumes. The average budget deficit in the eurozone is 2.9%, and only Spain and Finland did better than Belgium. That balance was achieved despite the slowdown in the growth of the economy. When putting together the 2005 budget Vanden Bossche’s predecessor Johan Vande Lanotte had still assumed GDP growth of 2.5%. By the end of 2005 that proved to be only 1.4%. Vanden Bossche therefore had to quickly find 1.5 billion euros or 0.5% of GDP. She raked this in by taking over the pension funds of the NMBS (Railways) and Antwerp Port Authority, selling off government buildings and selling on tax arrears to financial institutions. All together the one-off interventions amounted to 0.4% of GNP. The opposition CD&V disputes that figure. It says that the government’s one-off interventions came to 1.5% of GDP and that their total has risen to 11 billion euros since 2003. Future generations will have to foot the bill, claims the CD&V. The balanced budget is largely due to a single expense item which was dramatically reduced: healthcare. Minister Demotte succeeded in reducing its growth in expenditure, which for three years had been more than 8%, to 3.7%. And finally the Federal Government can also thank the regions - in particular Flanders. As agreed earlier this year, they set aside a surplus which could be counted in the federal budget. What is striking is that despite such outstanding budget figures the level of debt hardly fell at all. But there is a reason for that (FF).

DE STANDAARD • 6 JANUARY

Last year the drop in the level of debt was minimal: from 94.7% of GDP in 2004 to 94.3% in 2005. In absolute terms, the national debt even rose slightly. According to the website of the Federal Debt Agency, at the end of November 2005 the national debt was 279 billion euros. The delay in reducing this debt is because in 2005 the government took over the NMBS’s debts, a sum of 7.4 billion euros, in one fell swoop. That is around 2.5% of GDP. The government expects debts to fall further to below 80% in 2009. In saying this, however, it has systematically relaxed its own targets of several years ago. Originally it was Verhofstadt’s ambition to bring debts down to 60% by 2010, later 2013. That would help cope with the ageing population: the less money has to go towards paying off loans, the more can go towards healthcare and pensions. In recent years most countries in the eurozone have recorded budget deficits and seen their debts rise. Last year the level of debt in the eurozone rose from 70.8 to 71.7%. However, our historically high level of debt fell. Thanks to these two movements Belgium is slowly but surely approaching the European average. Freya Van den Bossche pointed out that from 2007 budgetary surpluses will have to be collected. These will then be paid into the Silver Fund. The government may only take money out of the Silver Fund [to help pay for pensions] if our debt is less than GDP.

BELGACOM achieves 91% of Telindus shares

Belgacom’s bid for network constructor Telindus has been successful. The telecoms operator managed to acquire 90.85% of the shares. That is way above the threshold of 75% which Belgacom had imposed on itself. The Telindus shareholders offered 32.53 million shares at 16.6 euros. The takeover has therefore already cost Belgacom 540 million euros.

And yet Belgacom has not reached the threshold of 90% which forces the bidding to be re-opened. After all, in this situation the law assumes the total number of securities. As well as the shares this also includes the warrants. These are held by Telindus staff and most have not been sold. This means Belgacom has only acquired 84.3% of the total number of securities. Nevertheless the company announced a new and unconditional bid for the remaining Telindus securities. Belgacom wants to acquire 95% and then force the remaining shareholders to get out, claims De Tijd [12 January]. This is because the telecoms operator wants to take Telindus off the stock market.
Public transport breaks records

FF EDITOR

Over the past year both the Belgian railways [NMBS] and the Flemish tram and bus transport company De Lijn carried a record number of passengers. For De Lijn the number of passengers was 449 million. That is more than double the number in 1999. A number of drastic measures are responsible for this spectacular rise. Travel for the over-65s, for example, is free, and more and more attractive subscription offers are being introduced, so that now around three-quarters of De Lijn passengers have a subscription. Towns such as Hasselt (Steve Stevaert’s home town) and Lier even made travelling with De Lijn entirely free of charge. In Lier this increased the number of users fourfold. But according to De Standaard [7 January], there is a flip-side to the political choice of free and cheap public transport. De Lijn’s own revenue covers only one fifth of total expenditure. In 2005 the Flemish contribution to De Lijn was 621 million euros (+7%), while extra income only rose by 3.05%.

The number of passengers who made use of the Belgian railways network rose to 172 million. That is a 23% increase on 2000. The aim was to increase the number of passengers by a quarter by the end of 2006. The NMBS also has a number of attractive fares. 120,000 commuters travel for free, while 1,114 companies have a third-party payer contract with the NMBS. With such contracts the employer pays 80% of the subscription price.

WWW.DELIJN.BE
WWW.NMBS.BE

VRT-boss Tony Mary fuels new media war

O n 11 January the Managing Director of the VRT, Tony Mary, came under heavy fire in the Flemish Parliament. This was in response to his New Year’s address, in which he lashed out at the commercial competition. Mary predicted that in the future the Flemish Media Company [Vlaamse Media Maatschappij, VMMa], which is home to VTM and Kanaal 2, would not be able to escape a sale. He reproached De Persgroep (publisher of De Morgen and Het Laatste Nieuws) and Roularta (publisher of Knack and Trends), each of which holds half the shares in the VMMa, for blackmailing Flemish society and for even using their own newspapers and magazines to do so. Of the majority parties, the CD&V made most fuss over the comments. Eric Van Rompuy called for Mary to be shown a ‘red card’. Media Minister Bourgeois (N-VA, cartel partner of the CD&V) also condemned Mary’s comments. The cause of the growing tension - some papers are already talking of a new media war - is the new five-year management agreement between the VRT and the Flemish Government, for which negotiations are due to begin shortly. Above all Mary wants the commercial VMMa - not like with the previous management agreement - to try and influence the Flemish media landscape: ‘It is not the casual chattering of a civil servant. It is a prepared speech by the manager of a Flemish public enterprise,’ he said.

Bourgeois warned the players on the Flemish television market: ‘It is not the private broadcasters that will write the management agreement,’ he said. ‘But nor will I allow the VRT to hold discussions in public.’

More restraint

In a meeting with Tony Mary, Media Minister Geert Bourgeois [N-VA] and Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) advised the VRT boss to show more restraint when making comments on the Flemish media landscape. During the talks on the new management contract between the Flemish Government and the VRT Mary will have to refrain from making public comments.
**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **12 to 19 January**: *Exquisite Pain by Forced Entertainment*, Kaaitheaterstudios, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be
- **17 January**: *Alban Gerhardt, Steven Osborne*, recital with Shostakovitch and Schnittke, Royal Brussels Conservatory; info: www.bozar.be
- **18 January**: *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, music and poetry, in German, Flagey, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **18 to 21 January**: *Charlotte Vanden Eynde* with *Kwaad Bloed* (performance) De Singel, Gent; info: www.singel.be
- **18 January**: *Osama Abdurasol* and ensemble [UAE/Syria/Morocco/The Netherlands]; Zuiderpershuis, Gent; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
- **18 to 20 January**: *Anima Eterna*, conducted by *Jos Van Immerseel* with piano concertos by WA Mozart, Royal Brussels Conservatory (info: www.bozar.be) and De Bijloke, Gent; info: www.bijloke.be
- **19 January**: *Festival Lot* with *Anh Murray* with Brahms and Schumann, Flanders Opera, Gent; info: www.vlaamseopera.be
- **22 January**: *Joshua Bell*, violin and *Frederic Chiu*, piano with WA Mozart; De Bijloke, Gent; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
- **23 January**: *Scottish Chamber Orchestra* with *Piotr Anderszewski*, piano and *Alexander Janiczek* leader with *Sergey Prokofiev* and *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **24 January**: *Wannes Vande Velde*, AB, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be
- **25 January**: *Cosi Fan Tutte* by WA Mozart; De Bijloke, Gent; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
- **26 January**: *Turandot* by Puccini; Brabantsch Geselschap, Gent; info: www.speelgoedmuseum.be
- **27 January**: *L'elisir d'amore* by Donizetti; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **28 January**: *The New Helsinki Quartet* with Haydn, Shostakovich and Schubert; De Singel, Gent; info: www.desingel.be
- **29 January**: *Expo* *Ernst Haeckel*; Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be

**EXPO**

- **Until 25 January**: *From Tsar to Emperor*: 300 objects that illustrate the period of Russian history from Ivan the Terrible to Catherine the Great (1547-1796), Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **Until 30 April**: *Pain*, exhibition, Museum Chisilain, Gent; www.museumghislain.be
- **Until 26 February**: *The Trans-Siberian Express*: fascinating facts about the route to Vladivostok; KMSK, Cinquantenaire, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **Until 29 January**: *Exhibition*: *Toys in girls’ hands*, Toy museum, Mechelen, info: 015/55.70.75

**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 8700, 1918, Royal Army and Military History Museum, Brussels; info: 02 747 78 33 www.klm-mra.be

**Until 9 January**: Panamatenko, retrospective, KMSK, Brussels; info: 02-508.32.11

www.fine-arts-museum.be

**Until 22 January**: Avant-garde from Russia 1900-1935, exhibition, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be

**Until 5 February**: Europalia Russia: Katharina Proskpekt, The Russians by the Fashion designer duo A.F. Vandervorst, Fashion Museum, Antwerp; www.momu.be

**Until 29 January**: Exhibition: *Toys in girls’ hands*, Toy museum, Mechelen, info: 015/55.70.75

www.specloedmuseum.be

**Until 5 February**: The Blue Rose – Symbolism in Russia, Museum of Elsene; info: 02/515.64.22

**SMAK exhibitions**: Until 8 January: *Sergej Bratkovik* and *Sven’t Jolle*. Until 15 January: Giovanni Asselmo, Carsten Nicolai and Rindfleisch/Rapedius, SMAK, Ghent, www.smak.be

**Until 17 December to 26 February**: *Intertidal*, Vancover Art and Artists, exhibition, MUHKA, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be

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