Faultless cooperation leads to arrest of Joe’s killer

On 27 April, with a big show of force, the Polish police detained the 17-year-old murderer of Joe van Holsbeek, in the East Polish town of Suwałki. Adam G. was found in the outbuilding of an elderly gypsy woman. On the basis of the European arrest warrant, the perpetrator will be extradited to Belgium within fourteen days and can also be tried here. The federal public prosecutor’s office wants to have him appear in Belgium before the Criminal Court. According to the Polish solicitor Janusz Kaczmarek, he will have to sit out his sentence in Poland. The arrest is certainly a boost for international police cooperation (FF).

Opinion
YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 28 APRIL

In the first few days after Joe’s murder, there was something of a populist outcry about the country’s police services. For how could something like this happen, after the costliest police reform ever? Those who, from their barstools, would change the world into a paradise with a single push of a finger, have been given a clear answer. In a good two weeks’ time, after intensive and professional detective work, at all levels of the police departments, from officer on the beat up to head of the judicial police, both perpetrator and accomplice have been caught.

We have known things to be different. In the Dutroux period it was perhaps still possible for the various police departments to put more energy into protecting their own information than into solving the crime. That has not been the case here. The coordination proved to be accurate and efficient. It is also striking how smoothly the international cooperation was set up. Didn’t we use to hear the story that we would no longer be able to control crime after the entry of the East European countries because the local police corps there were not able to cope with things and possibly were even corrupt? With its action the Polish police has clearly proven that those prejudices do not appear to be correct at all, either. Where praise is due, it should, or rather must, be given.

In addition, it is an illusion to think that the police can guarantee a crime-free society. They can work on prevention, control and tracing, but not much more.

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INTRODUCTION

Belgium breathed a first sigh of relief when Mariusz O, the accomplice in the murder of Joe Van Holsbeek, was caught. A little later, on 27 April, the relief was even greater when the actual killer, Adam G., who was responsible for the five fatal stab wounds that killed Joe, was arrested after an intensive search by the Polish police. Adam G. is over seventeen and according to Belgian legislation, he is therefore eligible for extradition to the Belgian judicial authorities. In Poland the news has made the front pages in the papers. A lot of Poles fear that the two offenders have helped ruin the image of Poles abroad. At the Belgian embassy dozens of expressions of sympathy and indignation were handed in. A delegation of Polish students even travelled from Krakow to Brussels to lay flowers at the place of the murder.

In the meantime the police and the public prosecutor’s office are annoyed at the fact that they apparently all too easily assumed that the perpetrators were Moroccan youths. Papers immediately zoomed in on the several hundreds of “bloody Moroccan kids”, who make the streets of Brussels unsafe. They made the immigrant community understand that they could not remain on the sidelines looking on. An immigrant MP called for people to take part in the march, and a number of imams encouraged the Muslim community to help find the perpetrators.

So there was great surprise when the perpetrators turned out to be two young Polish gypsies. The public prosecutor’s department lamented having created “an incorrect perception”, the head of the federal criminal investigation service even offered his apologies to the North African community in Brussels.

De Morgen (27 April) concluded how easily the police cooperation (FF) is certainly a boost for international police cooperation. The paper said that the watch-hunters who blame Muslims for everything were now looking foolish. A stark contrast with the worthy position adopted by Joe’s parents, who did not make a single hateful comment aimed at immigrants, according to the paper.

Gypsy youths or bloody Moroccan youths... for the 80,000 people taking part in the silent march on Sunday, it didn’t make much difference. The march made it clear that the people expected the government to take measures to safeguard safety on the street. The government did not dawdle, and on Wednesday, after consultation with the community governments, announced a whole series of measures to combat juvenile crime. The most conspicuous is the setting up of a juveniles’ prison for young people who have committed serious offences. The juvenile court is also strengthened, and the tackling of youth gangs is given priority. Phenomena such as steaming or extortion with violence will from now on always be prosecuted. And last but not least, the operational police capacity is to be raised also, and in particular, in Brussels’ stations and underground stations. Finally, special attention is also being given to increasing the sense of responsibility of the parents of children who play truant. They will be given support by criminologists and there will be the possibility of them being prosecuted if they leave their children to their own devices. We cannot put a social worker or a policeman alongside every teenager, as Het Nieuwsblad (27 April) summarises it, for no single measure will ever be able to replace parental responsibility.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
**Government accelerates efforts to tackle juvenile delinquency**

**FF EDITOR**

The silent march that took place on 23 April appears to have accelerated government efforts to tackle juvenile delinquency. Mayor of Molenbeek, Philippe Moureaux (PS) recently stated that current residential facilities for delinquent youths are insufficient, consequently making them eligible for early release. For this reason, Prime Minister Verhofstadt (VLD), together with Minister of the Interior Patrick Dewael (VLD), Minister of Justice Lau-rette Onkelinx (PS), and regional and community governments will be opening a discussion on the matter. VLD Chairman Bart Somers believes a new federal institution for juvenile offenders should be created as soon possible. Onkelinx has reminded him that an agreement was already in place in principle for the construction of a new ‘youth prison’ such as this, designated for those juvenile offenders who have been sentenced to imprisonment.

**Search for second perpetrator with the help of mobile phone signals**

**FF EDITOR**

There was relief and satisfaction among the police, the judicial authorities and politicians after the accomplice in the murder of Joe Van Holsbeeck was arrested. The chief offender, who stabbed Joe, fled to Poland immediately after the crime. He does not live in Belgium and does not go to school here either. On the basis of his mobile phone signal and the statements made by his accomplice Mariusz, the detectives had an idea of where he might be. They were counting on their Polish counterparts to track him down (FF).

**MARK ECKHAUT • DE STANDAARD • 26 APRIL**

Marius has already been placed in the Kasteelbrakel closed institution by the judge sitting in the juvenile court. The judge will have to decide at the end of the investigation whether or not he releases the youth and has him tried as an adult. If that happens, he risks a long prison sentence.

For the other offender, things are more difficult. If he is picked up in Poland, he can be extradited to our country without any problem if he is of age. If the offender is a minor, there is no ex-tradition. Minors are not responsible under criminal law and cannot be extradited. Persons come of age for criminal law purposes in Poland at seventeen. In Belgium the age is eighteen.

**Bill on juvenile crime approved**

**DE STANDAARD • 26 APRIL**

On 25 April the Parliamentary Committee has approved the bill on juvenile crime. For several years this matter has been the cause of political debate between Flemish Liberals and Christian Democrats on one hand and Walloon Socialists on the other. The government asked Parliament to approve the bill quickly as a signal to the outside world. Only the Vlaams Belang voted against it (FF).

The bill amends the 1965 law on youth protection and gives the judge sitting in the juvenile court more possibilities for dealing with young offenders. He can start up an attempt at mediation, impose house arrest on young people, place them in a young offenders’ institution, and so on. Young people aged sixteen or less who have committed serious offences are brought before a special chamber of the juvenile court. When they are sentenced, they will be placed in a young persons’ prison which is still to be set up, and should be up and running by 2009, although it is not yet clear where the prison will be. The juvenile court will receive more resources: 27 crimi-nologists and a number of coordinators. To get the specialist chamber up and running, Onkelinx will be bringing in more judges. All together, the reform is to cost EUR 45 million. PS minister Onkelinx said she wanted to implement the text of the law this year. Onkelinx also mentioned a possible expansion of the competency for the municipality to deal with minor offences by means of administrative sanctions. It will be examined whether minor cases of theft can also be handled in this way.

With the exception of the Vlaams Belang, the opposition also ranged itself behind the project. CD&V MP Tony Van Parys said he was pleased that the majority had adapted the bill at the request of the Christian Democrats. Now we can talk of a genuine youth sanction law and the judge sitting in the juvenile court can also impose real sanctions, he said. Van Parys did ask for sufficient resources to be made available to enable the law to be imple-mented.
80,000 take part in silent march against street violence

The marchers were not only expressing their sympathy for the victim, but were also silently protesting against senseless street violence.

On Sunday 23 April some 80,000 people participated in a silent march through Brussels, to commemorate the murder of Joe Van Holsbeeck. The march was carried out peacefully, and politicians kept a low profile. At the request of Joe's family, no banners were displayed. The march passed through Central Railway Station where Joe was murdered. Here, participants laid down flowers and offered their sympathies to Joe's parents, while a brass band played George Brassens’ ‘Les copains d'abord’.

The marchers were not only expressing their sympathy for the victim, but were also silently protesting against senseless street violence. After the demonstration, the parents thanked the public and appealed to politicians to do more to keep street violence in check.

Prime Minister Verhofstadt stressed that the government will continue to make efforts to fight juvenile crime. He said that criminal acts such as extortion and ‘steaming’ carried out by youth gangs must receive special attention, as they can generate feelings of insecurity and racism. Flemish Minister-President Leterme feels that politicians should above all be discreet (FF).

Prime Minister Verhofstadt advocates that greater attention be paid to youth crime - and in particular the practices of steaming and extortion - in national and zonal safety plans, but he, too, is careful not to delude the population with illusions: ‘Unfortunately there will never be a society free of violence’. Flemish Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) joined his federal counterpart on Sunday before the march: politicians have to do their work, but apart from that are best advised to act discreetly. ‘You can’t have a policeman watching over every citizen. Even then you wouldn’t be able to rid the world of violence.’ Leterme also refers to the responsibility of the entire community: ‘Everyone in their own environment should oppose behaviour that goes against the rules.’

It is in that spirit that the chairmen of the Flemish democratic parties participated, just as many other individual politicians. ‘I am wholly behind the position adopted by Guy Verhofstadt and Yves Leterme’, said Flemish Education Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (sp.a), one of the politicians on the march. ‘It’s logical that a government leader should not take part in a march or demonstration. I also have respect for politicians who stay at home out of hesitance, but I feel that it should be possible. If as a politician you are clearly saying that you are not able and never will be able to solve this kind of problem with laws and decrees, you might just as well join the march.

In any case, all politicians yesterday refrained from making promises for new policy measures. ‘Within the political establishment there is certainly the willingness to formulate solutions’, said Leterme. ‘But we are not going to launch new ideas now and take advantage of people’s emotions and the junc- ture. That would be an incorrect position.’

In French-speaking Belgium the politicians appeared to be somewhat less hesitant about showing themselves. PS chairman Elio Di Rupo, who took part in the march, was one such example. ‘When the government was created in 2003, I asked for 2,500 more police- men. But we need even more’, he said in De Morgen. ‘At the moment there’s too much of a feeling of impunity. The district police officer has still not been upgraded enough. He still wastes too much time on administrative duties. These should be reduced not by a half, but by 80%.’ Di Rupo is not thinking immediately of a political initiative. On the French-speaking side, too, there were those lobbying, before the march, for more juvenile courts and places in youth offender institutions.

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 26 APRIL

When we saw the video images, did we all automatically conclude that these were indeed ‘bloody Moroccan kids’? And therefore we felt it was obvious that the immigrant community should make its voice heard, in order to distance itself from this cowardly deed. Did we all nonetheless want the imams to make a call on the perpetrators, during Friday prayers, to give themselves up? Did we nonetheless all want the immigrant community to reflect on the problems that some of their young people are causing?

This last question is not unjustified, for there are indeed a couple of problems to be broached. The only thing is: the occasion was completely incorrect, as we now know. We did not have the slightest right to lay part of the responsi- bility, even unspoken, on a communi- ty that had nothing to do with the mur- der. And actually, we wouldn’t have even if it had emerged that the two had indeed been of Moroccan origin.

An individual remains responsible for his own acts, not the population group from which he comes.
The Council of Ministers has approved Minister of the Interior Patrick Dewael’s proposals for reform of the asylum procedure, following a number of modifications made by Dewael to the procedure on the advice of the Council of State. Under the new asylum procedure, it will no longer be the inefficient Immigration Service who launches investigations into the viability of claims. The General Commissioner for Refugees and Displaced Persons will have ultimate authority in the rejection or approval of requests for asylum. The decision will no longer be able to be contested through the somewhat slow-moving Council of State, but will now go through the Board for Immigration Disputes. The use of delaying tactics by the solicitors of asylum seekers will become more difficult. The whole procedure should be settled within a year. The new procedure will deal also more severely with possible asylum abuses.

Since the most popular form of family reunion is marriage, the partner living abroad and coming to Belgium must be at least 21 years old. The couple may be checked on over a three-year period to ensure it is not a marriage of convenience. Meanwhile, refugees are continuing to occupy churches and hold sit-ins to press for new general regularisation, but Dewael is refusing to give in. His tough policy has resulted in the number of asylum applications dropping to fewer than 1,000 per month (FF).

FRANS DESMET • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 22 APRIL

The long ailing Aliens Department (DVZ) will soon only be carrying out purely administrative duties, with the exception of three checks: whether the asylum applicant has already requested asylum in another EU country, whether he/she constitutes a danger for public order, and whether it is a case of several applications being made by one and the same person. The approval or rejection is the responsibility of the commissioner for refugees, who will take just one decision, as opposed to the several interim decisions that had been taken hitherto. Appeal no longer has to be lodged with the Council of State, a legal mill that turns very slowly, but with the new Council for Aliens’ Affairs which will consist of 32 magistrates. It is Dewael’s aim to have the full asylum procedure, including any appeal, completed within a maximum of one year.

The new law provides for clearer statutes and the protection of bona fide refugees. Every asylum story is tested on the international Geneva Convention, and in addition to that the new law introduces ‘subsidiary protection’. This means that those who are not officially eligible for asylum can also be recognised as refugees if it is presumed that they will suffer severe harm if returned to their country of origin. Marriage is the most popular form of family reunification. The minimum age to be eligible for this has been raised from 18 to 21, which reduces the chance of forced marriages.

The highest law court, the Council of State, has to deal with an enormous backlog. There are currently 36,264 cases ‘pending’ with the Council of State, 25,016 of which asylum cases. Of course these are being worked through, but the influx of new cases is being blocked by the new professional body. However, the Council of State will also continue to act in asylum cases as the highest cassation body, although access to it will be filtered more strictly than ever before, so that appeal to the Council of State can no longer be used as a means of gaining time.
Advertising agency Duval Guillaume is taken over by Publicis

Duval Guillaume is not being subsumed into an international network and it is keeping its name

André Duval and Guillaume Vander Stighelen, the two founders of the largest Belgian independent advertising agency Duval Guillaume, are selling their company to the French company Publicis, the third largest communication group in the world, which embraces such well-known agencies as Saatchi and Leo Burnett. Publicis is not divulging how much it has paid for Duval Guillaume. The acquisition of Duval Guillaume means that the most successful independent advertising agency of the last ten years has fallen into foreign hands. However, Duval Guillaume is not being subsumed into an international network and it is keeping its name. Founder André Duval sees the takeover chiefly as offering opportunities. In his view, the firm gains access to Publicis’ major international customers who want to carry out a campaign in the Benelux, and will be able to draw more international attention to its campaigns (FF).

GUIDO CLOOSTERMANS • HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG • 19 APRIL

Last year Duval Guillaume recorded a turnover of EUR 68.3 million, on which gross earnings of some EUR 20.7 million were recorded, 11% more than in 2004. The advertising agency has offices in Antwerp and Brussels. Last year an office was opened in New York, and at the beginning of this year a subsidiary was opened in Paris. ‘It’s not illogical that Duval Guillaume should be taken over’, says Mark Anthieren, editor-in-chief of the advertising trade journal Pub. The agency wants to grow abroad. But that costs money. You can’t do that just with the income from Belgian activities. Renting an office in New York and recruiting creative people there costs many times more than what it costs you in Belgium’.

Publicis is the largest communication group in Europe and the third largest group in the world. In 2005 it recorded a net profit of EUR 386 million on a turnover of EUR 4.127 billion. Publicis Groupe is listed on the Paris and New York stock exchanges and is present in 104 countries. Publicis was certainly not the only candidate interested in acquiring Duval Guillaume. But the group managed by Maurice Lévy made the difference with its strategy whereby smaller firms can develop independently. ‘We had talks with other groups, but Lévy demonstrated a far greater understanding of what our company and brand stand for’, says Guillaume Vander Stighelen.

‘Advertisers in Belgium usually have a choice. Either they remain a local agency or they become a part of an international network. We are proud that we can continue to grow internationally without becoming part of a network structure’, says Duval. ‘This agreement is certainly not a dying-out scenario. We may very well carry on like this until we’re sixty.’

According to the agreement with Publicis Duval [52] and Van der Stighelen [51] are obliged to remain in active service for their new employer for at least a further five years. Duval Guillaume was the first Belgian agency to gain a place in the top fifty independent advertising agencies in 2004. In 2005 it was proclaimed best European advertising agency. Last year Duval Guillaume won two Golden Lions at the Cannes advertising festival. That is a unique feat for a Belgian agency.

WWW.DUVALGUILLAUME.BE

Ranking Independent Agencies by gross income (x 1000 euro)

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SOURCE: PUB MAGAZINE

Foreign investments crank up corporate results of Belgian companies

A study of corporate entrepreneurship conducted by two professors at the Flemish Business School in Antwerp reveals that large Belgian companies (more than 200 employees) had set up 60% more subsidiaries in 2003 than ten years before, in 1994. This increase is chiefly attributable to strong foreign expansion, reports De Standaard [27 April], for in that same period the number of Belgian subsidiaries dropped by 43%. There is an obvious reason for companies opting to invest abroad. The return is much higher than in domestic subsidiaries, and that jacks up operating results. The idea that relocation is bad because it often involves job losses is thus not entirely correct, says De Standaard. Should the government therefore encourage companies to invest in their own country, knowing that they cannot really secure any financial and economic improvement out of doing so, the paper wonders. And can Flemish Economic Affairs Minister Fientje Moerman allow herself to call relocation a good thing for Flemish companies? For that matter, Flanders is the only region where the establishment of subsidiaries in the companies’ own region has increased.
**Flemish Parliament approves Flemish sign language**

On 26 April the Flemish Parliament unanimously approved a decree formally recognising Flemish sign language. That means that sign language is considered as a fully-fledged language and not as a resource for communication. Flemish N-VA MP Helga Stevens - herself of impaired hearing - co-authored the decree with fellow CD&V member Veerle Heeren. She hopes that the decree will encourage more interpreters to be deployed at public events and in this way help deaf people out of their isolation. But she also hopes that Flemish sign language is also given a place in foreign-language education, alongside French, English or Chinese (FF).

According to Helga Stevens the decree regulates three aspects: ‘Firstly the cultural recognition of Flemish sign language, since language belongs to a culture. Secondly, an advisory committee is being set up. And thirdly, the recognition opens the way to a structural subsidisation of research into the future development of Flemish sign language. For sign language is also a living language that continues to evolve. Up until now it has remained the work of volunteers. If a volunteer stops, then all that knowledge is also lost’. Stevens points out that in contrast to what a lot of people think, sign language is not universal, just as there is no universal spoken language. Deaf people did not used to be mobile, so it was a long time before sign language was standardised. Flemish sign language differs from that used in the Netherlands and from that used in French-speaking Belgium. ‘In the old unitary Belgium, the same sign language used to be valid throughout the country, but since the regionalisation of education the French and Flemish sign languages have grown apart, she explains. Stevens can only follow the sign language interpreters for the RTBF news bulletin if she knows the subject very well, she explains. Her colleague Heeren points out that doctors are questioning the usefulness of sign language in education, because more and more deaf children are being helped with implants, which replace their sense of hearing. According to Stevens implants and sign language support each other. Stevens herself has two sign language interpreters in the Flemish Parliament, who enable her to follow the debates.

**VRT boss Mary demands guarantees**

Tony Mary, the managing director of the VRT, and his television manager Aimé Van Hecke, want their own digital range of thematic and target-audience channels as soon as possible. For this, they need an additional budget of EUR 180 million. A further government contribution of EUR 120 million would be enough, for they hope to earn EUR 60 million themselves through commercial activities. With their own digital range, they want to stem the tide of American programmes that will shortly be coming into Flemish households via the Telenet and Belgacom digital TV platform. They also want more synergy between radio and television channels more or less targeting the same audience, such as between Radio 1 and Canvas or between Radio Two and One. Investing in the VRT means investing in the Flemish identity, according to Mary, for those offering digital television, Belgacom and Telenet and the commercial broadcaster VTM, inevitably fall into foreign hands. But the big news on the proposed action plan was that Mary was demanding ‘formal guarantees’ that the politically composed board of directors will not meddle in the operational management of the VRT. If he does not receive those guarantees, ‘he will draw his conclusions’. Mary therefore threatens to step down (FF).

Bart Haecck • De Tijd • 27 April

The question is whether Mary’s wishes become reality. There have been clashes between him and Flemish politicians for some time. Mary is calling for freedom of movement for good management of the public broadcasting corporation. The Flemish Parliament and the Flemish Government feel that they no longer have a hold over the VRT. The appointment of Aimé Van Hecke to the post of television director, the setting up of Sporza and the cooperation with Belgacom for the Belgian football rights: on each occasion the politicians had the feeling that they were being presented with a fait accompli when it came to important decisions. Those defending Mary make the point that the VRT is no normal company. In accordance with the culture pact law, the Flemish Parliament appoints the board of directors. On the basis of the elections of June 2004 CD&V, VLD, SP.A and the Vlaams Belang each appointed three directors. This political distribution risks bringing the board of directors into a deadlock, Mary’s supporters said at the time. To combat that, a strong managing director is needed.

Yet the Flemish Parliament finds that the swing has swung too far in the direction of the management. Last week the Media Committee unanimously approved a draft decree in which the board of directors is given greater power. The board has to take all strategic decisions. For Mary it goes against the grain that the board can determine what is strategic. The VRT management committee wrote a letter to Flemish Media Minister Geert Bourgeois [N-VA] on the subject yesterday, ‘The new decree in no way guarantees that all operational decisions are still taken solely by the management. That can de facto lead to an unmanageable situation.’
**BUDGET POLICY**

**New accounting structure should save budget**

**FF EDITOR**

The takeover of the historic public debt of the Belgian national railways or EUR 7.4 billion should be booked in the budget expenditure of 2005. This is according to Eurostat, the European Office for Statistics. This would lead to the federal public account for last year showing a deficit of 2.4% of GDP instead of a surplus of 0.1%, reports De Tiid (25 April). The government, which took pride in the fact that the 2005 budget year had closed with a balanced budget for the sixth time in a row, informed Eurostat that it was planning to reorient the debt. For that, however, a new accounting structure has to be devised. In government circles, people are meanwhile finding themselves somewhat cheated. After all, Eurostat had given the informal green light for the structure in which the NMBS debt was categorised.

[www.statbel.fgov.be](http://www.statbel.fgov.be)

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**TAX POLICY**

**Record revenues from registration fees in 2005**

**FF EDITOR**

The 1,200 Belgian notary offices collected a record amount in registration fees in 2005. The EUR 3.055 billion in fees collected was as much as 25% higher than in 2004. The reduction of these registration fees by no means leads to a drop in revenues. On the contrary, as Pierre Nicaise, chairman of the Federation of Belgian Notaries’ Offices, concluded during the presentation of the 2005 annual report. Deeds of sale for real estate and deeds for mortgage loans accounted for half of all deeds. Three in every four deeds of sale are coupled to a loan deed. But also the lower gift taxes in Flanders and Brussels have led to a larger number of gift deeds. And the number of wills rose from 60,000 to 80,000. The lower gift taxes enable people to draw up their will in complete openness, said chairman Nicaise.

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**MUSEA**

**First Museum Award goes to the Museum Dr. Guislain in Ghent**

**WITH THE ORGANISATION OF THIS AWARD OKV WANTS TO CHANGE MUSEUMS’ ACCESSIBILITY AND VISITOR-FRIENDLINES**

**GEERT VANDER SPEETEN • DE STANDAARD • 25 APRIL**

The Museum Award is a new initiative of the arts magazine Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen (OKV - ‘Public Art Possessions Flanders’). Museums mostly miss out when it comes to awards. In the cultural sector there are hundreds of awards, except for museums which make a point of presenting their permanent collections well. Openbaar Kunstbezit wants to change that and with the organisation of this award reward museums’ accessibility and visitor-friendliness.

For the first edition the preparation was immediately tackled thoroughly. On a separate website the public was encouraged to choose their favourite museum. The public’s awards went to the Natural Science Museum, the Huys van Alijn in Ghent (folklore) and the Photography Museum in Charleroi. Although all established museums appeared on the nomination list, in the end it was the ‘odd man out’, the Museum Dr. Guislain, which landed the first Museum Award to the value of EUR 10,0000 (FF).

**MUSEA**

**First Museum Award goes to the Museum Dr. Guislain in Ghent**

**WITH THE ORGANISATION OF THIS AWARD OKV WANTS TO CHANGE MUSEUMS’ ACCESSIBILITY AND VISITOR-FRIENDLINES**

**GEERT VANDER SPEETEN • DE STANDAARD • 25 APRIL**

The Museum Dr. Guislain is located in an exceptional site in Ghent, in the middle of a psychiatric institution. It explains the history of madness. Here medicine finds a continuation in cultural history, folk art and contemporary art.

Lurid but also everyday aspects of psychiatry are displayed. Guislain does this on the basis of internationally talked-about exhibitions on unusual subjects such as ‘Pain’ or ‘The Heart’. Often the thin line between what is normal and abnormal is explored. The Museum Dr. Guislain aims to break through taboos, in the opinion of the jury. Moreover, it takes its social role very seriously, ‘without becoming pedantic or purely didactic’.

Awards were presented for the three regions. For Wallonia the highest distinction went to the ‘Mac’s’, the Museum of Contemporary Arts, in Hornu. In the Mons region the putting to a new use of a former mine site and the contemporary museum concept of the Mac’s hold out their hand to each other. The museum has a strong public vocation and assumes its responsibility vis-à-vis the economically neglected area.

In Brussels the winner is the Natural Science Museum. The educational department has existed there for seventy years. The museum is seeking a young public and to this end deploys communication means such as SMS messaging, interactive games and competitions.

Museums are weighed down by a mistaken image, in the view of Peter Wouters, director of OKV. ‘They are identified with dusty places, with lots of atmosphere and a treasure-house of extraordinary stories. The alternative is a soulless contemporary building with no charm, but whose educational services are in tiptop shape. The nominated institutions prove that things can be different. Museums are gradually learning to deal with their stately buildings and with the legacy of the nineteenth century’.

[www.tento.be](http://www.tento.be)
**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **1 May:** Fear Factory, AB, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24
- **3 May:** Ricky Martin, Vorst National, Brussels; info: www.vorstnational.be 0900/0099
- **6 May:** Boris Godunow, Opera by Mousorgski, director: Klaus Michael Grüber with José Van Dam and Anatolij Kotscherga, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.bijloke.be
- **6 May:** 11 May: Beaux Arts, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **6 May:** Stéphane Degout baritone, Hélène Lucas piano with Works by Carl Löwe, Hugo Wolf, Richard Strauss, Camille Saint-Saëns, Franz Liszt, Arnold Schönberg, Claude Debussy, Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, Maurice Ravel, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **6 May:** Eliza Gilkyson [USA], folk songs, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- **6 to 27 May:** KunstenFestivaldesArts with artists from all over the world on 18 spots, Brussels; info: www.kunstenfestivaldesarts.be
- **6 May:** Beethoven Academi conducted by Chico Cesar [Bra], concert, Flagey, Brussels; info: www.flagey.be
- **5 May:** Beethoven Academi conducted by Jörg Rabinovich (architectural school from Tielt, Belgium), exhibition, PMMK, Ostend; info: www.museumkunstotdenmakken.be
- **5 May:** Herve Nicquet, with Véronique Gens (soprano) with WA Mozart, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be
- **5 May:** Garland Jeffrey's [USA], pop songs, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- **5 May:** New Mozart Ensemble with Melvin Tan [piano], WA Mozart, F Chopin and J. Doye, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouwb.be
- **5 May:** Bamberg Symphoniker conducted by Jonathan Nott with Pierre-Laurent Aimard piano with works by JS Bach, Olivier Messiaen and Anton Bruckner, Bozar Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **5 May:** Natalia Gutman o/ Viacheslav Poprugin with Schnittke, Hindemith, Poulsen, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
- **5 May:** KunstenFestivaldesArts with José van Dam and Anatolij Kotscherga, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.bijloke.be 02/507.82.00
- **5 May:** Until 24 June: Rhythm and创新 around 1600, exhibition, Hessenhuis, Antwerp; info: www.hessenhuis.be
- **5 May:** Until 31 May: Antwerp-Frankfurt: Migration and innovation around 1600, exhibition, Hessenhuis, Antwerp; info: http://museum.antwerpen.be/etnografisch_museum
- **5 May:** KunstenFestivaldesArts with José van Dam and Anatolij Kotscherga, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.bijloke.be 02/507.82.00
- **5 May:** Until 1 October: Beaufort Outside: open air exhibition along the Flemish coast; info: www.2006beaufort.be
- **5 May:** Until 3 September: Beaufort Inside, exhibition, PMMK, Ostend; info: www.2006beaufort.be www.pmmk.be 070/22.50.05
- **4 May:** Minguett Quartett with Jörg Widmann [clarinet] with WA Mozart, J. Widmann and W. Rihm, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be
- **4 May:** Until 24 June: Art at the Frontline 1914-1918, Royal Army and Military History Museum, Brussels; info: 02 737 78 33 www.klm-mra.be
- **4 May:** Until 28 May: Yearning for Beauty, The Vienna Werkstätte, exhibition Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **4 May:** Until 31 May: Antwerp-Frankfurt: Migration and innovation around 1600, exhibition, Hessenhuis, Antwerp; info: http://museum.antwerpen.be/etnografisch_museum
- **4 May:** Until 6 May: KunstenFestivaldesArts with José van Dam and Anatolij Kotscherga, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.bijloke.be 02/507.82.00
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**EXPO**

**27 April to 18 June: Serodio, Furtado o/ Associates [architectural school from Porto], exhibition, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be**

**DAILY NEWS ON WWW.FOCUSONFLANDERS.BE**

- **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, Kasteelastraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail. The website www.focusonflanders.be contains an electronic archive of published articles**
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