Investing in Belgium becomes attractive again

In 2005 Belgium was the third most attractive country in Europe for foreign investors, up five places on its 2004 rating. This was revealed in the annual ranking drawn up by the consulting firm Ernst & Young. Belgium attracted 180 of the 3,066 foreign investment projects in Europe (5.9%), representing 8,460 new jobs. The US (48 investments), the Netherlands (23) and France (23) were the largest investors. Belgian companies themselves invested in 58 foreign projects in Europe.

The difference between the Belgian regions is also striking in this area. Last year Flanders fetched in 61% of all foreign investments. For Wallonia that was 21%, and for Brussels 18%.

Belgium’s principal asset when it comes to investment remains the good infrastructure as regards transport, logistics and telecoms, in addition to the central location in Europe and the seaports. Foreign companies mainly come to our country to establish their (European) head office and to expand logistical activities (FF).

JOHAN RASKING
DE STANDAARD • 8 JUNE

In the field of logistical infrastructure, Belgium is in fifth place. Quality of life, access to capital and the ‘specific’ tax treatment for foreign executives and head offices are plus points for bringing in investments.

On the down side for Belgium are wage costs and the tax burden.

The image of the Belgian economy among foreign managers has improved in recent years, but the image of Belgium as an investment country still leaves something to be desired. For there is still a great difference between the opinion of foreign managers who have never worked here, and that of their colleagues who do have Belgian experience.

In any case Belgium’s trump cards are still not well known enough. One crucial factor is the further extension of Zaventem as an international airport. This is of even greater importance than the presence of the European institutions, says the report. The ongoing political discussion over the noise standards at the airport does not do the airport’s image any good in the eyes of foreign investors.

Another demerit: Belgium chiefly has to concern itself with expansion investments, i.e. from foreign companies expanding their existing subsidiaries or projects.

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DAILY NEWS
ON WWW.FOCUSONFLANDERS.BE

INTRODUCTION

T he current governor of Limburg and former SPA party chairman Steve Stewart cannot refrain from giving his opinion on Flemish and Belgian politics. In Gazet van Antwerpen his frank analysis of the forthcoming federal elections was that they would be a disaster for the Christian-Democrat Yves Leterme, Flanders’ Minister-President and the most popular politician of the moment. Stevaert immediately received a phone call from Leterme himself, who made it clear to him that such comments did not fall within the job descrip- tion of a provincial governor. Shortly after that about Leterme also came from SPA chairman Johan Vande Lanotte and the Leuven Socialist mayor Louis Tobback.

What is it all about? By the end of this year Leterme has to decide whether he will be running for prime minister in the federal elections of 2007. De Standaard describes Leterme’s dilemma as a catch 22 situation. If his party, the CD&V, does not win enough votes to demand a place in the Socialist-Liberal coalition, Leterme will miss out on the prime minister’s post. And if CD&V can exact a place in the federal government, then he still has no guarantee of becoming prime minister, if it turns out that the Socialists have become the largest political group- ing. Both PS and SPA could in that case claim the prime minister’s post. And even if Leterme did become PM, he would have to abandon his blinkered Flemish image in order to ensure that the talks on the prospective state reform are brought to a favourable conclusion. The alliance with the Flemish-National N-VA could even be put at risk. According to De Standaard it is therefore perhaps safer for Leterme to simply remain Flemish Minister-President and to conduct negotiations on a state reform from that position.

His party and grassroots are imploring him to take part in the elections, claims De Morgen (7 June). But the VLD will not fail to accuse him of desertion if he trades in his Flemish job for a federal one. Leterme’s party also did that in the last election in 2003, when the then Minister-Presiden Dewael (VLD) made the move to the federal level. As Minister-Presiden in office, it is moreover very difficult for Leterme to wage a campaign and at the same time keep his government team together. In the VLD Guy Verhofst- adt is angling for a third term of office. In the VLD Guy Verhofstadt is angling for a third term of office, but his party has in the meantime slumped to fourth place in the polls and is doggedly looking for issues on which it can gain points in the public opinion. Elio Di Rupo, the PS chairman and indisputably the most popular politician in Wallonia, was also tipped until recently as a likely candidate for the prime-minister. But according to the latest polls his party is likely to lose heavily in electoral terms as a result of the wave of scandals plaguing the party. The PS is hoping that it can still turn the tide a few months from the local elections. It may therefore adopt more radical standpoints within the federal government in order to win back its grassroot. De Standaard doubts whether the federal government will keep going for another year in those circumstances.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Somers wants to limit unemployment benefits in time

FF EDITOR

VLD chairman Bart Somers has a proposal for getting the long-term unemployed back to work. Somers wants to limit unemployment benefit in time, but increase it to as much as 75% of the wage. After around three years, the job-seeker would fall back on the minimum benefit paid out by the OCMW (public welfare centres). With his radical proposal Somers wants to close the gap between the high unemployment and the many vacancies in so-called ‘bottleneck’ professions which are not being filled. In Wallonia more than one in five unemployed people have been out of work for more than five years. In Flanders it is one in 13.

With the exception of the Flemish employers’ associations Unizo (which claims the original idea) and VOKA, nobody seems to be backing the idea. Unizo recalls that Belgium is the last country where unemployment benefits are unlimited in time. According to the socialist trade union ABVV, Somers’ proposal will only result in poverty and social exclusion increasing (De Standaard, 6 June). The Christian union ACV feels that there are simply too few jobs, certainly for the long-term unemployed. Somers is taking over the Scandinavian model, albeit amputated, without the policy for getting people into work that goes with it over there, the union concludes. For the Christian Democrats (CD&V) and Socialists (SP.A) the proposal is not open to discussion. With this proposal, the VLD is showing that it does not believe in the policy of its own government, CD&V feels. SP.A chairman Johan Vande Lanotte sees more in the recipes of Flemish Employment Minister Vandebroucke (SP.A), who is in favour of an active monitoring and guidance by the VDAB (the Flemish employment office). In that system job seekers who do not want to work after guidance are suspended. According to Vande Lanotte, the battle should not be waged against the unemployed, but in favour of employment. The criterion should be if someone is making enough of an effort to find work, he believes. Federal Employment Minister Vanvelthoven (SP.A) regards the proposal as not open to discussion. By removing unemployed people from the system, you are giving them up, says the minister in De Morgen (8 June).

Most newspaper commentators see in Somers’ proposal more an upsurge of electoral fever than a genuinely feasible measure.

TABLE PAGE 6

BRUSSELS

Does Brussels need a third community?

FF EDITOR

The current capital model, in which all community matters (culture, education, welfare, etc.) in Brussels are shared between the Flemish and French-speaking Communities, is failing. That is the opinion of the Flemish minister with competency for Brussels, Bert Anciaux (Spirit). The minister expressed this standpoint at an intercultural meeting day in the Flemish Parliament, where the Congolese, Moroccan, Turkish and French Communities were also represented. Interculturality means that you give a voice to everyone, Anciaux said in his address (De Morgen, 6 June). Therefore, he feels that a third partner, the international community in Brussels, should be given a place in the ‘upper structure’ of the Communities, where at the moment only the Flemish and French Communities are represented.

His alliance colleague from the SP.A Pascal Smet, who is also minister of the Brussels Region, does not agree. In his view, you cannot lump all foreign communities in Brussels (Turks, Moroccans, Congolese, etc.) together in one category or one community. His Liberal colleague Vanhengel takes the same view. He points out that in Brussels everyone votes along ethnic lines: Turks vote for Turks, Moroccans for Moroccans, Flemings for Flemings, and so on. But Anciaux is right when he says that the image of one large French-speaking majority and a small Dutch-speaking group is not correct, according to Vanhengel.

All guests were in agreement on one demand, reports De Morgen: Brussels is no longer bilingual, but multilingual.

WWW.BERTANCIAXU.BE
WWW.PASCALSMET.BE
WWW.GUYVANHENGEL.BE

WELFARE

Extra month’s family allowance or school bonus?

FF EDITOR

The federal government will be holding its long awaited council of ministers meeting on 14 June, at which it wants to announce measures aimed at boosting families’ purchasing power and the competitiveness of companies. One of those measures is a school bonus for children on top of the monthly family allowance. The bonus would be EUR 75 to 125 per family and on an annual basis would cost the Treasury some EUR 170 million. One not insignificant fact is that the school bonus would be paid out at the beginning of the academic year, in September. This will already happen this year, which suits the coalition partners fine, since a month later the local elections take place.

The proposal comes from PS Social Affairs Minister Demotte and is backed by the Flemish Liberal VLD. But that party is adding another ‘extra’ to it. For families who spend a lot of money on creche facilities, they want to make an amount of EUR 20 per day tax deductible. At the moment that tax deductible amount is limited to EUR 11.20 per day.

At its family day in the Bobbejaanland amusement park in Lichtaart, the CD&V, which for ages has been profiling itself as the family party par excellence, launched the proposal to immediately pay out an extra ‘thirteenth’ month’s family allowance in September. However, that measure costs EUR 370 million per year, more than double the government’s proposal.
**List vote counts for one third in local elections**

In the local elections for the municipal and provincial councils on 8 October, the votes cast on the list count for one third, as agreed upon by the chairmen of the Flemish parties of the majority CD&V, VLD, SP.A, N-VA and Spirit. In the last elections, these list votes still counted for a half. In February Interior Minister Marino Keulen (VLD) announced that the list vote would be wholly neutralised, but he encountered opposition from the small alliance partners N-VA and Spirit which often have joint lists with their large partners CD&V and SP.A. The fact is that N-VA and Spirit feared that when the list votes no longer counted, their less favourably placed candidates would barely be eligible for a seat on the council, if only the name vote counted. A compromise was found: the list vote would count for the successors, who replace elected candidates, but at the request of Groen!, the Court of Arbitration quashed that rule. Two systems of seat allocation could not be used for successors and actual candidates, the Court ruled. If the Court of Arbitration also definitively annulled the suspended rule, the old rule with the halving of the weight of the list votes would apply again. All parties could live with that, except the VLD, which again pressed for the complete neutralisation of the list vote. On 8 October a compromise was reached: the list vote would only count for one third (FF).

**MARK DEWEERDT • DE TIJD • 7 JUNE**

In 2004 the Liberals and Socialists held exploratory talks on a solution to the disappearance of the coordination centres. Europe had announced that the centres, which control financial streams between the companies of a single group, had to go by 2010. To offset the disappearance of that fiscal goodwill system for companies, the Liberals proposed a further cut in the nominal rate of corporate income tax. Our country had earlier already cut the rate for companies from 40.17 to 33.99%. However, the Liberals were unable to sell a further cut to the Socialists. Because the Socialists also realised that something had to happen to keep the coordination centres in our country, at the end of 2004 they agreed to introduce the so-called notional interest deduction.

**POLITICS**

**ELECTIONS**

**Racist murders do no harm to Vlaams Belang**

The racist murders in Antwerp have scarcely had any effect on the voting intentions of Vlaams Belang voters, according to the three-monthly opinion poll commissioned by the VRT and De Standaard. The poll, which was carried out in May, even has the party up slightly on February’s poll. With 23.1% it remains the second party in Flanders behind the CD&V and N-VA alliance. Both CD&V-N-VA (29.4%) and the alliance of socialists and Spirit (20.7%) gain 0.3%, whilst the Liberals of the VLD (18.2%) lose a little ground. Groen! (7.5%) is down 1.2%. The shifts in the last three months can therefore barely be called significant. In comparison to the most recent regional elections, CD&V-N-VA records a marked increase (+2.8%). SP.A-Spirit gains a little ground, whilst both Liberals (-1.8%) and Vlaams Belang (-1.2%) lose ground. In the popu-

larity poll Minister-President Leterme (CD&V) leads by a large margin. More than half those questioned (51%) say that they could vote for Leterme. He is followed by Jean-Luc Dehaene (CD&V, 43%) and Steve Stevaert (SP.A, 41%), neither of whom holds an active political mandate eligible for election any more. Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (39%) and SP.A chairman Johan Vande Lanotte (39%) follow at some distance from Leterme (FF).

**BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 3 JUNE**

The Antwerp drama has caused some problems for the Vlaams Belang in the last few weeks. The party was accused of being partly responsible for the climate that coloured the marksman’s murderous decision. The communica-

The impact of the measure was underestimated by many. According to tax experts, the measure cut corporate income tax to around 25%. The expectation is that some companies with extensive net assets have even pretty much ceased to pay tax. The strange thing is that the interest deduction does not per se lead to greater investment. Companies can deduct a fictitious interest from their net assets from their taxable income, regardless of the level of investment. Although the impression is created that the notional interest is mainly aimed at attracting foreign investors, tax experts expect mainly companies based in our country to profit from the measure. The measure is too difficult to explain to attract foreign companies. These are frightened off by the nominal rate of 33.99%, which is way above the European average (26.8%). It is also not certain whether the measure will create many new jobs. If foreign companies are attracted, it will mainly be to set up so-called ‘treasury centres’ where only a handful of people work. Although the notional interest will not create many more jobs, it will ensure jobs in existing companies are preserved. Without the goodwill system many jobs could disappear to more tax-friendly places.
Overtaking ban for lorries on dual carriageways

The decision was taken at a special federal council of ministers meeting on transport

A speed limit of 80 km/hour will not be coming into force for lorries. Flemish Transport Minister Kathleen Van Brempt (SP.A), who had put the speed limit on the political agenda, is not getting her way. According to the minister, coalition partner VLD has been excessively accommodating to the transport lobby. But there will be an overtaking ban for lorries on roads with two lanes in both directions and Febeutra, the organisation of haulage companies, for example, is not entirely happy about that. The prohibition condition enters into force at the end of this year and will, according to Federal Transport Minister Renaat Landuyt (SPA), have at least as great an impact. The decision was taken at a special federal council of ministers meeting on transport, at which the simplification of the traffic code was also on the agenda (FF).

At the moment there is already a ban on overtaking for lorries in rainy weather. That is being extended to all dual carriageway roads (1,186 kilometres of motorways and 979 kilometres of regional roads). Only on the 509 kilometres of roads with three lanes in each direction is overtaking still permitted. The government can still permit overtaking areas where possible. ‘This decision is perhaps less symbolically charged than the 80 km/hour one, but is more efficient’, Transport Minister Renaat Landuyt (SPA) claimed. ‘I think that truckers will soon be longing for an official 80 per hour rule. For me the most important thing was that traffic became safer, and that effect has been achieved’. ‘We are happy that the 80 per-hour rule is not being introduced’, reacted Isabelle De Maegt of Febetra. ‘But the ban on overtaking also boils down to a disguised 80-per-hour. We fear that there will now be a wall of lorries in the right hand lane’. Tough rules alone are not enough, their observance also has to be checked. For example, the ban on overtaking in rainy weather is known among foreign truckers as the rule that does not have to be respected. Landuyt wants to change things there. He wants the police to spend 15% of the money from the traffic safety fund on controls of lorries. Rules are also changing for the normal car driver. In addition to the 30 km/h speed limit zone sign and the sign that delimits the built-up area (50 km/h limit area), there will also be a sign introducing the 70 km/h zone. That makes it unnecessary for signs to be placed limiting the speed to 70 km/hour after every junction. The priority to the right is still valid, also when a car coming from the right has already stopped. This measure should once and for all provide clarity and remove uncertainty surrounding the priority rules.

The intention of all these measures is to simplify the traffic rules, so there will also be a campaign to remove unnecessary road signs.

Social inspectors given greater powers

Minister Vanvelthoven defends the targeted controls of certain specific documents in malafide companies

Social inspectors, who check whether employers are abiding by the law when they take on staff, may soon actively search for documents in the company. At the moment they can only ask the employer to hand over those documents he is obliged to keep. They cannot actively look for these documents in the company. If the employer refuses, he is guilty of ‘hampering inspection’. The inspectors then have to ask the magistrate for an order, so that the employer is obliged to present the documents. But in the meantime employers conveniently use the time afforded by this process to get rid of any evidence of social fraud, says Employment Minister Peter Vanvelthoven (SPA). Therefore he defends the targeted controls of certain specific documents in malafide companies (FF).

Vanvelthoven denies that the inspectors are able to carry out house searches. ‘It relates only to company premises. If a house search takes place, that can only be done under the supervision of a magistrate’. Nonetheless, five professors in social law are expressing concerns about the ‘far-reaching’ extension of the inspectors’ powers, reported De Tijd (2 June). ‘We had reached a consensus with the inspectors services’, says Ghent professor Willy Van Eeckhoutte. ‘But the government has clearly directly extended the inspectors’ powers. We find that’s going too far. The European Court of Human Rights has recognised that a company, just like a private person, falls under the protection of privacy and that without a court order no house search can be made in a company’.

Vanvelthoven sees no objections. ‘In a recent opinion the Council of State did not express any fundamental objections. We are not targeting the 95 % bonafide companies, but only the cowboys. Trade and industry has even been pressing for us to put a stop to the unfair competition from companies that make fun of the social legislation’.

www.ministerpetervanvelthoven.be
**ECONOMY AND SCIENCE POLICY**

**STOCK EXCHANGE**

**NYSE-Euronext merger: good news for Belgian investors**

The Euronext stock exchange, to which the Brussels exchange belongs, is to merge with the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). Euronext shareholders are to receive a stake of 41% in the NYSE Euronext joint exchange. The merger agreement was announced in Paris, but has still to be approved by shareholders. With an estimated stock market value of 15.7 billion euros, it is set to become the biggest exchange grouping in the world. The merger will bring about savings of some 214 million euros, by bringing the number of trading systems from six down to two. After the news was announced, shares in both NYSE and Euronext recorded a sharp rise. Shares in NYSE gained 2.8%, whilst Euronext shares recorded an increase of 3.3%.

Of the 20 directors posts, 11 are to be filled by Americans and 9 by Europeans. One such post is assigned to Olivier Lefebvre, currently chairman of the Euronext Brussels Board of Directors. He views the joint exchange venture as an opportunity for Belgian companies, as they will now also come into the sights of American investors (De Tijd, 3 June) (FF).

**Opinion**

KURT VANSTEELAND • DE TIJD • 3 JUNE

For the small investor, too, a merger with NYSE appears more advantageous than with Deutsche Börse. The latter already hinted that in the event of a merger it would be prepared to shut down the regional stock markets in Germany. There can be little doubt that, viewed from Frankfurt, Brussels does not transcend the level of Stuttgart, Berlin or Bremen, and would thus disappear. NYSE Euronext, on the other hand, places noticeably strong emphasis on the importance of local competition. Of course Paris will set out the lines for the merger group, but it has been doing that for years. For Belgian companies and investors it is important still to have a contact point in Brussels. If the stock exchange building is emptied, Belgians run the risk of losing their appetite for direct investments and will switch over to savings accounts and pegged funds.

After the Euronext merger in 2001 the small Belgian investor saw his horizons expand, with the result that he could invest more simply and cheaply in Dutch and French shares. At the same time the Brussels stock market went to great efforts, also by means of events, to see to it that Belgians did not lose sight of Belgian shares. Fingers crossed that NYSE Euronext expands investors’ horizons without leaving Brussels.

www.euronext.com

**SCIENCE POLICY**

**Still hope for Meise botanical gardens**

In Meise near Brussels, Belgium boasts one of the richest botanical gardens in Europe. It is the fifth biggest in Europe, to be precise. The gardens are older than Belgium itself, as they were established in 1796. They include a herbarium of 3.5 million specimens, the world’s largest rose herbarium, have 18,000 plants under cultivation, a gene bank and a seed bank. And the botanical gardens are still growing. Meise is soon to take over the nearby herbarium of the University of Leuven and the City of Antwerp herbarium, which is currently accommodated within the Zoo.

Unfortunately the conservatories and boilers do not make much of an impression. In stormy weather, the glass flies all around, according to assistant director Elmar Robbrecht (De Morgen, 6 June). The reason for this does not take much working out. The establishment has been suffering from a lack of funds since 2001. The Flemish and French Communities have not yet settled on the terms of a cooperation agreement for the joint management of the gardens. In order to relieve the worst of the lack of funding, Flemish Minister of Science Policy Fientje Moerman (VLD) has put up one and a half million euros (FF).

FILIP ROGIERS • DE MORGEN • 31 MAY

An (old) calculation reveals that the Botanical Garden needs some EUR 40.5 million until 2018. Until 2001 everything was going quite well, but then the garden entered the turbulent water of the Lambermont agreements, in which it was decided that the garden would be handed over from the Belgian state to the Communities. But five years on the Flemish and French Communities have still not managed to reach a cooperation agreement for the joint management of the garden. A makeshift situation has reigned for all that time.

Flemish Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) and his French-speaking counterpart Marie Arena (PS) have resumed the talks to arrive at an agreement. And according to Minister Moerman the main guidelines have now more or less been set in place. The Botanical Garden should become an ‘External Independent Agency’ of the Flemish Authorities, without this having to have any implications for the collection or the staff. ‘The world-class collection remains one whole. The herbarium and library remain the property of the Belgian state, but the garden is to be given on long loan to the Communities’.

In the meantime, the Botanical Garden continues to make do with what it has. Lambermont made provision for a fund of EUR 5.6 million which would be shared out when the garden was handed over to the Communities. But the real operating costs amount to some EUR 10 million. ‘The garden’s situation is especially delicate in winter. To alleviate the most pressing need, Fientje Moerman is earmarking a fund of EUR 1.5 million. This is even before the Community agreement is signed and scaled, in other words, but the minister says she is doing this out of genuine scientific interest: ‘The Botanical garden is too important an institution for science for it to be left to languish’.

www.fientjemoerman.be
www.plantentuinmeise.be
Roularta acquires control of L’Express/L’Expansion

The West Flanders media group Roularta, known for the magazines Knack and Le Vif/L’Express, the business magazines Trends and Trends/Tendances and owner of 50% of the commercial television and radio company VMMA, is acquiring full control of the French magazine publisher Groupe L’Express-L’Expansion. Roularta already held 35%, but is now also buying the other 65% of the shares from the publisher Socpresse, a subsidiary of Groupe Industriel Marcel Dassault. The takeover was to take place in two phases, according to reports a few weeks go, but this has now changed. By the end of the month there should be an agreement on the full acquisition, reports Roularta, which, according to De Tijd (6 June), is paying in the region of EUR 140 million for the remaining 65%. L’Express/Expansion recorded a turnover of EUR 200 million and a profit of EUR 10 million in 2004. Both publishers were already joint owners of Côté Maison and the Belgian weekly Le Vif/L’Express. Roularta is financing the operation with a debt financing. A second stock exchange listing in Paris is not ruled out (FF).

The full acquisition of L’Express/L’Expansion illustrates De Noil’s theory that Belgium is the perfect laboratory for all brands and formulas: that if it works in Belgium, it works everywhere. It gives Roularta the chance to copy its Belgian magazine mix almost entirely - and on a large scale. L’Express/L’Expansion’s profile is almost identical. In addition to the general title L’Express, the portfolio includes L’Expansion, L’Entreprise and Mieux vivre/votre argent. L’Express/L’Expansion’s model also resembles Roularta’s. They also publish books, organise seminars and launch special editions of magazines. By tapping the same niche markets as in Belgium, Roularta can offer advertisers its cherished ‘advertising packs’ across two countries. And that could give the group’s advertising income a boost. Roularta has quickly built up a second domestic market in France in the last two years and is present in both the leisure and entertainment niche markets (Studio Magazine, Guitar Part, Actua Vidéo, etc.), and in the home niche market (Côté Maison). With the takeover Roularta also acquires the remaining 50% of this latter magazine. In the lifestyle sector Roularta holds 50% of the publisher Art de Vivre, the name behind the magazines Idéat and Atmosphères. From now on Roularta will be publishing the royalty magazine Point de Vue and the free ‘A Nous’ magazines in Paris, Lille, Lyon, Marseille and Nice. After completion of the L’Express/L’Expansion transaction, around a third of the turnover comes from the French market. The French magazine market is attractive for Roularta, with magazines attracting around 15% of media advertising (5% more than the daily newspapers). The niche markets in the French magazine market in which Roularta is active (generalist and economic) grew by 2.6 and 3.9% respectively.

Dalai Lama fills Antwerp’s Sportpaleis

With an address on the art of being happy, the Dalai Lama rounded off his official visit to Belgium in Antwerp’s Sportpaleis on 5 June before an audience of 12,000. The Buddhist leader mainly talked of the importance of mental happiness. He called on people not to attach too much value to material things and asked for greater attention to be paid to spiritual values. The Dalai Lama also stressed that affection and compassion are two foundation stones of happiness. He also pointed to the importance of laughing a lot and motherly love. ‘Things that you receive from when you are born and during your youth stay with you for the rest of your life.’ The spiritual leader called on everyone to be allowed to experience their own religion. Christians do not have to convert to Buddhism, he feels. The Dalai Lama has already been living in voluntary exile for years. He has long been advocating greater autonomy for his homeland, Tibet. He again called on the Chinese leaders to give Tibet more autonomy, and to put what was agreed on paper into practice. For that matter, he did not neglect to thank the European Community for the support it had offered him. However, he hopes that Tibet can also take advantage of the economic growth of the People’s Republic of China. WWW.DALAILAMA.COM

**Fully unemployed job seekers according to unemployment time**

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<th>(June 2005)</th>
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**Online advertising**

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**Advertising expenditure in Belgium 2005**

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Online advertising grows, but market share remains small

Advertisers spent EUR 55 million in Belgium last year on online advertising, according to a report by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), the association of online advertisers (De Standaard, 6 June). EUR 44 million of that goes to traditional online advertising such as banners on websites and EUR 11 million goes to keyword buying, mainly with the search engine Google. However, Internet advertising still only has a very small market share (2.2%) on the advertising market, where television (40.2%), newspapers (24.3%), radio (11.9%) and magazines (11.9%) are the real gas-guzzlers. Online advertising is still under-valued in comparison with the time that Belgian consumers spend on media. Consumers spend considerably less time reading newspapers (8%) and magazines (7%) than they do using the Internet (19%). Here radio (39%) is the leader, ahead of television (27%) (FF).

WIM DEPRETER • DE STANDAARD • 6 JUNI

Television, in particular, is the victim of the increasing use of the Internet. Research carried out by the measurement centre CIM shows that non-surfers spend an average of almost four hours a day watching television, compared with a good two and half hours in the case of Internet users. Those who use the Internet also spend less time than they used to on making phone calls and reading books and newspapers. Advertising revenue that the traditional media are losing can only in part be recovered via their websites. So-called portal sites [such as MSN or the home page of Telenet] swallowed up a quarter of all online advertising. Websites run by newspapers only manage 11%, and TV and radio websites barely 3%. Search engines are estimated to account for 21%.

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### TV Vlaanderen Digitaal launches low-threshold satellite television

In Flanders satellite dishes adorn the facades of houses where people of Turkish or Moroccan origin live, so that they can receive channels from their home country. Cable broadcasting of TV programmes serves 97% of families in Flanders and that has always played tricks on satellite television. But with TV Vlaanderen Digitaal a chance might be coming here. The brand new platform offers a range of more than 400 Flemish and international channels. Because TV Vlaanderen uses the European satellite system Astra, in addition to the Flemish networks and the bulk of the current range on offer on cable, the viewer also has access to more than 400 extra radio and television channels. The satellite platform actually started up three months ago. But director Kurt Pauwels was now proudly able to announce that his initiative will henceforth also offer all Flemish commercial and public television networks.

**De TiJD • 7 JUNE**

Despite the huge range on offer, the ambitions of TV Vlaanderen in densely cabled Flanders remain relatively modest. General manager Kurt Pauwels is hoping to reach the figure of 100,000 subscribers in three years. ‘But our sister company Canal Digitaal in the Netherlands proves that satellite television can be successful in a densely cabled market’, he said. ‘Above the Moerdijk 600,000 families are already viewing via satellite’. Pauwels stresses that it is not the intention to attack the range offered by Telenet or Belgacom. ‘We do not have the resources to compete with the two big players - for us, there are no expensive football contracts for example - but we offer the consumer a simple, accessible way of viewing digital television’.

The Flemish Media Minister Geert Bourgeois (N-VA), yesterday attended the official launch of TV Vlaanderen. He showed himself to be satisfied with the advent of a new digital player. ‘Flanders must have been just about the only country in the world where we were not able to receive our own channels by satellite’, he said. ‘What is more, TV Vlaanderen offers an interesting and comprehensive range, which will most probably persuade a great many Flemings to switch over to digital television. I can only applaud the advent of another distributor’.

The minister went on to say that the satellite platform could offer a solution for Flemings who live in Brussels and Wallonia, who had hitherto been deprived of various Dutch-language channels. Digital or interactive applications, such as video-on-request, are not possible for the time being. ‘Initially we are keeping TV Vlaanderen simple and cheap’, goes the message. ‘The advantage we have over the competitors, apart from the huge number of channels, is the convenience and the quality of the image. Our customers receive a perfect and direct digital signal wherever they are, without the intervention of a cable or telephone company’.

‘Another advantage of a satellite subscription is mobility. ‘With satellite television, you don’t need to take out a second subscription in your apartment on the coast. You can take your dish set with you anywhere. Mobile users are an important target group’.

[www.tvvlaanderen.be](http://www.tvvlaanderen.be)
CULTURE

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MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• 9, 14 and 15 June: Flat Earth Society (contemporary music), AB, Brussels;info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24, www.vooruit.be 09/267.28.28 and www.zuiderpershuis.be

• 14 June: Le Poème Harmonique [France] with ancient love songs and laments, Conservatory, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 15 June: Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen with Hélène Grimaud, piano and Florian Donderer leader, with Joseph Haydn, Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 16 June: Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Mikko Franck with Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Antonin Dvorak, Johann Strauss, Jean Sibelius, John Williams, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 16 to 18 June: Royal Ballet of Flanders with Sleeping Beauty, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be 070/22.50.05

• 17 June: DJ party with Peter Hook - New Order / Joy Division [Di Set], Tom Barman - DEUS [Di Set], Nena’s Polla, Marcellus Wallace & Kaliba, Valérie Garré, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

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

• Until 30 July: Photo exhibition: From here to here, a double multi-screen video installation, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• Until 2 July: Jana Sterbak [Canada] From here to here, a double multi-screen video installation, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• Until 10 September: Family affairs: brothers and sisters in art, exhibition with work by Jan and Pieter Brueghel, Johannes, Ambrosius and Abraham Bosschaert, Antoine Pevsner and Naum Gabo, Giorgio De Chirico and Alberto Savinio, Marcel and Suzanne Duchamp, Alberto and Diego Giacometti, Koen and Frank Theys and others, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00