



Combining Economy, Science and Innovation for a better society

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Low countries, riding high

Flemish government



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COLOFON

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Editors: Peter Spyns (General Editor), Emmelie Tindemans (Editor-in-Chief), Margot Bollen, Yves Govaert, Marleen Verleysen.

Editorial Board: Pierre Verdoodt (Chairman), Peter Bakema, Pascale Dengis, Veerle Lories, Tom Tournicourt.

Contributors to this edition: Peter Bakema, Ilse Boeykens, Lut Bollen, Karel Boutens, Erwin Dewallef, Kathleen D'Hondt, Karen Haegemans, Rudy Herman, Veerle Lories, Peter Spyns, Monica Van Langenhove, Wim Winderickx.

Guest authors: Johan Bogaert, Philippe De Lombaerde, Karel Goossens, Martin Hinoul, David Grzegorzewski, Liselot Ledene, Annick Schramme, Barbara Tieleman, Linde van den Bosch, Laura van Eerten, Maarten Vidal.

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Farewell to linguistic romance

Have the comments of the Dutch Finance Minister during the recent Fortis crisis given a rather stubborn and one-sided orange hue to relations between Belgium and the Netherlands? Not really, as this edition – devoted to Flemish-Dutch cooperation – makes clear.

What it illustrates most strongly is that the naive romantic conception of two peoples linked historically by a common language has long since been consigned to the history books. There is no East European Eurovision-style back-scratching (whether real or perceived) in the Low Countries, just a hard-nosed business-based approach that says: where joint interests exist or can be created, exploit them; otherwise, each for himself. Our joint bid to co-host the Football World Cup does not signal the end of rivalry between the two national teams.

But is this really so surprising? Are things any more amicable among the French-speakers? Did Belgium receive better treatment from France in connection with Fortis or Dexia? And what about here in Flanders? Who still buys from the corner shop when supermarket prices are lower? There is no such thing as a free lunch, especially when the stakes are high.

What matters is that two parties discuss shared interests with one another on a level playing field, reach an agreement that suits both and stick to it. This edition offers plenty of evidence that cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands benefits both sides, in such areas as interregional cooperation (p. 24), work on Dutch language and speech technology (pp. 28 et seq.) and the marine sciences (p. 38).


The importance of Flemish-Dutch cooperation is illustrated by the signing of a (revised) declaration of intent and the creation of a steering committee to stimulate and monitor practical cooperation in a number of fields (p. 20). This edition features an interview with the previous and current Flemish Representatives in The Hague, on this and other issues (see p. 34).

In addition, we showcase another policy research centre (p. 39) and take a look at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp (p. 13). We also focus on women starting up their own businesses (p. 10), legislation (p. 6 and p. 19) and European cluster policy (p. 8). In the Column, we round off this edition with a light-hearted look at some similarities and differences between the Flemish and the Dutch (p. 45).

Happy reading!

*Peter Spyns,
General Editor*





Mitigate, adapt or suffer?

Slowly but surely, we are coming to realise that our impact on our surroundings is much greater than originally thought. The environment is not an inexhaustible resource that will keep on bouncing back. Climate changes are becoming so manifest that urgent action is required: failure to act will imperil our very civilisation.

It is never too late to change things. There are two ways in which this can – and must – be done. On the one hand we need to mitigate (i.e. prevent) climate changes as much as possible. On the other, past mistakes cannot be completely reserved so we need to adapt to those changes. There is a third option: suffer. This is what will happen if we continue to blather and wait for events to take their course.

Change is a necessity

The fact that we know all this is thanks in no small part to the work of the most recent Nobel Prize winner, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹ (IPCC). The IPCC is a collaboration between

the World Meteorological Organisation² (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme³ (UNEP). Working with hundreds of critical specialists, scientists and policymakers from around the world, they provide a clear and objective picture of human impact on the climate. To this end, they have studied all known sources, examined them critically and summarised them in an Assessment Report. The conclusions of this collaborative venture are stark: our emission of hazardous substances has to change, urgently and fundamentally.

As is collaboration

Fortunately, there is a resolve in both the private and public sectors to do some-

thing about this. The huge investments made by companies in emission reduction are important. And many companies appear to be taking steps – however small they may seem – to adapt to the changing climate.

In Belgium, responsibility for climate issues is split between various levels of government. The federal government has some major tax and product policy instruments at its disposal. The regions are responsible for policy on rational use of energy, renewable energy, environmental legislation and many climate-related aspects of mobility, housing policy and agriculture. Efficient climate policy demands constant harmonisation between federal and regional policy initiatives to

enable them to work together to meet Belgium's reduction target in a cost- and resource-efficient manner. To this end, in 2002 the federal government and regions signed a cooperation agreement providing for the creation of a National Climate Commission, made up of representatives of the relevant governments and assisted by a permanent secretariat. The Commission is responsible for internal coordination and assessment of the national climate plan and also acts as a contact point.

A Flemish climate plan

The Flemish Climate Policy Plan is part of international efforts to a) tackle climate change by cutting greenhouse gas emissions and b) prepare for adapting to some of its unavoidable effects. Because climate policy impacts various policy areas, the Flemish Government set up the Flanders Climate Policy Task Force which includes representatives from various ministerial offices (cabinets), administrations and public institutions with responsibilities spanning a wide range of fields: environment, energy, development cooperation, science policy and innovation, economy, agriculture, housing, government buildings, mobility, external relations, well-being and spatial planning.

The Task Force performs the following tasks:

1. Preparing, developing and implementing a proactive Flemish climate policy on the greenhouse gases included in the Kyoto Protocol;
2. Process-based monitoring and adjustment – according to Flanders' specific needs – of the creation and implementation of a National Climate Plan;
3. Reporting on progress to the Flemish government, on the basis of reliable monitoring
4. Preparing Flanders' policy position on national and international climate policy.

Under the umbrella of the Climate Policy Task Force, various working groups have been set up to examine a number of specific issues in greater depth. There are working groups on the use of flexible mechanism²⁴; fine-tuning of the emissions inventory; calculation of cost-effectiveness; and preparing Flanders for climate policy post-2012. The lessons and challenges arising from the Flemish Climate Policy Plan 2002-2005 and the progress reports were key building blocks in the second Flemish Climate Policy Plan (VKP).

This is a strategic policy plan that proposes actions in all relevant areas for which

the Flemish government is responsible. The measures contained in the second VKP are grouped into ten topics: five sectoral topics, reflecting the general objectives in the fields of climate-friendly and sustainable mobility, rational use of energy, sustainable and low-carbon energy supply, industry and sustainable agriculture and forestry; and five horizontal supporting topics relating to research and innovation, awareness raising, flexibility mechanisms, the exemplary role of government and adaptation to climate change.

Europe also involved

At the forefront of reactions to climate change is the European Union. It was one of the first major powers to investigate ways of reducing the effects of climate changes and has implemented a range of mitigating measures. However, it is becoming clear that even with every will in the world we will be unable to reverse all of the climate changes caused by mankind. For that reason, the EU in 2007 also began focusing on adaptation to climate change.

In a Green Paper entitled "Adapting to climate change in Europe – options for EU action", we were asked for our opinion on their ideas. The survey findings will be published in a White Paper, which will eventually form the basis for the legislation and rules to be developed by the European Commission.



*Johan Bogaert and Liselot Ledene,
Department of Environment,
Nature and Energy (see also www.lne.be)*

1 <http://www.ipcc.ch>.

2 http://www.wmo.int/pages/index_en.html.

3 <http://www.unep.org>.

4 EWI Review 3 (2): 54.

Lower CO₂ emissions thanks to the Benchmarking Covenant



Since the 1970s, efficient use of energy has developed into a key objective of energy and climate policy in industrialised countries. In Flanders, CO₂ emissions are declining significantly, thanks in part to the Benchmarking Covenant for energy-intensive industry.

Various industrialised nations launched energy-saving programmes in the wake of the energy crises of 1973 and 1979. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) gave a whole new impetus to climate and energy policy. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has shown that human activity is partly responsible for the sharp increase in greenhouse gases – the most significant being carbon dioxide (CO₂) – in the atmosphere. The 186 countries that have ratified the Framework Convention, including Belgium in 1996, have pledged their commitment to tackling global warming.

Towards sustainable economic development

A vital part of this is sustainable economic development, with the industrial nations leading the way. The goals of the Framework Convention were established at a series of conferences over the ensuing years, the most famous being the 1997 conference in Kyoto. The Kyoto Protocol sets out quantitative commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Belgium pledged to cut emissions by 7.5% (Flanders: 5.2%) in the period 2008-2012, compared with the base year 1990.

Achieving this target is no easy feat for either Belgium or Flanders, since economic growth inevitably entails rising energy consumption. Moreover, energy-intensive industry is an important part of the Belgian economy, creating no less than 40% of our industrial value added: 10% more than in France, Germany or the UK, for example. On top of this, some major new facilities were built in Flanders in the first half of the 1990s.

Own commitment first

The Flemish government decided not to impose an absolute emissions ceiling, nor to introduce a one-size-fits-all percentage decrease for energy-intensive companies. Instead, it preferred to develop an objective system that would safeguard companies' growth potential. The chosen option was a benchmarking scheme, similar to the one already operating in the Netherlands. The Flemish Government approved the Benchmarking Covenant on energy efficiency for energy-intensive industry on 29 November 2002.

The Benchmarking Covenant is a voluntary agreement between the Flemish government and energy-intensive companies⁵, which once entered into becomes legally binding. Companies or sites that sign up to the Covenant undertake to achieve and/or maintain the highest

international levels of energy efficiency⁶ for their facilities by 2012 at the latest. To this end, they must carry out a benchmark study in which the energy efficiency of their facilities is tested against that of the best comparable facilities worldwide or regionally. Next, the company draws up an energy plan containing measures aimed at reaching and remaining at the highest international level by 2012 at the latest, taking into account any improvement in that level in the intervening period. In addition to energy-saving schemes within the actual production process, energy-efficiency measures include a more efficient use of raw materials (less waste) and more effective use of utilities (cogeneration, for example⁷).

Benefits and monitoring

In exchange for this, the Flemish government promises not to impose any additional energy-saving or CO₂-reduction measures such as levies or emission ceilings. It also pledges to make every effort to exempt Covenant companies from obligations imposed by the Belgian or European authorities. Covenant companies may enjoy partial or total exemption from excise duties on energy products and electricity as well as degenerativity in the federal electricity contribution. Companies or sites that meet the Benchmarking Covenant requirements are allocated the emission rights required to satisfy the European Emissions Trading Directive⁸, on the basis of their energy plan. Furthermore, the Flemish Government gives priority in assigning Flemish aid for the promotion of energy efficiency to those companies that have signed up to the Covenant. Consequently, only those target-group companies that have actually signed up to the Covenant can apply for an ecology premium⁹.

The Benchmarking Commission is the steering committee that undertakes general coordination and monitors the progress of the Covenant. It comprises representatives of the Flemish Minister for Environment and Nature, the Minister of the Economy¹⁰ and the industry associations that have joined the Covenant. The Commission publishes an annual report detailing the results of the Covenant. The Verification Office Benchmarking Flanders (*Verificatiebureau Benchmarking Vlaanderen*) is an independent body responsible for the correct implementation of the Covenant.

Positive results

At the end of 2006, 187 companies and/or sites from various industrial sectors¹¹ had signed up to the Benchmarking

Covenant. These companies account for over 80% of Flanders' industrial energy consumption. In 2002 (the Covenant reference date), the energy efficiency of Covenant companies was already 10.2 PetaJoules better than the highest international level and this improved further in the following years. In 2006, the energy efficiency of Flemish Covenant companies was 15.8 PetaJoules better than the highest international level. The total CO₂ reduction – both directly, through fuel consumption, and indirectly, through electricity consumption – was 1.96 million tonnes in 2006.

The Benchmarking Covenant provides a means of testing the energy efficiency of Flanders' energy-intensive industry in an international framework. By helping to cut CO₂ emissions, the Covenant makes a genuine contribution to climate policy. This shows that there is still scope for sustainable development, innovation and growth in today's globalised and competitive world.

*Lut Bollen,
Enterprise and Innovation Division*

5 Companies or sites with an annual energy consumption of at least 0.5 PetaJoules (1 PJ = 10¹⁵ J) per site can sign up to the Benchmarking Covenant.

6 Energy efficiency is expressed as specific energy consumption (energy consumption in PetaJoules per unit product).

7 Cogeneration is the simultaneous, combined production of heat and electricity. The big advantage of cogeneration is a much more efficient use of fuel.

8 EWI Review 2 (2): 38.

9 EWI Review 2 (2): 42 – 43.

10 The representatives of the Minister for Environment and Energy and the Minister of the Economy come from the relevant administrations, namely the Department of Environment, Nature and Energy, the Flemish Energy Agency and the Department of Economics, Science and Innovation.

11 Chemicals, refining, steel, paper, food, metal, textiles, ceramics, wood, glass and sand.

European top clusters: crucial for Flanders as a top region



In its Flanders in Action¹² action plan for the future, Flanders outlined its ambition to join the select club of European top regions by 2020 by means of sustainable policy. The internationalisation of Flemish business, particularly SMEs, is an urgent priority. This means not only competing across borders, but also – and perhaps more importantly – cooperating across borders.

What is a *cluster*? A grouping of several private, and often also public, entities that compete in specific areas but at the same time work together to boost the competitiveness of each participant. Clusters may be geared towards research and technological development or the joint procurement of raw materials. Organising particular services centrally allows participants to focus to the full on their core activity. Clusters are well known for enhancing their participants' innovation potential, and therefore have a positive impact on their competitiveness. *Cluster initiatives* are aimed at maximising cluster benefits. By adopting a *cluster policy*, the government can choose to maximise regional advantages by supporting cluster initiatives.

Flemish cluster initiatives

Flanders has a number of cluster initiatives, albeit referred to by different names. VIB¹³ and IMEC¹⁴ are strategic

research centres that since long enjoy financial support under Flemish innovation policy. They have spawned renowned and internationally active clusters in the fields of biotechnology and microelectronics & ICT. The latter has for some years received structural support through the Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT¹⁵). A fourth strategic research centre is VITO¹⁶, which aims to establish Flanders as a leading player in the field of sustainable energy and environmental technologies.

Whereas the strategic research centres are a deliberate government policy choice (*top-down*), the centres of excellence (*competentiepolen*) are more the result of a factual economic situation (*bottom-up*). The Flemish Government uses the centres of excellence to channel support for cooperative networks in the food industry (Flanders Food¹⁷), automotive sector (Flanders Drive¹⁸) and logistics sector (Flemish Logistics Institute¹⁹), among others. In so

doing, it does not focus solely on technological innovation: at least as important are non-technological innovations, in such areas as processes and management, which deliver increased efficiency. Efficiency increases generate cost savings, which in turn boost competitiveness. And while knowledge and innovation have replaced productivity as the most decisive factor in determining competitiveness, productivity remains key.

International outlook

In Belgium, it is primarily companies from the Flemish Region that participate in cluster initiatives, such as EUREKA²⁰. In many cases, these companies are already involved in a Flemish cluster. Indeed, many of the cluster initiatives focus on developing international cooperation structures. Among the most internationally active clusters in Flanders are the biotech and ICT clusters, created around the VIB and IMEC. Both easily rank among the

best in the world and are held in great esteem internationally within their areas of expertise.

Flemish companies and cluster initiatives must be encouraged to take an active part in European, cross-border cluster initiatives. Strengthening the international dimension of Flanders' innovation tools – as recommended in the Soete report²¹ – can be seen as the fine-tuning needed to meet this challenge successfully. Moreover, achieving the general objective of Flanders in Action – namely to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Europe's and the world's top regions by 2020 – will largely depend on how successful our companies and research institutions are at developing cross-border cooperation structures. Such a context will enable Flanders' assets as a region to be fully exploited and further strengthened, as the Commission Communication of 17 October 2008 on the creation of world-class clusters in the European Union also suggests.

High-quality cluster policy

Europe has a couple of thousand clusters, but only a fraction of these are on a par with rival clusters elsewhere in the world. The Commission aims to address this by striving for excellence at all levels.

There will be new European initiatives to support cross-border cooperation between companies. The Commission is deliberately targeting pilot projects towards six growth markets. Earlier this year, it identified these as: e-health, protective textiles, sustainable construction, recycling, bio-based products and renewable energy.

As regards cluster management, the

Commission proposes measures designed to improve the way cluster organisations operate and make them more professional. More specifically, proposals include recognising cluster management as a new professional qualification with associated quality standards.

In terms of policy and programming, the Commission urges Member States to work together more closely. It intends to facilitate the exchange of good practices and policy experiences. Member States should map existing clusters, and when drawing up their cluster policy must take particular account of the specific characteristics of SMEs to maximise their participation in clusters. Alongside this, the Commission announces initiatives designed to strengthen the innovation potential of SMEs. It aims to boost the development and dissemination of better innovation support services through channels such as Europe INNOVA²², the European Cluster Alliance²³ and the EEN²⁴.

Finally, the Commission asks Member States to plan and report on their cluster policy as part of their reporting on their Lisbon Strategy National Reform Programmes.

*Karel Boutens,
Enterprise and Innovation Division*

Flemish-Dutch hydrogen cluster initiative

Flanders and the South Netherlands have developed a multi-annual programme with the aim of creating a 'Flanders-South Netherlands hydrogen region'. This hydrogen awareness project has been developed by a number of SMEs, research institutions, schools and regional development agencies operating in the field of hydrogen and fuel cells in the Flanders and South Netherlands regions. Following analysis, they came to the conclusion that Flanders-South Netherlands has the potential to become a flagship region for hydrogen and fuel cells in Europe.

As well as hydrogen producers and distributors, the project also brings together technology developers, suppliers, energy companies and researchers. End users and project developers enable the products to be brought to market. Another vital element is the presence of hydrogen infrastructure, comprising a number of mobile filling stations, which could eventually expand into a wholesale regional network.

The Master Plan for implementing the Hydrogen Region scheme has three parts. The WaterstofNet project office, which is central to the plan, is responsible for implementing and scaling up the hydrogen programme. The plan provides for the creation of a limited hydrogen infrastructure and four demonstration projects, including hydrogen-powered tourist boats, fork-lift trucks, mobile dental vans and tourist trains. The third part involves developing training programmes and laboratory facilities for technology education. The aim is to finance the first phase of the Master Plan (2008-2012) through the European Interreg IV programme²⁵ and the Dutch and Flemish governments.

On 20 June 2008, the Master Plan was officially submitted to the Flemish Economy Minister, who expressed a readiness to provide the Flemish share of the funding.

*Lut Bollen,
Enterprise and Innovation Division*

12 On 11 July 2006, the Flemish Government unveiled the socio-economic plan entitled Flanders in Action (Vlaanderen in Actie). The aim is to secure Flanders' place among Europe's leading regions by 2020 in a sustainable way. The plan is based on a series of projects, grouped around four challenges: talent, logistics & mobility, creativity & innovation and internationalisation. Many of the projects have already been, or are in the process of being, implemented. See also <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/nlapps/default.asp>.

13 EWI Review 1 (1):24 – 27.

14 EWI Review 1 (1): 20 – 23.

15 <http://www.ibbt.be>.

16 EWI Review 2 (2): 23 – 24.

17 <http://www.flandersfood.com/ned>.

18 <http://www.flandersdrive.be>.

19 <http://www.vil.be>.

20 See also EWI Review 1 (2): 20 – 22.

21 L. Soete (ed.), (2007), Eindrapport Expertgroep voor de doorlichting van het Vlaams Innovatie-Instrumentarium [Final report of the expert group set up to evaluate the Flemish Innovation Policy Mix], 68p., Maastricht.

22 Supported by the European Commission, Europe INNOVA was set up to inform, assist, mobilise and network key business innovation stakeholders such as company managers, policymakers, cluster managers, investors and relevant organisations. See also <http://www.europe-innova.org/index.jsp>.

23 The European Cluster Alliance is a Commission-backed platform that serves as a contact forum for national and regional authorities with responsibility for cluster policy. See also <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=395&parentID=0>.

24 The Enterprise Europe Network is made up of over 600 organisations across Europe which offer companies business and innovation support on European legislation and international enterprise and innovation – see also http://ae.vlaanderen.be/html_afdelingen/enterprise.html.

25 See also p. 24 of this edition.





Female start-ups: smaller but happier!

In June, the Dutch research and consultancy organisation EIM²⁶ published a comparison between female and male start-ups, based on two studies, one carried out in 2004 and the other in 2008. A group of start-up entrepreneurs²⁷ was monitored annually for the purposes of the research. Statistics in this area have also been published in Flanders, most notably the gender notebooks and yearbooks²⁸ issued by the Flemish government. All these sources reveal a wealth of differences between male and female entrepreneurs, in both the Netherlands and Flanders.

These differences are apparent even before the business is up and running. For instance, in 2003 63% of Dutch male start-ups were already running another company, whereas barely 30% of female start-ups stated this as their main activity prior to launching their business. When it comes to the reasons for starting a business, there is less of a discrepancy

between Dutch men and women, with 'the challenge' and 'being my own boss' being the main reasons cited by both. Slightly more women than men start their own business in order to achieve a better family-work balance. The similarity of motives between men and women observed in the Netherlands is also evident in Flanders²⁹.

Women start up smaller

There are greater differences as regards the size of the company. Dutch women, for example, start up their companies with considerably less initial capital than their male counterparts. In 2003, only 13% hired an employee shortly after launching their business (compared with



STARTUP

20% of male start-ups), although by 2008 the number of Dutch female start-ups with staff had risen to 1 in 5. The same upward trend is apparent among Dutch male start-ups, 34% of whom had an employee in 2008. In Flanders, slightly more female entrepreneurs (26% in 2003) employed staff than in the Netherlands, although they still lagged considerably behind their male counterparts, 35% of whom employed staff²⁶. In 2006, the situation in Flanders remained largely unchanged (27% versus 36%), with men still outstripping women in this regard.

They earn less

In addition, more than 1 in 4 Dutch men achieved an annual turnover of €10,000 shortly after launching their business (i.e. in 2003-2004), compared with only 8% of women. This trend is reflected in the operating results, with only 61% of companies run by Dutch women making a net profit in 2007, compared with 76% for men. The EIM research also highlights a continuing wage gap between male and female start-ups in the Netherlands.

They work less in their own business

The fact that women's start-ups are often smaller than men's may be due to the fact that they are more likely than men to start out as – and remain – part-time entrepreneurs. 57% of the Dutch women worked less than 30 hours when launching their business, compared with 39% of Dutch men.

Flemish female entrepreneurs worked considerably longer than their Dutch counterparts in 2003. At that time, the average working week for a self-employed woman without staff was 44 hours, as against 56 hours for self-employed men without staff. Flemish self-employed people with staff had an even heavier workload, with women working an average of 56 hours and men an average of 60 hours per week in 2003. Only 8% of Flemish women entrepreneurs with staff worked part-time, compared with 17% for women entrepreneurs without staff²⁷. The most likely reason why more Dutch

than Flemish women work part-time is that part-time work is generally more encouraged in the Netherlands than in Flanders. Also, running a business part-time is much more of a deliberate choice for Dutch women than for Dutch men. After the initial start-up period, the proportion of Dutch women working part-time decreases over the years, although the difference vis-à-vis men remains significant.

But more for their family

With more Dutch female than male entrepreneurs working part-time, it is unsurprising that they also do more outside the business. 47% of Dutch female start-ups perform another activity, compared with 31% of male start-ups. The EIM research also reveals that more women than men work part-time for family reasons. 20% of women look after family and children as their second activity, compared with only 2% of Dutch male start-ups. Although Dutch women are more likely to run smaller businesses and combine their business with other activities, they are nonetheless happier than male entrepreneurs with their businesses.

And they want it to stay that way

Finally, EIM also surveyed how entrepreneurs perceived the future. This revealed that male entrepreneurs in the Netherlands are more optimistic than their female counterparts, with 15% of men anticipating a very successful future for their company. By comparison, only 6% of women felt the same way. More Dutch women have no staff and wish this to remain the case in future. Furthermore, Dutch female entrepreneurs are less likely than men to expect their company to have changed in five years' time.

This comparison highlights the big differences that can exist between men and women when starting a business. Women are much more likely than men to start on a small scale, often because of their second role as a wife and/or mother. There are a raft of initiatives in Flanders to encourage women to become more actively involved in business. In 2005, the policy focus of the call for enterprise projects was on female entrepreneurship: this resulted in Flemish government support being granted to a number of female-focused projects, including Start-up now³¹, Vrouwenzaken and E-facc.

*Ilse Boeykens,
Enterprise and Innovation Division*

26 <http://www.eim.nl>.

27 People who started their own business in 2003.

28 The gender notebooks (genderzakboekjes) and gender yearbooks (genderjaarboeken) relay statistics for female and male entrepreneurs as a whole, both start-ups and established entrepreneurs. Moreover, the gender notebooks do not monitor a group of start-up entrepreneurs over several years, as the Dutch research did. They provide real data for a specific overall number in a specific year. The gender notebooks were published in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Gender yearbooks have been published in 2006 and 2007.

29 *Vrouwen en zelfstandig ondernemen, tien lessen en tien aanbevelingen voor vrouwelijk ondernemerschap van markant VZW* [Women and self-employment: 10 lessons and 10 recommendations for female entrepreneurship], October 2004, Diane study.

30 Gender notebook 2004, Female entrepreneurship, Flemish government, Steunpunt Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Vorming (Policy Research Centre for Employment, Work and Training), ESF.

31 <http://www.startupnow.be/index.php>.

32 <http://kanaalz.trends.be/nl/vrouwenzaken>.



Flanders Investment & Trade

We speak a different language

The Netherlands is Flanders' second largest export market after Germany, accounting for almost 14% of all the region's exports. Conversely, Flanders is the Netherlands' biggest market, accounting for around 22% of imports. In other words, trade with the Netherlands is important and necessary for our economy.

This all seems rather obvious: Belgium and the Netherlands are neighbours, within easy reach of one another – and speak the same language. However, doing business with the Netherlands is an art in itself and is not as easy as one might expect. Consequently, Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT)³³ operates a busy office in The Hague, designed to help Flemish entrepreneurs break into a country that, while next door geographically, can sometimes feel a world away from home.

Dutch businessmen

Katharina Desmet has recently taken up the position of Flemish Economic Representative in The Hague. Until last summer, she ran the FIT office in Istanbul. Moving from a rapidly expanding metropolis on the bridge between East and West to a city that is geographically near to, and already enjoys close economic ties with, Flanders has been quite a shift.

"It's still too early for me to assess how business relations with the Dutch operate. But my first impressions tend to bear out the stereotypes," laughs Katharina. "Just because we speak the same language doesn't mean that everything runs smoothly. On the contrary, we assume that the meaning and interpretation of words is the same but that isn't always the case, so in-depth knowledge and careful preparation is absolutely vital. We definitely aren't given easier treatment just because we have the same mother tongue.

Direct in communication, self-assured and punctual is how I'd describe the mentality

of the average Dutch businessman, so clarity and directness are highly recommended for any Flemish people doing business here. One thing is certain: successful business in the Netherlands is about identifying shared interests, and that also applies to the Flemish."



Katharina Desmet

Strong economy

Flanders' number one export to the Netherlands is mineral fuels, followed by cars, tractors and bicycles (2), organic chemicals (3), machinery (4) and plastics (5). Flemish companies are most likely to succeed with innovative products and services boasting excellent value for money, although collaborating with Dutch companies on innovative projects is also an option, one

that could ultimately result in a stronger international position in third markets.

Flemish companies interested in the Dutch market can come to FIT for market information; to search for trading partners or contacts in the Netherlands; for legal information; information on trade fairs and so forth. FIT also promotes trade relations by organising 'contact days', inviting purchasers and compiling industry overviews. The possibilities of the Dutch market, the growth potential, the proximity: these are major assets.

Moreover, the Netherlands has recorded stronger economic growth than the European average in recent years: GDP grew by 3.5% in 2007, the highest level in seven years. Economic growth was 3.1% in the first half of 2008. The European Commission anticipates growth of 2.2% for 2008, compared with an average of 1.3% for the 15 Eurozone countries. Although the Netherlands has not escaped the global slowdown, it is still performing well and, as Flanders' neighbour, continues to play a leading role in our foreign trade.

Barbara Tieleman,
Flanders Investment and Trade

³³ EWI Review 1 (2): 47.



The Institute of Tropical Medicine

The Institute of Tropical Medicine³⁴ (ITM) has its origins in Belgium's colonial past. The Congo Free State, which had been the personal playground of King Leopold II since 1885, came under Belgian control in 1908. At that time, institutes and educational courses devoted to tropical medicine were springing up all over Europe, and Belgium was no exception.





The high mortality rate in the colony was hampering the colonisation process, and pressure grew for something to be done about it. Anyone wishing to pursue a career in the colony could take a course in tropical hygiene, while specialist training was introduced for doctors and nurses. Meanwhile, plans were floated to set up an institute of tropical medicine in Antwerp. This eventually came into being in 1906... in Brussels. It catered mainly for doctors and veterinarians planning to work in Congo.

To Antwerp, at last!

The Brussels Institute of Tropical Medicine did eventually move to Antwerp in 1934. It was housed in the new art deco building in the Nationalestraat (still in use), near to what was then the Congo docks. This was a logical choice, since sick mariners and colonial soldiers would disembark at the quays upon their return from the tropics. They brought with them not only typical tropical infections but also sexually transmitted infections – which explains why this remains one of the ITM's areas of expertise. The new school was named the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine, after the then Crown Prince of Belgium. Since then, the ITM has been a constant centre of reference for teaching, research and service delivery in the field of tropical medicine. In recent decades, research has also focused heavily on public health and HIV/AIDS.

National and international cooperation

The ITM is dependent for its basic funding on the Education Department. It is an integral part of the academic landscape in Flanders, but has always worked with federal bodies and institutes across the linguistic divide. Courses are taught in English, French and Dutch to both Belgian and foreign doctors and nurses.

The ITM's inter-university character is reflected in its Board of Trustees, which includes representatives of all Flemish universities as well as the relevant Flemish, federal and local governments. The Scientific Advisory Council (WRA) – set up to advise the ITM on science policy – is made up of experts from Belgian universities and as well as international experts. This inter-university status was confirmed in 1996 by (recently renewed) cooperation ties with Flemish universities in the fields of teaching, research and doctoral training. In 1999, the ITM's academic status was further clarified and confirmed in a Flemish Government decree that recognises a number of Institutes for Postgraduate Teaching, Research and Services, among which is the ITM.

The expectations and obligations of each party were detailed in a five-year agreement with the Flemish Department of Education and Training. The associated funding is mainly used to deliver the teaching programme. Another key part of the ITM's work relates to training, field and policy research and capacity building in developing countries. There are programmes on overseas research, training and capacity building, in partnership with a range of NGOs, national authorities and large international organisations. These activities are supported inter alia by a Framework Agreement with the federal Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC). 1 January 2008 marked the start of the third Framework Agreement "Switching the Poles", which will run for six years. The ITM is a national and international centre of reference for the diagnosis and treatment of tropical and infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The ITM's medical services perform 50,000 consultations a year, dispensing curative and preventive treatment and advice.

Education and training

Each year, the ITM provides postgraduate training to some 200 young doctors, nurses and veterinarians in tropical medicine and public health and tropical animal health (5-12 month courses). It also teaches around 80 international students – with at least 2-5 years' professional experience – on specialised masters courses in public health, disease control and tropical animal health. It hosts around 80 doctoral researchers and about 100 students a year who receive individual research training. The ITM also organises specialist courses in medical mycology, biostatistics, AIDS treatment, disease control and reproductive health. It organises annual North-South symposia, assists in several masters and expert courses in Africa, South America, Asia and Europe, and actively supports and networks its thousands of alumni in the field.

Excellent research

In addition to its involvement in education, clinical studies and capacity building in the South, the ITM also performs an important scientific research function. As a knowledge centre, it undertakes fundamental, applied and operational research into tropical diseases in humans (AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, sleeping sickness, tropical ulcers, helminths and zoonoses) and animals (trypanosomoses, theileriosis, helminths). It also carries out extensive research programmes on epidemiology, nutrition and the organisation of health systems.

The ITM contributes to long-term solutions by ensuring a better understanding of often complex diseases; development of new diagnosis techniques, treatments and prevention methods; better organisation of health systems; and long-term strengthening of local capacity. The ITM also plays an important role in the field of science sharing, since a number of pre- and post-docs from developing countries carry out research there. In Belgium, the ITM meets the increasing demand for expertise in tropical and imported diseases.

In scientific terms, the ITM is at the pinnacle of research and education in tropical medicine, AIDS and healthcare in developing countries. It employs close on 400 scientists, technicians and support staff, spread across five scientific departments (Microbiology, Parasitology, Animal Health, Clinical Sciences and Public Health) and support services, a specialised clinic and a hospitalisation service at University Hospital Antwerp.

Since 2004, the ITM has also received support from the EWI Department. This support is linked to Flanders' involvement in the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), the European Commission's first successful Article 169 initiative³⁵ launched during the Sixth Framework Programme. The money was used to set up the new Clinical Trial Unit (CTU), which carries out research and coordination activities in the framework of EDCTP, focusing on clinical studies into AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and tropical diseases. The ITM represents Belgium in EDCTP and has played an important role in developing and managing the partnership. The ITM also contributes the most to the Belgian co-financing of EDCTP, mainly in the form of in-kind contributions. This makes it a major player in terms of the support offered to African partners and capacity building. A substantial share of this co-financing comes from the CTU.

In consultation with the ITM, the EWI Department hired three external experts to evaluate the functioning of the CTU in July 2007. The experts were highly complimentary about the functioning and achievements of the CTU. Their main recommendation to the government was to extend the financing and increase the budget. They recommended that the CTU continue on the same path and expand its operations.

More and better

Unlike other university institutions, the ITM cannot make independent use of research funding sources such as Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) and the

Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders (IWT). These channels are only accessible to the ITM in the form of so-called 'co-promotership', where a university institution itself acts as promoter. Although collaboration between research institutions is encouraged, this often leads to a situation that is not compatible with the realities of the research management and may also result in competition with the university promoter's own projects.

By analogy with BOF (Special Research Fund) funding for universities, it was decided to allocate an additional subsidy from the EWI Department to the ITM, in an effort to support and expand scientific research. This safeguards scientific quality, allows research to be conducted independently and fosters the quest for excellence at national and international level. In 2007, EWI and the ITM signed a provisional agreement laying down the terms and conditions governing annual funding of scientific research. The ITM was asked to submit a strategic financial plan setting out the long-term vision and priorities for research in the period 2008-2012. This plan will form the basis for a five-year agreement and sets out a number of ambitious performance criteria, designed to enable the ITM's research activities and implementation of the strategic plan to be assessed objectively on an annual basis. Performance is measured based on scientific publications in leading journals, contribution to the training of young scientists, success in securing external funding, national and international partnerships, involvement in and organisation of scientific gatherings, institutional development and external and internal assessments of the institution. Annual reporting and evaluation by the EWI Department will be followed by an in-depth evaluation at the end of the agreement, which will determine whether support for the ITM's research activities will be continued.

*Kathleen D'Hondt,
Research Division*

Dutch counterpart?

The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)³⁶ or Tropical Institute in Amsterdam can be seen as the Dutch equivalent of the ITM and was set up at around the same time, in 1910. The general objectives of KIT as regards training and capacity building are similar to those of the ITM. KIT works to ensure that diagnosis plays an integral role in healthcare. It advises and supports governments and organisations in developing countries in their efforts to prevent infectious diseases. Its focus in this area is on developing research capacity, establishing and equipping laboratories, evaluating and improving diagnostic processes and working on quality care and safety.

Whereas the ITM is also a strong player in the field of fundamental research into tropical diseases, KIT's biomedical research focuses mainly on the diagnosis of tropical infectious diseases. KIT develops, improves and evaluates diagnostic tests for diseases such as brucellosis, pertussis, leishmaniasis, leprosy, leptospirosis, malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid and various sexually transmitted diseases. The institute also researches the mechanisms underpinning the resistance of micro-organisms to drugs. KIT Biomedical Research partners with research institutions, multilateral and development organisations and businesses. The department has an international and multidisciplinary staff made up of professionals with extensive research and field experience.

KIT also has an active cultural policy and is responsible for raising public awareness about the Tropics. In Belgium, these tasks are performed by the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, which does not fall within EWI's sphere of responsibility.

³⁴ <http://www.itg.be>.

³⁵ The main objective of Article 169 of the EC Treaty is through coordination to prevent fragmentation of research efforts at national or regional level in Europe. This article allows the European Community to participate in research and development programmes undertaken by several Member States (outside the framework programme – see EWI-Review 1 (2): 30 - 33), including participation in the joint structures created for the execution of those programmes. In practice, this means that the EU provides additional financing on top of national public funds.

³⁶ <http://www.kit.nl/smartsite.shtml?ch=FAB&id=4365>.



Cooperation between Flanders & the Netherlands on science and innovation

One concrete example of cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands in the field of science and innovation is the **European Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (FP)**³⁷. How often do we participate together in the FP? What are the associated budgets? Who are the players involved and which fields do they operate in? The answers in figures...



The figures for Flemish/Dutch joint participation in the Sixth Framework Programme (6FP) (2002 – 2006)³⁸ (Figure 1) show that the Netherlands was the fifth most important partner for Flemish participants. Flanders participated 1,342 times in 1,051 6FP projects, which generated a total participation payment of €352,288,473. The Netherlands participated 4,074 times in 2,491 6FP projects, receiving a total participation payment of €1,107,167,177. According to these figures, Flanders and the Netherlands achieved a financial return of 2.12% and 6.66% respectively from 6FP³⁹. Looking specifically at Flemish/Dutch involvement in 6FP, we can see that Flanders took part 777 times in 6FP projects in which the Netherlands also participated, equivalent to a participation budget of €201,853,145. Conversely, the Netherlands took part 1,157 times in 6FP projects in which Flemish partners also participated, equivalent to a participation budget of €325,561,233.

Who and what for?

The participation budget reveals that in Flanders the main participants in 6FP projects with Dutch involvement were universities and university colleges (41%), followed by research centres (31%) and companies (23%, of which 70% were SMEs). Similarly, in the Netherlands, universities and university colleges collaborated most (41%) with Flemish partners in 6FP, followed by research centres (28%) and companies (20%, of which around half were SMEs).

Based on the participation budget, the 6FP research areas in which Flanders participated most with the Netherlands are (in descending order):

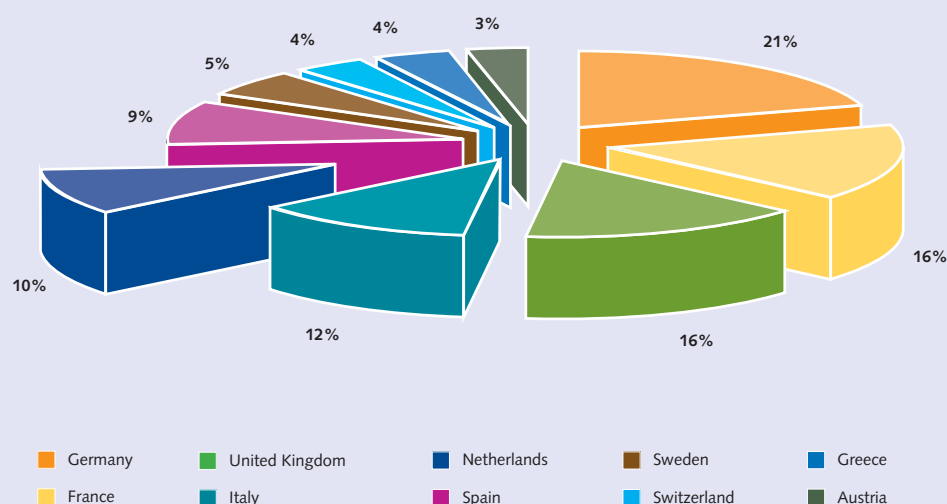
1. Information and communication technology (36%)
2. Life sciences and biotechnology (18%)
3. Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems (11%)
4. Nanosciences and nanotechnology (8%)

Table 1 gives a complete overview of Flemish participations in 6FP projects in which the Netherlands also participated, broken down by specific 6FP programmes and priorities.

The ERA-NET scheme⁴⁰

Another area of cooperation is the European ERA-NET scheme. This aims to step up cooperation and coordination between different funding programmes in a bid to support research and innovation in the Member States of the European Community and associated countries. The scheme was launched under the Sixth Framework

Figure 1: Flanders' top 10 partner countries in 6FP, based on number of participations



Programme (6FP) and is being continued under the Seventh (7KP). Flanders and the Netherlands are participating jointly in 21 ERA-NETs.

INNO-Net

Flanders and the Netherlands are also working together in the European **INNO-Net** network. This aims to stimulate transnational cooperation between different (sub)national innovation programmes by:

- clustering cooperation on innovation policy;
- supporting knowledge-based SMEs and start-ups;
- fostering transnational exploitation of knowledge;
- bringing together research and industry;
- stimulating innovation in services.

More specifically, Flanders and the Netherlands are involved in **VALOR**⁴¹, an INNO-Net that seeks to exploit knowledge by translating it into marketable products and services. VALOR brings together Europe's key innovation policy players with the aim of developing a common agenda and a joint action plan. Flanders is represented in VALOR by IWT-Flanders, the Netherlands by the Netherlands Genomics Initiative⁴².

EUREKA⁴³

Flanders and the Netherlands are also jointly involved in a number of EUREKA projects. EUREKA is an intergovernmental initiative to promote international

cooperation in projects relating to applied and market-oriented industrial Research & Development. The partners themselves determine the nature of the cooperation as well as the content and timing of their project. Subject to a quality control, EUREKA awards approved projects a EUREKA label. The individual partners can apply to their own national or regional governments for co-financing; in most Member States, the EUREKA label usually entitles projects to a higher level of support.

Alongside the programme for individual projects, EUREKA also encompasses strategic 'cluster' and 'umbrella' initiatives. *Clusters* are strategically important long-term industrial initiatives. Flanders and the Netherlands are jointly active in *inter alia* the *ITEA* (2), *MEDEA+*, *EUROFOREST* and *CELTIC* clusters. *Umbrellas* are thematic networks that focus on a specific technology area or business sector. The main goal of an umbrella is to facilitate the generation of EUREKA projects within its own technology area or business sector and to offer them support. An overview of all projects, including a technical description and details of the partners, can be found on the EUREKA website⁴⁴. Details of the clusters and umbrellas can be found on the "Strategic initiatives" web page⁴⁵.

Supporting and encouraging participation in European programmes

Finally, Flanders and the Netherlands are also both active members of a number of

networks aimed at encouraging and supporting local/regional/national participation in European (research) programmes, including:

- **IGLO** – Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices⁴⁶: aims to facilitate and increase interaction, information exchange and cooperation between members;
- **ERRIN** – European Regions Research and Innovation Network⁴⁷: an information platform that aims to strengthen regional research and innovation;
- **ERIK** – European Regions Knowledge-based Innovation Network⁴⁸: an innovation network that supports networking and the exchange of good practices between European regions;
- **IRE** – Innovating Regions in Europe⁴⁹:

an information platform intended to strengthen the global competitiveness of European regions.

Find out more

Flanders and the Netherlands are heavily involved as joint partners in various European programmes. By maximising our participation in such programmes, we aim to be frontrunners in the European knowledge economy.

If you want to know more about Flemish and Dutch participation in the Sixth European Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (6FP), EWI

will be producing a final analysis of the framework programme in the near future.

*Monica Van Langenhove,
Knowledge Management Division
Erwin Dewallef,
Strategy and Co-ordination Division*

Table 1: Flemish participations in 6FP projects in which the Netherlands also participated, by programme/priority

Programme	Priority	No. of participations	No. of projects	Participation budget
Euratom	Euratom	33	26	8.215.477
Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area (ERA)	1. Life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health	91	68	35.577.797
	2. Information society technologies	181	121	72.163.806
	3. Nanotechnologies and nano-sciences, knowledge-based multifunctional materials and new production processes and devices	60	39	17.027.032
	4. Aeronautics and space	18	17	3.842.116
	5. Food quality and safety	52	36	11.643.823
	6. Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems	101	71	23.088.556
	7. Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society	32	27	2.825.059
	Specific research activities for SMEs	31	25	3.134.527
	Policy support and anticipating the EU's scientific and technological needs	54	44	5.099.415
	Specific measures in support of international cooperation	8	8	1.697.721
	Support for the coherent development of policies	5	4	469.319
	Support for the coordination of activities	21	21	3.223.771
	Structuring the European Research Area (ERA)			
	Human resources and mobility	46	36	9.205.816
TOTAL:	Research and innovation	10	5	1.177.950
	Research infrastructure	14	13	2.594.040
	Science and society	20	15	866.919
		777	576	201.853.145

37 EWI-Review 1 (2): 31 – 33.

38 Source: database made available periodically by the European Commission at the meeting of the Horizontal Configuration of the Programme Committee for the Specific Programme "Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area" within the Sixth Framework Programme.

39 The 'correct' returns for Flanders and the Netherlands are 2.2% and 5.5% respectively, which means that Flanders is making a (slight) net contribution to the European Framework Programme, while the Netherlands receives slightly more than it contributes. See also EWI Review 1 (2): 34 – 36 for a calculation of the 'correct' Flemish return. The Dutch figure comes from Making Innovation Visible, in Europa Dichtbij Special No. 4, December 2005, p. 9 – see also <http://www.nistelrooij.cda.nl/LinkClick.aspx?link=Europa+Dichtbij%2FMaking+innovation+visible+-+7e+kaderprogramma%2FMaking+Innovation+Visible.pdf&tabid=6260&mid=19971&language=nl-NL>.

40 See also EWI Review 1 (2): 23, 25.

41 <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=74&parentID=55>.

42 <http://www.genomics.nl>.

43 EEWI Review 1 (2): 20 et seq.

44 <http://www.eureka.be/inaction/portfolio.do>.

45 <http://www.eureka.be/inaction/strategicinitiatives.do>.

46 <http://www.iglortd.org>.

47 <http://www.errin.eu>.

48 <http://www.eriknetwork.net>.

49 <http://www.innovating-regions.org>.

The Science & Innovation Decree

The comprehensive decree on the organisation and funding of science and innovation policy was prompted by two key factors: the Better Administrative Policy project and organically grown Flemish innovation policy.

The Better Administrative Policy project⁵⁰ heralded a radical overhaul of the Flemish administrative landscape aimed at making the Flemish government more efficient. The watchwords were transparency, customer orientation and good governance. The Flemish ministry was restructured: 13 logically determined policy areas were constructed from a department and various independent agencies. Tasks were clearly apportioned: the minister determines policy, the departments are responsible for policy support and the agencies oversee policy implementation. A Strategic Advisory Council (SAR) provides advice on strategic policy issues and key policy features.

In late 2004, the Flemish Government decided to create a homogenous policy area comprising Economics, Science and Innovation (referred to by the Dutch acronym EWI), reflecting the close links between innovation and economics. The EWI Department, the Agency for Economy and the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurship (VLAO) came into being on 1 July 2006. The time has now come to complete the process begun back in 2004...

Flemish innovation policy

Flanders has been largely responsible for science and innovation since the State reform of 1988. The existing financing instruments were incorporated into Flemish innovation policy and optimised. Public expenditure on research and innovation has been increasing gradually since 1995

with the aim of expanding the knowledge economy. A number of new financing instruments were introduced to cover the whole spectrum of knowledge development, application and exploitation. These instruments were often anchored in decrees relating to the higher education system. The step-by-step creation of Flemish policy tools and associated legislation means that there is room for improvement in terms of transparency and coherence.

Basis for structures and financing

On the one hand, the S&I decree creates a legal basis for reform of the agencies linked to science and innovation policy – the *Research Foundation - Flanders* (FWO) and the *Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders* (IWT) – as well as for the *Flemish Science and Innovation Council* (VRWI), the strategic advisory council that takes over from the Flemish Science Policy Council (VRWB).

On the other hand, the decree offers a basis for financing of the *strategic research centres* (IMEC⁵¹, VITO⁵², VIB⁵³, IBBT⁵⁴), the *Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts*⁵⁵, the non-profit associations *Flanders Technology International*⁵⁶ and *Flanders, District of Creativity*⁵⁷, the *Industrial Research Fund* (IOF), the *expertise units* for the popularisation of science, technology and technological innovation, as well as additional scientific research funding for post-

initial education institutions (the *Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School*⁵⁸ and the *ITM*⁵⁹).

On 21 November 2008, the preliminary draft decree was approved in principle by the Flemish Government. This preliminary draft has now been submitted for advice to the Belgian Council of State. Once the final draft has been approved, it will form a transparent and coherent framework for all existing and new legislation on the organisation and financing of science and innovation policy.

Karen Haegemans and Veerle Lories,
Research Division

⁵⁰ <http://www.vlaanderen.be/bbb>.

⁵¹ EWI-Review 1 (1): 20 – 23.

⁵² EWI-Review 2 (2): 23 – 25.

⁵³ EWI-Review 1 (1): 25 – 27.

⁵⁴ <http://www.ibbt.be>.

⁵⁵ <http://www.kvab.be>.

⁵⁶ <http://www.technopolis.be/nl>.

⁵⁷ EWI-Review 3 (1): 48.

⁵⁸ <http://www.vlerick.be>.

⁵⁹ See also p. 13 of this edition.

The Netherlands and Flanders: working together to achieve top region status

It is 7 April 2004. The Flemish and Dutch ministers responsible for innovation sign a declaration of intent to further reinforce and structurally entrench strategic Flemish/Dutch innovation cooperation. The two regions share the political vision and ambition to expand together into one of the most competitive and innovative regions in the world.



To achieve this ambition, the declaration of intent sets out four specific areas of action:

- Establish a structural, strategic dialogue based on regular ministerial meetings and the creation of a civil service 'task force';
- Promote direct cross-border cooperation between regional and local authorities and institutions;
- Formulate common positions within the European and international research agenda, and stimulate joint participation in European and international forums and programmes (including the EU's Framework Programme for Research⁶⁰);
- Set up concrete cross-border initiatives in a number of specific technology and innovation fields.

From intent...

Shortly after the declaration of intent was signed, the Flemish/Dutch Task Force came into being. Its mission was twofold: firstly, to engage in structural policy dialogue – with mutual information exchange and regular consultation resulting in a coordinated approach to innovation policy in Flanders and the Netherlands; secondly, to initiate, encourage, coordinate and monitor innovation cooperation – between the various national, regional and local authorities, companies, universities, research institutes and other organisations in Flanders and the Netherlands.

... to implementation

Partly under the auspices of this Task Force, substantial progress has been made on innovation cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands. The combined efforts of authorities in Flanders and the Netherlands have resulted among other things in new policy ideas, harmonisation of framework conditions, the strengthening of innovative clusters and a broader foundation for fostering cross-border cooperation.

One critical development has been the intensified cooperation between the government agencies responsible for driving innovation: IWT in Flanders and SenterNovem in the Netherlands. The opening up of programme and project financing to companies and knowledge institutions from both countries is a key focus in this regard, while the STEVIN programme and the Holst Centre are the most prominent and successful achievements of Flemish/Dutch cooperation in recent years.

From renewing and expanding the intent

On 12 April 2008, the relevant Flemish and Dutch ministers signed a new declaration of intent, inspired by the experiences acquired to date, which renewed and stepped up innovation cooperation. The

Still following?

*STEVIN*⁶¹ stands for *Spraak- en Taaltechnologische Essentiële Voorzieningen In het Nederlands* (Essential Speech and Language Technology Resources for Dutch). It is a long-term research and incentive programme set up to stimulate Dutch language and speech technology and is jointly funded by the Flemish and Dutch governments.

The *Holst Centre*⁶² is an independent, international centre for open innovation that develops generic technologies and technology platforms for wireless autonomous transducer solutions and systems-in-foil, allowing the industry to bring new products to market faster and more efficiently.

policy focus was also expanded to include the fields of economics and science. In the wake of this change, the Flemish/Dutch Task Force was renamed the Flanders/Netherlands Cooperation Steering Committee. It was also decided to adopt a new structure comprising an official overarching consultation forum (the actual Steering Committee) and technical working groups made up of representatives from the field, including IMEC and Philips, who can apply their knowledge and expertise to implementing specific measures on the topics featured in the new declaration of intent.

The Steering Committee provides a forum for ongoing dialogue and consultation between Flanders and the Netherlands. It also focuses (even) further on initiating, coordinating and/or supporting both thematic and enabling activities capable of further boosting Flemish/Dutch cooperation in the fields of economics, science and innovation. These activities were collated into an action plan, which was appended to the declaration of intent and which represents the agenda for converting cross-border cooperation opportunities into money-making ventures.

To a concrete action plan

This action plan draws an important distinction. On the one hand, the government can take initiatives which the Steering Committee initiates, coordinates, executes or facilitates. On the other hand, the field can itself develop initiatives, with the parties concerned taking responsibility for and executing the associated projects and processes. In the latter case, the government monitors the initiatives and offers support and assistance where possible. Roughly speaking, then, the government takes charge of the (more generic) 'enabling' initiatives while the field develops more thematic cooperation initiatives (see box p. 22).

The action plan appended to the declaration of intent identifies a number of specific topics (mainly spearhead sectors and technologies in Flanders and the Ne-

therlands). The main ones are automotive technology, chemicals and (green) energy, life sciences and health, maritime research, nanosciences and nanotechnology, new materials, language and speech technology, food and water (purification). These will be the focal points of further Flemish/Dutch cooperation in the EWI policy area, going forward.

Ensuring complementarity between innovation programmes and centres of excellence

In thematic terms, the task of the Steering Committee is to closely monitor future policy developments and initiatives affecting the Dutch key areas and Flemish strategic clusters and ensure maximum complementarity between them. The Dutch *innovation programmes*⁶³ being developed in the key areas are one way of achieving this. These are programmes designed to stimulate specific sectors and/or technologies and are geared to the application and marketing of knowledge. They are based on an explicitly bottom-up approach, with companies and knowledge institutions themselves taking the lead. The Dutch government – in the guise of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the SenterNovem agency – plays a facilitating role in development of the innovation programmes. The Dutch innovation programmes are actively searching for potential participants from Flanders.

The most obvious strategic partners for the Dutch innovation programmes in Flanders are the centres of excellence (*competentiepool*)⁶⁴, which are almost by definition suited to the role. Their aim is to develop a substantial 'knowledge base' in the field of innovation to benefit specific business segments in Flanders. They seek to bridge the gap between economic policy and (technological) innovation policy. The activities of a centre of excellence focus on collective research and/or the dissemination of knowledge. They must be able to deliver direct and beneficial results for Flemish companies. All centres of excellence are created bottom-up, based

on the innovative strength of a number of players – normally a combination of the government and private sector – and the need to pool knowledge and expertise across organisational boundaries with a view to scaling-up, etc. Here too, the government acts as a facilitator, financing the start-up phase through the IWT support programme Flemish Cooperative Innovation Networks (VIS)⁶⁵.

Partly managed and coordinated by the Steering Committee, structural consultation has already started on practical cooperation in the fields of automotive technology and food. This takes the form of interaction between the Dutch innovation programmes *High Tech Automotive Systems*⁶⁶ and *Food & Nutrition Delta*⁶⁷ and the Flemish centres of excellence Flanders' DRIVE⁶⁸ and Flanders' FOOD⁶⁹ respectively. In the food sector, this has already resulted in the signing of a cooperation agreement between Flanders, the Netherlands and Germany aimed at creating a leading innovative food region. The other Dutch innovation programmes are also seeking closer ties with Flemish counterparts in their respective fields. For example, the *Life Sciences & Health*⁷⁰ innovation programme has contacted the *Flanders Institute for Biotechnology*⁷¹ and *FlandersBio*⁷², while the Flemish platform for ICT players *PIC ToR*⁷³ has been approached by *Point One*⁷⁴, the Dutch innovation programme for nanoelectronics and embedded systems.

In conclusion, then, implementation of the Flemish/Dutch action plan to strengthen cooperation in the fields of economics,

science and innovation is well under way. "Growing together into a innovative, world-class knowledge region" is far from an empty slogan: it is becoming a reality on the ground, and EWI – it hardly need be said – is fully involved in the process, not least through its representation on the Steering Committee.

Erwin Dewallef,
Strategy and Co-ordination Division

Generic activities

The more generic, enabling activities are in the following areas:

- *Stimulating and promoting joint Flemish/Dutch participation in European (and other international) forums and programmes.* Key examples are the *European Framework Programme for Research*, *INTERREG* and *ESFRI*. *INTERREG*, which seeks to promote cooperation between regions, includes the specific programme *Interreg IV Gensregio Vlaanderen/Nederland* (2007–2013), central to which is the sustainability triangle of people/environment/economy⁷⁵. Within *ESFRI*, which focuses on the European expansion of large-scale research infrastructure, both Flanders and the Netherlands are involved in the preparatory phase for two research infrastructure projects, namely *CLARIN*⁷⁶ (a scheme to develop, coordinate, create and make available a range of language-related products and technologies) and *LIFEWATCH* (in which hundreds of databases inside and outside Europe are linked together in a bid to monitor the development of ecosystems and associated biodiversity). The Steering Committee, amongst others, is looking at how Flanders and the Netherlands can participate together in both infrastructure projects.
- *Making knowledge and innovation vouchers interchangeable*, focusing, on the one hand, on patent applications, but also on bringing enterprises (particularly SMEs) into contact with knowledge institutions with a view to improving their products, production process or services.
- *Promoting cooperation between the Flemish Technology Attachés (TAs) and the Dutch Science and Technology Officers (TWAs).* Based at Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT)⁷⁷, the Flemish TAs are responsible for fostering the international business activities of high-tech companies and ensuring that knowledge developed in Flanders reaches a global audience, for instance by actively supporting Flemish companies in the international development of new products. The services offered by the Dutch TWAs are geared towards enterprises and knowledge institutes in the Netherlands, with an emphasis on networking and information provision on trends and developments in foreign scientific and technological research. The aim is to ensure optimum coordination between the functioning and service provision of TAs and TWAs and enable them to be used by both Flemish and Dutch companies and knowledge institutions.
- *Initiating and implementing joint initiatives with regard to (stimulating) entrepreneurship and science communication and popularisation.*
- *Stimulating cross-border interregional cooperation*, focusing on the further expansion of the Eindhoven/Leuven/Aachen knowledge triangle (ELAt)⁷⁸. The goal is to develop the region by 2010 into an internationally recognised top technology region in such fields as micro- and nanoelectronics, (digital) signal processing, embedded systems, mechatronics and medical technology.

Thematic activities

An interesting thematic challenge for the Steering Committee is to create synergy between the Dutch 'key areas' and the Flemish 'strategic clusters'.

The key areas defined by the Dutch Innovation Platform⁷⁹ are sectors, technologies and networks in which the Netherlands excels in terms of knowledge and activity, and which offer innovative opportunities to boost the country's international competitive position. They are: (1) flowers & food, (2) high-tech systems and materials, (3) water, (4) chemicals, (5) creative industry and (6) pensions & social security. In addition, ICT and energy are seen as crucial fields in all economic sectors.

In Flanders, the Flemish Science Policy Council (VRWB) study entitled "Technology and Innovation in Flanders: Priorities" identifies six strategic clusters⁸⁰, which are considered key to enhancing Flanders' innovative strength. They are: (1) transport, logistics, services and supply chain management, (2) ICT and services in healthcare, (3) healthcare, food, prevention and treatment, (4) new materials, nanotechnology and manufacturing industry, (5) ICT for socio-economic innovation, and (6) energy and environment for services and manufacturing industry.

60 See also p. 16 of this edition.

61 <http://www.stevin-tst.org>, and p. 30 of this edition.

62 <http://www.holstcentre.com>, and p. 26 of this edition.

63 <http://www.senternovem.nl/innovatieindialoog/index.asp>.

64 <http://www.iwt.be/steun/steunpro/vis/index.html>.

65 <http://www.innovatienetwerk.be>.

66 <http://www.htas.nl>.

67 <http://www.foodnutritiondelta.nl>.

68 <http://www.flandersdrive.be>.

69 <http://www.flandersfood.com/ned>.

70 <http://www.lifesciencesgezondheid.nl>.

71 <http://www.vib.be>.

72 <http://www.flandersbio.be/home.asp>.

73 <http://www.rohsservice.be/newsItem.aspx?id=2252>.

74 <http://www.senternovem.nl/Pointone>.

75 See also p. 24 of this edition.

76 <http://www.clarin.eu>.

77 See also p. 12 of this edition.

78 See also p. 23 of this edition.

79 <http://www.innovatieplatform.nl>.

80 VRWB Study 18b: Technologie en Innovatie in Vlaanderen: Prioriteiten (proces van prioriteitsstelling en resultaten):[Technology and Innovation in Flanders: Priorities (prioritisation process and results)] www.vrwb.be/Mfiles/VRWB18B-def.pdf.

ELAt as a top knowledge economy

ELAt⁸¹ – the Eindhoven-Leuven-Aachen region – forms a triangle with a surface area of 14,000 km². 2.8 million of its 6 million inhabitants are economically active and it has a gross national product of €165 billion, making it eminently comparable with Flanders in terms of both population and GDP. ELAt has sufficient critical mass to create value and play a leading role in 21st century Europe. The triangle could even become one of the more advanced knowledge economies, thanks to a wide range of assets...



ELAt is home to a dense network of top knowledge institutions at universities, university colleges and research centres. K.U.Leuven has established itself as one of Europe's leading research universities and also plays an important role as a knowledge centre; the Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e)⁸² can boast a long tradition of collaboration with the renowned Philips Laboratories; while RWTH Aachen University, for its part, has built up a global reputation. These centres of academic excellence are supplemented by the Leuven IMEC⁸³ – the internationally renowned *Interuniversity Microelectronics Centre* – which is Europe's largest independent research centre for microelectronics and nanotechnology. ELAt also has 20 other universities and university colleges, including those of Hasselt, Maas-tricht, Tilburg, Roermond and Jülich.

A hive of intelligence, enterprise and science

In addition, ELAt has a tried-and-tested enterprise culture. Leuven is home to more than 90 spin-offs from K.U.Leuven and IMEC. In Germany, AGIT⁸⁴ has assisted over 300 spin-offs, while in Eindhoven TU/e and Philips have spawned some high-quality start-ups, ASML⁸⁵ being a unique example: this company has an absolute monopoly on the development and manufacture of lithography machines, which represent the lifeblood of the semiconductor industry.

ELAt also contains a wide range of incubators, science parks and industrial parks. Leuven has the Haasrode Science Park, whose 130 hectares are home to 150 technology companies providing 5,000 high-quality jobs. The Arenberg Research Park on the river Dijle is starting to take shape. Geleen-Sittard (in the Netherlands) can boast the magnificent Chemelot Campus⁸⁶, a Research Park for DSM – once the Dutch State Mines, now an avant-garde chemical company. Chemelot is being hailed as the "The global home of chematerial excellence". Eindhoven has built a brand new High

Tech Campus⁸⁷, on the site where the celebrated Philips⁸⁸ NatLab made many a major breakthrough. There are also research parks in Aachen, Jülich, Hasselt, Mol and Venlo. All in all, this 'knowledge triangle' has one of the highest concentrations of research parks in Europe.

An important link in the chain are ELAt's Technology Transfer Cells. K.U.Leuven has been setting the pace for years with K.U.Leuven R&D. In 2008, Professor Koen Debackere received the prestigious IPTEC Tech Transfer Award for the professionalism and efficiency of the K.U.Leuven transfer cell. Aachen too is doing sterling work with its AGIT transfer cell.

ELAt is awash with capital, from seed money to risk capital. The money is managed by talented individuals with a view to supporting young companies in their growth phase. This knowledge is probably more important than the financial know-how. More and more ELAt companies are looking to the stock market for their *growth financing*. Over a period of many years, and particularly since the 'golden sixties', hundreds of foreign companies have set up shop in the area between Leuven-Eindhoven and Aachen, and the trend continues apace.

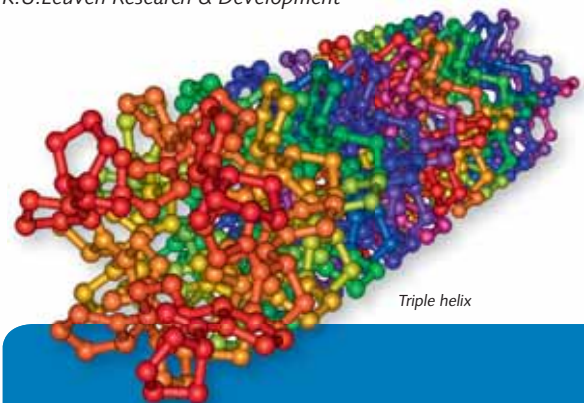
Top class

ELAt, then, has many assets enabling it to play a major role in the global international network of knowledge economies. The region scores highly in world rankings for design, manufacturing, research & development, marketing and distribution. It is very rare to find all of these strengths in one region. A number of projects are developing on the back of this: IMEC has opened a new research centre – the Holst Centre – on the High Tech Campus at Eindhoven, and the Leuven Digital Signal Processing (DSP) Valley⁸⁹ is expanding northwards, with a cluster of DSP companies moving into the corridor between Leuven and Eindhoven.

Could this herald its emergence as one of Europe's leading DSP regions?

The innovation and entrepreneurship master class run by Leuven.Inc⁹⁰ has been successfully expanded into the new knowledge triangle, with entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs from the triangle attending for the first time. All in all, ELAt is a region full of promise, in which a triple helix⁹¹ – a healthy new dynamic between government, business and academia – has been established; a region that combines excellent job prospects with a strong focus on quality of life.

Martin Hinoul,
K.U.Leuven Research & Development



Triple helix

81 <http://www.elat.org>.

82 <http://w3.tue.nl/nl>.

83 EWI-Review 1 (1): 20 – 23.

84 <http://www.agit.de>.

85 <http://www.rwth-aachen.de>.

86 <http://www.chemelot.com/?id=60&template=algemeen2.htm&taal=nl>.

87 <http://www.hightechcampus.nl>.

88 http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philips_Natuurkundig_Laboratorium.

89 <http://www.dspvalley.com>.

90 <http://www.leuveninc.com>.

91 Cooperation between governments, knowledge institutions and companies in the field of innovation.

Towards sustainable socio-economic development of the Flemish-Dutch border region

The Interreg IV programme Grensregio Vlaanderen-Nederland (Border Region Flanders-Netherlands) is financed by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)⁹². It is one of the nine European Territorial Cooperation or Interreg IV programmes in which Flanders is involved. The EU has a budget of over €94 million for this cross-border cooperation programme. The programme zone covers an area of 23,746 km² and was home to 10 million people in 2005.

The Grensregio Vlaanderen-Nederland programme is implemented by the Flemish government, the Dutch government (Ministry of Economic Affairs), the Flemish provinces of Antwerp, Limburg, East Flanders, West Flanders and Flemish Brabant, and the Dutch provinces of Limburg, North Brabant and Zeeland. The Flemish Community is responsible via the Agency for Economy for implementation of the programme on behalf of the Member State. The Province of Antwerp has been appointed managing authority and the Province of East Flanders as

certifying authority. A Joint Technical Secretariat assists the managing authority in the day-to-day running of the programme. A new feature in 2007-2013 is the incorporation of the Euroregions Benelux Middengebied (BMG) and Scheldemond (ESM) into a single border-wide programme.

People, Environment, Economy

The sustainability triangle *People-Environment-Economy* is an intrinsic part of the Interreg IV programme 2007-2013

for the Border Region. The three points of the triangle are the priorities of the Operational Programme that sets out the implementation framework for the coming years. The aim is to contribute to the sustainable socio-economic development of the whole border region via implementation-oriented cross-border initiatives.

The Economy priority is geared towards innovation and expansion of the knowledge economy, cross-border enterprise and strengthening of economic struc-



tures. The focus of the Environment priority is the sustainable use of natural resources, landscape and nature. The People priority concentrates on advancing culture and social care. The triangle concept is about achieving a synergy between these three factors.

Key to the project selection process are the main objectives of the Operational Programme, namely Economy, People and Environment. Most of the projects in this framework contribute to the economic development of the region, with a particular emphasis on innovation. This will remain the case over the coming years.

In addition, the programme will continue to support smaller projects whose main goal is to show citizens what Europe is all about in their region – not just the big institution that churns out frequently misunderstood legislation in the distant corridors of Brussels, but also the Europe that truly invests in a region's further development.

57 million already approved

The programme's Steering Committee has already approved a total of 12 projects. Together they represent an investment of more than €57 million, including over €23 million of ERDF support.

The cooperation areas in the first batch of five approved projects range from stimulating cross-border transportation of goods by rail on the Lanaken-Maastricht line as an alternative to road transport; Corporate Social Responsibility⁹³ on both sides of the border; business tourism in rural areas; the cross-border promotion of technical jobs like maintenance technician; to a sustainable approach to beach and coastal management.

The second batch of seven approved projects deal with other issues: strengthening the greenhouse horticulture sector in the border region; sustainable land use and soil quality; a better coordinated and more viable local biodiversity policy; bridging the divide between home and residential care for the elderly; revitalising old industrial docks; and interactive water management in the light of the EU Water Framework Directive.

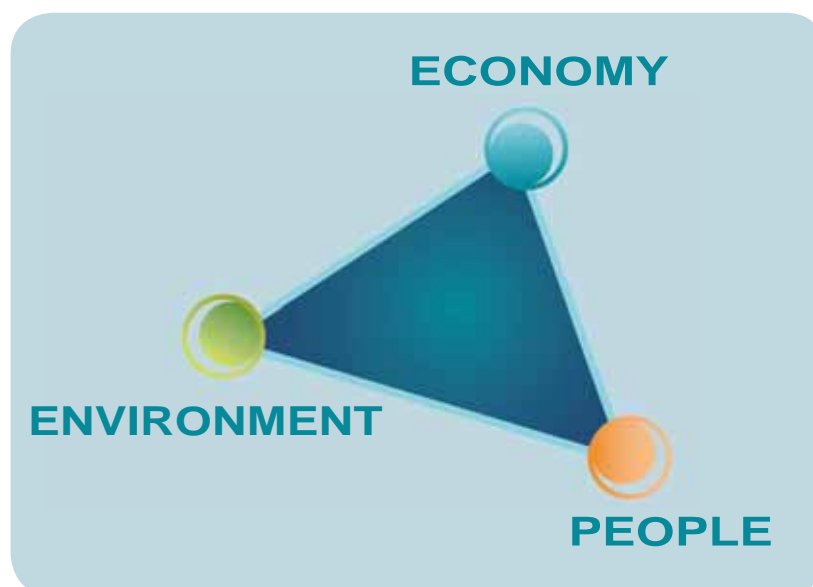
Further ambitions

It is interesting to note that the programme already enjoys a high level of popularity, with proposal submissions far outstripping the grant resources available under the Border Region programme. In view of this, the Steering Committee is

considering tightening up grant policy and more closely defining the core topics eligible for Border Region grants.

David Grzegorzewski,
Agency for Economy

This article was written with the assistance of the Grensregio Vlaanderen-Nederland Programme Secretariat.



Submitting a project proposal

The programme is aimed at national, regional and local authorities as well as semi-public and private organisations (both profit and non-profit) wishing to contribute to the region's economic development through practical, action-oriented cooperation projects. The reshaping of the programme area means that such projects can now also be 'border-wide', i.e. implemented with partners from anywhere in the Flemish-Dutch border region.

Project ideas can be submitted at any time. Twice a year, the Steering Committee meets to discuss the proposals that are ready for a decision. The Steering Committee is composed of deputies from the eight provinces concerned as well as representatives from the Member States, municipalities, the social partners and environmental organisations.

Those submitting projects can count on the support of a Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) in Antwerp as well as a network of Interreg contact persons run by the partner governments and/or the JTS.

If you would like to learn more about the Grensregio Vlaanderen-Nederland programme, are interested in submitting a project or wish to keep abreast of approved projects, please contact:

Agency for Economy
Marc De Frenne, +32 (0)2 553 38 57 (marc.defrenne@ewi.vlaanderen.be)
or Eric Van Gendt +32 (0)2 553 37 22 (eric.vangendt@ewi.vlaanderen.be)
or Stefaan Pennewaert +32 (0)2 553 37 25 (stefaan.pennewaert@ewi.vlaanderen.be)
Website: <http://www.efro.be>

Grensregio Vlaanderen-Nederland Programme Secretariat
Interreg Vlaanderen-Nederland
Belpairestraat 20 B10 (Albert Building), B-2600 Antwerp (Berchem)
T +32 (0)3 240 69 20; F +32 (0)3 240 69 29
E info@grensregio.eu
<http://www.grensregio.eu>

HOLST Centre: smarter and stronger together

To get ahead in today's knowledge economy, cooperation across national borders is essential. The increasing complexity and interdisciplinarity of scientific research mean that our own limitations are becoming all too quickly apparent. Flanders has a world renowned microelectronics research institution in the form of the Interuniversity Microelectronics Centre (IMEC)⁹⁴. However, this field is facing new challenges. In response to these, IMEC, in partnership with Dutch research centre TNO⁹⁵, set up the Holst Centre⁹⁶ back in 2005.

The new R&D centre was named after Gilles Holst, the first director of the Philips Natlab research centre⁹⁷. With a name like that, there was only one place that the centre could be built – on the High Tech Campus⁹⁸ in Eindhoven.

Cooperation a necessity

Microelectronics has progressed at a tremendous rate over recent decades, driven by the phenomenon known as 'Moore's Law'. Gordon Moore, co-founder of chip designer and manufacturer Intel⁹⁹, observed in the 1960s that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit doubled every two years. Such transistors are developed from silicon. However, with the physical limits of silicon technology fast approaching, a raft of alternative technologies is now emerging, described in the

jargon as 'more than Moore'. The great variety of new technologies means that it is no longer possible to achieve excellence in all of these areas. The alternatives therefore are: choose between them or, preferably, work together in partnerships. *n moet samenwerken met andere partners.*

Opening of the Holst Centre

The Holst Centre was set up with the aim of boosting the knowledge economy and attracting industrial activities to the Netherlands and Flanders by bridging the divide between industry and knowledge institutions. Based on these common goals, IMEC and TNO put together a business plan setting out concrete objectives and ambitions. The plan should allow the Holst Centre to expand into a

leading research centre in specific fields of microelectronics. The Dutch government is co-funding the initiative, which also ties in with the declaration of intent between Flanders and the Netherlands¹⁰⁰ aimed at developing a strong knowledge region centred on the geographical axis between Eindhoven and Leuven.

IMEC is a leading microelectronics research centre with a staff of over 1,500. TNO was founded in 1932 and is one of the largest research centres in the Netherlands, with 4,500 staff and an annual turnover of €600 million. In other words, the Holst Centre represents a joining of forces between the region's two biggest, and most important, R&D institutions. The first strategic partner to come on board was Philips Research.

Research at the Holst Centre

The Holst Centre's activities are focused around two specific programme lines:

• SIF: Systems-in-Foil

TNO has contributed its activities in the field of electronic systems on thin foil. Polymer electronics is a highly promising technology for use with foldable, portable and cheap systems. This division teamed up with the Dutch Polymer Institute in Eindhoven and other partners to build a machine for making plastic electronics. The first applications are about to come to market in the form of flexible monitors and solar cells as well as plastic electronics such as identification chips, flexible batteries and light sources.

• WATS: Wireless Autonomous Transducer Solutions

IMEC has contributed its research division, which works on autonomous wireless microsystems. Amongst other things, the project entails producing sensors that measure bodily functions such as blood pressure, temperature and heart rate and transmit the information wirelessly to a processor. This means that small autonomous sensors, linked together in a network, can be used to monitor our health, for industrial process control, in cars, to make intelligent clothing and for food quality control. As well as miniaturisation, the research also focuses on ultra-low power data transmission. This programme line is referred to as WATS (Wireless Autonomous Transducer Solutions).

From the outset, the Holst Centre received backing from a number of high-profile companies. The founding fathers were TNO, IMEC and Philips, and these have since been joined by other leading companies, including ASML (NL), Akzo Nobel (NL), AGFA-Gevaert (FL) and Bekaert (FL). The Holst Centre is also involved in over 16 academic partnerships.

The way forward

In barely three years, the Holst Centre has grown into an organisation with 100 or so employees from 18 countries and some 60 partners from participating companies and universities. Moreover, staff numbers are set to rise further, with the business plan forecasting around 250 employees by 2010.

In spring 2008, the Netherlands and Flanders renewed their declaration of intent

on strategic cooperation¹⁰¹. The centre is thus well on course to realise its ambitious goal and become a centre of excellence in its programme lines.

*Karel Goossens,
Research Division*

Photos from top to bottom

1. Mobile and wireless EEG (electroencephalogram) device with hybrid power supply (combination of body heat and solar energy).
2. Flexible OLED (organic light-emitting diode) technology for lighting and signage.
3. Wireless pulse oximeter powered by thermoelectric generators (head and wrist-band). The pulse oximeter measures heart rate and oxygen saturation using a finger sensor.

94 EWI-Review 1 (1): 20 – 23.

95 <http://www.tno.nl>.

96 <http://www.holstcentre.com/index.php>.

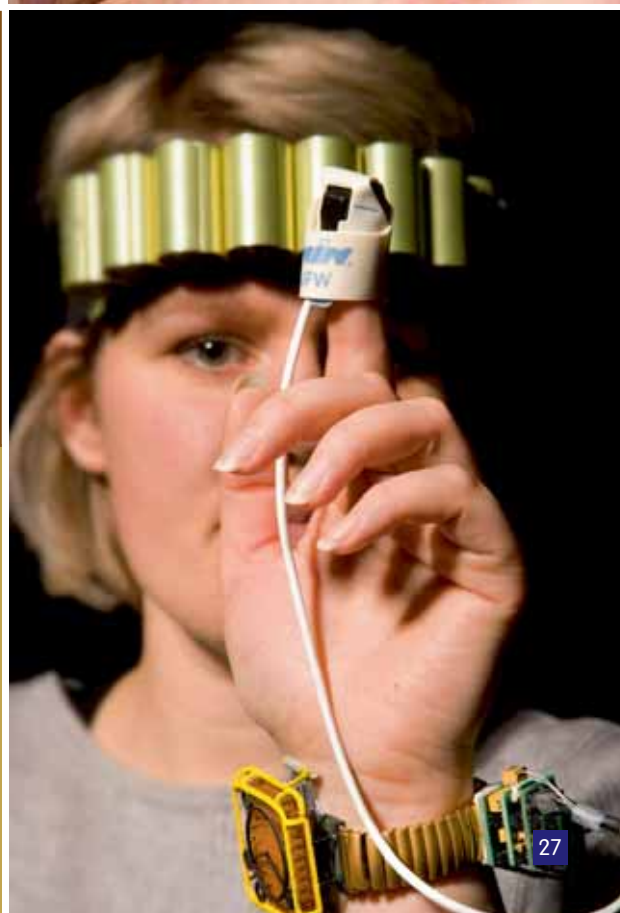
97 http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philips_Natuurkundig_Laboratorium.

98 <http://www.hightechcampus.nl>.

99 <http://www.intel.com>.

100 See also p. 20 of this edition.

101 See also p. 20 of this edition.



groting van de taak: *horizontale taakverruiming*, z
taal; *verticale taakverruiming*, zie bij *verticaal*¹;
ving (v.), structurele wijziging in taken of de
binnen een bedrijf, instelling of afdeling; ...
(v.); ...**waardering** (v.); ...**werk** (o.), werk dat
richt wordt.

taal (v.(m.); -tje) [Mnl. *tale* (hetgeen iem. zegt, ge
Limburg ook: getal), ~ *tellen*, de Idg. verbinding
ker], **1** (g.mv.) het op basis van een universeel
vermogen gevormde geheel van tekens en regel
betekenisdragende elementen te combineren
mens gebruik maakt, om zijn gedachten te art
wereld te ordenen en te communiceren, syn.
taal is een evoluerend, sociaal symbolencomplex,
gearticuleerde intrinsiek-variabele, arbitraire eenheid
waarop de mens in en aan de periferie van sociaal

Three countries, one language policy

As world languages like English, Arabic and Chinese battle for supremacy, can Dutch continue to hold its own? And what can the government do to keep our small language alive? The answer is: much more than you might think.

Let us begin by correcting a misconception: Dutch is not a small language. It is the mother tongue of over 15 million people in the Netherlands and 6 million in Flanders, and a further 400,000 in Suriname use it on a daily basis. There are more than 6,000 languages in the world and Dutch is ranked somewhere between 45th and 50th – higher than Greek or Swedish, for example. Some researchers also take into account the importance of a language in terms, for instance, of its use in publications, international relations or on the Internet: they place Dutch in the top 20.

A healthy language

So, Dutch is in fine fettle. However, care is required if we want to keep it that way, since languages can easily lose ground. We have seen that happen to Flemish dialects in recent decades: where parents have stopped passing on local dialects to their children, those dialects have all too quickly, and irremediably, disappeared.

Having all the resources it needs to develop and adapt to ever-changing needs is critical to a language's survival. In an age when writing is important, a language that cannot be written down dies out. For that reason, a fixed orthography (spelling) is essential. A language that cannot be studied at translation and interpreting schools will disappear from use in international relations. For that reason, good Dutch translation institutes and language courses abroad are key. A language that fails to keep pace with developments on the Internet will become weaker the more we rely on the web for information. For that reason, resources such as glossaries and large quantities of textual material are needed, which developers of digital material and software can use in their products.

More language resources

Dutch may not be a small language, but any language policy aimed at keeping it healthy has to be implemented by authorities in three countries. Working alone, their options are severely limited. By working together, they can achieve greater efficiency and plough in more resources. This is where the Taalunie comes in.

The *Nederlandse Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union) is an intergovernmental organisation set up in 1980 under a treaty between the Netherlands and Belgium. Suriname has been an associate

member since 2004. The initial aim of the *Taalunie* was the "integration of the Netherlands and the Flemish Community in Belgium in the field of Dutch language and literature". Nowadays, the emphasis is less on integration and more on cooperating for the benefit of language users and on preserving Dutch linguistic and literary heritage.

The *Taalunie's* main areas of work are: the language itself, Dutch in digital applications, education in and about Dutch, promoting reading and literature, and the status of Dutch in Europe and the world.

Cooperation helps

In all these areas, cooperation is sought between the member countries. Consequently, the *Taalunie* is only responsible for teaching in the context of joint projects, complementing the policies of the Dutch, Flemish and Surinamese education ministers. This is also clearly evident in its work to promote reading and literature. For example, funds for literature exist in both the Netherlands and Flanders; the task of the *Taalunie* is to ensure that these funds work together on cross-border projects. Another good example is the Institute for Dutch Lexicology, which – on behalf of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* – compiles databases that can be used to produce dictionaries and in ICT applications. None of the three countries could afford to fund such important, but expensive, resources alone. Together, they can. The same principle applies to the STEVIN programme¹⁰², where the *Taalunie* did much of the policy preparation work and acted as a coordinator for the funding authorities.

Linde van den Bosch,
Secretary General of the
Nederlandse Taalunie

Nederlandse Taalunie

What is the Taalunie?

The *Nederlandse Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union) is an organisation in which the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname join forces to promote the Dutch language, language teaching and literature. Policy is developed by ministers and monitored by members of parliament. The *Taalunie* is advised by a council of experts. Policy preparation and implementation is the responsibility of a General Secretariat, which works with committees and working parties.

The aim of the *Taalunie* is to support users of Dutch and so ensure that Dutch remains a living, thriving language. The ideas underpinning its strategy can be summed up in four slogans:

- Dutch can be used in all spheres of life
- Dutch can be spoken in many different ways
- Dutch has its place among other European languages
- Dutch is our cultural home

Lange Voorhout 19,
Postbus 10595
2501 HN The Hague,
The Netherlands

T: + 31 70/346 95 48
F: + 31 70/365 98 18
E: info@taalunie.org

More information about the *Taalunie's* activities can be found at taalunieversum.org. *Taalunie* publications can also be ordered via the website.

¹⁰² See also p. 30 of this edition.

Technology that sets tongues wagging

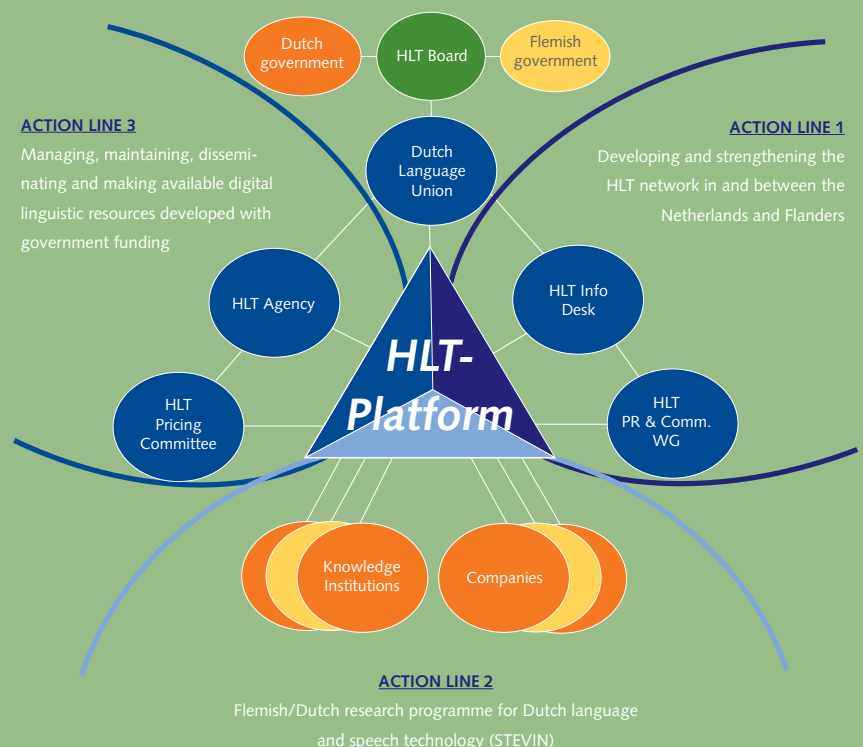
Various (minor) differences and variants notwithstanding, the Flemish and Dutch use one and the same language. It therefore seems self-evident that Flanders and the Netherlands should collaborate in the field of language and speech technology (more commonly known as human language technology or HLT). However, this was a long time in coming. The debacle surrounding speech recognition company Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products in 2001 caused a real shock wave, particularly in Flanders – not only among researchers, industry and the legal profession but also among the many ordinary people who had hoped to benefit from the venture. HLT is still viewed with distrust today – a distrust that is misplaced.

From a deep leper valley ...

In 1999, Flanders and the Netherlands founded the HLT Platform (*TST-Platform* in Dutch) to streamline and coordinate language and speech technology activities. There were three main lines of action (see Figure 2): networking; cataloguing and prioritising research and development; maintaining materials.

2004 marked the start of an effective and integrated cooperation in the field of Dutch language and speech technology. This cooperation was a continuation of the three previously defined lines of action. An HLT Agency (TST-Centrale in Dutch)¹⁰³ (action line 3) was established, along with a STEVIN research and support programme¹⁰⁴ (action line 2) and an HLT info desk (action line 1). STEVIN¹⁰⁵ (Dutch acronym standing for Essential Speech and Language Technology Resources for Dutch) is responsible for developing basic digital resources in the form of research findings (data collections or corpora supplemented by additional information, software, demonstrators, algorithms, etc.). The task of the HLT Info Desk is to identify players and bring them into contact with one another. The HLT Agency is responsible for maintaining and disseminating digital HLT resources.

Figure 2: The three HLT lines of action coordinated by the Dutch Language Union





To a peak in the polders

The HLT Info Desk: an HLT 'dating' service

The aim of this service is to identify and bring together Flemish and Dutch players in the field of HLT, including knowledge centres, technology providers, software producers, interest groups and public authorities. The HLT newsletter¹⁰⁶ and HLT trade fair Language@Work (*Taal in Bedrijf*¹⁰⁷) are key activities in this area. This service is performed on an ongoing basis by the Dutch Language Union (*Nederlandse Taalunie*¹⁰⁸) by means of a central info desk¹⁰⁹, among other facilities. Part of this involves participating in European networks that benefit HLT for Dutch.

The STEVIN programme: an HLT 'factory'

Business is reluctant to invest in the development of basic digital infrastructure for Dutch due to the limited market, compared with English for example. Such a market failure forces governments to make the necessary investment themselves. There are a number of key objectives to this. An adequate digital language infrastructure of essential data and tools for Dutch must be available to both knowledge institutions and business (objective 1). Knowledge institutions need

the data as a raw material and the tools as a means to develop their scientific activities (objective 2a), e.g. new methods for filtering information from documents. For business, they are vital to develop complex applications for a number of languages, but primarily Dutch (objective 2b), e.g. a navigation system that correctly pronounces street names in Dutch. Finally, Dutch must retain its economic and cultural position in the world of information technology (objective 3).

Additional supporting activities promote knowledge transfer and stimulate demand (objective 4). Demonstration projects are intended to show that HLT for Dutch is a mature technology capable of producing useful and value-added applications (see also below), the aim being to stimulate demand for such products. Networking grants are awarded to equip workshops or other events to disseminate knowledge. There are a number of educational projects specifically designed to raise HLT's profile among students and schoolchildren. For example, STEVIN is helping to develop an HLT section within the linguistics page of popular Dutch website 'Kennislink'¹¹⁰. For their part, decision-makers and investment managers within organisations can brush up their

HLT knowledge at HLT master classes.

Issues regarding the intellectual property rights to materials and software are dealt with appropriately in close cooperation with the HLT Agency. In principle, the Dutch Language Union owns all project results – something that is not customary in research projects. However, this offers scope for establishing an 'open innovation' policy¹¹¹ via the HLT Agency, allowing companies to develop their own specific products using shared basic components (objective 5).

What rolls off the production line?

STEVIN is delivering a range of outcomes¹¹³. A distinction can be drawn here between research projects and demonstration projects:

- Various research projects (receiving grants of €400-500,000) are producing a corpus of texts featuring all sorts of linguistic information such as part of speech, infinitive, and so on. Resources and procedures for adding to a corpus are also being developed. These projects are geared specifically towards basic digital infrastructure. Others are more focused on research and development, e.g. improving

speech recognisers and developing useful features, such as methods for dealing more effectively with interference and background noise. Finally, there are also application-oriented research projects, such as a project to develop software that automatically summarises and translates texts, or extracts information from texts. Another project is of social benefit as it is developing digital support methods for foreigners learning to read and write. The main participants in research projects are knowledge institutions. A total of 19 such projects have been approved.

- The demonstration projects (€50-100,000) relate to a wide range of applications, from subtitling on TV programmes to the automatic production of a spoken newspaper for blind people, from spelling correctors for the dyslexic to jargon trackers, automatic answer lines and smart ways of searching for information on web portals. Such projects are mainly intended for SMEs, who apply ready-to-use technology in new products or services for 'real' customers.

A fine example of cooperation between business and knowledge institutions and between Flemish and Dutch partners, as well as the use of basic infrastructure in an applied project, is offered by Autonomata and Autonomata Too. The same consortium is behind both projects: TeleAtlas¹¹³, Nuance Communications International¹¹⁴ and Ghent University¹¹⁵ in Flanders and the universities of Utrecht and Nijmegen in the Netherlands. The first Autonomata project resulted among other things in a special software component enabling better pronunciation and

recognition of proper names. This component is supplied with the commercial Nuance software. The development is of particular importance for car navigation systems, which explains the involvement of TeleAtlas. The Autonomata Too project builds on these developments with the aim of producing a demonstrator that provides information on so-called 'points of interest' (POIs). These are local sights, official buildings – tourist information centres, hospitals, police stations, etc. – public transport, hotels, banks and so forth. The names of these POIs can be pronounced in many different ways, especially if the POI's name includes a proper name or foreign word. The pronunciation and recognition of such names can pose major difficulties for computers. The problem is all the more pressing given the importance of POIs, for foreigners as well as native Dutch-speakers. This only increases the variety of ways in which the names are likely to be pronounced. Autonomata Too is trying to find a solution to this.

What next?

EWI has launched an HLT forecast exercise¹¹⁶. From a number of preparatory brainstorm sessions and reports, we came up with 45 propositions which were then assessed and commented on by around 70 experts. The results were unveiled at the HLT trade fair Language@Work (*Taal in Bedrijf 2008*)¹¹⁷. The Dutch government and various interest groups also submitted a wish list. On the basis of all this information, we will attempt in the near future to come up with a summary document that all funding authorities can back, which will hopefully result in a follow-up programme for STEVIN.

Peter Spyns,
Strategy and Co-ordination Division and
STEVIN programme coordinator for the
Nederlandse Taalunie



nu | STEVIN

STEVIN's budget

STEVIN's total budget is €11.4 million. The Flemish government, represented by the EWI department, the IWT and the FWO, contributes a third of this (€3.8 million). The remaining two-thirds (€7.6 million) comes from the Dutch Ministries of Economic Affairs, of Education, Culture and Science, and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. The Dutch Language Union¹¹⁸, as an intergovernmental organisation, acts as the financial distributor as well as overseeing and coordinating the activities. STEVIN will run until the end of 2011.

103 See p. 33 of this edition.

104 <http://www.stevin-tst.org>.

105 See http://www.stevin-tst.org/documenten/stevin_mjp_150904.pdf for a detailed description of the STEVIN multi-annual plan.

106 <http://taalunieversum.org/taal/technologie/nieuwsbrief>.

107 <http://www.taalinbedrijf.org>.

108 See also p. 28 of this edition.

109 <http://taalunieversum.org/taal/technologie>.

110 <http://www.kennislink.nl/web/show?id=129397>.

111 EWI-Review (2) 2: 46 – 49.

112 The interested reader is referred to two themed editions of the magazine DiXIT (published by the Dutch Organisation for Language and Speech Technology – NoTAS) relating to STEVIN and featuring a page-long description of each project: http://www.stevin-tst.org/pers/#in_media.

113 <http://www.teleatlas.com/index.htm>.

114 <http://netherlands.nuance.com>.

115 <http://www.elis.ugent.be>.

116 <http://ewi-vlaanderen.be/ewi/index.php?id=485>.

117 <http://www.taalinbedrijf.org>.

118 See also p. 28 of this edition.

The Dutch HLT Agency: working to preserve digital research material in Dutch

Research and development on Dutch language and speech technology requires an adequate supply of digital source material in Dutch. This material is often compiled at research institutes using government funding. To maximise the use of capital, the management and reuse of materials is encouraged by centralising such materials in a Dutch-Flemish portal: the Centre for Language and Speech Technology, or Dutch *HLT Agency* (*TST-Centrale* in Dutch).



The materials available at the HLT Agency consist of collections of texts or speech fragments (corpora), ordered lists of words and parts of words (lexica), electronic dictionaries and language and technology software (tools such as spell checkers). The text and speech corpora mostly include additional linguistic information on form, pronunciation, part of speech, meaning and the relations of words to one another in a sentence. Many of these corpora, lexica, dictionaries and tools are the outcome of government-assisted projects. Project grants generally only cover the costs of development, but not management and distribution of the final results. The main aim of the HLT Agency is therefore to manage the materials following completion of the project and make them available for new projects in the fields of education, research and development.

STEVIN plays its part

A key supplier of language materials is the Flemish-Dutch grant programme STEVIN (Dutch acronym standing for Essential Speech and Language Technology Resources for Dutch)¹¹⁹. The outputs of STEVIN projects are transferred to the *Nederlandse Taalunie* (Dutch Language

Union), with the HLT Agency overseeing subsequent management and distribution. The HLT Agency is closely involved in certain aspects of the STEVIN project procedure: intellectual property issues have been clarified in collaboration with a specialist STEVIN committee and legal experts; an 'open source' policy has been drawn up for research findings; and the HLT Agency has held a number of public open days to showcase ongoing projects. An initial series of STEVIN project results has now been made available via the HLT Agency.

The materials are made available via the website of the Institute for Dutch Lexicology (which houses the HLT Agency¹²⁰). The online product catalogue provides individual descriptions of all the available materials. Many of them can be viewed on-line and ordered directly from the HLT Agency. Subject to signing a user agreement (or signing up to it on-line), virtually all products can be used free-of-charge for research purposes. Commercial parties are charged at the market rate.

Value added

As well as knowing about the practicalities of management and distribution, staff at

the HLT Agency are also knowledgeable about the content of materials available. The service desk helps users with specific queries or problems and if necessary can contact the developers of the material. It is also possible to request workshops or guest lectures on specific materials at the service desk. In this way, the HLT Agency ensures that the value and knowledge of digital research materials for Dutch are conserved.

*Laura van Eerten,
Dutch HLT Agency*

Find out more

The Dutch HLT Agency was set up in 2004 on the initiative of the **Nederlandse Taalunie**. It is funded by the Nederlandse Taalunie and is run as a project at the Institute for Dutch Lexicology, which has branches in Leiden and Antwerp.

Website: www.inl.nl/tst-centrale e-mail: servicedesk@inl.nl

¹¹⁹ See also p. 30 of this edition.

¹²⁰ <http://www.inl.nl>.

Our man in The Hague



Axel Buyse



Filip D'havé

Interview with Axel Buyse and Filip D'havé

For some time now, a civil servant from the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs has had the task of defending Flemish interests in The Hague. The central theme of this edition provided a perfect opportunity to quiz our representative 'north of the border'. Thanks to a recent changing of the guard, we managed to get two for the price of one: Axel Buyse, who was in the post until 1 September, and his successor Filip D'havé – the one taking a fond look back, the other outlining his plans for the future.

“In a sense,
we're the eyes and
ears of Flanders.”

"The Netherlands is, first and foremost, a huge testing ground for our government institutions."

EWI Review: A Flemish civil servant attached to a Belgian embassy in the Netherlands: how does that work?

Axel Buyse: As a Flemish representative abroad, we are also by default a Belgian diplomat. This set-up isn't without its problems: the host country sees us as diplomats of the Belgian State, yet we have Flemish powers. The Netherlands is extremely important to Flanders in every conceivable area, so a Flemish representative in the Netherlands holds quite a powerful position. On the one hand we are part of the embassy, on the other we enjoy a great deal of autonomy in the Netherlands. Flemish government departments are responsible for determining the policy content-wise. We report to the Flemish Government and to the Flemish civil service, and keep Belgian federal diplomats and the ambassador informed of our activities. The ambassador is the Head of Mission; he takes charge on protocol-related matters. The relationship between the different parties is not simple as it presupposes a certain degree of courtesy and consideration on both sides. We call that the 'federal loyalty'. But as long as both sides respect the Belgian Constitution, we can work together very well and the Flemish level strengthens the federal level and vice versa.

A testing ground for Flemish government institutions

EWI Review: What does the position entail?

Axel Buyse: Firstly, I tried to gather information in a targeted way and deliver that information to the appropriate destination within the Flemish government institutions. The Netherlands is not only an extremely important partner country due to its shared language; it is, first and foremost, a huge testing ground for our government institutions. The Netherlands is an established nation state with a long tradition, which functions well and is always looking to modernise. I therefore tried to keep our own civil servants up-to-date with social, political, economic and welfare developments which also had a major bearing on Flanders. Obviously, I had to make choices because for the first four years I was there on my own with only the agricultural counselor, the trade attaché of the FIT [Flanders Investment and Trade]¹²¹ and the director of the Flemish Tourism Office, who were all occupied with their own sectors and activities. I think I managed to be pretty

proactive, though, especially in fields such as culture, education and integration.

Filip D'havé: First and foremost, I want to carry on the work done by Axel. Our policy vision follows the outlines proposed by the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs, which are in turn based on the strategy paper for the Netherlands, developed with input from all Flemish government departments. In other words, there are very clear long-term guidelines; we need to be certain of where we are going. On the ground, I naturally want to tap every available opportunity.

The eyes and ears of EWI

EWI-Review: How involved are you with issues falling within the Economics, Science and Innovation policy area?

Axel Buyse: Our activities in the field of Economics, Science and Innovation kicked off in 2004, when the relevant ministers signed a declaration of intent to enhance cooperation in the field of science and innovation¹²². Thanks to contacts at EWI, I became progressively more involved in this side of things. The Flemish representative now also sits on the Flemish-Dutch steering committee, which really helps keep you on your toes. Forwarding information is extremely important. There was the time, for example, when Philips announced it wanted to part with the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven. News like that has to be passed on as quickly as possible. In a sense, we're the eyes and ears of Flanders – and of EWI – abroad. On the other hand, we also have a *representative role* to play. As such, my colleague at FIT and I built up contacts with a number of research institutions including the High Tech Campus, SenterNovem, etc. We are also represented on the policy bodies of the *Nederlandse Taalunie*¹²³, which has links with STEVIN¹²⁴. The educational aspect was originally what prompted me to start liaising with universities, but I soon came to realise that we needed to cooperate on science policy too. Leuven and Leiden, for example, which have close ties historically, have developed specific cooperation plans. Sometimes we also operate more behind the scenes: *companies*, for instance, sometimes come to us with questions of a strategic nature which cannot be directly resolved by FIT. They might have hit a

political stumbling block while trying to close a big deal, say. In such cases, I was able to give them useful tips and support thanks to my contacts. Obviously, we always make sure to run this past the economic representative: we certainly don't want to be treading on each other's toes. But given that they are often inundated with project work, a Flemish representative can often offer a broader perspective on things, more of a bird's eye view.

"The Dutch State Security Service couldn't believe there was such a thing as a Flemish diplomat."

EWI Review: So economic cooperation is another area in which the representation can play a role?

Axel Buyse: We've been working on the W [Science] for years, and the I [Innovation] even more so; the E [Economics] has lagged behind a bit. The change we're seeing now, especially in the economic field, is considerable. It's down not only to me but also to my predecessors and my successor. The people who did the job before me were the real pioneers. I just took their work up a level, I think. And the plans that Filip has I also find very interesting. He is thinking of organising a full-scale consultation of representatives from the Flemish business community. He wants to alert the likes of VOKA, UNIZO and Agoria to the Flemish representation and what it can do for them.

We also monitor the large and often efficient advisory bodies that exist in the Netherlands: the Scientific Council for Government Policy¹²⁵, the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands, the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands¹²⁶ and the Netherlands

"It's important that we join forces in foreign will ensure that we have a bigger share of the

Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis¹²⁷. The documents they put out can be extremely useful for us too. Passing on this information to interested parties within the Flemish administration can be a very valuable role. I'm sure that Filip, who is himself an economist, has what it takes to further expand that role.

Filip D'havé: I'd like to add a footnote to that by saying that I have no intention of encroaching on the territory of my colleague at FIT¹²⁸. Katharina Desmet, who is also new to the job, has two tasks: firstly to serve the export interests of Flemish companies in the Netherlands and investigate market opportunities, and secondly to encourage Dutch investment in Flanders. Naturally I will not be doing her job for her. However, that won't prevent me from playing a facilitating role at a policy level. There is a demand for greater cooperation between economic organisations: by this I mean not so much company research as cooperation at the macro level. A conversation with Bernard Wientjes, president of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry¹²⁹ (VNO), spawned the idea of an annual meeting of economic organisations. Obviously companies active in, say, the audiovisual market, the media sector and so on, could also attend. In other words, I want my role to be about exploring increased cooperation in the field of economic policy. When it comes to the micro level and opportunities for cooperation between individual companies, the ball is clearly in FIT's court.

A dust-free declaration of intent

EWI Review: Strengthened bilateral cooperation in our policy area fits into the framework we are creating with the new declaration of intent, an action plan containing a number of specific areas for

attention and the Flanders/Netherlands Cooperation Steering Committee¹³⁰. Do you have further ideas for keeping up the momentum in future?

Axel Buyse: I'm convinced that this is the right approach. A lot of policy plans become old and stale and end up as static documents. I think it's very important that the Steering Committee keeps the policy statement in mind at all times. We need to check regularly whether the principles laid down in that statement are actually being implemented.

Filip D'havé: Axel is right: the new declaration of intent mustn't end up coated in dust. I will do my utmost to keep its spirit alive and act as a facilitator between the relevant ministries in the Netherlands and EWI in developing specific projects.

In the area of innovation and science, we can try to talk more to one another about our positions on European issues. This is an idea inspired by my previous role with the European Union in Brussels. It might also make sense, within the EU's Seventh Framework Programme, to harmonise Flanders' position with that of our colleagues in the Netherlands. I think that some moves have been made in this direction and that the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has already expressed its interest. The representation can play a facilitating role here too.

Arrested by the State Security Service

EWI Review: How are your dealings with the Dutch ministries?

Axel Buyse: There is very great interest in the Netherlands in all policy areas for which Flanders is responsible. Where there is any negative reaction, it's usu-

ally the result of a sort of agoraphobia prompted by a lack of familiarity with Belgian institutions.

A funny incident occurred which serves to illustrate how difficult it was when I first took office to be seen as a Flemish diplomat. I accompanied the Belgian ambassador to the opening of the Westerschelde Tunnel. I accidentally got too close to Queen Beatrix and was arrested by the State Security Service. I had to spend several hours in a police van, because they simply couldn't believe there was such a thing as a Flemish diplomat.

Filip D'havé: I cannot see that sort of thing happening nowadays, not least because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is well briefed on the situation in Belgium. Circumstances have changed a lot. The Flemish representation is also seen as a fully-fledged diplomatic mission, on a par with the Belgian embassy. We have just come back from an introductory meeting with the Director-General for International Cooperation. She specifically requested that we meet, and put aside time for a chat as she does with all ambassadors from Western and Central Europe. That shows how the Dutch authorities view Flanders and its representatives.

Axel Buyse: One hindrance to cooperation is the tension between the civil-service and political levels. In the Dutch



Cv Axel Buyse

Born in Kortrijk, 27 April 1955

Master (lic.) Moderne Geschiedenis, K.U.Leuven

- History and economics teacher (1980-1984), Adult education college - Leuven.
- Foreign Editor at *De Standaard* newspaper (1984-1995), specialising in Africa, the Balkans and international security.
- Head of Foreign News and Foreign Commentator at *De Standaard* (1995-2003).
- Sabbatical year researching "Ethical aspects of germ-line gene therapy" (for the Flanders Institute for Biotechnology) (2002).
- Flemish Government representative at the Belgian Embassy in The Hague (2003-2008).
- Flemish Government representative at the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU (autumn 2008 -).
- Publications on the EU, journalistic integrity, terrorism, the far right, Congo, the Balkans and nationalism.

markets since in a globalised economy this world market."

context, there is a fairly direct line between the two: they don't have a system of ministerial cabinets. A senior Dutch civil servant is responsible for the position he adopts, which he has often worked out and developed himself. He has to deal with a Flemish civil servant who is at least as familiar with the subject matter but who doesn't have the same level of authority. It's fine provided he has consulted extensively with the cabinet, but if new problems suddenly arise he can't take impromptu decisions. Where you have a well-functioning cabinet combined with a well-functioning department or agency, this is a minor problem. However, when the lines of communication between department and cabinet are poor, it's a very different matter. That can lead to some embarrassing situations, where major agreements between the Netherlands and Flanders have been signed at civil-service level and the cabinet turns out not to be in agreement. That makes the Dutch furious. And justifiably so – it's bad administrative policy.

Inward-looking world citizens and outward-looking nationalists

EWI Review: Is cooperation essential for both the Netherlands and Flanders?

Axel Buyse: Key areas requiring very active follow-up by the Flemish representation in the Netherlands are the major infrastructure projects with cross-border impact, such as the Scheldt, the Iron Rhine [freight railway line] and works on the Antwerp ring road. These issues are not only far-reaching and important for us but also for them. They are as dependent on Flanders for transit to the outside world as we are on them for part of our transport system. They sometimes need to be reminded of that. After all, they are an old nation with a tendency to be somewhat inward-looking, despite being self-proclaimed 'world citizens'. We are sometimes accused of being nationalists, but in reality I think we're very outward-looking in our world view. Sometimes we need to say loud and clear what we have to offer. The Holst Centre¹³¹ is a fine example; so is the innovation policy adopted by our universities, with Leuven setting the benchmark for spin-off creation.

Filip D'havé: In a sense we're competing with one another, but ideally we should focus as much as possible on win-win situations. I think it's important that we join forces in foreign markets since in a globalised economy this will ensure that we have a bigger pie, a bigger share of the world market. And the bigger the pie

the easier it is to carve up. For example, the Netherlands and Flanders together account for around 70% of the global dredging market. If we work together on providing training, the benefits are guaranteed. We are servants of the Flemish Government, and where there is a clear vision and political will I am committed to supporting them.

*Erwin Dewallef en Peter Spyns,
Strategy and Co-ordination Division*

*Karen Haegemans,
Research Division*



Cv Filip D'havé

Born in Bruges on 14 August 1960, Filip D'havé originally trained as an economist. He studied at Ghent University and the Economische Hogeschool Sint-Aloysius (majoring in public management) then completed a postgraduate course at the College of Europe in Bruges, gaining a Master in Advanced European Studies in 1987. He went on to study public management at the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School.

- 1987-1990: parliamentary assistant to Mr Raf Chanterie, MEP for the European People's Party.
- 1990-1992: project manager ("Europe 1992") at the Belgian Central Economic Council (*Centrale Raad voor het Bedrijfsleven*).
- 1992-early 2000: assistant advisor to the Flemish government, initially as a policy advisor on implementation of the European Social Fund and European social programmes in Flanders; from 1994 as Foreign Policy manager at the then Flemish Department of Economics, Employment and Agriculture, on the staff of the secretary-general.
- Early 2000: diplomatic representative of the Flemish Government to the European Union, within the Permanente Representation of Belgium.
- From 1 September 2008: diplomatic representative of the Flemish Government in the Netherlands.

121 See also p. 12 of this edition.

122 See also p. 20 of this edition.

123 See also p. 28 of this edition.

124 See also p. 30 of this edition.

125 <http://www.wrr.nl>.

126 <http://www.scp.nl>.

127 <http://www.cpb.nl>.

128 See also p. 12 of this edition.

129 <http://generator.vnoncw.intermax.nl/web/show/id=278790>.

130 See also p. 20 of this edition.

131 See also p. 26 of this edition.

Flemish-Dutch cooperation on marine research

There has been good cooperation between Flemish and Dutch research institutions in the marine sciences since the 1970s. All scientific disciplines are involved, with a variety of research – fundamental, applied and policy-supporting – being performed.



Figure 3: The Drowned Land (Verdrongen Land) of Saeftinghe plays a major role in water management in and around the Scheldt and provides an important breeding habitat for various communities in the estuary (© SIC/ Joop Van Houdt)

Since the 1990s, some of the coastal research has focused on the Western Scheldt (Westerschelde) estuary and on the tidal part of the Scheldt from Ghent to the Dutch border, known as the Sea Scheldt (Zeeschelde). The River Scheldt is an important lifeline for the Flemish and Belgian economy, and also plays a crucial role in providing a range of ecosystem services along the river and the estuary.

VLANEZO

Building on the positive experience of the past, in 2000 a Flemish-Dutch working group devised a structured system of cooperation between Flemish and Dutch research institutions. This resulted in the Flemish-Dutch coastal marine research programme (VLANEZO 2002-2006), a five year research programme funded by the OCW ministry¹³² in the Netherlands and the predecessor of EWI in Flanders (the Science and Innovation Administration). It had a total budget of €1.8 million from the Netherlands and €0.99 million from Flanders. VLANEZO received scientific and administrative support from FWO in Flanders and NWO¹³³ in the Netherlands, and was managed by a joint Flemish-Dutch committee.

The research programme fostered cooperation between Flemish and Dutch scientists, particularly in the field of ecological marine research. It also helped to expand knowledge of the Scheldt estuary and the coastal area, from both a purely scientific viewpoint and in line with policy needs.

On the educational level, cooperation was strengthened by having four Dutch lecturers teach on Flemish masters courses and by inviting Flemish lecturers to work with the Functional Ecology Research School in Yerseke. This allowed Flemish and Dutch researchers to get to know one another better. The resulting relationship of trust may one day develop into a critical mass and knowledge pool, with the potential to achieve European status through enhanced cooperation with France, the United Kingdom and Germany.

Upcoming challenges

The partnership should ensure knowledge transfer to university teaching and research, support for political initiatives on environmental issues and the development of new methods and instruments. It should also enable more efficient responses in future to the challenges facing marine sciences, in particular by:

- expanding knowledge on subjects ranging from ecological and biogeochemical cycles to processes that may shape the creation and development of estuary and coastal landscapes;
- better understanding the effects of climate change in coastal areas and waters and more accurately assessing the implications of coastal water warming;
- predicting which new species will occur in our region and what the effect on existing species and communities may be;
- coupling Flemish expertise in biotechnology with Dutch expertise in microbial ecology.

In addition, the southern North Sea and the delta region are home to a diverse range of economic activities. Socio-economic research – into structures, how they operate and how they can be improved – is of scientific and social relevance. Together with the findings from scientific research, it can be used to develop a better scientific policy for coastal areas in the Low Countries. VLANEZO has already addressed a number of recommendations of EU maritime policy. It also offers a scientific basis for the future development of coastal indicators, focusing inter alia on better management of marine space.

*Rudy Herman,
Research Division*

Our thanks to the ScheldtInformatie-Centrum (SIC¹³⁴) for the aerial photos.

¹³² Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

¹³³ Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

¹³⁴ <http://www.scheldenet.nl/nl/nieuws?lng=nl>.

Flemish Policy Research Centre for Foreign Policy: Flanders and the big wide world

The Flemish Policy Research Centre for Foreign Policy launched on 1 January 2007, one of the second generation of policy research centres (PRCs) set up by the Flemish government. Unlike most of its counterparts, it is a newly created entity, with all the advantages and drawbacks that this entails.

On the one hand, it benefited from past experience and managed to avoid some of the teething problems experienced by its predecessors. On the other, setting up a new body from scratch is a big undertaking. Premises had to be found and young researchers recruited at very short notice. Then the centre had to be publicised fairly quickly to make sure that all relevant parties were aware of its existence.

The new arrival

The latest addition to the PRC family moved into one of Antwerp University's finest buildings, a former Grauwzusters convent in the Lange St. Annastraat. Here, a young and dynamic team of around 10 researchers occupies a large attic space, previously converted into a landscape architect's office.

On paper, the new body is one half of a pair of Siamese twins, the other being the Policy Research Centre for Recreation and Tourism at K.U.Leuven. Officially, we fit together to form the Policy Research Centre for Foreign Policy, Recreation and Tourism. Although we get on together very well, in reality we're more like step-brothers. We each have our own lives, and although we didn't choose the current set-up we are nonetheless members of the same family.

The PRC is like a blended family in other ways too. For example, Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel are our

real brothers (or sisters), with whom we make up a consortium. The final member of the family is the Dutch Clingendael Institute, which is akin to a distant relative and close friend. We work closely with Clingendael on specific projects.

An interdisciplinary four-leaf clover

The PRC has a very broad research base, with four main components:

1. European and global relations
2. Cultural diversity and subsidiarity
3. Socio-economic effects of globalisation
4. Development cooperation and human rights

This list immediately conveys how interdisciplinary – and exciting – the PRC is, with a staff roll including economists, political scientists, sociologists, historians and legal experts. This diversity of backgrounds is also reflected in the promoter team.

The PRC has settled on a number of long-term research projects, whilst also ring-fencing an annual budget of €60,000 for short-term projects in consultation with the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs.

Long-term research

The first long-term (four- or five-year) research project is about *"Developing and fine-tuning a geopolitical analysis instrument"* for the Flemish government, based on a number of case studies. Two local

surveys have been completed in 2008, one on *"The geopolitics of energy: Russia and the EU – the options for Flanders and Belgium"* and another on *"Geopolitical trends in the Mediterranean: the implications for Flanders"*. Both are highly topical issues, which continue to evolve. The need for background information and clarification is therefore all the greater.

In addition, the Flemish government is paying more and more attention to foreign trade policy. One reason for this growing interest is the realisation that foreign trade policy has a major bearing on the export opportunities and competitiveness of Flemish companies and on the well-being of the Flemish population at large. Moreover, international trade talks seem increasingly to be a forum for discussing and deciding on matters that fall wholly or partially with the Flemish remit, such as culture, environment and agriculture. The general question underpinning the second long-term research project is therefore: *What role can Flanders play in international trade policy?*

The third long-term research project focuses on the *"Costs and benefits of globalisation"*. It is important for the purposes of Flemish foreign policy to have a thorough understanding of the socio-economic impact of globalisation, in both the short and long term. This involves cataloguing and analysing data kept at the National Bank and drawing out its socio-economic implications.

Another long-term research project is aimed at *"Assessing and gauging the effects of current Flemish policy on development cooperation in South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi"*. This research looks at the current and potential position of Flemish development cooperation in terms of ownership and alignment, international donor coordination and harmonisation, and managing for results.



buitenlands beleid, toerisme en recreatie

Name: Policy Research Centre for Foreign Policy, Tourism and Recreation (*Steunpunt Buitenlands Beleid, Toerisme en Recreatie*) – Foreign Policy Wing
Promotor-coordinator: Prof. dr. Koen Defeyter

Consortium members:

- University of Antwerp
- Ghent University
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Netherlands Institute of International Relations: Clingendael (partner)

Address: Lange St. Annastraat 7, B-2000 Antwerp
Tel.: +32 (0)3 275 56 37

Website: <http://www.ua.ac.be/svbb>

Minister responsible: Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Institutional Reform, Administrative Affairs, Foreign Policy, Media, Tourism, Ports, Agriculture, Sea Fisheries and Rural Policy

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The final research project is legal in nature and relates to *"The international powers of Belgium's regions: status quaestionis, limits and possibilities of the 'in foro interno, in foro externo' principle"*. This principle allows the federated entities to take external action on matters for which they are responsible internally. The central plank of this research is how to reconcile uniform foreign policy with the respect for regional autonomy and the requirements of public international law.

Two-year research

In addition to these long-term research projects, three of which are prospective doctoral theses, the PRC is also carrying out a number of medium-term research projects lasting two years.

The first of these is a *"Comparative study and benchmarking of the foreign policies and diplomatic representations of a number of regions with legislative powers and small states"* (of a similar size to Flanders). This is the first time that information on this subject has been collected and analysed in such detail, thus making the study relevant not only to Flanders but also to the other regions featured in the research. The eagerly awaited findings are due to be published in early 2009.

The second project looks at *"Cultural diversity in the Flemish culture sector: an impact study and policy evaluation of the audiovisual culture industry"*. Before this research got under way (in October 2008), three papers had already been published on subjects including *"the impact of European legislation on Flemish public broadcasting"* and an *"analysis of the effects of Eurimages on Flemish film"*.

Short-term research, long-term interest

Last but not least, the PRC has already conducted a number of short-term projects lasting between six months and a year. For example, a two-part study was undertaken in preparation for the commemoration of First World War in 2014. This examined which modern-day countries fought on the Yser Front during World War One (1914-1918) and what traces of the Great War remain in 26 of those countries. The ultimate aim is to examine

how this data can be best used in drawing up Flemish foreign policy for the World War One centenary commemorations. This exciting research was showcased at a study day (16 June 2008) attended by foreign diplomats.

The PRC also published a report on *"the public diplomacy of Quebec"* (November 2007 - February 2008). The research, which was carried out in Canada, examined the extent to which Flemish foreign policy might draw on practice in Quebec. A discussion day involving the principal stakeholders was held on 18 September.

This last piece of research was a practical example of the PRC's cooperation with the Clingendael Institute. Clingendael possesses specific expertise not present in Flanders, and the Netherlands also have a longer tradition of policy-supporting and advisory research. The Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), for example, regularly publishes interesting advice that may also be relevant to and provide inspiration for Flanders. In other words, cooperating with this Dutch partner enriches and strengthens our own work.

Cross-cutting research field

Two years after it opened, the PRC is now operating at full speed. The diversity of research topics, disciplines and partners makes its work extremely exciting. It also goes to prove that Flemish foreign policy is very much a cross-cutting research field, of relevance to both the horizontal dimension of policy (cooperation between different Flemish departments) and the vertical (coordination between different policy levels).

Annick Schramme,
Policy Research Centre for Foreign Policy,
Tourism and Recreation -
Foreign Policy Wing

The new Benelux Treaty: what's in it for Flanders?



On 17 June 2008, fifty years after the signing of the Treaty establishing the Benelux Economic Union ('s-Gravenhage, 3 February 1958), Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg signed the new Benelux Treaty in The Hague. Significantly, the text was signed not only by the prime ministers and foreign ministers of the three countries but also by ministers from Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the German-speaking Community. This reflects both the changing institutional context in Belgium and also some changes to the content of the text¹³⁵.

Flanders in particular played an active role in the run-up to the signing, indicative of its status within the Benelux as a relevant policy level, both now and in the future. As the first government to adopt an official position on the treaty prior to revision, Flanders also had a big say on content-related issues during the negotiations for a new text. So how was the Flemish position reached? And how much of it ended up in the final treaty?

Perceptions and expectations

The Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs commissioned a team from UNU-CRIS and K.U.Leuven to carry out a study and make a number of recommendations to the Flemish administration, with a view to preparing the Flemish position on the new treaty¹³⁶. Next, a survey was conducted among 100 or so experts from the Flemish political, socio-economic and academic world and the other Benelux regions. This revealed that the organisation was not currently very well known, and was often perceived rather negatively. The organisation's main activities were thought to be (in order of occurrence): cross-border cooperation (mainly on spatial issues), security and the police, consultation in general and political consultation (in the European framework). Other areas of activity were much less frequently cited.

Internal market and economic cooperation

Despite the name 'Benelux Economic Union', economic cooperation is no longer the only – or indeed most important – activity of the organisation. Currently, the main focuses of policy consultation are combating tax fraud and cooperation (with France and Germany) on energy matters. The Benelux is also operationally active in one of the sub-areas of economic cooperation, namely intellectual property. A special Benelux Office for Intellectual Property, based in The Hague, promotes the registration and protection of trademarks and designs. Most respondents felt that the actions of the Benelux in the general economic sphere brought added value. The experts saw opportunities for the Benelux in such areas as promoting the region as a multimodal logistics platform, the joint promotion of direct investment and exports, the further expansion of the internal market, tax harmonisation and the protection of intellectual property.

However, the main thrust of the organisation's activities is currently elsewhere, namely the spatial and person-related aspects of border issues, including cooperation on judicial and security matters.

Spatial cooperation

In the Benelux context, most spatial cross-border cooperation takes place at a legal level. Other matters, such as large-scale infrastructure projects, are outside the scope of the Benelux, although the organisation prides itself on its expertise in supporting such projects. The Consultative Committee of Advisory Parties (OAP) during the Dutch-Flemish negotiations on the project to deepen the River Scheldt benefited substantially from such support. Areas where the Benelux cooperation brings undoubted benefit are, most notably, the inter-port consultations, the Rhine-Scheldt Delta cooperation platform and the cross-border nature reserves.

Security has become a much more important part of the Benelux cooperation in recent years. What is new is the political interest in achieving more operational cooperation on the ground. The 2004 Treaty Concerning Cross-Border Police Intervention is the first major binding implementation of the Senningen consultation objectives. Experts point to current challenges facing the

Benelux, most notably: ensuring access to each other's databases; joint police inquiry teams and training; shared police stations and increased cooperation on judicial matters. The great progress made through European initiatives such as Europol is a major opportunity for the Benelux. The need to reach efficient arrangements governing health care and disaster management is at least as great.

Other person-related matters

The Benelux performs a number of dispersed activities in sub-areas of what are known as the 'person-related matters' (persoonsgebonden aangelegenheden, i.e. broadly speaking family, health and social issues). For instance, it focuses a limited amount of attention on education, research and culture, without much in the way of tangible outcomes. A new policy area for the Benelux is young people. As well as exchanging experiences, the five – modestly sized – administrations have also entered into agreements on joint external activities and representation at international forums. Person-related matters offer other opportunities for the Benelux,

one example being the crying need to address the specific, technical problems encountered by frontier workers.

Recommendations and position of the Flemish Government

The vast majority of respondents, irrespective of job sector or region, acknowledged that the Benelux had to be adapted to the current institutional reality in Belgium. At the same time, they saw the Benelux as being relevant to various areas of Flemish competence provided it could be reshaped into a integration model in which the sub-national governments play an essential role.

The recommendations made by the research team to the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs in 2006 related primarily to the objectives and core tasks of the Benelux. They wanted to see a cooperation instrument that could be fleshed out over the medium term in a flexible way. This instrument should not focus solely on traditional centralised cooperation but rather embrace all governments and authorities faced with cross-border issues in their work.



Photo 1: Signing of the new Benelux Treaty (photo: Benelux Secretariat)



The Benelux could serve local authorities (municipalities and provinces) as a knowledge centre on cross-border cooperation, with the substance of its tasks being periodically evaluated and updated. Moreover, a flexible Benelux would enable rapid switching between Benelux cooperation in the strict sense and bi- or trilateral, or even broader, cooperation. The idea of an enlarged Benelux or 'Benelux plus', taking in a number of border regions, opens up a new spatial perspective. Top of the list of candidates would be the German federal states North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony and the French department Nord-Pas de Calais.

In the short term, the respondents urged the Benelux to focus on core tasks in related sectors: further economic integration; management of cross-border cooperation; and security in the broad sense (Senning agreements).

It was suggested that the revised treaty should make it clear that the Benelux has reached a new stage in its existence. Following the Benelux Customs Union (1944) and the Benelux Economic Union (1958), its next incarnation should be the Benelux Union.

The new Benelux Treaty

When the international negotiations got under way in 2007, Flanders was part of the Belgian negotiating delegation, in line with the terms of the 1994 cooperation agreement on 'mixed treaties'. The signing of the revised treaty on 17 June 2008 marked the successful completion of the negotiations. The relatively short text limits the number of institutions to five: the Benelux Committee of Ministers, Benelux Council, Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council (which calls itself the Benelux Parliament), Benelux Court of Justice and Benelux General Secretariat. The organisation's name was changed to the Benelux Union. Moreover, Belgium's federated entities, including Flanders, were formally involved in the cooperation and signing, as joint representatives of Belgium.

The idea of a more flexible organisation¹³⁷ capable of responding to new challenges was also incorporated, the aim being to "deepen and expand the cooperation between the High Contracting Parties so that it can continue its role as precursor within the European Union and strengthen and improve cross-border cooperation at every level". In other words, the new treaty

is more of a framework treaty, setting out the powers and functioning of the institutions, how they relate to one another and the legal force of Benelux legislation. Most of the substantive provisions of the original treaty were excised and replaced by work programmes to be assessed periodically, though these are not included in the actual text of the treaty.

The first work programme was agreed upon during the negotiations and focuses on three areas, roughly as proposed in the advisory reports: (i) internal market and economic union; (ii) sustainable development, and (iii) justice and internal affairs. Although it may seem, on reading through the work programme, that this is simply a regrouping of existing activities and a little extra window dressing, it does actually send out some clear signals for the future. When the first programme comes to an end in 2012, the member states will redefine the priorities. This should prevent the Benelux Union from lapsing into hibernation, as it did in the 1980s and 1990s.

Likewise, in the field of extra-regional relations, the treaty mandates the General Secretariat to build up relations with other regional cooperation structures and bordering States, federated entities and administrative entities. This will even make it possible to structurally involve North Rhine-Westphalia in the cooperation, something the federal state is keen to see happen.

The Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs is currently preparing parliamentary approval of the treaty. However, a number of internal agreements have yet to be reached within Belgium regarding the definition of positions and representation in the institutions and also funding of the organisation.

Flanders counts

In conclusion, Flanders weighed heavily in the negotiations in the run-up to the new Benelux Treaty. The content of the new treaty is heavily influenced by new ideas conceived in Flanders.

The new Benelux can thus be seen as a light and flexible level of governance capable of helping Flanders – in a context of multi-level governance – to coordinate policy with its neighbours in specific areas. These policy areas are set out in the new work plan, but could be expanded to take account of future needs and wishes.

The Benelux also provides another means for Flanders to raise its international profile, both in its immediate neighbourhood and in its relations with other groups of small States and federated entities. In addition, it has the potential to act as a neutral support in the many infrastructure projects we share with our northern neighbours.

Philippe De Lombaerde, Associate Director, United Nations University – Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS), Bruges¹³⁸

Maarten Vidal, Policy advisor at the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs and researcher at the Institute for International Law, K.U.Leuven¹³⁹

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The Low Countries

The Low Countries lie where the Scheldt and the Rhine meet the sea. You'd be hard pressed to find them on a globe. Long ago they were marshy deltas, wholly devoid of promise. Roman generals had trouble subduing their rugged barbarian inhabitants, who fired up their spirits with beer – much to the disgust of Caesar and Tacitus. Our cold, wet lands were seen as a place of exile.

Nowadays, our location is our biggest asset, giving us the world-class ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam, which are strategically located for the German market. We have become experts at the landing and transshipment of goods and are strong on transport, trade and logistics. We have also, of course, become world leaders in dredging and brewing. All of this has not been without its material benefits: the Low Countries are among the most prosperous in the world.

Because we do more or less the same things, we compete with one another and engage in endless discussions on the deepening of the Scheldt or the reopening of the Iron Rhine railway.

Even genetically, we have helped to shape one another's identity. During the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), the North freed itself from Spain. After the fall of Antwerp (1585), there was a massive exodus from the South. In some cities in Holland, such as Amsterdam, Haarlem and Leiden, immigrants from the South made up over 25% of the population. Most of those that came were people of distinction, and helped pave the way for the Dutch Golden Age. In the course of time, the Southerners

became fully integrated into Holland's population.

However, there are differences of course. This is immediately obvious to anybody crossing the Belgian/Dutch border. Everything seems different on the other side: the houses, the roads, the shops, even the place-name signs. Dutch visitors are surprised at the ribbon development seen in Belgium, with houses dotted here and there and a jumble of smaller buildings (sheds, pens, barns, etc. – known locally as 'koterijen') built around them. Belgians are taken aback at the monotonous, uniform new housing estates that spring up from the streamlined Dutch landscape. The divide is as clear-cut culturally as it is geographically. Go into any old chip shop or snack bar and you'll find that the most familiar snacks are either nowhere to be seen or called something completely different. The same is true at the baker's or the local café. It could hardly be called a culture shock – more like a mild sense of alienation.

And although the inhabitants of both countries officially speak the same language – Dutch – a brief conversation is often enough to reveal differences in

pronunciation, sentence construction and vocabulary. Linguistic differences can sometimes lead to hilarious misunderstandings. For example, if a Belgian and a Dutchman arranged "*een eind te gaan lopen in de voormiddag*", for the Belgian this would mean a morning jog, while for his Dutch friend it would mean a stroll between midday and 2 p.m. That said, we shouldn't overstate these linguistic differences: Dutch and Flemish vocabulary is by and large identical.

Many Flemish people have mixed feelings about the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands. On the one hand they associate 'northern Dutch', as it is known, with fluency and quick-wittedness. On the other hand, they are not fond of the pronunciation or the use of certain words. Flemish successes on language-related TV programmes such as *Het Groot Dictee der Nederlandse Taal* and *10 voor taal* have only served to heighten Flemish linguistic awareness.

The notion that there is a clear distinction between the way Dutch and Flemish people use language has prompted calls for a separate set of standards for Flemish. But what would we take as our basis? After all, there are no official

grammars, dictionaries or spelling rules for Flemish. Furthermore, the use of urban and regional dialects is much more widespread in Flanders than it is in the Netherlands. The very absence of a single standard and the reluctance to embrace the 'Dutch' Dutch standard militates against the idea of unity. Time will tell whether an *Algemeen Vlaams* (standard Flemish) will emerge as a counterpart to *Algemeen Nederlands* (standard Dutch). Personally, I have my doubts. Why reinvent the wheel, after all?

As for the cultural differences between Flanders and the Netherlands, there are countless clichés doing the rounds. Jokes are indicative of how we perceive one another: the Belgians are stupid, the Dutch are stingy. A Dutchman calls in at a filling station in Belgium and asks: "How much is a drop of petrol?" The Belgian says: "Nothing, obviously". To which the Dutchman replies: "In that case, I'll have a tank full".

Another cliché relates to lifestyle and outlook on life: the merry, pleasure-seeking Fleming with a fondness for the finer things in life contrasted with the Calvinist, upright, conscientious Dutchman. The Fleming spares no expense on his house and car; he wants everyone to see what he's made of, and is keen to impress. The Dutchman, on the other hand, doesn't need all that pomp and luxury; pride comes before a fall and it'll only make the neighbours jealous. For the Fleming, every day is a gastronomic extravaganza – after all, he's earned it. The Dutchman is consumed with guilt at the dining table: food should be sober and nutritious, anything tasty is a sin. For the Fleming, milk is a kid's drink. He'd never order a glass of milk with his food – he'd be a laughing stock. For the Dutchman, a glass of milk is standard fare.

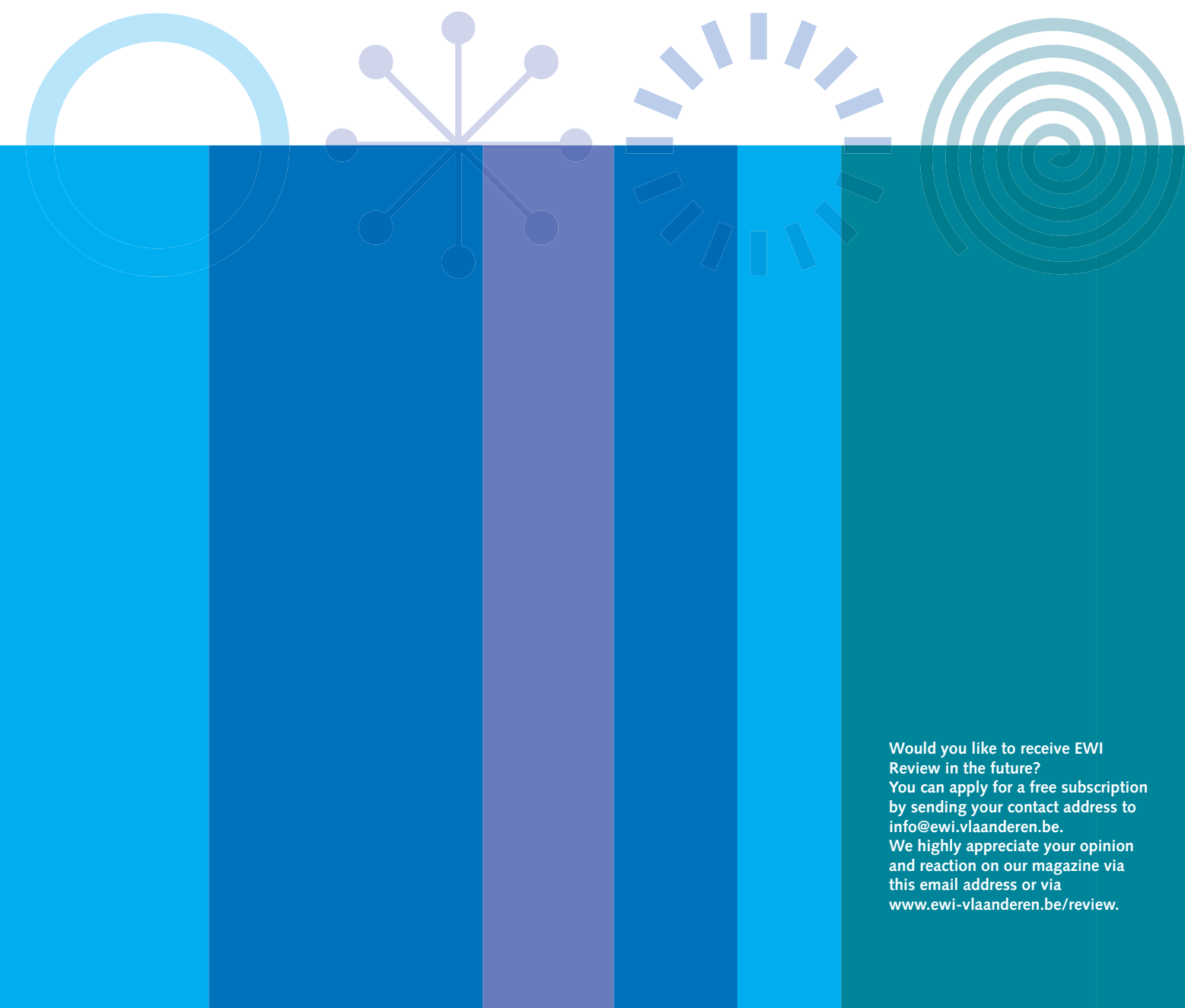
However, clichés won't get us much further than that: they are collective myths based on a handful of experiences and superficial observations. 'Stupid' Belgians do better than the Dutch academically in European competitions, while the 'stingy' Dutch are apparently Europe's most generous tourists. Is the food better in Belgium? These days, there are just as many Michelin-starred restaurants in the Netherlands as there are in Belgium. Only Belgian beers and chocolates remain unequalled. You'd expect the Flemish to be happier than the Dutch. But no, suicide rates in Flanders are among the highest in the world, those for the Netherlands among the lowest. And the Dutch also claim to feel happier.



Perhaps both countries – Belgium a little more than the Netherlands – need to work on their 'Calimero complex': the notion that one's role in the world has to be modest in proportion to one's size. An economic map of the world would quickly dispel that idea: whole continents (South America, Africa, Asia) would shrivel up, while Europe would balloon. Indeed, on a map of GDP, it would even be possible to locate the Low Countries!

Culturally speaking, the Calimero complex is evident in our attitude to language and literature: the idea that Dutch is a small language and our literature is barely worth reading. In reality, Dutch is a medium-sized language. Indeed, measured by the yardstick of publications, it's one of the big boys. Admittedly we've never won a Nobel Prize for Literature, but then a Nobel Prize is the best guarantee of literary oblivion. We overvalue what is thought and written elsewhere and spend our time reading translations – in effect second-hand literature. No, modesty is decidedly not a virtue. Let's not make ourselves smaller than we are: others are doing that for us.

Peter Bakema,
Research Division



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