

Ushering the monarchy into the 21st century

Monarchy does not rhyme with democracy. The N-VA is a republican party. The highest office – that of the head of state – must be open to everyone. However, as democrats we accept that today the majority of the population will not vote for a republic. In Flanders, there is nonetheless growing consensus that the King should no longer be allowed to play a political role. The N-VA advocates for the monarchy's role to be purely ceremonial and wants to take the lead in this matter. King Philippe's accession to the throne is the ideal opportunity.

Financing the royal house

First and foremost the N-VA advocates for transparency with regard to financing the royal house. With King Philippe's accession the Chamber will approve a new Civil List, the budget for the royal house. We advocate for this to cover all costs involved. Today, the royal house makes use of budgets including those of Defence, and Foreign and Home Affairs, services that are already strapped for cash and that can use their scarce resources more effectively.

Secondly, preferential tax treatment for the royal house must end. The kern cabinet's announcement that the King will pay tax is a positive step: the favourable regime for VAT and excise is over. However, members of the royal house continue to be exempt from income tax and social security contributions.

Lastly, there must be restrictions on contributions for members of the royal house that are not eligible for succession to the throne. They must earn their own income, as do those in other European royal houses.

Role of the King in forming a government

A second reform involves the role of the monarch in forming the federal government. It is the King who appoints an *Informateur* and a *Formateur*, which means he plays a decisive role in the coalition. A simple amendment to the Rules of the Chamber will suffice to allow the President of the Chamber of Representatives to fulfil this role. This has been the case in the Netherlands for the past two years.

Amending the Constitution

The King's role in legislative work is over. According to the Constitution the King signs and promulgates the laws. At the Flemish level this is done by the Speaker of the Flemish Parliament. We advocate for this logic to be extended to the federal level. The N-VA also wants ministers to swear their oath to the President of the Chamber of Representatives. The ministers are in the service of the people, not of the King.

According to the Constitution the King also still determines international relations. However, the 1993 state reform granted major competences to the federated entities in terms of foreign policy. Furthermore European integration has transferred considerable competences to the supranational level. The King also still possesses the right of coinage though this task has been completely taken over by the ECB since the introduction of the euro. Amendments to the Constitution to reflect the modern day reality are urgently needed.

The palace's recruitment policy

At present, the Chief of Cabinet is still selected by the King, with no control by the government or the parliament. However, the Chief of Cabinet possesses considerable political influence and power. The N-VA believes the Chief of Cabinet must be appointed by the Prime Minister and then be subsequently heard by the Parliamentary Committee on the Interior. He/she is then also accountable to the government.

All the monarchies in Europe have evolved or are evolving into a ceremonial role. Only the Belgian monarchy continues to cling on to the Ancien Régime with a king as a political actor. The N-VA is already prepared to take the lead to thoroughly revise the role played by the King.