

## ***Progress through change***

Europe is going through a crisis, and so is Belgium. Opinions differ widely about how to respond to this crisis. The fundamentally different visions between Northern and Southern Europe about savings and reforms, debt and growth, the internal market and the euro, are also apparent in Belgium.

The outcome of this clash of visions is a policy which nobody wants and whereby far too little is done. A policy where we just muddle along and never implement structural reforms. It is impossible to arrive at one effective solution when you start from two totally different viewpoints. The result is limited to solutions which either please only one community or nobody, a solution that is not a solution, in other words.

In a perpetual state of state reforms, governments have tried to find a way out by increasingly transferring competences to the Communities and the Regions. Unfortunately we paid and still pay far too high a price for this political autonomy.

- A democratic price. Flanders had to give up its majority for the French speaker's de facto right to a veto. And the bolts on the doors multiply with every state reform.
- A financial price. Invariably part of the Flemish prosperity was dispatched to Wallonia and Brussels. The sixth state reform is not an exception to this rule, but its rather sad culmination. The invoice has increased to 4.6 billion euros, or more than 1,500 euros per Flemish household annually.
- A price for Brussels. With every state reform the ties between Flanders and Brussels become looser.

In return the Flemings did not receive an efficient government but a maze. The distribution of competences is increasingly complex and ambiguous after each state reform, with fragments here and pieces there. We can no longer afford to waste time, money and energy on Community discussions. This country needs change.

We will take a new path with confederalism. A road which facilitates structural change and provides a perspective again. That is what confederalism is all about. About change. About progress. In short, about progress through change.

## **Confederalism**

With confederalism, the N-VA is writing a European story. The European Union after all is a recent example of a confederation. This means that the collaboration within the Confederation of Belgium can be organised in line with the organisation on the European Union level.

Confederalism starts from three basic principles. First, confederalism needs to generate more democratic support so that policies are closer to citizens. Secondly, confederalism must lead to a more efficient and therefore cheaper government. And finally, confederalism has to bring about peace between the Communities by ensuring better cooperation between the various governments.

The Confederation of Belgium will consist of two federated entities, Flanders and Wallonia, which are each competent for competences related to territory and to people. The Brussels-Capital Region and the German-speaking Region have special status in the Confederation. The Brussels-Capital Region will be allocated territorial competences. At the same time, its function as a capital will be reinforced and its ties with Flanders and Wallonia strengthened, and the federated entities will be responsible for all matters related to people.

The federated entities are the owners of all the competences. They shall exercise all the competences in their territory except for those which have been transferred to the Belgian Confederation.

There will be **one Belgian Parliament**, with one legislative chamber. There will be 50 Belgian members of parliament. Half to be elected by the Walloon parliament, half by the Flemish parliament. The representation of the Brussels-Capital Region and the German-speaking region will be guaranteed.

The **Belgian Government** has equal representation and has four ministers, who shall be nominated by the Flemish and the Walloon parliaments. One of them will preside the Government. One minister of the Flemish government and one minister of the Walloon government shall be part of the Belgian government in an advisory capacity without competences. They will constitute the link between the confederal level and the level of the federated entity.

The Flemish and Walloon Minister-Presidents together will form the **Belgian Council**. The Council can be extended with the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region and/or the German-speaking Region when their presence is required for a given matter.

**Belgian Councils of Ministers** will be convened depending on the subjects. A Council of Ministers consists of the relevant minister(s) of the Flemish government, the Walloon government and where necessary, the government of the Brussels-Capital Region and/or the German-speaking Region.

The Belgian monarchy shall be reformed into a ceremonial monarchy, in line with the monarchies of the Scandinavian countries. The head of cabinet of the King shall be under political supervision, as is the case in the Netherlands.

The confederal competences shall be financed with direct grants from the federated entities' own resources. The Belgian Confederation shall not levy its own taxes. Some indirect taxes shall be managed at the confederal level, however.

### ***State debt and transfers***

Since 2007, the state debt (which at the time stood at about 80% of GDP) has been rising again and recently it once again crossed the "magic" boundary of 100 percent of the GDP. The debt ratio is so high that the interest on it eats up a hefty share of the annual budget. Moreover, the government will probably have to borrow again in order to pay this interest – the infamous interest snowball.

If policy remains unchanged, then ageing will constitute an additional burden for public finances between now and 2030 amounting to 3.3% of our GDP. In order to finance this bill, we would have to increase taxes on households by more than 25%. At least if the very optimistic growth figures materialise. The ageing cost will increase by at least 4.6% of the GDP based on a more realistic growth rate, meaning taxes for households would have to increase by at least 38%.

On top of this there is also the annual money transfer to the south of the country. Although Flemings are one of the most inclusive people worldwide we are not to know how wide and how deep the river of funds which annually flows to the south is. The estimates are not provided in a memo by the Belgian Government – as is the case in Switzerland – but are based on the studies of others. The annual amount has been calculated to be anywhere between 8 and 16 billion euros, depending on the parameters used.

The current solidarity system - or rather, solidarity tangle – is neither objective nor transparent. It has no upper or lower limit, cannot be periodically reviewed, offers no prospect of reduction and is needlessly complex. It is not efficient and it does not encourage accountability. Wallonia and Brussels will not implement a different, stronger policy which will improve their financial situation as well as increase their fiscal capacity. On the contrary, if they increase their fiscal capacity then their revenues will decline,

which is why this is a perverse system. Because it encourages bad policy. And because Flanders, after the transfers, has fewer resources per capita than Wallonia and Brussels.

The Butterfly Agreement about the Sixth State Reform does effectively apply the solidarity mechanism of the Special Financing Act. But in combination with other elements, Vives has estimated that the transfers from Flanders to Wallonia and Brussels are only set to further increase. Moreover, Vives is of the opinion that the proposed accountability of the federated entities is not being implemented.

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#### ***CAPPING DEBT AT THE CONFEDERAL LEVEL***

The Basic Treaty will enforce an absolute cap on debt at the confederal level in order to gradually reduce Belgium's historical debt in order to avoid any financing shortages.

#### ***DEBT AMORTISATION FUND***

The existing federal debt will be incorporated in a debt amortisation fund. The debt will be repaid over a period of 25 years with the revenue from VAT and excise duties. This will result in a deficit in the budgets of the federated entities. The federated entities can then choose whether they wish to make up this deficit by implementing their own budgetary measures or borrow more money and create their own debt.

#### ***SOLIDARITY MECHANISM***

Flanders wants to continue to demonstrate its solidarity with its neighbours. But it wants a solidarity which helps people progress and gives them a perspective. The existing transfers will be replaced by an objective, efficient solidarity which is founded on accountability. A temporary and a permanent solidarity mechanism will be established. The temporary solidarity mechanism will compensate for the transition from the federal to the confederal model and will be gradually phased out over a 25-year period. This will provide Flanders and Wallonia with guarantees about an equal relative starting position. The permanent solidarity mechanism will partly iron out the differences in terms of fiscal capacity between Flanders and Wallonia. They will be financed through the confederation.

### ***BRUSSELS***

Brussels is our capital, a capital with strong assets which can become a vibrant and creative city, an enterprising and prosperous city, a city of the future.

Together with the Flemish ports, Brussels is the engine of Flanders' economy. And vice versa, Flanders has a strong impact on Brussels's economy. A major part of Brussels employment is assured from Flanders.

Out of the 700,000 jobs 350,000 are held by commuters, 240,000 of whom come from Flanders.

Brussels is our window on the world. A bridge with other cultures. And a showcase for our Dutch language and culture. It is the seat of the Flemish Government, the Flemish Parliament and the Flemish public services. The Flemish Community invests in infrastructure and services. Flanders sets aside 5% of its Community budget (725 million euros a year) for policy in Brussels. For all the people of Brussels.

But these assets are outweighed by some huge challenges. It is expected that Brussels' population will grow with at least 15,000 inhabitants a year in the next ten years. Moreover, the population is very diverse. There is a bottom layer of low-skilled and low-qualified migrants and a top layer of highly skilled expats. The outcome is a fragmented society with no strong social fabric. The poverty figures in Brussels are very high. In Belgium, 14 out of a thousand inhabitants receive a living wage; in Brussels the figure is 34 out of every thousand. The visible poverty (homeless people, beggars, slummification...) is increasing noticeably. And we haven't even mentioned mobility, cleanliness or safety yet.

All of these factors explain the exodus from the city, especially of the middle class. And a lot of businesses are following suit. In the past five years alone, more than 2,500 companies left Brussels. The fact that policy is unable to deal with these challenges is largely due to the state's architecture. Brussels is an institutional and administrative tangle which is not very transparent and anything but efficient. Brussels is managed by several administrators but very few of them actually feel responsible. As a result, Brussels and the entire country are paying a heavy price for the bad institutional architecture and the substandard governance.

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#### ***A SIMPLIFIED AND ACCOUNTABLE BRUSSELS***

Brussels will have one level of governance: the Brussels-Capital Region. Brussels will as a result become simpler and stronger, and be a real capital.

The municipalities, the Region and the agglomeration will merge, as will the police zones and the public social welfare centres. The army of 1,100 politicians will be halved, and several institutions will either be abolished or merged. The administrative proximity will be organised by a subdivision into districts, neighbourhoods and boroughs. The old town halls will become district offices. They are like an extension of the central town hall and constitute a permanent communication platform for the authorities and the citizens, and will provide the traditional administrative services.

The Brussels-Capital Region will be led by a government with equal representation of the language communities. The Brussels Parliament is made up of 70 MPs, including 15 Dutch speakers. There will be one Flemish Brussels administration, which will also encompass the Flemish Community Commission.

The Brussels-Capital Region holds territorial competences and is largely responsible for its own revenue and expenditure.

The Brussels-Capital Region will become a real capital, respecting language and culture, with bilingual officials and with an enforceable language act. The Government of Flanders and the Dutch-speaking members of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region will regularly discuss Brussels' role as a capital and on the international scene. The Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region can request recommendations from the Flemish Government or the Walloon Government.

### ***THE BRUSSELS CHOICE***

The Brussels Choice allows the people of Brussels to choose from a wide range of services and facilities, thus creating an interpersonal solidarity between Brussels and Flanders or Wallonia. Each inhabitant of Brussels is free to make his own choice. As long as children are dependent, their parents choose for them. **When the parents each opt for different systems**, objective criteria shall determine which system is applicable to the child (i.e. the family allowance system). The choice is not necessarily final. You can switch to the other system after a period of transition. Naturally, the principle that the inhabitants of Brussels continue to have access to the institutions and infrastructure of both of the Communities will remain applicable.

The Brussels Choice applies to a complete range of services, with rights (subsidies) and duties (contributions). Anyone who chooses the Flemish system shall benefit from the same arrangement as the Flemings in Flanders, which guarantees a transparent, inclusive approach.

This includes personal income tax, the social security compensation systems (healthcare, family allowances, allowances for people with disabilities), social security benefits (living wage, guaranteed income for the elderly), replacement incomes (pension, disability, incapacity for work, unemployment), placement services, welfare institutions, youth services, migration and integration and voting rights for the Flemish and Walloon Parliaments respectively.

### ***CITY OF THE FUTURE***

Brussels has to become once again a pleasant city to live and work in. Currently, it does not need a Marshall plan, but a people plan. Most crucially, the exodus of the young, working middle class needs to be halted. They work and consume, thus generating more jobs, a stronger financial basis and less poverty. That is why the city has to urgently become more attractive. This means that Brussels needs to become an accessible and safe city where people can raise their children. A city with equal opportunities for everyone and where everyone has the same obligations.

### ***AN ACTIVE AND ACTIVATING BRUSSELS***

It is in Brussels' interest to attract companies and employment in view of the resulting revenue. The district offices will have enterprise offices where entrepreneurs, more specifically start-ups and SMEs, can go with all their questions. Brussels' Canal Zone will become the centre for new industry and SMEs.

### **SHOPPING PLAN**

The Shopping Plan will once again turn Brussels into a shopping capital. A special development plan will be drawn up for each of the fifty shopping areas which responds to the needs of neighbourhood residents and customers in general. The plans will provide for (basic) shops, comfort, the embedding in the neighbourhood's various functions, aspects such as appearance (the quality of the façades for example) and positioning and market share (e.g. specialisation, neighbourhood function and so on). The recently proposed Atrium Barometer is a perfect starting point.

These plans allow us to abandon the current approach, which is founded on an ad-hoc policy and which only responds to problems as they arise. Consequently, we will ensure that the new megamalls will complement the range of services offered by retailers in the city centre.

### **POVERTY POLICY**

We will develop a poverty policy which focuses on participating in society once again. This will be developed around two pillars. We will meet people's basic needs (housing, food, clothes) and also focus on helping them back on their feet. Thanks to a customised policy people will become stronger and will have the tools at their disposal (training, entry level jobs, assistance for financial management...) to fully participate in society. The district offices will serve as a low-threshold focal point.

### **SECURITY**

The police competences shall be merged in one level of governance with decentralised local police stations. Neighbourhood activities, neighbourhood committees and neighbourhood network schemes will have to promote social cohesion and local safety.

All the nuisance and crime – regardless of how serious it is – will be dealt with. This requires a spatial planning policy as well as a well-thought out security policy, with clean, open streets and better lighting, And more social supervision thanks to the presence of a police force which uses the most modern technology. No go areas are excluded, regardless of the time and place.

Drugs cause nuisance and can even ruin entire neighbourhoods. A strong response is required, tackling the supply and demand side. The answer for users lies in assistance as well as law enforcement. Harsh measures shall be applied to drug dealers.

### **LIVING**

We want a more project-based approach to create more housing and increase social control, for example by turning the available spaces above shops into housing and promoting "living above shops".

### ***A CULTURE OF INNOVATION***

A well-thought out urban planning project shall stimulate a culture of innovation. Cities are currently working with city poets and master builders, but they lack a real city architect. Brussels will host the international "Urban Ideas Festival", the platform of choice for brainstorming about the future of cities in Europe and in the rest of the world.

### ***MOBILITY***

Brussels is a polycentric city. But in terms of mobility, the city has been structured too concentrically, which is why urban planners should focus on developing several centres which are all organised around a train or metro station. Public transport, offices, shops, living and park areas shall all be developed in function of this.

Rail services must be integrated more seamlessly with local public transport. The infrastructure is available: there are 28 train stations on Brussels' territory. The existing infrastructure is not sufficiently used for local transport within Brussels. An integrated plan, which also includes Brussels rail services, shall serve as a supplement to other networks (including the Regional Express Network).

Large car parks will be built along the major arterial roads into Brussels, especially along the major traffic axes (E40 from the east and west, E19 from the north and south), in the vicinity of public transport facilities. A public transport ticket will entitle you to free parking.

Feasibility studies will study how the small ring road and other major arterial roads can be relocated underground. This will help restore the residential, living and shopping function of these major roads. At the same time we will build one large, traffic-free zone in the city's historic centre, which will be combined with large car parks along the small ring road. The Zavel/Sablon can soon become a completely car-free, traffic and leisure area.

Ultimately, much like our objective is to integrate the great ring road with the public transport network thanks to large car parks, we wish to connect the small ring road with a car-free area thanks to car parks.

### ***CHILDCARE & EDUCATION***

We shall make additional efforts in terms of childcare.

We will examine how we can directly invest in rental properties for employees who choose a shortage occupation in Brussels, such as a job in Dutch-language education and Dutch-language childcare.

Any child wishing to have access to Dutch-language basic and secondary education must be guaranteed a place. We shall provide language immersion courses for children do not have the required language skills in Dutch-language education. A language screening shall be conducted during the transition from kindergarten to primary education and from primary to secondary education.

The Dutch-language schools shall be embedded in local social-cultural activities. We aim to recruit local teachers who can serve as role models.

In the short term at least 500 additional student rooms shall be built for students who enrol in Dutch-language higher education.

### ***CARE***

Each district (or cluster of districts) shall have a residential and care centre, a revalidation centre, a youth centre and a centre for the elderly where the use of Dutch is guaranteed. The residential care network also has to be drastically expanded so Dutch speakers are guaranteed residential care in their own language.

### ***SPORT***

Brussels needs sport and leisure facilities for the fast-growing group of young people. Flanders is contributing to this by building, in consultation with the Brussels-Capital Region, a large BLOSO sport centre, a new flagship of Flemish openness.

### ***A TRILINGUAL RECEPTION POLICY***

Flanders shall enforce an adapted trilingual (Dutch, French and English) reception policy for welcoming expats to Brussels.

## ***Europe***

The future of 6.5 million Flemings is in Europe. Our story is and always be a European story: to be a Fleming to become a European.

Indeed, we think that we have something to offer to Europe. Much like we are of the opinion that we should approach the rest of the world as confident Flemings. Independent and confident, open and in solidarity. That is how we see the future of Flemings. European Flemings, global Flemings.

Unfortunately, the European Union is increasingly starting to resemble Belgium in XL format: people are becoming increasingly frustrated about the common project and support is wavering. Because the pressure on democratic legitimacy is growing; because more and more people no longer think that Europe is contributing to their wealth but instead feel as if they are losing their grip on the decision-making process.

As is the case in Belgium, there is a fundamental discrepancy between the north and south when it comes to a vision of savings and reforms. And like in Belgium, the north is suspicious about instituting even more transfers unless these are reciprocated with greater accountability.

Choosing in favour of Europe is opting for a Europe which we fully believe is our Europe. It means opting for change.

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#### ***EUROREALISM***

It is because we believe in Europe that we also dare to raise questions about it. We are Eurorealists: for us, Europe is a serious matter. But Europe also has to ensure that everybody can understand its policies thanks to continuous critical self-reflection. Europe's current celebratory communication does not reflect the reality.

#### ***A CONFEDERAL EUROPE***

At present, the European Union is largely an elitist project and not a Union of the people. European debates are held above citizens' heads, in a bureaucratic and technocratic jargon that nobody understands.

We are against a European superstate, just as much we are against a Flanders which withdraws into itself, without a strong European foundation. We believe in a Europe which can grow from the bottom up. Europe cannot be a top-down model. Instead, it should grow from the bottom up.

We are in favour of a confederal Europe in which the Member States jointly decide which issues to tackle in order to restore the trust between the European citizens and their politicians. Not because have to, but because they want to. This is the only way to shape the cooperation between countries and people and to restore and enhance the Union's democratic legitimacy.

In this framework, legislation and policy have to be developed and implemented as closely as possible to the citizens. Much like the federated entities in the Belgian Confederation can decide which competences are confederal competences, Europe should only act when its Member States consider this to have added value.

An à la carte Europe is impossible according to these principles. If we want to guarantee the European Union's long-term existence and success then we will have to ultimately agree on the common objectives which all the Member States are required to meet, without exceptions.

#### ***NO ENLARGEMENT***

We cannot ignore the fact that the previous enlargements have not yet been digested. We need to further deepen the Union before discussing another external enlargement. Especially in light of the development of a Europe with different speeds in relation to

the euro, the fiscal compact, the Schengen area and the single market, this is both necessary and a prerequisite.

### **UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

Europe has to be a shared ownership project in which all the citizens can participate. Preserving diversity, including linguistic diversity, within the European identity is crucial in this context. That is why we believe every citizen has the fundamental right to communicate with the European institutions in their official national language. This too shall reduce the European democratic deficit.

### **MORE EUROPE IN THE PARLIAMENT**

National MPs shall bridge the gap between the national and the European levels. This can be achieved, among others, by "Europeanising" the national and regional parliaments, as is the case in Denmark. Before and after each meeting of the Council of Europe or the Council of Ministers, the competent minister should address parliament and explain the position. Consequently the debates in the parliaments shall be more in line with European political developments.

### **BETTER COOPERATION AND COORDINATION**

Although more and more European policy themes relate to the competences of the federated entities, the coordination and preparation of the Belgian position is still a federal matter. As a result, Flanders misses opportunities to weigh in on European policy.

The European Union only recognises states as members. That does not prevent Flanders and Wallonia, and where applicable the Brussels-Capital Region, from playing a decisive role in the preparation, the definition, the representation and the monitoring of European policy in Belgium.

The Belgian Confederation shall inform Europe that the federated entities shall henceforth act on its behalf. This is perfectly possible within the existing European legislation (Article 4, paragraph 2, EU Treaty). Moreover, an entity can also exercise those domestic competences on an international level in keeping with the "*in foro interno, in foro externo*" principle.

On those occasions when the Belgian Confederation has to speak as one, as is the case in the European Council meetings, the standpoint needs to be coordinated. This stance is defined in the framework of the Belgian Council (of Ministers), in a direct dialogue between Flanders, Wallonia, and where applicable the Brussels-Capital Region and the German-language Region.

### **AN OWN VOICE IN EUROPE**

The Belgian Confederation will be partly represented in the European Councils of Ministers by Flanders and by Wallonia. The competences will be fairly divided by theme. Flanders will be responsible for one half of the competences, Wallonia for the other. The division will be enforced for the entire parliamentary term in order to ensure that the competences are clearly defined and to ensure continuity on the issues that are dealt with. When Flanders is the representative, Wallonia shall attend the meeting as assessor and vice versa. The only exception to this rule is the Fisheries Council, for which Flanders is exclusively competent.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH EUROPE**

Flanders and Wallonia, and where applicable the Brussels-Capital Region, will separately report to Europe on the obligations which they are required to fulfil (stability and reform programmes in the framework of the European semester, action plans in the framework of the EU 2020 objectives and so on). They will share their programmes, action plans, and so on with Europe through a “confederal mailbox system”. The programme which Belgium shall submit shall combine the programmes mentioned above. This method is already in force for certain policy areas (e.g. the environment). The Belgian Confederation will ask the competent European institutions to evaluate these programmes and plans separately and to make separate recommendations. Europe shall then pass on this information directly to Flanders and Wallonia respectively.

### **DIPLOMACY**

Flanders and Wallonia shall defend their own political and economic interests abroad, for which they have their own separate diplomatic service. There shall thus only be one Flemish diplomatic service, whereas now it is fragmented among several services (representatives of the Flemish Government, Flanders Investment & Trade, Flanders International Cooperation Agency and Tourism Flanders-Brussels). The Belgian Confederation shall no longer have its own diplomatic service.

The reforms of the diplomatic network will ensure that diplomats work better together. Whereas currently coordination is often lacking and there is rivalry between diplomats, the emphasis in the confederal structure will be on a partnership between two instead of three services. The reform also entails a rationalisation of the existing embassies, consulates and other representations. The result will be simplification and cost savings.

Flanders and Wallonia shall separately determine in which countries they wish to establish an embassy. In countries where both Flanders and Wallonia wish to be represented, they can do so jointly.

### **Development cooperation**

Flanders has organised its own development cooperation. It has given priority to three African countries in this framework: Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa. There are also several multiannual commitments with UNICEF, Unaid, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO). Healthcare, education, agriculture and animal husbandry as well as social infrastructure are the main priorities for action.

The development cooperation of the Belgian Government has different priorities and uses other tools. In some cases Flanders and Belgium work well together, while in other cases there is barely any contact. Belgium for example has eighteen partner countries, while Flanders only chooses to focus on three, as mentioned above. Whereas Flanders outsources the implementation of its development cooperation, the federal government largely relies on its own agency, the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), to do this, in collaboration with external partners. Moreover, the federal development cooperation also focuses on policy areas of Flanders and the other federated entities, such as university development cooperation, education and agriculture. This is not efficient.

In 2001 the Fifth State Reform provided for a split of the development cooperation budget. To date, the Lambermont Agreement has not been executed. Meanwhile, Flanders has shown that it is prepared to take its international responsibility. The total Flemish development cooperation budget has increased from just under ten million euros in 1999 to 31.7 million euros in 2006 and 51.5 million euros in 2012.

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#### ***GEOGRAPHIC AND THEMATIC CONCENTRATION***

Flanders and Wallonia are responsible for implementing a full-fledged development cooperation policy. In this respect, we have chosen to concentrate our activities as much as possible by focussing on a limited number of partner countries. Working with more partner countries results in a higher administrative cost. As a consequence, we avoid that our efforts are a drop in the ocean. The partner countries are chosen following a broad consultation which involves parliament and civil society.

We also choose to concentrate on certain themes as much as possible. We need to continue to specialise in order to distinguish ourselves from others. Priorities for Flanders can be sectors in which we have already built significant expertise (such as education, biotechnology and healthcare). The NGOs which will assist Flanders will also specialise in these fields.

#### ***OWNERSHIP***

When working with partner governments the emphasis will be on the principle of ownership. In the long term especially, the partner countries have to bear responsibility through professionalised institutions. We therefore base cooperation on certain conditions. For example, the governments with which Flanders works have to unequivocally respect human rights and democratic principles. If they do not do so, then we have to act and as a last resort we can choose to partly or completely suspend all aid. We will also pay attention to the readmission of foreigners whose asylum application has been refused and the readmission of prisoners who are not entitled to reside in Belgium when concluding partnership agreements.

#### ***SUPPORT***

A policy will be implemented aimed at generating support among the population. Development cooperation is a matter for the government and/or NGOs but it is above all a matter of people helping other people. That is why we want to give as much support possible to small-scale personal projects (the so-called fourth pillar).

We will above all choose projects with high visibility, with which people feel a connection and which will raise young people's enthusiasm about development cooperation. In education, we will focus on learning more about these partner countries. We can encourage students and classes to effectively visit the partner countries instead of raising funds for the traditional ski trip, for instance, or exchange projects can be set up, traineeships for graduates and so on.

### ***FLAGSHIP***

Flemish development cooperation will be our flagship on the international level. We can achieve the OECD goal in the short term and spend 0.7 percent of our GDP on development cooperation. Denmark, which has a slightly smaller population than Flanders, has achieved this objective for several years already. In so doing Flanders shall distance itself from the current federal policy which continues to cut the development cooperation budget.