



Dear friends,

Welcome to this magnificent university town. Welcome to Leuven! It is right here in this city that we launched 'Traject 2012', or 'Route 2012' in English (in the Brabant in Haasrode). And it is also right here in Leuven that we are bringing this 'Route 2012' to a close. Allow me a moment to reflect on the road that we have travelled on together so far.

- As I said, we first came together on in the Brabant 16 October. No less than 1,200 local committee members joined the party leadership in firing the starting pistol for 'Route 2012'. A number of party leaders discussed all manner of local policy issues, and we introduced you to the five most important aspects of the N-VA's position on local policy.
- One month later, on 19 November, we assembled at the Kinopolis in Hasselt. With some 750 local committee members in attendance, we held a conference on the issues of mobility, town and country planning, the environment and energy.
- Next in line was our meeting one month later on 17 December at the Metropolis in Antwerp, where 850 people attended. We hosted a workshop on social fabric, family policy and education.
- On 21 January we met at the Casino Kursaal in Ostend. No less than 800 local committee members made a special trip to the coastal city for this gathering. Topics discussed included social issues, senior citizens, civic integration and migration.
- Finally last month, on 4 February, we filled the ICC in Ghent with 900 local committee members to discuss local economic issues, security, housing policy, rural policy and leisure.

These meetings gave us the opportunity to travel throughout Flanders. Before I go any further, I would like to congratulate each and every one of you! I think it's extraordinary that our young party succeeded in organising five conferences over the course of six months and managed to get almost 5,000 local committee members interested in attending, and for this I am very grateful to all of you. I can still remember the days when we had to call a general convention of all members in order to bring 1,000 members together. Nowadays we are forced to limit entry to committee members only, and even restrict it to a maximum of three per chapter so as not to exceed 1,000 attendees. As Bredero said, '*Het kan verkeren*', which roughly translates as '*Things can change*'.



Dear friends,

I think it is fair to say that no other party in Flanders has accomplished so much in the way of substance as has the N-VA. During all of those seminars, we provided you with a wealth of information, views and new ideas. If you are planning on creating a programme for your own municipality yourself, then you will most certainly be able to draw inspiration from this. Think of it as a lucky dip from which to pluck all sorts of ideas as you see fit, depending on the nature of your municipality.

In spring of last year, we organised a practical training day for you in Ghent, and today we are holding the second edition of this training. Today we will be focusing on practical preparations for the local elections: how do I formulate a campaign plan, what election legislation do I have to take into account, what sort of campaign branding will the party employ, what campaign materials will be available to me, how do I prepare in order to address any number of political debates, how must we proceed with negotiations on policy agreements, how can I write persuasive content, what should the ideal campaign website look like, etc. We are going to try and provide answers to all of these pressing questions today. With this, the training day marks the final stop on our 'Route 2012'. All of you have already undergone thorough training and can now get right down to business in your own municipality.

Dear friends,

There can be no doubt about it: the N-VA is growing! I don't want to bore you with too many facts and figures, but I do want to let you know about a few things that speak volumes.

- We closed 2010 with 15,799 members. We closed 2011 with 25,483 members. That is a net gain of almost 10,000 additional members in one year's time! Our membership renewal programme has since got underway, but I can tell you now that we have added 5,500 new members over the last four months!



- We finished 2010 with 225 local N-VA chapters. We now have 289 N-VA chapters throughout Flanders, and five chapters in Brussels. Out of a total of 308 Flemish municipalities, this means that we now maintain an active presence in 94% of Flanders.
- Of those 289 chapters, 241 of them - or 83% - have already decided to take part independently in the October municipal elections.
- 251 chapters have already created their own local N-VA website. That is 83% of all of our chapters.
- Over the course of 2011, no less than 653 brochures were distributed house-to-house by our chapters: a total of almost 7 million copies found their way into Flemish letterboxes. And my staff has informed me that we will overtake that figure by a long way this year.

So in short, dear friends, I can only encourage you to maintain these efforts with steadfast determination. Keep up the legwork - this year more than ever! I don't have to tell you how important it is for a party to be as strong as possible at the local grassroots level. At the risk of sounding a bit pretentious, my hope for next year is to address an auditorium full of municipal councillors, aldermen and burgomasters. Go for it, everybody!

But while you're at it, don't lose your humility. Keep both feet planted firmly on the ground. Don't allow yourself to be seduced by dazzling poll numbers. In spite of our strong growth, we still lag far behind the traditional parties at the local level, and we are not going to be able to make up that disparity in one election. Anyone who thinks that we can is mistaken. I call on all of you to stay realistic: have faith in your own power – never underestimate the power of our convictions – but keep your objectives realistic. Our goal must be at a minimum to erase a significant chunk of the gap that exists between us and the traditional parties. I am positive that we can do this.

And so on that note, my dear friends, I shall move on to the announcement that I have come here to make today. I can now present to you the slogan which the N-VA will use during this year's campaign. The slogan is: "The power of change"! Assuming the equipment is cooperating, you should now see a sample of a poster with the new slogan on it behind me.



The message is loud and clear: the N-VA is strongly committed to change. The N-VA is wielding the power of change against the forces of the status quo. As the N-VA, we must offer people a credible and reliable alternative, a party that conducts itself with consistency and sincerity in the political arena, a party that REFUSES to settle for the bare minimum that can be achieved in this country, but which instead aims for that which is necessary - for the change that Flanders needs!

In 2014, the voter will have to make a very clear choice: will Elio get another 4 or 5 years, and will we have to keep muddling along this same path? Will Elio be allowed to destroy the Flemish economy, just like the Walloon economy before it? Will Elio be allowed to bleed dry the Flemings who are still working? Will Elio be allowed to continue to pursue the open-border policy with respect to asylum seekers and immigrants? Or will it be the N-VA's turn, and will we finally be able to move toward a confederal model in which we Flemings are able to determine our own policies ourselves? The importance of this choice must not be underestimated. **2014 must be the year in which the power of change scores a conclusive victory over the status quo!** And in order to succeed, my dear friends, we must also perform as well as possible this year - in 2012 - throughout all of Flanders so that we can continue to expand our local network. And so, my friends, we now have to get out and fight for it, from Opgrimbie to De Panne! The next four months will be a crucial time for successfully wrapping up preparations for the local elections.

We must now take the change that we want to achieve in this country and bring it straight to the cities and municipalities. And this, my friends, is our challenge. It's no coincidence that our primary slogan's subtitle is: "Change starts in your municipality". We call on all voters to choose decisively for the N-VA in October 2012! A vote for the N-VA is the most powerful way to send a clear message to the traditional parties that business as usual can no longer go on. That is the only thing that they are really afraid of! **The powers that be will only listen to the voice of the people if these people come out to vote in very large numbers for the N-VA. Anyone who would like to see Elio go in 2014 must cast their vote for the N-VA right now in 2012!**

I thank you very much.

Bart De Wever

N-VA General Chairman