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Flanders And European Environmental Policy

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Flanders and European environmental policy

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abstract

Flanders, as a Belgian region, enjoys wide competences in environmental policy. In this paper, the interaction between the European and the Flemish policy is examined.

We will focus on the problem of implementation of directives and on the strategies for sustainable development at local level.

More in general, attention will also be paid to the political opportunities a region has to influence European environmental policy.

Flanders and European environmental policy

Hendrik Vos

Jeroen Decock

Introduction

A devolution tendency can be observed in a substantial number of European Union member states. This has some consequences with regard to the Union's decision-making. We will not give a general overview of the history of this devolution tendency or of the institutional consequences for the EU (see e.g.: …), but we will focus on one specific policy domain.

In this contribution, we will talk about environmental policy and we will pay particular attention to Flanders, a region that enjoys wide competences in this domain.

Environmental policy is one of those policy fields where an overlapping of the competences of the regional authorities and those of the European Union can be observed. This is not only the case in Belgium. Christoph Demmke, in a recent seminar on the sixth EU Environmental Action Programme, even states that "[..]environmental policy is special since there is no other policy sector where portfolios are so strongly decentralised and fragmented among the different government levels and ministries and agencies. In some Member states, water legislation forms part of the portfolios of several departments and agencies. The way in which responsibilities are distributed is a matter that lies within the competence of the Member States. However, if competences for one particular sector (such as water) are divided among several ministries and agencies, shortcomings in implementation are more likely to occur than if one sector is the full responsibility of one ministry/agency." (Demmke, 2000: 6-7).

Of course, it is clear that decentralisation, e.g. in environmental matters, has some advantages as well, but we will not focus on them. In this contribution we will pay attention to consistency and conformity between regional (Flemish) and European environmental policy.

We will examine the interaction between the regional and the EU environmental policy at the level of concrete legislation and at the level of general policy principles.

[1] Implementation of European legislation.

It is not our intention to give a detailed overview of specific directives, regulations or other European decisions and to outline for each piece of legislation the specific implementation and enforcement measures (or the lack of them) taken by the Flemish government. We will, however, give a more global assessment and will focus on the institutional context in which the interaction between European and Flemish environmental policymaking takes place.

Let us start with some general observations. On the one hand, Belgium is generally a moderate advocate of a stringent European environmental policy (the same holds for Flanders, even to a greater extent). Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria and Germany are generally seen as 'front-runners' in European environmental policy; Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland are seen as the 'laggards'; Belgium, Luxemburg, France and the United Kingdom are seen as the 'fence sitters'. These distinctions are very rough generalisations. Actually, in specific cases each country can be a front-runner, a laggard or a fence sitter. (Sbragia, 1996: 238)

In the OECD environmental performance review of Belgium, we read: "Belgium is promoting the development of EU-wide environmental policies and the adoption of directives to improve environmental protection. […] [I]t is in favour of stricter environmental standards than those contained in EU directives with a view to creating "total" and not simply "minimum" harmonisation […]." (OECD, 1998: 185; quotes in original)

But on the other hand, the same study says that "[f]or many years, Belgium was far behind in transposing directives at domestic level and in many cases was found to be in breach of the EEC Treaty by the European Court of Justice." (OECD, 1998: 185).

In 1997, the OECD continues, Belgium was one of the three EU Member States, which had communicated the smallest number of transposition measures to the Commission. Implementation of all EU directives, and for Flanders in particular (among others) those concerning nitrates, birds and urban wastewater, form a major challenge.

If we look at the Annual Reports on Monitoring the Application of Community Environmental Law, the same conclusion holds. Belgium had not yet transposed 32 directives by December 31, 1998.

In other words and without going into details: Belgium has considerable compliance and enforcement problems.

We will try to determine the main causes of this situation. Somewhat artificially, one can split up the sources of the implementation problem in European and Belgian-Flemish. The different sources of European shortcomings, stem from one main fact: the lack of political will and leadership to place transposition, implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation on top of the agenda. The Commission lacks human and financial resources to fulfil its monitoring task (Demmke, 1997: 70; Demmke, 2000: 2,4). Although Commissioner for the Environment Wallström declared that implementation will be a policy prirority, it is not likely to happen in the near future, since the appropriations of DG environment for 2001 will decrease by 21.8% (Wallström, 1999; European Commission, 2000). Member states, of course, know this fact and that is not at all an incentive for making a high priority of transposition and implementation at national level. The poor quality of the European legislation and the European implementation measures, is another cause. Sometimes, on delicate policy themes, the member states in the Council framework, deliberately use some vague and bad defined concepts in the legislation, in order to reach a compromise. This means that some fundamental discussions are transferred to the implementation phase. Also, reporting requirements on national implementation measures for the member states are often poorly elaborated in directives. Again this does not form an incentive to put much energy in reporting the national implementation measures to the Commission. Reporting depends in most cases too much on the voluntarism of the member states. Although it is not the central theme of this paper, one can even say that the record of national reporting on the effects of the implemented European policy is even worse. Only in 9% of the environmental directives, member states are obliged to report on the effects of the policy. Even then, the quality of reporting has lots of shortcommings (Wilkinson, 2000). Summarizing, the Commission, mainly due to a lack of political will from the member states, does not fulfil its monitoring task as it formally should be. It should not surprise that implementation and enforcement of environmental law is a significant problem in the EU as a whole. This situation also cuts off the Commission from feedback on the impact of policy measures, so useful information for updating and adjustment lacks.

Our second set of causes has more to do with the national and sub national context. First we must point out that implementation of European legislation is a general problem in Belgium and its regions (so it is not only about environmental law). We do not enter into details, but if one looks at the Commission reports on the application of community

law, one notices that for Belgium and its regions the correct implementation of EU directives is very unsatisfactory. Never the less, implementation of environmental legislation remains particulary problematic.
Since Belgium will be the EU-president in the second half of 2001 (and the country and its regions do not want to leave a bad impression on the European scene), the federal and the federate governments are trying to catch up. A (federal) Government Commissioner, Mr. Willockx, a former Member of European Parliament, has been appointed at the end of 1999. This fact illustrates that, as at the European level, political will and leadership are crucial for transposition, implementation of legislation. It also illustrates that a presidency of the Union can be an incentive to get rid of a bad record.

Now, which internal causes for a lack of implementation can be traced? There are two kinds of causes: there is the typical environmental situation in Belgium and in Flanders and there are some Belgian particularities, which do not stimulate a quick reaction on European legislation, for example in the environmental domain (but in others domains as well).

[a] Intense pressures on the Flemish environment

It is not very easy to implement high environmental standards in a region in which the pressures on the environment are very high. In the OECD environmental performance review of Belgium we read that "in a country as densely populated and as developed as Belgium, the environment is exposed to intense pressures from human activities" (OECD, 1998: 19). The same holds for Flanders, which is even far more densely populated than the Belgian mean (439 inh/sq. km versus 333 inh/sq. km; European mean: approx. 100 inh/sq. km). In Flanders, there are substantial pressures on the environment. If we look at the OECD-indicators to measure those pressures (i.e.: population, GDP, cattle and pigs (with seven million specimens, the population of pigs outnumbers the human population), use of nitrogenous fertilisers, road vehicle stock and road network length), we can conclude that the pressures on the Flemish environment are very intense. The region is criss-crossed by very dense networks of roads, railways and navigation canals; industry and very intensive animal breeding and crop cultivation impose further pressures on air, soil, water resources and nature (see e.g. Verbruggen (red.), 1996). Under such conditions it is a real challenge to raise the level of environmental protection. The Flemish produce 20% more greenhouse gas per habitant

than the neighbouring countries. Belgium has per habitant the highest amount of nuclear medical services in Europe. The street lighting in Flanders is one of the most intense in the world. Only 1,1% of the surface is a protected nature area, which is extremely low. Between 1980 and 1995, the use of pesticides and herbicides raised with 36%, while a decrease was observed in most of the other EU countries (Mira-t 1999: 11).

[b] The federal form of government and a lack of a proactive approach in European policymaking do not stimulate a quick reaction on European legislation

Most of the European directives must be transposed and implemented by the three regions separately. Since the European Union only legally recognizes the Belgian state as responsible government, Belgium may be condemned, where perhaps only one of the three regions is at fault. The federal government has only a limited substitution right: in a situation where an international court renders a judgement against Belgium, because a region has not fulfilled its European or international obligations, the federal state is empowered to execute the operative part of the judgement. (The EU Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce of Belgium, 2000: 171) Generally speaking, one can say that states federal states (Germany, Austria and Belgium) and regional states (Italy ands Spain) in the EU, are vulnerable for transposition problems (Demmke, 1997: 45). Policy coordination in federal states requires more negotiations and coordination than in central states. This may slow down or block progress in implementation.

A second reason for the bad record is the lack of a proactive approach in European matters: a one-way flow of information and decisions from the European institutions to the Belgian and the Flemish. The national and sub national administrations are confronted with problems, when the decisions are already taken and are not enough involved in the crucial phases of the decision making. Certainly this is also partly because of the federal state structure. It is only since 1980 that environmental policy has gradually been federalized and that regional administrations could develop. For example, a systematic approach to the international aspects of the environment has only been formally institutionalised in the Flemish administration in 1995. The federal environmental administration, which lost lots of its competences, suffers from a lack of capacity building. All in all, international aspects of environmental policy seem to depend on a small number of influential experts.

We now will look at both reasons, by presenting an analysis of the instititutinal aspects of the involvement of Flanders (as a Belgian region) in European policy making, particularly in environmental dossiers.

Different stages in European decision-making can be distinguished:

(1) The Commission is the body having the right to initiate legislation. Before an initiative (e.g. a proposal for a directive) is submitted to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament a lot of consultation takes place within the Commission (with several Directorates). The Commission also consults widely with interested parties from all sectors when preparing draft legislation. In the case of environmental legislation, before it issues an item of draft legislation, the Commission carries out extensive preliminary soundings and discussions with technical experts, industry, special interest groups, sometimes the trade unions and the agricultural organizations. In this stage, representatives of (regional and national) governments (experts and officials) are consulted as well. In an attempt to influence the European decision-making process, the regional information offices in Brussels and regional (just like national) officials and experts try to establish or to maintain relations with the Commission (see Greenwood, 1997: 218-241), but this is a highly informal process.

It is a fact that the Flemish government and the Flemish environmental administration are almost not involved in this crucial process (neither are the Belgian federal government and administration). Since it is in the Commission that the real conception of European regulation takes place (and the Commission tries to take account of the often competing interests when it prepares its proposals) an important (though mostly informal) opportunity is already missed.

The Flemish authorities are only confronted with the proposals after they had been adopted officially by the Commission and submitted to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. At that stage of the decision-making process, it is often already too late to have a significant influence on the content of the proposed legislation.

(2) Although it has the right of initiative, the Commission does not take the main decisions on EU policies and priorities. This is the responsibility of the Council of the European Union, whose members are ministers from member governments. Due to the awareness that some matters primarily affect regions rather than states, the heads of states and governments decided in Maastricht to create a procedure

which makes it possible for a regional minister to be a member of the Council (and replace a national minister), but only on the condition that this regional minister can commit his state as a whole. In other words, a Flemish minister has to defend the Belgian point of view in the Council and the five Belgian votes in the Council can in no way be divided. In Belgium, a system of representation is worked out (Cooperation Agreement of 8 March 1994 between the federal government and the sub national governments – more information: see Alen, Ergec, 1998: 24; Beyers, Kerremans, 1997: 46-47; Vos, 2000). In environmental issues, the leader of the delegation is the federal minister of environmental affairs (who has in fact only very limited competences) and his assessor is a member of a sub national government (the Flemish, Brussels or Walloon minister of environmental affairs – a simple rotation system regulates which sub national minister will represent Belgium). This will almost certainly change in 2002: from then on the regional minister will head the delegation, with the assessor being a member of the federal government.

But since the regions have to defend a central position, their representatives are not entitled to voice their region's opinions in the Council. So even more important is the preparation of the central position of Belgium. The former *cavalier seul* strategy of the federal ministers had to make place for intensive collaboration. The decision-making process for the Belgian position to be defended in the Council is coordinated by the Federal Foreign Ministry: all issues that will be dealt with in the different Councils are discussed within the Directorate for European Affairs (the so-called P11), sometimes after a procedure in an inter-ministerial conference. Every decision on the Belgian position is reached in this Directorate by representatives of the federal prime minister and deputy prime ministers, of the minister-presidents of the different sub national governments and – for environmental matters - of the ministers of environmental affairs (both federal and sub national). Preceding talks on technical aspects take place in working groups. It is very important to stress that the decisions have to be reached in consensus.

In other words, Flanders has a say in the Belgian position to be defended in the Council, but all regions and the central state have to agree on this position. Differences of opinion must be overcome within this framework, since it is not possible to split up the five Belgian votes at the European level. Especially in environmental matters this sometimes leads to difficult situations since opposite interest between the regions may be involved (e.g. the regions have considerable

different views on bio safety issues, on waste policy and on certain aspects of air pollution policy)

But perhaps more important than the 'formal sessions' of the Council of Ministers is the preliminary work in the Council Working Parties and Committees. Regional officials and experts are invited to attend these meetings and they can have their say. But practice shows, once again, that this is not a high priority for the Flemish government. The involvement has an *ad hoc* character and relies heavily on the goodwill of officials and civil servants. There is only very little coordination within the Flemish administration or with the other regions or the federal government.

(3) The European Parliament shares the power of co-decision with the Council in most environmental matters. In environmental issues, it often takes a progressive and advanced position. But it shows little sense of reality to assume that the Flemish point can be the decisive factor in a parliament with 626 members. Moreover, the European Parliament is not a *Regional Chamber*, nor a *Senate of the Regions*. 14 of the 25 Belgian members of this Parliament are elected under a Flemish regional list (and 5 of those Flemish representatives are even member or substitute of the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy), but it is clear that they are also members of five different groups. So they are supposed to defend not only the Flemish interest but also their own ideological point of view. On environmental issues there are often competing interests between e.g. the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance and the Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party. The voting behaviour of the Flemish members of parliament (in the plenary session and in the committees) is often unpredictable (regional or ideological motives).

(4) The Committee of the regions (with 12 Flemish members), set up by the Treaty on European Union, is one of the advisory bodies. Its main objective is to involve regional and local bodies – federal states, town and cities and municipalities – in shaping Community policies (at least on paper). Setting up this Committee enshrined in law the obligation to hear the view of regional and local representatives on issues where they are responsible for putting policy into practice. There are ten areas of consultation, among which (since the Treaty of Amsterdam) environment. The Committee is organised in eight Commissions, whose responsibility is to support the preparation of Committee of the Regions Opinions on the proposals of

the European Commission. One of those commissions is the Commission on spatial planning, urban issues, energy and the environment.

But as a matter of fact, this Committee of the Regions is not a very important body in the EU institutional setting. The other institutions can ignore its opinion without justification and the composition of this Committee is seen as problematic. The Committee is at present an extraordinarily varied group of people and the arbitrary nature of its representation is a significant problem (Newman, 1997: 128-129).

Some authors warn that this Committee is yet another European talking shop (Jones, 1995: 295; Vos, 1997; 1999; 2000). And there are no big changes on the way, since those countries without any real regional structures would never tolerate providing such a body with important powers.

Summarizing, it may be said that Flanders is formally involved in the elaboration of the positions to be taken by the Belgian Permanent Representation in Coreper and the Belgian Minister in the Council, but its viewpoints are often watered down due to the consensus with the other two sub national governments and the federal government, necessary to reach a single Belgian position. More important perhaps than the participation at the formal internal decision-making, is the need for a coordinated participation at the Council Working Parties and Committees and a proactive approach to Commission initiatives. The latter could serve as an early warning and as a channel through which the Commission can be made aware of possible implementation problems due to Flanders particular environmental situation. A Commission proposal, which takes into account these requests, prevents implementation problems at the source.

Willockx suggests to establish within each department a European entity composed of a responsible from the political cabinet of the responsible minister, the Secretary-General of the department, a European Coordinator, and the route managers. When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assigns a (draft) proposal to a department, it serves as a ‘pilot department’. Within the pilot department a civil servant (or a team of them) is appointed as a ‘route manager’. The route manager monitors the assigned case until it is correctly transposed and implemented. The route manager signalises transposition and implementation problems to the European Coordinator, so action can be taken promptly. The OECD suggested earlier already a comparable change: “An important task for the administrations involved at both the federal and regional levels would be to streamline internal co-operation in order to further reduce the need for administrations to carry out

duplicative activities in some cases. One way would be to extend the practice of using ‘‘pilots’’ or ‘‘focal points’’ for international issues.” (OECD, 1998: 200).
Besides this clear distribution of responsibilities and a better information flow within and between the regional and federal administrations, the civil servants should also develop a more European reflex and should establish networks of contacts with relevant persons in the European institutions. By introducing these changes, Willockx hopes to avoid the end of pipe implementation problems, which Belgium is currently faced with.
The Belgian implementation problem also shows that political will and leadership are necessary ingredients for change. It also illustrates one of the side effects of an upcoming EU Presidency: a training in European decision making for the civil servants.

There are of course lots of other possible changes to improve the implementation and enforcement at national, regional and local level, which we will shortly mention. What holds for the regional and federal autorities that are directly involved in the transposition and implementation, namely a lagging behind the facts, holds of course even stronger for those persons and organisations who are affected by the measures and whose channels of information consist mainly of those autorities. Demmke (2000: 4-7) makes some interesting suggestions. The regional government could set up compliance assistance centres for small and medium sized business. Big enterprises are generally managing quite well, but the smaller enterprises do not have the resources for monitoring the legislative evolutions. The compliance centres could offer practical translations of the legislative texts, training tools, helping lines, etc. Another important change could be a better access to the courts for non-governmental organisations and citizens in environmental matters. The translation of the ‘United Nations Convention of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters’ into community law should be a good starting point. The Commission plans a first proposal after the summer of 2000. Especially in view of a lack of resources from the Commission to monitor the implementation in the member states from above, it would be a real improvement if citizens and non-governmental organisations, could serve as watchdogs from below.

[2] The basic principles of European environmental policy

If we look at the implementation of European environmental regulations (part [1]), there are some obvious problems in the interaction between Flanders and the EU. But in preparation of the EU-presidency in 2001, the federal and the federate governments want to tackle this problem.

Besides concrete directives, the EU also formulates general policy strategies. How is the interaction between Europe and Flanders on this matter?

'Sustainable development' has been established as a goal for the Union (even in the Treaty). Sustainable development and the concepts of integration and participation have to do with more than only environment aspects, but it is the principal *leitmotiv* of especially environmental policy. "Sustainable development aims at meeting the needs of the present generations without jeopardising the ones of future generations." The Brundlandt Commission was one of the pioneers in bringing out this definition of sustainable development and accelerating the international political decision-making process on this matter. In 1992, the United Nations organised an international conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. At this conference, 'Agenda 21' was approved. This 'Agenda 21' offers a framework for an environment and development policy, aimed at sustainability. It is an action plan designed to crystallise the vague concept of this sustainable development by means of a number of initiatives and actions. At this moment, in 1992, sustainable development really broke through as foundation for the environmental policy.

The fifth EC Environmental Action Programme, entitled 'Towards sustainability' (the European Community Programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development), was approved by the Council in 1993. So sustainable development has become the basic principle of EU environmental policy since the Rio Summit. This is not the place to discuss neither the specific contents of this programme, nor the progress report or assessment.

The question is whether the basic principles of Flemish environmental policy are in line with those of the EU. And then we see that Flanders has formulated and adopted a five-year Environmental Management Plan (MINA Plan, 1997-2001), which is a manual, with the guiding principles for environmental action in Flanders. This plan is explicitly based on the principles of the Brundlandt Report, Agenda 21 and the Fifth Action Plan of the European Community.

Special efforts are still needed to ensure that environmental concerns are reflected in all sectoral policy making (the concept of integration), in Flanders as well as on the European level. But the environmental administrations are still very active in drafting and implementing plans and strategies to promote their own environmental policies (see OECD, 1998: 138).

I want to pay special attention to the initiatives, taken by the Flemish government to promote sustainability at the local level. Since many of the action items of Agenda 21 relate to the local level, local authorities are considered to be vital links in the realisation and the implementation of a sustainable development policy. As management level, relating the closest to the citizens, it can play a crucial role in informing, educating and mobilising the general public for sustainable development. Therefore Agenda 21 launches an appeal to local authorities in order to set up an action plan of their own with regard to sustainable development, i.e. a so-called "*Local* Agenda 21".

Flanders has started introducing the sustainable development concept on the local level. In past years, a number of concrete initiatives were organised by a substantial number of cities and municipalities. They were very diverse and range from distributing energy-efficient lamps and showerheads to establishing joint ventures with recycling centres, promoting alternative means of transport and occasionally, relations are entered into with cities from developing countries.

It can generally be said that the Flemish authorities consider it their task to support local authorities in setting up a sustainable policy. A first important step was the environmental covenant.

This covenant is an agreement that can be concluded between the Flemish cities and municipalities and the Flemish authorities on a voluntary basis. The municipalities receive subsidies in exchange for a number of 'tasks'. These tasks may consist of, among others, appointing an environment official, developing an environmental year programme and an environmental policy plan, establishing a municipal environment and nature council, making agreements with recycling centres and the like.

In fact the covenant comprises a basic part and one or more options, amongst which option 7, specifically relating to sustainable development (the basic part and the other options also contain elements that are aimed at sustainability – but not as explicitly). Recent research investigating which initiatives were taken by the Flemish cities and municipalities with regard to sustainable development, shows that the pursuit of this option 7 was the most successful (Devuyst, van Wijngaarden, De Beckker, Hens, 1998).

By signing this option, the municipalities commit themselves to organising actions concerning five themes, both within their own services and for the population. These five themes are: (1) waste prevention and recuperation; (2) sustainable use of rainwater; (3) sustainable use of sustainable raw materials; (4) sustainable use of pesticides; (5) economical use of energy.

Up till now, about 100 of the 308 Flemish municipalities and cities have signed this option. But it is obvious that sustainable development implies more than merely signing option 7. As said before, real sustainability can only be striven for in an integrated way (e.g. after consultation with other departments than the one involved in the environment).

It is the explicit aim of the Flemish minister of environmental affairs to give 'sustainability' a more prominent place in the next environmental covenant, which will be a real local agenda 21 from 2002 on (local sustainable policy not as one of the options but as the basic part). Possibilities are explored on how sustainability can become a thread in the local policy in its entirety. But it is already obvious that for policy makers the concept of integration is the most difficult dimension of sustainability to put into practice on whichever level: European, regional or local.

[3] Conclusions and recommendations

A legal act is only as good as its implementation. Implementation of European (environmental) directives is, until now, unsatisfactory.

We stressed some 'European' causes for this problem. The main cause is the lack of political will to put the implementation high on the agenda. Mainly as a consequence of this lack of political will, the Commission lacks human and financial resources to perform its monitoring task. Due to the compromise character of the legislation, texts contain vague elements, so control becomes difficult and prone for wide interpretation. The Union also lacks a clear set of rules for reporting the national transposition and implementation measures to the Commission. All in all, the Commission does not provide incentives to the member states to comply with transposition and implementation.

A second set of causes has to do with the Belgian and Flemish economic and political situation. Firstly, we showed that there are severe pressures on the environment stemming from the dense population, the intensive agriculture, the very dense road network and the intensive economic activities. Under such a conditions, it is not always easy to implement European directives. Secondly, we stressed the difficult framework for policy coordination between the federal state and the three regions, whereby consensus between the four entities is needed to reach a single Belgian standpoint in European matters. Lastly, we mentioned the general lack of a European culture and a proactive approach in the departments.

Will this picture change in the future? Although Commissioner Wallström stressed the importance of implementation, no new policy measures have been taken up till now. Perhaps the Sixth Environmental Action Programme, to be adopted by the Commission in the autumn of this year, will contain some measures to tackle the problem of implementation. It would certainly be an improvement if the Union should transpose the provisions of the Aarhus Convention in European law. Commission proposals are at the moment in a drafting stage. A better access to courts in environmental matters for citizens and non-governmental organisations would increase the pressure on governments to comply with the European legislation. The Belgian government, on the other hand, would like to get rid of its bad implementation record before the EU

Presidency during the second part of 2001. Commissioner Willockx suggests reorganising the departments in such a way that civil servants will monitor carefully the proposals from the European Commission. He hopes also to stimulate a greater awareness for European decision-making and a more proactive approach of the civil service. Hopefully this new approach will be sufficiently institutionalised and politically pushed, so that once the Belgian Presidency will be over, there will be no relapse into the old pattern.

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