

**www.flanderstoday.eu**Date : **13/05/2016**

Page : --

Periodicity : **Continuous**

Journalist : --

Circulation : --

Audience : **1000**

Size : --

<http://www.flanderstoday.eu/business/contractors-ask-governments-invest-public-infrastructure>**Contractors ask governments to invest in public infrastructure****Summary**

Roads, schools and tunnels all need serious investment, according to the construction industry, as a report shows that employment in the sector has fallen

‘No long-term vision’

A group of major construction contractors has called on the regional and federal governments to begin urgently investing in infrastructure of roads, tunnels and schools, as well as specific projects like the Oosterweel connection in Antwerp and the railway station in Vilvoorde. Industry federation VBA issued the plea during its annual presentation of the state of the industry.



VBA's annual barometer shows that employment in major construction works has fallen by 2.67% in three years. At the same time, 48% of employers are ready to take on trained workers. Worker numbers have fallen by more than 7% in the last year, while the number of executive and manager positions has increased by almost the same amount.

Investment in public infrastructure is the main cause for concern, VBA said. Not only is public infrastructure an important indicator of a country's wealth, it also creates jobs and thereby tax revenue. Between 2010 and 2014, the value of investments fell by 32%, VBA said.

Places where investments are urgently needed, it said, include the Brussels tunnels, which have started to crumble because of lack of maintenance, and schools, one in four of which are more than 100 years old and 70% of which are more than 45 years old. It would take €2 billion to bring the state of the schools where it should be, the federation said, while the federal budget is €60 million a year.

Some of the problems are a matter for the federal government and some for the regions. "In Belgium, there is no long-term vision on infrastructure, and that's a problem for the networks [rail, roads and waterways], for economic development, for employment and for the people," said Marc Peeters, VBA chair and managing director of construction services business Royal BAM Group.

"Introducing a levy on the motorways is a good idea," he continued, "and I hope the money it raises will be used for the upkeep of the roads network and not to fill in the holes in the social security budget, for instance."

Photo: Disrepair in the Stefania tunnel, now closed to traffic until later in the year
©Jasper Jacobs/Belga