



Big plans for the celebrating Van Hool

Expansion in Macedonia and USA

Van Hool has big plans for the near future. The seventy years young family company hopes to launch a completely new city bus on the US market by 2020 and also has expanded the factory in Skopje, Macedonia to eight production lines. Projects are pending for the European market as well, including a new city bus.

Despite production facilities in Macedonia and later in the USA, the Belgian municipality of Koningshooikt remains the beating heart of the family business whose daily agenda focuses on engineering, customizing and high-end vehicles such as the ExquiCity. The standard production moves entirely to Macedonia, where the factory was expanded by four production lines in no time and which already employs 970 people, a number that soon will exceed one thousand.

The American bus will be fully built in the USA. CEO Filip Van Hool already has a state and location in mind, but further investigation is still required. The city bus for the USA will run on diesel or CNG. It will be built entirely modularly with mainly American components in order to comply with the Buy American Act. Filip Van Hool hopes to launch the first US city bus by 2020. Earlier in time, i.e. January 2018, a facelift of the American coaches CX45 and CX35 will be rolling from the conveyors.

Parallel or somewhat later, Van Hool also hopes to introduce a modernized city bus for Europe. Key goals are lower weight, custom design and modular construction. Filip Van Hool hopes to unveil the new European city bus in 2020 or at the latest in 2021.

Belgium

This new European standard city bus will be built in Macedonia and/or Belgium, depending on the power train, design and numbers. Producing standard buses in Belgium is no longer possible due to the high wage costs in Belgium. "I like to keep as much as I can in our country. We hope to maintain a certain stability in Belgium", says Filip Van Hool.

The heavy Belgian income taxes are also the reason why Van Hool did not subscribe for the latest tenders, not even in his own country. "But we'll be back", says CEO Filip Van Hool firmly.

CEO Filip Van Hool will have quite a busy agenda in the years to come.



Great party for 70 years Van Hool

The second Busworld night featured around 70 years of Van Hool. Their spacious, new stand was completely decorated in the light of a great party. And it was. After a short speech in which CEO Filip van Hool greeted the more than 300 attendees, the party was kicked off by famous deejay Guy Depré.

In agreement with Van Hool, he had composed a music repertoire with the highlights of Van Hool's history. Seventy years of Van Hool combined with seventy years of music history; it was a nice overview and also brought a lot of people to the dance floor, which served as confirmation of what Filip van Hool had said:

"We from Van Hool are happy because we are again at Busworld Kortrijk, but at the same time, we are a little sad because it is the last time here. However, Van Hool is now seventy years old. My grandfather Bernard founded the company in 1947, shortly after the Second World War. Today, we are still for one hundred percent a

family business. Van Hool is famous for combining tradition, innovation and quality. All those years, we have listened and will continue to listen to the wishes of our customers and their passengers, but first: time to party!"

Van Hool is doing great in the USA

In the USA, it takes no longer than two days to get the necessary permits for the construction of a new factory whereas in Belgium, it takes ten months to get one for an internal renovation inside the factory. Filip Van Hool is not surprised by this difference in approach.

As is known, Van Hool is going to build a new factory in the USA for the production of a new city bus. He already has a location in mind but an internal team has to check some things before the final decision can be made. CEO Filip Van Hool: "I have visited five states and the governor of one state came to my desk in Koningshooikt in person with all the required permits only one week later.

However, decisions that involve such amounts of money are not made overnight. Taxes, presence of technical schools, subcontractors, available professions, logistics, etc. are all parameters that require research. Of course, we have gained experience with Macedonia, but

we do not want to rush things. I do not want to stumble anywhere. The final decision will be made around the turn of the year.

Better

CEO Filip Van Hool feels great about the American story. The USA are more business-oriented, the states cultivate manufacturing. On top of that, the cooperation between companies and schools is much stronger, just like training for professionals. Schools have state-of-the-art machines that meet the needs of the companies. Production is wanted there. So far the analysis of CEO Filip Van Hool. But of course, Europe and the rest of the world are not out of mind. The current TX range is nicely tagging along with the technological evolutions but the look and feel stays the same. With the EX, which significantly reduced in weight (minus 600 kg), Van Hool wants to conquer the Japanese, Australian and New Zealand market, in addition to the European market. The first EXs are already driving around there.



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Berlin Wall led to first double-decker

Neoplan Skyliner celebrates 50th birthday

At the stand of MAN-Neoplan, the fiftieth anniversary of the Neoplan Skyliner was joyfully celebrated. Numerous invitees attended the ceremony. For many it was quite a surprise to their ears to hear that the Berlin Wall led to the first double-decker.

Today, the seventh Skyliner generation is proudly shown at the stand while the very first one, perfectly restored, is being admired with curious eyes at Busworld's entrance zuid. We are no longer used to it but stainless-steel body parts equalled luxury finish in the 60s.

Honorary guests were Konrad Auwärther, inventor of the first double-decker and his loyal Bob Lee who provided quite some design.

But who still remembers what the first six double-deckers were built for? Let's go back in time. In August 1961, the GDR built the Berlin Wall to stop the flight to the West. Many West Germans and tourists from around the world want to take look "over the wall" to see how it is going there. This would turn out to be the precursor of the double-deck sightseeing buses who are now enriching many cities all around the world. However, there was a problem technique-wise: low floor or low entry did not yet exist but the height of the interior had to be at least 1.80m on each deck while the height of the bus

could not exceed 4 meters. The inventive solution was an open top deck, where, despite the Central European climate, tourists took their seats regardless of the weather conditions.

The evening was richly brightened up by numerous archive images. This way, the attendees were reminded that the name Skyliner was given by a US customer, that the longest bus ever - the articulated Jumboliner - rolled from the conveyor in 1976 and that the four-axle 15-meter-long Megaliner appeared on the roads in 1992. We also learned that Konrad Auwärther is left-handed, which might be the cause of the so specific Neoplan design.

Loyal customers 1697-2017: 50 years of Neoplan Skyliner

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Three customers were honoured with the Skyliner award: the German transport company Götten which had at least one piece of each Skyliner model in their fleet, the Belgian travel company Leroy as most loyal Skyliner customer and the Italian customer Baltour who commissioned the five thousandth Skyliner.

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Autonomous buses on outdoor grounds

As tradition goes, the Busworld outdoor area offers space for testing buses and coaches yourself. This year, you can look and try quite a particularity: the autonomous Navya.

This French brand paves the way with its small autonomous buses. In the Swiss city of Sion, they are already quite used to it, as a recent study shows. In June 2016, they were commissioned and since then no less than 25,000 people have travelled with them and another 25,000 have used the Swiss Postbus at all kinds of events.

This study also revealed that roughly half of the respondents indicated that they were a little worried about driving around without driver while for the other half, it was not issue at all.

The French Navya has been developing autonomous vehicles and working on their deployability for ten years now. They are pursuing sustainable urban mobility through intelligent transport systems. No less than 30 million euros has been invested in Navya so far, among others by Keolis. The Navya can detect obstacles. If you would like to try it out yourself, Busworld offers you the opportunity.



No fire at Van Hool...

Passers-by and visitors could not believe their eyes for a while at Van Hool's stand yesterday afternoon.

Why was it that thirty visitors came running out of the stand as if a fire had broken out? And no smoke anywhere... It

soon became clear that it was an evacuation exercise from the Belgian federation of coach and bus companies (FBAA) during which teachers and attendants were given tips on how to correctly evacuate a bus or coach.



Thermo King aims at sustainable transport

At Busworld, Thermo King presents sustainable heating, ventilation and air conditioning solutions with a focus on hybrid and electric buses. This way, Thermo King wants to respond to the increasing importance of sustainable transport in Europe.

Many European municipalities and cities see more sustainable passenger transport as a solution to traffic jams, air pollution and new regulations. That says Ursula von Kreijfelt, commercial director of Bus Transport Solution in Europe, the Middle East and Africa at Thermo King. "Heat pumps have proven to be the technology that reduces the power consumption of electric buses, thus ensuring a wider reach with still a guaranteed comfortable climate for passengers". At Busworld, Thermo King presents the electric water pump series Athenia, which has already been providing comfortable cooling and heating in hundreds of electric buses in Europe.