

# Tenant and landlord fully support 100% partnership

The Hendrik Conscience building at Koning Albert II laan, Brussels, belongs to AXA Belgium and houses the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training. The lease on the building did not expire until 2023, but in March 2015, owner AXA Belgium put forward a proposal for a thorough renovation of the building with a view to improving its sustainability and introducing the new way of working.

In practical terms, the aim of this far-reaching renovation was to bring the building up to date. *“The building no longer met our current expectations in terms of sustainability, but as the Flemish Government, we prefer the North District of Brussels because of the excellent access by virtually all forms of public transport. No fewer than 90% of the users in the Hendrik Conscience building come by train!”* says Frank Geets, Administrator-General of the Facility Management Agency.

## Focusing on BREEAM Excellent

The Flemish Ministry for Education and Training is to remain in the Hendrik Conscience building until 2032 while AXA Belgium will bear the cost of the major conversion work. The Flemish Government gave the go-ahead for this at the end of 2015 and the contract was signed at the end of January 2016. An open communication procedure with owner AXA Belgium was set up and this ultimately led to a 100% partnership and a win/win situation for both parties.

Sustainability is a key word in the Flemish Government’s real-estate policy. Recycling buildings to improve them and ensure that they remain useable in the future is fully in line with this sustainability policy. The Hendrik Conscience building is now around 15 years old and the far-reaching renovation will earn it the BREEAM ‘Excellent’ label. The building will be modified in phases so that it can remain operational. So there is no question of temporarily relocating to another site. The main focus in order to obtain this label is the technical installations, including passive cooling, along with acoustic comfort.

## Architectural rejuvenation cure

*“The new VAC Brussel complex is going for an A-energy performance label, which is extremely difficult to obtain for existing office premises like*

*the Hendrik Conscience building, particularly given the fact that the building envelope, for instance, is not being modified”* Frank Geets admits. The plan developed by the two parties together includes both architectural adaptations and a complete refurbishment. The entrance to the building is being repositioned and redesigned to create more openness. The ground and first floors are intended to be a public space, set out as a meeting centre.

## Attractive working environment

The renovation of the Hendrik Conscience building also provides an opportunity for the transition to the new way of working for public servants. That means, among other things, giving up individual workstations in favour of an open-plan layout. At the moment, around a thousand people work in the Hendrik Conscience building. After the renovation work, the capacity will increase to 1,600 workstations. The renovated Hendrik Conscience building is also to set an example in terms of ICT. In addition to a cable and wireless IT network, mobile phone network cover will be provided throughout the entire building (4G). DECT telephony will no longer be used. Instead, ‘unified communications’ will ensure that all forms of communication reach the right staff member.

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Frank Geets,  
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