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Tia Hellebaut high-jumped to gold over the weekend, injecting a renewed enthusiasm for the games in Belgium

Totally Tia

A big jump for Belgium as the country wins its first gold medal in athletics in 44 years

Derek Blyth

With only hours to go before the Olympics ended, Belgium looked as if it might return home

with no medals. But the country seized its first Olympic medallist last Friday in the women's 4x100m relay final when the four sprinters set a new national record of 42.54 seconds and secured

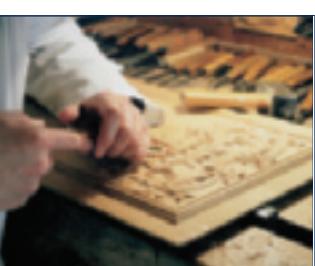
further glory the following day when Antwerp-born Tia Hellebaut snatched an unexpected gold in the high jump, clearing 2.05 metres despite struggling with an injury sustained earlier

in the year.

A few days earlier, Belgium narrowly failed to gain a bronze medal in the football tournament, plunging the country's sports fans into deep gloom. But

Friday's silver medal boosted morale, with some Belgians briefly entertaining hopes of a gold as Gevaert streaked to the

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Business

For the first time ever, Flemish chain Colruyt is the supermarket leader in Belgium. This has also improved its market share, despite this being a very rough time for the industry.

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Arts

Patrick Damiaens is the only full-time ornamental woodcarver in Flanders. Since the only training programme is shutting down, he may be among the last of these rare craftsman in the country.

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Living

Down a little alleyway in Bruges is 't Brugs Beertje, voted internationally as the best bar of 2008. Owner Daisy Claeys celebrates 25 years of building up a perfect cafe atmosphere.

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Branding Flanders

The Flemish region is working to create a recognisable international image

Dafydd ab Iago

Nation branding is a controversial concept. The idea is that successful nation branding can paint a public picture of a nation or state as the place to be, whether for business, culture, education, innovation or tourism. Sounds harmless enough, but critics argue that the concept is a waste of taxpayer money or, even worse, dangerously close to state propaganda.

Traditionally, the problem for Flanders – and for Belgium – is the low level of brand recognition. Nation brands such as the

US, the UK, China, France and Germany steal the limelight. Flanders, despite its wide-ranging competence in international affairs, notably for foreign trade, is not even listed in international nation brands indexes.

"Brussels is better known abroad than Belgium or Flanders," admits Ben Weyts, spokesman for the Flemish Ministry of Administrative Affairs, Foreign Policy, Media and Tourism. According to Weyts, the lack of an image that is instantly recognisable

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Flanders in Action

Nine months ago, the Flemish government launched a plan called Flanders in Action, which aims to make Flanders one of the top five economic regions in Europe by 2020. (It currently ranks 27th). Flemish minister president Kris Peeters kicked off the process by inviting 280 prominent Flemish people to air their views on the way forward.

Great stuff, but it hardly engages the ordinary citizen struggling to get along in a changing world. However, the Flemish government has now launched a new initiative as part of Flanders in Action that seems to strike a lot closer to our own needs.

It has invited foreigners living or working in the region to take part in an online interactive debate on the international image of Flanders. The goal is to have a brainstorming session that will help to shape the government's policy when it holds a workshop on Flanders' image in mid September.

It's not often that politicians take account of the views of foreigners, so this is something not to be missed. You can log on to the one-hour debate on 2 September beginning at 20.30.

Derek Blyth

online

www.vlaanderen-in-actie.be/debate



Flanders: what do you think?

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FACE OF FLANDERS



Lieve Blancquaert

Born in 1963, photographer Lieve Blancquaert uses her lens to open up worlds that are often ignored by others more interested in glossy images. Airbrushed reality is not her thing, as evidenced by *Voorbij de grens*, her new series, debuting next month on the één television network. A Flemish version of the BBC series *Beyond Boundaries*, Blancquaert focuses her camera on handicapped people trying to deal with the harsh realities of the Nicaraguan wilderness.

This isn't Blancquaert's first foray into television. Her work often garners media attention, and she has been an oft-featured guest on the popular late-night één programme *De Laatste Show*.

With her frequent partner-in-crime, journalist Annemie Struyf, she was one half of the 2003 exhibition and book *Meisjes van 40* (*Girls in their 40s*). Blancquaert and Struyf also collaborated on the book *Insjallah, Mevrouw*, which took them to Afghanistan where they interviewed and Blancquaert photographed women living under the oppressive rule of the Taliban.

Much of Blancquaert's work evinces a feminist sensibility: In her book *Vrouw (Woman)*, she collaborated with Betty Mellaerts on a photo-documentary of women aged 40 and beyond. Remarkable in both its honesty and its beauty, *Vrouw* examined the complexity of character of a woman's face once the dew of youth has worn off.

She was also the lenswoman behind the campaign from the soap company Dove – where real women, rather than twiggy supermodels, were shown in all their un-photo shopped glory. And with journalist Anna Luyten, she showed eight breast cancer survivors following mastectomies and reconstructive surgery – the scars, both emotional and physical – in the book *Twee Borsten* (*Two Breasts*).

But the major thread through her work is humanity: she has photographed dEUS front man Tom Barman, former prime ministers Jean-Luc Dehaene and Guy Verhofstadt, harmonica legend Toots Thielemans and others in campaigns promoting Oxfam fair trade and various Belgian celebrities for the anti-cancer campaign "Kom op tegen kanker" ("Come up against cancer").

Blancquaert's 2006 book *Straftijd* (*Punishment Time*) is a photo chronicle of 10 prisoners, visitors and workers in a Leuven detention home. The raw but tender images offer insight to people who might otherwise be dismissed as just criminal statistics, rendering them real and moving.

But probably most heartrending is *Mijn status is positief* (*My Status is Positive*), a searing diary of the damage done by the Aids crisis in Kenyan slums created by Blancquaert and Struyf. The two even rescued an orphaned 14-month-old of an Aids victim who they met during their stay there. Struyf adopted the little girl, and Blancquaert is her godmother.

Blancquaert's latest project finds her again travelling outside of her viewers' comfort zones, focusing on how people with disabilities deal with an environment not completely hospitable to even the able-bodied: the jungles of Nicaragua. In *Voorbij de grens*, 10 physically challenged or sensory-deprived Flemings set out to show that they are capable of making it through such rough going.

Rather than work against each other, à la *Survivor*, the team pulls together with Blancquaert acting as motivator, shoulder to cry on and counsellor – sort of Oprah of the Wild. Blancquaert also releases a book next month to coincide with the series.

Steven Tate

online

<http://voorbijdegrens.een.be>

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



trouwen

A recent headline read: *Leterme I krijgt vertrouwen*. Yves Leterme is the beleaguered Belgian prime minister, and Leterme I is his cobbled-together government. You may think the "one" is a bit premature, but often Belgian prime ministers string together several governments which seem to defy gravity before they eventually totter over the brink. Anyway, Yves' government has received *vertrouwen* – a vote of confidence in parliament and returns from the dead.

Where would we be without *vertrouwen* – trust? *Hebt u vertrouwen in de toekomst?* Do you have faith in the future? *Geniet u iemands vertrouwen?* Do you enjoy someone's trust? For that you need to inspire confidence – *vertrouwen wekken*. Certainly, recent events in the financial world have resulted in a loss of consumer confidence – *vertrouwen van de consument*. Americans and others trust in God – *op God vertrouwen*.

Central to this word is *trouw* meaning faith or fidelity and *een trouwe vriend* is a loyal or faithful friend. The verb *trouwen* means to marry and produces all these words: *trouwdag* – wedding day, *trouwfeest* – reception, *trouwjurk* – wedding dress, *trouwring* – wedding ring, *trouwboeket* – bride's bouquet, *trouwfoto's* – wedding photos, and *trouwboek*. There's no simple translation for *trouwboek*: in Belgium, every marrying couple must *voor de wet trouwen* – "marry before the law" or go through a civil ceremony at the town hall – *gemeentehuis*. Often it is the mayor wearing a sash in the three colours of Belgium around the waist who officiates. (If you ever find yourself before the mayor, remember that instead of saying "I do", you say "Ja").

Then, if you wish, you can have a church wedding, but that on its own is not legal, which can result in awkward situations in Belgium for couples married in countries where a church wedding suffices. Anyway, the *trouwboek* is a marriage book given to the bridegroom at the end of the civil ceremony. It stands as a record of the marriage and has 13 spaces to add any children that may be produced. You're not limited to 13; you'll be given another *trouwboek* if necessary. Couples will need to produce this book when, for example, buying a house.

Now I thought in a weak moment that I could easily tie in Yves with a *trouwboek*. Well I can imagine that he has one, since he's married and has three kids. But there is little to be said about *mevrouw Leterme*. When he recently handed in his resignation, *Sofie Haesen, mevrouw Leterme, geeft niet thuis in leper* – Sofie Haesen, Mrs Leterme, didn't react in leper. So Sofie is no Cherie in that respect, and she still uses her maiden name. Unlike in some countries where only married women who tread the boards use their original name, in Belgium it is the norm. Which is fine, but watch out you macho men thinking of marrying a Belgian: you may find that you get rung up by someone wanting to speak to Mr Vissenaeckens (that's me).

Alistair MacLean

FEATURE

Branding Flanders

Continued from page 1

ble worldwide is nothing peculiar to Flanders. Austrians, for instance, are often confused with Australians. Slovak and Slovenian diplomats around the world meet up to exchange all the official post that has ended up at the wrong address.

Indeed, in the latest results for the Anholt Nation Brands Index, Belgium comes far after major countries such as China, the US, the UK and France, but also after other international market leaders like Australia, Canada, Singapore and Switzerland. Interestingly, Belgium is also rated lower than similar sized and populated countries like Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. The Anholt index weighs the public image of elements such as exports, governance, culture and heritage, people skills and qualities, tourism, investment and immigration.

Non-violent fascism

Compounding the problem of low levels of global recognition is a persistently negative image of political relations between Dutch and French speakers in Belgium. With an extended period without a federal government last year, international press reports now give even more space to the disputes. Reports are often written by the over 1,000 international journalists who are primarily in Brussels to cover the European Union and NATO, not Belgium or Flanders. Their presence may give Brussels a global resonance, but Flemish observers complain that these journalists only use French-speaking media as sources.

"Unfortunately, I mainly read French language newspapers," admits Slavko Vukadin from the main Croatian news agency HINA. "I try to explain the background and to be neutral. I do not know much about Flanders, but I have nothing against it." Anja Vedenskaya, correspondent for one of Russia's most prominent newspapers, the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, reads both the French- and Dutch-speaking press. But she appears more critical of many Flemish political demands. "Flemish separatism follows the old

fashioned idea of a mono-ethnic state," said Vedenskaya. She also takes a practical view on language issues in the Belgian capital. "One should first of all learn the language of one's environment. In Brussels, that is French," she says bluntly.

Typical of the negative international coverage is an article entitled "A Separatist Revolution Percolates in Belgium" last year in *The Washington Post*. Writing from Paris, the reporters noted, misleadingly, that Merchtem, just outside Brussels, "banned" the use of all languages but Dutch. The reporters failed to mention, however, that the little town had only decided to ensure that the official language of schools, Dutch, was used properly.

Even worse coverage, under the title "Belgium teeters on a linguistic edge", appeared in May this year in *The New York Times* and its global edition, the *International Herald Tribune*. The correspondent, also based in Paris, accused Flemish politicians of riding a "new wave of nationalism and pushing for an independent state". Hitting hard at Flanders' international image, the journalist noted a "nonviolent fascism" combining "national pride, rightist politics, language purity and racially tinged opposition to immigration".

Such negative international press coverage, especially over a longer period of time, does effect a country's image. The East West Nation Branding Index, for example, looks at some 400,000 news articles in prominent global media sources. Its latest survey placed Belgium at number 64 out of 242 countries and regions studied. In terms of the quality of its press coverage, Belgium is now faring worse than places like Azerbaijan, Bhutan and Turkmenistan.

Negative reporting about Belgium, and specifically Flanders, is also difficult to work away. This is not only due to Brussels' substantial journalist community preferring French to Dutch media sources but often their struggle to understand the reasoning behind Flemish language policies. Why do newcomers have to commit



Above: After the amazing success of Low: the Holland/Flemish Culture Fest in Hungary, another is planned for next year and maybe one later in New York. Right: Peter Janssen is head of the Vlerick Brand Management Centre

to learning Dutch if they want to buy property, get social benefits or housing? Unfortunately for Flanders' image, statistics showing the greater efficiency with which newcomers are integrated socially and economically do not make international headlines.

Flanders should say "Belgium"

Government adviser Simon Anholt coined the term "nation branding" back in 1996. Author of the National Brands Index, he is very negative about efforts to promote the brand "Flanders" separately from "Belgium". "A place like Flanders will only mean something to people within a range of a couple of hundred kilometres," he told *Flanders Today*. The bulk of future capital, investment and tourism will come from far-away places like Brazil, China and Russia, he points out. "To create another regional identity is an immense task. Even if you are only talking about a conventional campaign, you will need hundreds of millions of euros," says Anholt. "Promoting an unknown brand is thousands of times more expensive than promoting a known brand. If Flanders wants the best chances at making money, it should say "Belgium."

Even if regional branding has a wide range of political support in Flanders, Anholt argues that it is a huge waste of tax payers' money from a marketing point of view. "These things don't change despite the amount of marketing," he says. "The movement of countries in my survey is completely independent



of the amount of promotion they do. Sometimes it is an inverse relation. There are forces at work beyond the power of anyone to influence.

He disputes the idea that one can brand nations like shoes, toothpaste or MP3 players. "Flanders cannot brand itself," says Anholt. "You cannot change people's opinions by nation branding. You can only try to change the behaviour and actions of Flemish people, business and government, since these are what really determine how others see Flanders. This takes generations."

Walloon and Flemings cooperate abroad

But branding Flanders has a clear purpose according to Guido Scharp  , the region's economic attach   in Vienna. He also notes that there is close cooperation with Wallonia and Brussels colleagues. Flemish business, for instance, is represented by Wallonia's economic attach   in Slovakia, where there is no Flemish representative.

Having worked as a Belgian national trade attach   before the federalisation of foreign trade affairs, Scharp   argues that it is now much easier to focus on those sectors that are specifically strong in one region, whether Flanders or Wallonia. He says that feels much more able to do his job now that foreign trade is a Flemish rather than a federal competence. He is also relatively upbeat about the level of Flanders' brand recognition. His Austrian contacts see Flanders

as an economically strong region with a rich cultural past and close historical connections.

"Some 89% of Belgian exports to Austria come from Flanders," Scharp   says. However, aside from the typical "Belgian" products such as chocolate and beer, as well as Flanders' ports, Scharp  's Austrian contacts are often surprised to learn that Flanders' most important export to Austria is cars.

Peter Janssen, head of the Vlerick Brand Management Centre in Ghent, also appreciates the benefits of a Flemish brand. Nonetheless, he stresses the need to look for more synergies and adopt an integrated approach to branding. "Flanders is a major element in the brand "Belgium" both economically and culturally," he says. The Vlerick brand specialist further sees confusion due to separate promotion from Belgium's three regions. For example, Flanders has one of the strongest industrial and service-based economies in Europe. "But there is a lot of mismanagement of the brand," says Janssen.

Despite various initiatives, including the Flemish government promotion of a new Flanders logo, Janssen is convinced that there must be more work on positioning the Flanders brand. "Companies go through a lot of branding exercises before they form a clear concept about their own brands," he notes. "Position the brand Flanders not just externally, but also internally."

online
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How does Flanders want to be known?





Flanders wants your opinion!

Tell us how Flanders can establish itself as a strong player on the international market. Take part in the ViA debate on www.vlaandereninactie.be/debate.

The Flanders in Action project ViA (Vlaanderen in Actie) has been set up by the Flemish Government as an inclusive, interactive process for all of society.

The central goal of ViA is to position Flanders as one of Europe's top five regions by 2020.

ViA must break new grounds in terms of both vision and strategy. With a powerful policy plan greater focus will be placed on talent, innovation, internationalisation, logistics and mobility. This policy plan will also concentrate on sustainability and an efficient and customer-oriented government and must enable Flanders to become one of Europe's top five regions by 2020.

Police criticised for seizing Antwerp diamonds

Report slams police controls on seized property

Alan Hope

Diamond dealers under investigation for their part in a massive fraud have won an important ruling against the Antwerp prosecutor's office. A city court has ruled that diamonds worth millions of euros seized as evidence must be handed back to their owners, even though the enquiry is still being carried out.

The case was launched in October 2005 as police began investigating allegations that Monstrey Worldwide Services had smuggled both rough and cut diamonds via Geneva airport. The investigators alleged that hundreds of the city's diamond dealers had used Monstrey as a means of keeping the income from diamonds hidden from the tax authorities. The first searches took place at the premises of some of Monstrey's biggest customers in October 2006 and January 2007, and since then many other clients have been searched.

In many cases, the police seized large quantities of diamonds during their investigations. "We saw from the very beginning that the investigators overreacted," said Philip Claes, spokesman for the Antwerp World Diamond Centre, the industry's representative body. In some cases, the value of the diamonds seized was only determined later.

The diamond dealers, concerned that their businesses had been stripped of valuable assets, went to court to get their property returned. The Antwerp court has now ruled that the prosecutor must hand back most of the diamonds that were seized. It said that, rather than seizing the whole quantity concerned, the police could only remove that portion relating to the profit margin on which the tax was not paid. As a result, dealers have won up to three-quarters of their stones back.

In 2006, the government offered the diamond industry an amnesty on all stocks of undeclared stones in the hope of recouping some €136 million in lost taxes, but the action in the end barely realised €50 million. Under a proposed new law, which has wide cross-party support, investigating magistrates will no longer be able to seize diamonds on their own initiative, as is now the case for all goods, but will require the seizure to be carried out by a designated expert from the sector.

Meanwhile, a report from the federal police's General Inspector has accused police across the country of failing to keep track of the property they seize. The Inspector looked at storage and record-keeping in 36 local police zones (out of 196 nationwide) and 27 federal police departments.

"Right from the beginning of our enquiries, we realised that not a single one of the zones or departments was able to furnish correct and reliable data on goods seized," the Inspector's annual report states. The situation was so serious that in some cases immediate measures had to be taken to avoid "major failings and serious risks," the report said. The dangers are all the more grave in that the majority of seized goods consist of drugs, weapons, money and cars.

Many of the offices concerned have no measures in place to prevent theft. Seized cars are parked in the surrounding area for lack of space, while guns and drugs are stored in the same place as routine items of evidence, even though there is a constant flow of people through the premises and little control over access. Given that few services have any idea of the quantities being held, the chances of spotting a theft in the first place are slight.



The Mexican sailing ship Cuauhtémoc, named after the last Aztec emperor, will be sailing into the port of Antwerp this week following its participation in this year's Tall Ships' Race. "This promises to be a spectacular sight because the sailors will line up along the yards," said a Mexican embassy spokesman. The ship will be on view from 4-6 September.

from the Germans, this campaign achieved its aims, although it resulted in 6,800 Australian dead and wounded.

The remains of the soldier, along with all artefacts and belongings, are now in the custody of the Belgian army. Commandant Rob Troubleyn, head of the Belgian War Graves Department, said the soldier's dog tag would be x-rayed and the question of DNA sampling would be up to the Australian government. "A link is needed, and without names identification can be difficult," he added.

A soldier found in September 2006 in Poly-

gon Wood was recently identified by DNA following a publicity campaign in Australia resulted in his descendants coming forward.

The Australian authorities said they were committed to honouring the country's war dead and were already undertaking historical research to establish any initial identification links.

"We are also hopeful that some of the equipment located with the remains, such as badges and buttons, may assist with identification of the soldier and will consider the possibility of DNA testing if there is a reasonable chance of a match," said Warren Snowdon, Australian Minister for Defence Science and Personnel. "It is likely the remains will be buried in one of the existing Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries in Belgium later this year."

NEWS FLASH



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A field of tall maize was partly to blame for a fatal accident in which a cyclist was killed near Beernem, West Flanders. The cyclist, riding a mountain bike, was hit by a car at the point where a dirt track crossed a main road. The official investigation ruled that the cyclist was to blame for "riding too fast in light of the reduced visibility". Cyclists and car drivers regularly complain about the danger of tall maize crops along narrow country roads, but the farmers' union Boerenbond argues that people should drive more carefully in the countryside. The danger increases in the late summer up until the end of September when the crop is harvested.

Police are questioning 40 inmates at the Steenokkerzeel detention centre for asylum seekers, Flemish Brabant, after fire broke out late on Sunday night. The centre had to be evacuated while police closed off several roads to prevent anyone escaping. One person was injured and two out of three wings are now uninhabitable.

Flemish mobility minister Kathleen Van Brempt has launched a €3 million project aimed at teaching secondary school students to pass the theoretical part of the Belgian driving test. The project is aimed at some 55,500 students in 720 schools across the region in the final two years of their studies. The students will get eight hours of tuition on traffic rules, road safety and sustainable mobility. "[This] is the first step towards free, professional driving tuition for young people," Van Brempt said.

Belgian prime minister Yves Leterme met the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao at the close of the Olympic Games in Beijing last week. Leterme praised the Chinese for their organisation of the Olympics but also raised the issue of human rights in Tibet with his Chinese counterpart. Leterme also pressed China to help find solutions to international conflicts such as the one in Georgia.

Flanders has 842 "typical Flemish cafés", according to the Volkskunde Vlaanderen association, which recently launched a campaign to identify the dying breed of local cafés. The photographer Jimmy Kets has now set off to make a photo study of the establishments.

The country's first retirement home for gay men is set to open next year in Schoten, near Antwerp. While not excluding heterosexuals, the home is mainly designed to fit the lifestyle of homosexuals. "[Homosexuals] are more interested in design and cooking," manager Guy Sanders told *De Standaard*.

Mesen 1917: the killing fields of Flanders where Australians fell

Reuters



Totally Tia



Although women's athletics have never brought home an Olympic medal, this year there are two: the 4x400m relay team won silver, while high jumper Tia Hellebaut brought home gold

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finishing line, narrowly failing to catch the Russian leader.

The Belgian relay team was led by Olivia Borlée from Brussels, followed by Hanna Mariën, Elodie Ouedraogo and Kim Gevaert. Gevaert, 30, from Kampenhout in Flemish Brabant, has already secured European championships in the 100- and 200-metre races, but this was her first Olympic medal.

The women's victory came hot on the heels of another triumph when the Belgian men's team qualified for the final of the 4x400m relay. But they failed to translate the success into a medal, ending fifth in the final. Competing on the Belgian 4x400m men's team were twin brothers Jonathan and Kevin Borlée, while their sister ran as part of the medal-winning women's team.

Hellebaut, 30, who carried the Belgian flag during the closing ceremony in Beijing, also broke the Belgian record with her high jump. She has since announced that she will not be competing in the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Earlier this year, Kim Gevaert also said that she was going to stop her career to focus on starting a family. The country will be losing two of its brightest stars.

online
www.olympic.be

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



€1 million

Estimated cost of the recent three-day strike by baggage handlers at Brussels Airport. The action was called by staff at Flightcare and Aviapartner in protest at increasing workloads. Many flights had to be cancelled and thousands of passengers were stranded because of the action.

187

Number of illegal immigrants held by police in Ostend over the past three months. The immigrants were allegedly trying to enter Britain by hiding in trucks or containers. Belgian police are now using specially trained British dogs to sniff out stowaways.

40,000

Drop in the number of cars produced by the Volvo plant in Ghent this year. The company turned out 240,000 vehicles last year, but expects to produce just 200,000 in 2008. The fall is mainly due to the financial crisis in the United States, and staff have been laid off for prolonged periods due to lack of work.

2,318

Number of trains delayed in 2007 due to the theft of copper wire from railway lines. The Belgian railway network has been plagued by thefts since 2005 when the price of copper soared by 400%. The rail authority reported 626 separate incidents last year leading to a €1 million loss.

€5.2 billion

Belgium's contribution to the EU budget, according to a recent report that itemised for the first time the country's contributions to international organisations. The EU was the biggest cost by far in the total €6 billion budget.

779,860

Number of animals used in Belgium for laboratory experiments in 2007, up three percent on the previous year. Almost two-thirds were used in testing new medicines, and none were used to test cosmetics, which is illegal in Belgium.

575,000

Number of "missing" Belgians, according to the national register. The list covers people who have a national number but can no longer be located at any address, including 2,525 over the age of 110 and 10 who have apparently reached the age of 140.

Fortis chairman faces angry shareholders

Stricken bank has "no regrets"

Maurice Lippens, chairman of the Belgian-Dutch banking and insurance group Fortis, faced angry shareholders at a meeting held in Brussels last week. The aim of the meeting was to inform them on the company's strategy and offer them an opportunity to ask questions on the bank's financial troubles.

Following an earlier meeting in Amsterdam, Lippens came to Brussels to explain the company's policy and reassure shareholders following



Maurice Lippens (right) puts on a brave face

Leuven team finds Marcus Aurelius statue

An archaeological team from Leuven University has dug up a giant statue of Marcus Aurelius at the same site in Sagalassos, Turkey where they recently found

the head of a statue of Faustina the Elder. The marble statue of the Roman emperor Aurelius originally stood some five metres high but now lies in fragments. The

head was lifted from the ground by crane, while four men were needed to raise the right arm. Professor Marc Waelkens, who is leading the Belgian team, told VRT news:

"I am standing in front of the legs, and my head is not even reaching the knees. I really can't describe how beautiful this is. It's unbelievable."



Zoos get bad marks

GAIA, the Belgian animal rights group, has criticised 14 out of 15 zoos in the country for failing to comply with animal welfare laws. GAIA inspectors made a number of visits to zoos to check on animal welfare, visitor safety and educational value. They gave top marks to the wildlife park at Saint Hubert in Luxembourg province and slammed Aviflora in Ingelmunster, West Flanders, and Malter Park near Ghent, as the worst zoos in the country. GAIA director Michel Vandebosch argued that animals were found to suffering behavioural problems in 11 of the 15 zoos visited. He added that government inspectors should be more strict in forcing zoos to provide more space for animals.

Zoos come under pressure to improve standards

A super market

Colruyt's no-frills, middle-ground approach puts them at number one for the first time ever



Cool in a crisis: Colruyt has become the choice for Belgians squeezed by rising fuel and food prices

Alan Hope

At the end of the first half of this year, Colruyt achieved a landmark by upsetting the balance of power in the supermarket industry in Belgium. The Halle-based, no-frills chain reported total sales of €1.196 billion for the second quarter, a rise of 13.2% and enough to overtake both Carrefour and Delhaize for the first time.

Just days before, Carrefour had announced second-quarter sales of €1.141 billion. Later, Delhaize announced sales in Belgium down 0.6% to €1.1 billion.

As if that wasn't good news enough, Colruyt's strong results brought it market share. The supermarket chain now stands in second place to Carrefour. The rankings are:

Carrefour	25.9%
Colruyt	23.7%
Delhaize	21.5%
Aldi	11.4%
Louis Delhaize	5.7%
Makro	5.5%
Lidl	4.0%
Others	2.0%

These are tough times for the supermarket industry. Recent figures show that consumers are reacting to higher fuel prices by leaving the car at home and shopping locally. Local shops' takings across the board have gone up 10%.

The supermarkets themselves also bear a heavy burden from increased fuel costs. What made them powerful in the first place – their ability to buy in bulk and force the lowest prices from suppliers – relied on a system of central buying and shipping, which is heavily truck-dependent. If they pass the increased fuel costs on to customers, they risk eating into the price advantage they used to offer over local shops and markets.

Those problems affect Colruyt as well – but then, they have a wider margin to play with. The chain announced results showing growth in turnover of 8.9% to 5.67 billion in the year-to-end March, while net profits rose by 10% to €288.2

million. The company's DreamLand and DreamBaby subsidiaries saw growth of 9.6%, despite the fact that non-food is a sector that's traditionally hard hit when consumer spending falls off. Put simply, when times are hard people will still buy tea, but they're less likely to splash out on new tea cups and tea towels.

Colruyt gains, if anything, from a fall in the purchasing power of families. The supermarket has always operated a no-frills strategy, but it makes no compromises on quality. Unlike rock-bottom chains like Aldi and Lidl, which offer third-rate brands at give-away prices, Colruyt carries known brands, as well as own-brand goods, and has made a name for being the best quality on such ranges as wines and fresh meat. (Nevertheless, Aldi and Lidl have both also gained marketshare: together they have 706 stores in the country, 190 of them opened in the last five years.)

Colruyt provides a

middle ground between the hard discounters and the plush supermarkets of the main competition. At the same time, the Flemish chain offers a guarantee to shoppers that its prices will be the lowest for comparable products in the area. The company's annual report attributed its success to "the lowest-price strategy in a climate of inflationary tensions".

Own-brands have an increasingly important role to play. They

offer several advantages:

- Prices can be cut to the bone since there is no middleman, and promotional and advertising costs are minimal
- Negotiations with suppliers are carried out directly
- The brands help create a customer loyalty bond with the store

Both Carrefour and Delhaize have launched own-brands. Delhaize sells about 6,000 products with its name and a further 600 under its hard-discount "365" range. Together, they account for half of all turnover. Carrefour, meanwhile, lags behind with only 2,700 products in its "Nummer 1" range. They account for a tenth of turnover.

Delhaize is about to start a pilot project at the hard-discount end of the market in Greece. The Lion Food Stores will, if successful, give Delhaize an idea of the chances in other European markets, including Belgium. Delhaize has been here before, with its Dial stores which were launched in the 1970s to compete with Aldi, and which had to be scrapped at the end of the 1990s when the financial haemorrhage could no longer be staunched.

Colruyt, meanwhile, intends to steer a middle course between discounts and top-quality brands at competitive prices. The chain will broaden its range of own-brand, Everyday Selection, products. "But in the first place we remain a specialist in A-brands," says director-general Luc Rogge, referring to top brands like Coca Cola, Kellogg's and Danone.

If, as recent figures show, consumers want to restrict their supermarket shopping to once a week to save fuel, Colruyt looks to be positioning itself as the one supermarket they choose.

BUSINESS FLASH



Macquarie

The Australian operator of Brussels Airport has sold 26% of its 62% stake to one of its sister companies, the Macquarie European Infrastructure Fund. The move allows Macquarie to make a book profit of €173 million on its stake.

Volvo

Volvo in Ghent and Opel in Antwerp, Flanders' two largest car assembling units, will cut production as a result of the industry's downturn worldwide. Volvo will reduce its output by 40,000 vehicles to 200,000 this year, while Opel will drop capacity to some 150,000 cars in 2008 against over 200,000 last year. The region's other two large production units, Ford in Genk and Audi in Brussels are said to be unaffected so far.

Deme

Deme, the Antwerp-based dredging company, has won a €210 million contract for its part in the building of the London Gateway Port, a container terminal with a capacity of 12,000 boxes, expected to open in 2013. The project includes transporting some 30 million cubic metres of sand over 100 kilometres to Stanford-le-Hope on the Thames.

Go Sport

The French distributor of sport and outdoor equipment, will close its 11 stores in Belgium. Five of them are to be taken over by the C&A clothing and apparel distribution group.

Dekeyn and Linitop

The Dutch AkzoNobel group has sold both Dekeyn and Linitop, the Vilvoorde-based paint and covering companies, to the French Rieu Investments, specialised in paints and varnishes.

VLM Airlines

VLM Airlines, the Antwerp-based carrier owned by the French Air France-KLM company, has been voted Europe's best regional airline in the Skytrax survey. The company was also recently elected Western Europe's best business airline by readers of the *Business Destinations* magazine.

Chiquita

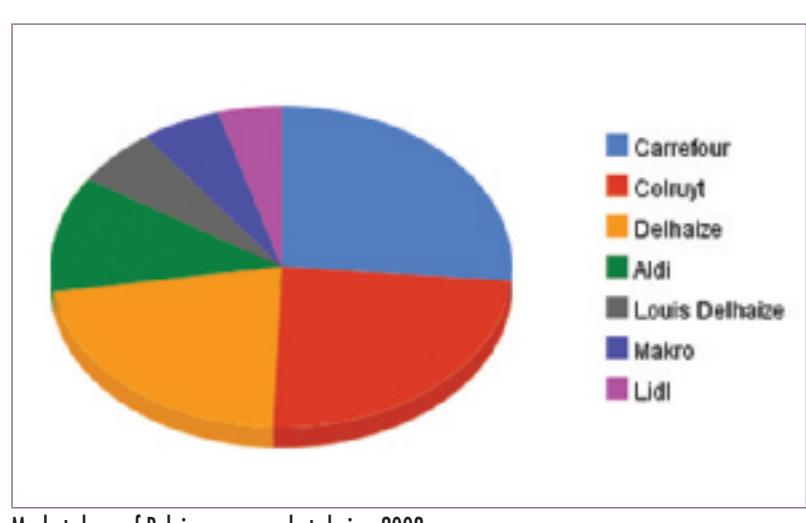
The world's leading bananas producer and distributor has confirmed its decision to transfer its European headquarters from Antwerp to Switzerland for fiscal reasons.

Verlinvest

The investment company owned by the Belgian founding members of the InBev beer group has acquired a controlling stake in the Dutch Hans Anders optician and glasses distribution firm to develop its activities on the Belgian market.

L'Oréal

Cosmetics giant L'Oréal has lost an attempt to sue internet auction site eBay, after a Brussels court found the company's complaint inadmissible. L'Oréal claims eBay didn't do enough to prevent the sale of counterfeit goods with L'Oréal brands on its site. The French cosmetics company has filed suit against eBay in five different European countries, and Belgium's ruling is the second time the suit has failed.



BOOKS

The low down

A unique collaboration informs neighbouring countries about the arts and culture of Flanders and the Netherlands

Lisa Bradshaw

At a time when the dichotomous national government is again in turmoil and scattered Flemish municipalities refuse to speak anything but Dutch, it's a pleasure and a relief to learn about an organisation like *Ons Erfdeel*. The name translates as Our Heritage, and they share Flemish and Dutch arts, culture and society throughout many countries and in many languages.

It was the idea of Jozef Deleu, then a 19-year-old schoolteacher in West Flanders who, in 1957, started a quarterly review of Dutch-language arts and culture. It was successful for many years, at which point he decided that he could do more.

Rather than offering views of current and historical society to Dutch speakers only, he wanted to expand the organisation's reach. So

in 1972, he launched *Septentrion*, a journal of literary and cultural life in Flanders and the Netherlands and its relationship with the French-speaking world. *Septentrion* publishes to this day four times a year in French.

"The idea was very simple," says Luc Devoldere, Managing Director of *Ons Erfdeel*. "*Septentrion* was a stretched-out hand. If you belong to a small linguistic community, you have to be pragmatic; you have to go to the other in their language." The idea may have been simple, but it was no less effective. Today *Septentrion* is widely read throughout French-speaking Belgium.

They didn't stop there. In 1976, the organisation launched an annual yearbook in Dutch called *De Franse Nederlanden* (*The French Netherlands*), essays on Northern France and its cultural, social and economic connections with Flan-

ders and the Netherlands. Then in 1993 came the second yearbook, which quickly became an anticipated annual publication. *The Low Countries* is *Ons Erfdeel*'s English anthology covering arts and society in Flanders and the Netherlands. They are now considering publishing an annual review in German. "Then we would have publications in all the languages surrounding Belgium," says Devoldere.

And that is very important to *Ons Erfdeel*. "Every European has the duty to learn as many other European languages as possible," Devoldere maintains. "The essence of cultural diversity is language diversity."

Based in Rekkem in West Flanders and in Raamsdonksveer in the south of the Netherlands, *Ons Erfdeel* is a bi-national project between the two countries. "We aren't nostalgic Dutch nationalists who want to create a great Netherlands with Flanders in it," explains Devoldere. "But there is enough that unites the Dutch and the Flemish – especially the language – to present this area as a whole."

Both countries collaborate on all the publications. "It's the combination of difference and similarities between the countries that makes cultural cooperation so exciting," says Devoldere. "In that way, it's a kind of European model."

The Low Countries is published every year in the spring. The articles in the first third of the anthology are always based on a theme, those in the middle of the book are more general – covering a number of diverse topics – and the final third is a chronicle of the previous year by subject: music, theatre, film, etc. This year's theme is "Love and Lust".



A playful 1924 woodcut by Flemish artist and labour activist Frans Masereel from *The Low Countries*

"The theme is a foreplay," Devoldere smiles, "and then the act itself consists of our annual mix of historical and contemporary concepts."

Devoldere and the editorial team commission articles from all kinds of writers, from journalists to academics to novelists. Though most are Dutch or Flemish or others who live in one of the countries, some contributions come from further afield. *The Low Countries* has had contributions from Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Updike and British filmmaker Peter Greenaway.

This year you'll find essays on the sexual emancipation of the Netherlands and Flanders after the Second World War, a treatise on romance and sex in the royal courts, the story of an 18th century Surinamese-Dutch marriage and a discussion of pornography in the Netherlands in the 19th century, among many others along the love and lust theme. In keeping with a yearbook style, *The Low Countries* mixes extracts of both modern and historical fiction and poetry in with the essays. All articles are beautifully illustrated.

Surprisingly, I actually found the essays outside of the love and lust theme to be the most interesting this year. The subjects are so diverse and, in many ways, random, there's always a fascinating titbit to discover. Although I wouldn't have believed it, I greatly enjoyed PhD candidate Joy Kearney's piece on Melchior de Hondecoeter, the 17th-century master who perfected the art of painting birds. It was also fun to learn about the early career of famous Flemish photographer Carl De Keyzer and

to read an extract of the English translation of Paul Verhaeghen's *Omega Minor*, a book that recently won a prestigious literary award in the United States.

Most of the articles are not more than a few pages long and, though some have clearly suffered from a translation process, are easy to read. For anyone new to Belgium or the Netherlands, *The Low Countries* is a rewarding and highly educational mix of fact and fiction, both historical and contemporary.

The formula has worked for 15 years. "We go along with the times, but we are never slaves of the time," notes Devoldere. "We take a certain critical distance, far away from the hype and the fashion." Regardless of whether readers are new or have been buying the book since 1993, *Ons Erfdeel* thinks articles on the history of Flanders' and the Netherlands' people, architecture, artists and cities are every bit as valuable as knowing what is going on today.

"We want to present our culture as a continuum of what has happened in the past and what is happening now," Devoldere explains. "Historical and present culture go hand-in-hand. You can understand what is happening now if you understand what has happened ages ago."

The Low Countries and other *Ons Erfdeel* publications can be purchased at bookstores across Flanders and ordered directly from the organisation.

online
www.onserfdeel.be

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WOODCARVER

Out of the woodwork

Patrick Damiaens may be the last of a dying breed

Denzil Walton

A visit to Patrick Damiaens' home in Maaseik is a reassuring reminder that even in these days of mass-manufactured furniture, there is still a demand for the traditional skills of a master artisan.

Damiaens is the only full-time ornamental wood carver and sculptor in Flanders, a unique position of which he is immensely proud. "There are a few part-timers and hobbyists," he says, "but no-one who earns his living doing what I do."

What he does is certainly impressive. His specialty is carving the decorations on Liège-style furniture. This style arose in the 17th century, is characterised by delicately carved intricate decoration and drew Europe's top carvers and cabinet makers to the Belgian city. Today, Liège is still a key centre for those interested in learning the skill.

Damiaens himself was educated at the Don Bosco Institute in Liège, where he studied ornamental wood carving for three years. That followed six years studying furniture making at the Sint-Jansberg College in Maaseik, Limburg province, which included a one-year wood carving course.

He works in close cooperation with four colleagues: a staircase maker, two cabinet makers and a furniture restorer, all of whom work independently. Between them they are responsible for turning planks of rough oak wood into stunning cupboards, chests of drawers, wardrobes, door frames, staircases, stereo cabinets and decorative panels.

"If you have the budget, we could make and decorate virtually any item of furniture," Damiaens exclaims, leafing through his extensive portfolio. I point to a beautiful chest of drawers and enquire about the cost and delivery



No room for error: Patrick Damiaens (above and right), Flanders only full-time ornamental woodcarver, never makes a mistake in his finely detailed wooden reliefs

schedule. "The cost would depend on the amount of decoration you require, which determines how many hours I would need to spend on it. The waiting list for such a piece would be 12 months."

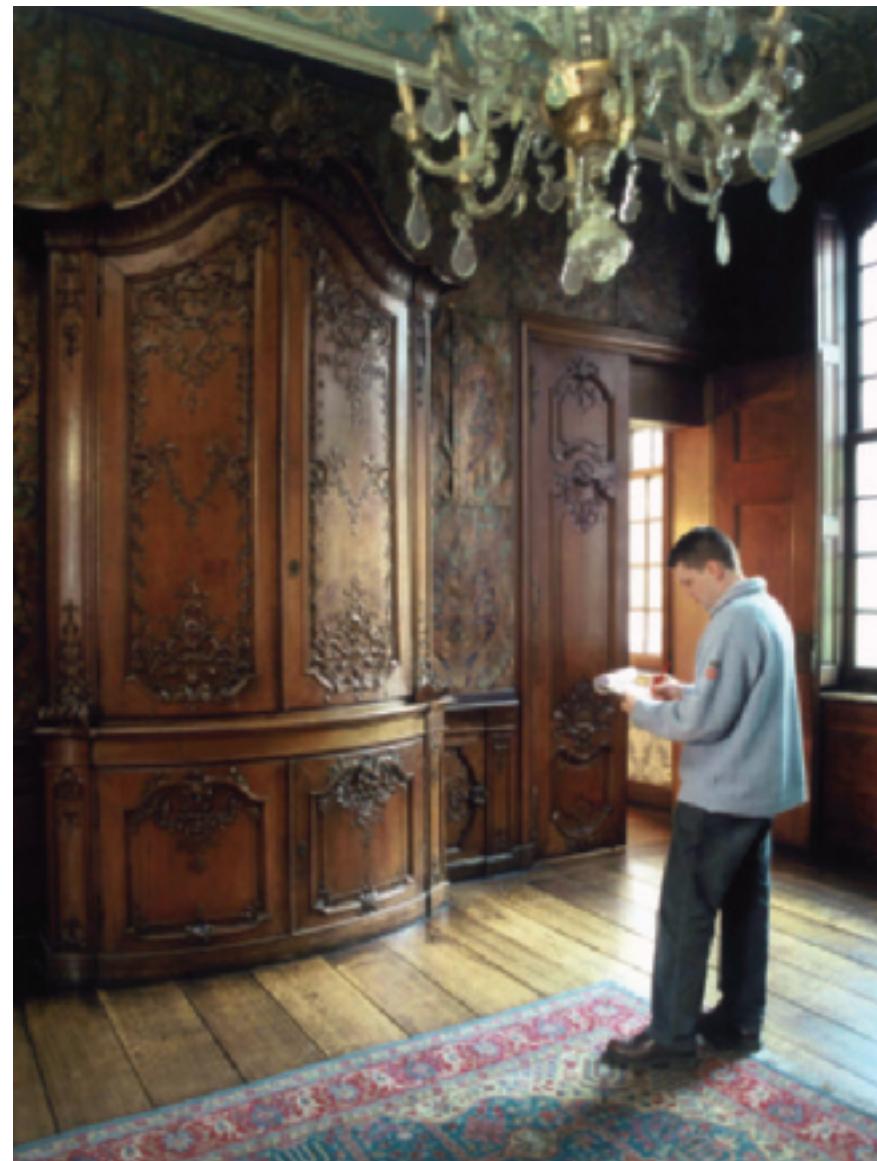
It seems a lengthy wait, but after Damiaens explains the process involved, it actually sounds quite reasonable. The preparatory technical drawings, for example, can take a full month, since every decoration is unique and requires a totally new set of drawings.

His first task is to make a rough sketch of the pattern, which might be based on an original item of furniture or be a Damiaens original, drawn in the Liège-style. This is then presented to the customer, and, after any necessary amendments are made, the final drawing is done tracing paper and pinned to the selected panel of wood. The design is then transferred onto the wood, which in most cases is French oak.

The next stage is the only time that Damiaens uses a machine. He manipulates an electric milling machine to remove the bulk of the wood surrounding the design, after which the actual hand carving can begin. He first uses a home-made scraper to remove the rough edges and excess wood missed by the milling machine, before bringing his vast collection of Swiss-made, razor-sharp carving chisels into action. Once carving is completed, the panel is returned to the cabinet maker, who treats it and incorporates it into the piece of furniture.

I ask him what would happen if his chisel should accidentally slip and slice off a fragile element, like, say, a butterfly's leg? In retrospect, it was like asking a Booker Prize winner if he ever misspells a word. "I don't make those kinds of mistakes," he says with a gentle smile. "I'm a perfectionist by nature."

One reason Damiaens never tires of his job is the variety of projects. Along with large items of furniture that take a year to complete, he carves and decorates a range of



smaller pieces, and, at the end of a long work day, he tries to find time to work on projects for his own house in Maaseik. He is currently building and decorating new kitchen cabinets, the like of which can definitely not be found in the IKEA catalogue.

Damiaens likes to set himself new carving challenges, his latest being an attempt to work in the style of Grinling Gibbons, one of his heroes. "He was a master wood carver from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. He was born in Rotterdam but spent most of his career in England," he explains.

Working mostly in lime wood, Gibbons is particularly well-known for his exquisite cascades of flowers, fruit and leaves, which were applied to furniture, walls and even chimneys. "So detailed were his carvings that, in certain light, they look natural and life-like and have been likened to lace-work," says Damiaens. "I think he is the finest wood carver of all time."

With a backlog of orders extending well into 2009, Damiaens' future looks certain. However, the future of ornamental wood carving in Belgium is less secure. The Don Bosco Institute in Liège is finding it difficult to attract enough young wood carvers. Last year only four

students enrolled, and so far this year no registrations at all have been received.

Damiaens is saddened but not surprised at the possible demise of the course, which started in 1896. "We live in a world in which new technologies are quickly promoted, while traditional skills are often neglected," he says. "If the Don Bosco Institute has to close its wood carving course, it will be the end of a tremendous heritage in Belgium."

Thankfully, the skills can still be learned elsewhere in Europe, with the Ecole Boulle in Paris offering particularly good courses.

Damiaens also likes to find out how other ornamental wood carvers in Europe are doing by visiting them when he's on holiday in their region. "I look them up in the telephone directory and visit their workshops," he says. "It's always a great encouragement to meet other artisans doing the same job I do. We may be a rare breed, but we're not extinct yet."

online

www.patrickdamiaens.be



Recognising an original Damiaens

Back in the 1980s, Patrick Damiaens saw a dragonfly carved into a Liège-style wardrobe. He'd never seen one before – or since – so decided to use it as his signature. "In years to come, people will be able to identify one of my carvings through the presence of the dragonfly."

SPORTS

Brussels Celtic



Up and away: Brussels Celtic plays Mechelen

Leander Schaerlaekens

Although the town of Rugby is only 302 kilometres from Flemish shores (thank you Google Earth), the sport of rugby was a long time coming to Flanders.

The small town in Warwickshire – where the sport was allegedly invented by a public schoolboy when he decided that he'd rather pick the ball up with his hands to get past his intimidating opponents than try to dribble past them with his feet – may have more than a 150-year headstart on Belgium but would struggle to match the enthusiasm with which the sport is played here.

In 1969 Olympic sailor Jacques Rogge, a 27-year old surgeon from Ghent, started the Ghent Rugby Football Club, now the oldest surviving Flemish rugby club. Rogge, of course, went on to become the president of the International Olympic Committee. Flemish rugby, meanwhile, is on the brink of becoming the most popular sport in the region.

It was invented in 1823, but rugby didn't really catch on in Flanders until the 1980s, when, according to Dirk Van de Voorde, president of the Flemish Rugby League for the last 17 years, it started to spread through university teams. Several clubs had been formed in the previous decade, but it wasn't

Limburg province.

In a cruel twist of fate, it is by virtue of having never been colonised by Great Britain that it took 150 years for rugby to debut in Belgium. Those who lived under British colonial rule now have the world's strongest rugby teams. But Belgium is quickly making up ground on rugby's traditional international powerhouses. Over the last few years, the national team has broken into the top 30 of rugby's world ranking.

This has resulted in a massive influx of young players into the Flemish clubs. "We've witnessed



More youth are playing rugby in Flanders than ever before

Not so far from Rugby

Nearly 40 years after International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge founded the first Flemish rugby club, the sport is set to hit the big time

until the players of the university teams graduated and moved back to their respective hometowns that clubs started to sprout all over Flanders.

A federation was subsequently founded in 1982. Membership barely cleared the 500 minimum required for subsidy. The number of clubs totalled three – one in Ghent, one in Antwerp and one in Bree, in the north of

an increase in the number of youth thanks in large part to the success of the national team against the Barbarians [a famed international traveling team] and Argentina but also thanks to our good work in the school," Van de Voorde says.

For the last few years the Flemish Rugby League has focussed heavily on developing the sport within schools. The fruit of their efforts came in the form of a school league, made up mostly of boarding schools, where rugby has become wildly popular.

"We have 22 clubs in Flanders, nicely spread out over the provinces and lots of trained coaches, but most clubs can't handle the flood of new young players anymore," Van de Voorde says. "Other sports are seeing their numbers dwindle because of demographic trends, but we keep on growing."

paid. In those [other] sports, lots is paid, and there's a lot of publicity. It's hard for us to attract attention."

The league hopes to obtain help from traditional rugby countries to get TV footage for Belgian channels. "If there would be rugby on TV here, we'd see our membership grow enormously, and we could generate some sponsorship," says Van de Voorde.

The market is certainly there. A few months ago, the Barbarians (not to be confused with the Brussels Barbarians rugby club) drew 15,000 paying spectators when they played the national team in the Koning Boudewijn Stadion in Brussels. When the Barbarians played a friendly against Argentina in that same stadium a year earlier, 20,000 paid for a ticket. The Rugby World Cup was held in

"In our club, even the Flemings and the Walloons get on. We're a good model for Yves Leterme to look at."

Ghent Rugby, for example, now has 200 members, 140 of which are kids. The city rewarded them with a Sport Award for their youth program last year. The club has had to hire an experienced professional South African coach to handle the growth.

The newfound popularity among the young has caused the Flemish Rugby League to swell to 2,500 members, half of which are under the age of 18. In fact, the number of youth players has jumped by as much as 25% over the last two years, according to Van de Voorde's estimates.

The reason it's taken the sport this long to catch on is simple. "It's a difficult sport, a technical sport," Van de Voorde explains. "Where we fall short is that the best athletes in our country are lured by sports that are professional. They go to cycling and football or volleyball and basketball. With us, nobody is

France last year and sold 100,000 tickets to Belgians.

But when Belgium played in and against Argentina a few weeks ago, the game was not even aired in Belgium. Though it was aired live in three other countries. "The Belgian press didn't realise we were even playing until the media in other countries wrote about it," Van de Voorde mourns.

Paul Moody, president of the Brussels Celtic rugby club, identifies another factor that has been holding the sport back in recent years. "Rugby gets quite a bad press," he says. "I mention to my colleagues that I play and ask them to come along, and they think I'm crazy. They just think it's just a big fight. I guess if you don't know the rules or tactics, it does look violent. It's physically demanding and tough, but there

Gent Rugby FC / www.gent-rugby.be

The Gent Rugby Football Club in 1970. The club was founded by the now International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge, fourth from right

are no more injuries than in football."

Moody also stresses the smarts of the game. "I haven't come across a truer team sport. It's not always the side with the 15 best individuals that wins; it's the side with the better organisation and tactics," he says.

But, while rugby awaits its big breakthrough in the national media, the clubs are playing a big part in the complex social mosaic that is Belgium. Brussels

partying so much and focus on winning, but that never found much support. We were relegated twice in three seasons, but [our spirits] were always back up after a few hours."

The 33-year-old also notes that what sets his club apart is that there's no dominant nationality. "There are always at least three different languages being spoken, usually French, Dutch and English but also Italian or Spanish," he says. "It's multicul-

A big part of the integration of its players is Celtic's annual rugby tour. Over the years, the club has played on several different continents, but, wherever it went, it never actually managed to win a game. "We used to be quite embarrassed about it, but now it's become a matter of pride. Every player that comes on tour with us has to guarantee that they'll be in such a state that they can't possibly win a rugby match," says a grinning Moody.

On at least one occasion, the loss of a game was to blame on a dirty trick played by the opposition. "On a rugby tour to Crema, Italy, the opposition provided us with a fantastic pre-match seven-course meal with as much wine, beer and limoncello as we wanted," Moody recalls. "We thought that they were enjoying it with us, but it turned out that they only sent their friends, coaches and injured players. The real team had stayed at home and killed us in the game, which was played in over 30 degrees!"

Regardless of Celtic's international misadventures, rugby is irrevocably claiming its place among Flanders' most popular sports. Tellingly, the school where the Belgian football federation was founded in Melle no longer offers football to its students – only rugby.

online
www.vlaamse-rugby-bond.be



Feel the love: Paul Moody, above left, says that rugby is misunderstood: "I guess if you don't know the rules, it looks violent."

Right: Brussels Celtic huddles up



Brussels Celtic

Celtic, for example, which was founded when several Irishmen playing for the Brussels British [now Barbarians] were understandably fed up with the club's name, have become a powerful catalyst for integrating recently arrived expats into Belgian society. It was even given a €5,000 grant by the Koning Boudewijn Foundation in recognition of their work in bringing Belgians and expats together.

"Other clubs target success and promotion and winning cups, and if people enjoy themselves, that's good," says Moody, an IT specialist from Cheltenham who plays second row. "But we want people to enjoy themselves first because we're amateurs, and we aren't paid, and if we get success then that's a bonus."

The Celtics, in fact, prides itself on its social focus and in so doing, has achieved the consummate integration of Belgians and expats. "At one point we made it up to second division – but without ever compromising our fun," Moody says. "It was once suggested that we should stop

tural and has a different ambivalence. I've learned French and Dutch through the club."

Moody, who has been in Belgium for five years, also notes that "in our club, even the Flemings and the Walloons get on. We're a good model for Yves Leterme to look at."



Fifteen thousand people showed up to watch Belgium's national rugby team play the famous Barbarian FC in Brussels last spring

TOUCHING BASE



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In this issue, our summer sports series comes to an end, but every week I'll be updating you on the world of expat-dominated sports.

Baseball

The **Merksem Greys** took an important step towards the Belgium Series by beating the **Brasschaat Braves** twice by 7-2 and 3-2 in the Elite Division. They are now in second place in the division, which sends the two top teams to the series. The **Brussels Kangaroos**, meanwhile, regained their spot in the First Division by beating the **Louvain La Neuve Phoenix** twice, 6-4 and 10-0.

The Promo Division looks like this:

Team	Wins	Losses
Merchtem Cats	8	1
Brussels Kangaroos	8	1
Deurne Spartans	6	5
Antwerp Eagles	4	5
Beveren Lions	2	7
LLN Phoenix	1	10

(Top two teams play in First Division next year, bottom four play in Second Division)

Cricket

The **PCCB Greens** of Antwerp have claimed this year's Belgian cricket championship. They beat second-placed **Ostend** in their final match by rain rules to clinch the title.

The First Division was decided as follows:

Team	Wins	Losses
Greens	6	2
Ostend	5	3
Optimists	5	3
AICC	4	4
Exiles	0	8

In that Second Division, meanwhile, there is one match left to be played between **Crescent** and **MCC**. If MCC win, they will be promoted to First Division. If they lose, either MCC or **Royal Brussels Cricket Club** will be promoted, depending on average run-rate.

In the Third Division, both the **Ghent Arcadians** and the **12 Stars** secured promotion to Second Division. The Arcadians won the division outright, while the 12 Stars won by virtue of a superior average run-rate over **PCCB**.

Final Third Division standings were:

Team	Wins	Losses
Arcadians	6	2
12 Stars	5	3
PCCB	5	3
Eagles	3	5
Heerlen	1	7

American Football

The Flanders American Football League, in cooperation with its Walloon counterpart, will kick off its **Junior season** on 28 September. New players are always encouraged to join the many Flemish clubs. Players have to be between the age of 16 and 19 for the season that runs through 30 November, when the Junior Bowl takes place. To find a team, visit www.americanfootball.be.

Rugby

The Brussels Celtic Rugby Club is looking for opposing **touch rugby teams**. They are the only touch rugby team in Belgium and are looking for a mixed-team opponent. To talk about playing Celtic, contact Paul Moody at: paulsmoody@yahoo.co.uk.

Email me at sport.flanderstoday@gmail.com



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ING 

CAFÉ

The little bear that could

Bruges bar voted the world's best on its 25th birthday

Paul Stump

Daisy Claeys' cheerful, apple-cheeked face can barely contain her emotion as Jean-Marie Bogaert, Bruges tourism head honcho, closes the press conference celebrating the 25th birthday of her Brugs Beertje with a rousing thanks. Loud applause follows.

Rightly. 't Brugs Beertje, "the little Bruges Bear" has, under Ms Claeys' watchful eye, become a locus not only of beer culture in Belgium but throughout the world. The influential American website www.ratebeer.com voted the Beertje its world champion bar for 2008.

The cafés cellar of 300-400 different types of Belgium's finest, with Flandrian ales to the fore, has attracted connoisseurs from the start. Tim Webb's *Good Beer Guide to Belgium* was apocryphally conceived here in the 1980s in the company of the late Michael Jackson, whose panegyrics to Belgian ales did more to sustain Belgium's tourist (and brewing) industries in the 1990s than anything or anyone else.

"Michael was such a help and such a great friend," Daisy tells me. After Jackson's seminal 1990 TV series for

Britain's Channel 4, *The Beer Hunter*, things were never going to be quite the same again. Daisy is reluctant to attribute all of her climbing success to the cult of Belgian beer the programme helped initiate, but there is no mistaking her affection for Jackson, nor for the countless Anglophone beer maniacs that pass through her portals.

Bruges has been known through the ages for its lace, its chocolate, Georges Rodenbach's novella *Bruges-la-morte* and Erich Korngold's 1920 opera thereon, *Die Tote Stadt*. Now, thanks to Jackson and especially Daisy, beer is as much a part of the townscape.

Bruges has been known through the ages for its lace, its chocolate, for Georges Rodenbach's novella *Bruges-la-morte*. Now, thanks to Daisy, beer is as much a part of the townscape.

Daisy must have known she'd made it when she heard that tourists were being redirected from a bronze statue of the bear that in legend terrorised medieval Bruges.

The Beertje is by no means easy to find – it's squirrelled away down an alley, the Kemelstraat. The ursine horror of yore now hugs a

beer glass on the sign outside. The opening hours are slightly eccentric (never before 16.00).

It is a place of dark wood, of the enamel publicity of long-defunct breweries, of memories one day

of harmony, in which it's easy to have like-minded, civilised conversation," says Daisy. Just to cross the threshold is to encounter a quiet bar, whose harsh wooden floors and lack of upholstery in the van of an old Flemish "brown bar" is softened by, well...what Daisy would call atmosphere.

The music is classical, predominantly Baroque. Vivaldi, Biber, Telemann, Mozart and Clementi at the latest hours. "It's relaxing and unobtrusive," says Daisy. "It lets people talk and listen." The Beertje pitches its music at a level whereby appreciation by one listener will not be spoiled by conversation at a neighbouring table.

A long-standing friendship with the Bruges microbrewery De Regenboog has borne fruit in a 25th anniversary ale, muscu-

lar at 9.2% alcohol, dry but with a mischievously sweet and drinkable undertone. There's also a celebratory pate from a producer in Alveringem, which, as Daisy says, fits with her theme: "It's like a harmony between the drink and food. That's how all things that give pleasure should be."

She's not kidding. When the setting sun blazes off Bruges' repainted brickwork, as it did on the afternoon of the birthday party, or whether the discreet lanterns are alight for an icy trek home across the cobbles on an evening in December's depths, the Beertje will remain a hive of the likeminded who come to worship at this altar of the brewer's and cafe-owner's art. All leave suitably refreshed and reinforced. Most return – suitably harmonised, as Daisy might prefer to say.

online
www.brugsbeertje.be



Owner Daisy Claeys – and all of Bruges – celebrates 't Brugs Beertje's 25th anniversary



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Classical & New Music**Brussels****Beursschouwburg**

Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be

Klara Festival:

SEP 1 12.30 Anneleen Lenaerts, harp; Piet Van Bockstal, oboe: Reiner, Holliger, Walter-Küne, Pasculli. 20.00 Hortus Musicus conducted by Andres Mustonen: Hebrew chants combined with music by Kancheli and Arvo Pärt. 22.00 Andres Mustonen and friends with sound artist Raz Mesinai combine traditional music with electronic sounds and percussion

SEP 2 12.30 Mikhel Poll, piano: Scarlatti, Beethoven, Shostakovich. 20.00 Alexei Lubimov, tangent piano: Bach, Haydn. 22.00 Jef Neve, piano: Goldberg Variations. Lidlboj Trio: jazz improvisations

SEP 3 12.30 Aleksander Madzar, piano: Berio, Ravel, Schubert. 20.00 Roberto Rosseda, piano: Chopin, Mendelssohn. 22.00 Andrea Belfi: electro-acoustic soundscapes. Het Collectief: contemporary music by Van Hecke, Francesconi

SEP 4 12.30 Pieter Wispelwey, cello: Kodály, Escher. 20.00 Danel Quartet: Schubert's String Quartet No 13, Opus 29, Puccini's Crisantemi, Beethoven's String Quartet No 132. 22.00 Roberto Rosseda, piano, Gianni Gebbia, saxophone: Mendelssohn, Clementi

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

AUG 29 20.00 Aldo Ciccolini, piano: Schumann (part of Klara Festival)
AUG 30 20.00 Grand opening of the KlaraFestival: Lille National Orchestra and La Monnaie choirs, conducted by Evelino Pido, with Pino de Vittorio, tenor and Queen Elisabeth Singing Competition 2008 prizewinners: Bel Canto

Miniemerk
Miniemerstraat 62; 02.511.93.84, www.minimes.net
AUG 27 12.15 Axis Ensemble: Leclair, Guillemain (part of Midis/Minimes Festival)

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
AUG 28 12.15 La Chorale conducted by Benoît Giaux: Franck, Fauré, Delibes, Pierné (part of Midis/Minimes Festival)
AUG 29 12.15 Les Muffatti conducted by Peter Van Heyghen: Handel's cantata HWV 99 (part of Midis/Minimes Festival)
Saint Michael and St Gudula

Cathedral

Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45
AUG 31 10.00 Hasselt Cathedral Choir conducted by Ludo Claesen: John Leavitt

Opera**Bruges****Stadhuis**

Grote Markt; 070.222.007, www.ideefix.be

SEP 1-13 21.00 Rossini's The Barber of Seville conducted by Eric Lederhandler, staged by François de Carpentries

Jazz & blues**Antwerp****Cafe Mambo**

Vlasmarkt 3

AUG 27 21.00 Marcelo Moncada Quartet

Brussels**Domaine de Rouge-Cloître**

Rokloosterstraat 4; 02.660.55.97, www.rouge-cloitre.be

AUG 30 17.00-19.00 O Tchalai, Romanian, Greek and Balkan jazz

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul**Brussels****Café Central**

Borgval 14; 02.513.73.08

SEP 4 23.00 Central Electric/Mickey (Dirty Dancin')

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89

AUG 30 23.00 Minilogue Live, Digitaline Live, Bloody Mary, Seuil, Pierre

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32

SEP 2 20.00 The Faint

SEP 3 20.00 Conor Oberst and the Mystic Valley Band

Deurne**Openluchttheater Rivierenhof**

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192, www.openluchttheater.be

AUG 27 20.30 The Ideal Husband + José González

AUG 30 20.30 Daan with Isolde Lasoen

AUG 31 20.30 Errors + Mogwai

Ghent**Frontline**

Overpoortstraat 37

AUG 29 18.00 Legacy Fest with

Heidevolk, Theudho, Klauwaert, Draugluin, Sedeloheim

World, folk**Brussels****Live Music Café**

Anspachlaan 90-92; www.live-music-cafe.be

Until AUG 27 22.00 PUCHO (Cuba)

Until AUG 30 22.00 Kalema and K-Tribe

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Until AUG 30 21.00 Rey Cabrera Cuban Combo

Visual arts**Antwerp****Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)**

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60

Until AUG 31 Visual art and sound installations by British artist and composer Cornelius Cardew

Until SEP 9 Fantasy, intervention by Koen van den Broek

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00

Until SEP 14 Focus on sports, a selection of the best sports photographs from the Belga agency (part of Summer of Photography)

Until SEP 14 Guy Bourdin, retrospective of work by the French photographer (1928-1991), famous for his contributions to fashion and advertising (part of Summer of Photography)

Until SEP 14 Summertime, photographs by Verne

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34

AUG 30-SEP 21 Sculptures 1985-2007 by Philip Aguirre y Otegui

Rockox House

Keizerstraat 12; 03.201.92.50

Until SEP 21 Ensor pays a visit to the Rockox House: A Confrontation

Bruges**Groeningemuseum**

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43

Until DEC 31 Leuven Loans, 15th- and 16th-century paintings and woodcarvings from Leuven's Van der Kelen-Mertens museum

Brussels**Atomium**

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, www.atomium.be

Until OCT 19 Expo 58: Between Utopia and Reality, documents, plans, objects, films, photographs and scale models of Expo 58

Until OCT 19 Lucien De Roeck's Star, design of the famous symbol of Expo 58

Until OCT 19 The Pavilion of Temporary Happiness, built from 33,000 drink crates to house screenings and exhibitions about World Fairs (near the Atomium on Louis Steensplein)

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be

Until NOV 16 Smurf for All, All for Smurf, original drawings and documents celebrating the famous characters created 50 years ago by Belgian comic strip artist Pierre Culliford, known as Peyo

Belvue Museum

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.belvue.be

Until AUG 31 Today's China, contemporary Chinese art (free entrance)

Until SEP 14 Magritte and Mariën, My Accomplices: sketches, photographs and correspondence between Jacqueline Nonkels, Marcel Mariën, René and Georgette Magritte, as well as an accompanying collection of Surrealist

works, including poetry and literature

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33

Until AUG 30 Chapitre II, book bindings by Florent Rousseau

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,

www.bozar.be

Until SEP 14 It's Not Only Rock 'n' Roll, Baby!, works by musicians, including Alan Vega, Brian Eno, Laurie Anderson, Patti Smith, Pete Doherty and Yoko Ono

Until SEP 21 Sioux in Paradise, sculptures, installations, video, models and drawings by Johan Muyle

Until SEP 21 Mapas abiertos (Opening maps), overview of contemporary Caribbean, Central and South-American photography (part of Summer of Photography)

CIVA

Kluissstraat 55; 02.642.24.71,

www.civa.be

Until SEP 19 Documents on the gardens designed by René Pechère and Jacques Boulanger-François for Expo 58

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50

Until SEP 30 Profiel, textile creations by Isabelle Marquet

Until DEC 30 Van New Look tot Expo 58, women's fashion from the time of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair, with evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, suits, coats and accessories

Czech Centre

Troonstraat 60; 02.213.94.30

Until SEP 5 Illustrations and installations by Czech artist Kveta Pacovská

De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art

Sint-Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31

Until SEP 28 Fables, photographs by Karen Knorr

De Loge Architecturmuseum

Kluissstraat 86; 02.649.86.65

Until SEP 28 Belgie/Belgique 58, architectural and decorative forms at the time of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair, with drawings, photographs, models, posters and furniture

Erasmus House

Kapittelstraat 31; 02.521.13.83

Until SEP 16 Anatomie van de IJdelheden (Anatomy of the Vanities), the museum's 75th anniversary show, with works by Hieronymus Bosch, Jan Fabre, Hans Holbein, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, Aida Kazarian and Quinten Metsys

Espace Photographique Contretype

Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20

Until SEP 21 Voyage Out, photographs by Chantal Maes

Huis der Hertogen van Brabant

Grote Markt 19; 02.540.85.10

Until AUG 31 An exhibition of over 200 works by Salvador Dali, to mark the 20th anniversary of his death

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70

Until SEP 26 White Noise, ceramics by Caroline Andrin and ten guest artists

Until OCT 11 Daisaku Nagai, paintings

Until OCT 11 Lights by Françoise De Smet and jewellery by Alice de Wrangel

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Raveel Museum in Machelen-Zulte)

Ghent

Caermersklooster

Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
Until SEP 14 Disappearing Worlds, photographs of indigenous peoples in Australia, New Guinea and South Africa by Danish anthropologist Jens Bjerre

Until SEP 14 Eighty-four: in pek op papier (in Pitch on Paper), large-format drawings by Flemish artist Richard Simoens

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until OCT 12 Design from the 1950s and 1960s

Until OCT 12 Design with a smile, designs with a surrealist touch

Until OCT 12 Homage to Hans Wegner, exhibition in recognition of the contributions of the famous Danish designer

Until OCT 12 Helena Schepens: Perpetuum Mobile, designs by the Flemish silver and goldsmith

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be

Until SEP 7 Circus or Science: The Roca Collection, anatomical wax models from the late 19th and early 20th centuries

Until SEP 7 Jean Rustin, retrospective of work by the French painter

Until SEP 7 I live in the painting, work by the late Flemish artist Marc Maet

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03,

www.smak.be

Until SEP 21 Electrified, installations combining visual, sound and electronic arts, by Ronald Kuivila and Edwin van der Heide

Hasselt

Modemuseum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21

Until AUG 31 Looks: Mode 1750-1958, Two-hundred years of fashion history

National Jenever Museum

Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60
Until AUG 31 The Orange Bulb Alambfleurics, olfactory installation by Flemish artist Peter De Cupere

Z33

Zuivelmarkt (Beguinage) 33; 011.29.59.60

Until SEP 29 1% Water, art and design relating to global water issues

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation, Westakker

Hulsterstraat Noord; www.

verbekefoundation.com

Until NOV 16 Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision, new exhibition of moving art

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00

Until SEP 21 The Joy of Looking, painting biennale with works by Georg Baselitz, Jean Dubuffet, Asger Jorn, Constant Permeke, Robert Rauschenberg and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum in Deurle)

Mechelen

Congres en Erfgoedcentrum Lamot Van Beethovenstraat 8-10; 015.29.49.00
Until SEP 14 Van Pijl tot paviljoen, 20 models of the pavilions at Brussels' 1958 World's Fair

Cultuurcentrum

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00, www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
Until SEP 14 Happy Days, collector's items and music of the 1950s recreating the atmosphere of Brussels' 1958

World's Fair

Ostend

Modern Art Museum

Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18

Until AUG 31 Georges Vantongerloo: Pionier van de moderne beeldhouwkunst (Pioneer of Modern Sculpture), retrospective of work by the Flemish artist (1886-1965)

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum

Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75

Until SEP 7 Man, Culture, War: Multicultural Aspects of the First World War, a panorama of the diverse origins of those who fought in Belgium during WWI
Until NOV 12 Off the record, work by artist-in-residence Wendy Morris

Festivals & special events

Belgium Roller Parade

Until SEP 29 Weekly rollerskating parades in Brussels and other towns www.belgiumrollers.com

Summer of Photography:

Contemporary photography festival Until SEP 14 in venues across Belgium 02.507.82.00, www.summerofphotography.be

Antwerp

Cultuurmarkt van Vlaanderen: Stands provide information on Flanders' new cultural season, along with free concerts, literature, stand-up comedy, classical music and theatre AUG 30-31 in Antwerp centre 03.203.95.85, www.cultuurmarkt.be

Het Theaterfestival: Annual competitive theatre festival featuring the most intriguing pieces of the last year from Flanders and the Netherlands Until AUG 30 at DeSingel, Desguinlei 25, and other venues in Antwerp www.theaterfestival.be

Laus Polyphonia 2008: Festival of polyphonic music from Hanseatic cities. The programme also includes organ and lute music Until AUG 31 at venues across Antwerp www.festival.be

Bruges

Vama Veche Festival: An evening of stand-up comedy featuring Freddy De Vadder and Alex Agnew AUG 27 21.00 at Het Entrepot, Binnenweg 4; 050.47.07.80 www.comedyshows.be

Brussels

Boterhammen in het Park 2008: Free outdoor festival of Flemish and Dutch music Until AUG 29 12.00 at Warandepark, Koningsstraat and Paleizenplein www.boterhammeninhetpark.be

Brussels Summer Festival: Outdoor festival including theatre, street entertainment, film and children's activities Until AUG 31 13.00 in venues and squares around the city www.brusselsummerfestival.be

Ca rebondit sur cour Festival: Festival of string and Baroque ranging from world and jazz to French chanson, classical and traditional, all on the theme of water Until AUG 30 at Domaine de Rouge-Cloître (Oudergem) 02.223.46.75, www.atelierdolcevita.be

Drive-In Movies: Outdoor festival with music, barbecue and films projected on a giant screen on Friday and Saturday evenings Until SEP 13 20.00 at Jubelpark, Ridderschaplaan www.driveinmovies.be

Muurrock: Music festival featuring DJ Zaki, Turbopascals, 15 Weeks, Jim Cole & Band, The Blackbox Revelation, Jasper Erkens, Flip Kowlier, Jerboa and Peter Van De Veire AUG 29-30 at Jeugdcentrum De Spiraal, Zakkaai 29 www.muurrock.be

Ecran Total: Festival showing a wide variety of films, including classics, reprises, documentaries, Japanese Nouvelle Vague and animation Until SEP 9 at Cinema Arenberg, Koninginnegalerij 26 02.512.80.63, www.arenberg.be

Feeërieën 2008: Free outdoor music festival organised by Ancienne Belgique. International artists performing folk, jazz, cabaret, chanson, classical and Klezmer Until AUG 29 20.00 at Warandepark, Koningsstraat and Paleizenplein 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be

Fiesta Latina Festival: Latin-American music festival with concerts, DJs and parties AUG 29-30 all day until 2.00 in Louizalaan www.fiesta-latina.be

Incredible Jazz Jam 2008: Rendezvous for amateur and professional jazz musicians from all over the country, free to the public AUG 30 18.00-2.00 at Aquamarine, Lenniksebaan 1041 www.incrediblejazzjam.be

International Brigitines Festival: A collection of theatre and dance performances Until SEP 6 at Les Brigitines, Korte Brigittenstraat 02.506.43.00, www.brigitines.be

Joërmel Festival: Music and entertainment featuring Kapitein Winokio, Freddy Birset, Lady Angelina and Guido Belcanto SEP 1 at Garbet Park, Jette 02.423.13.67 or www.jette.be

KlaraFestival 2008: International music festival including contemporary music and jazz around the theme Forza Musical!, the strength of music AUG 29-SEP 12 in venues and public spaces around Brussels 070.21.02.17, www.klarafestival.be

Midis/Minimes 08: Series of weekday lunchtime concerts, exploring classical and new music rarely performed and new Belgian and international artists Until AUG 29 12.15 at Kapel van de Miniemen, Miniemstraat 62, and the Royal Music Conservatory, Regentschapsstraat 30 02.512.30.79, www.midis-minimes.be

Shuffle #3: Two festive weekends of international dance and theatre to introduce Kaaitheteer's new season AUG 30-SEP 6 at Kaaitheteer, Sainctelettesquare 20, and other venues 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheteer.be

Tour of the Royal Palace: The Royal Palace is open to the public Until SEP 7 at Koninklijk Paleis, Brederodestraat 16 02.551.20.20, www.monarchie.be

Urban BBQ: Giant barbecue prepared by award-winning chefs, plus live music AUG 31 12.00-16.00 on Kunstberg www.urbanbbq.be

Evere
Mellowtime Music Festival: Outdoor festival of soft and vocal jazz with dez Mona, Mark Murphy, Carlos Diaz 'Zapatango', Bart Plouvier, Yvonne Walter & Rony Verbiest, Antje De Boeck, Roland Van Campenhout AUG 30-31 in Eversele (Temse) 03.290.71.08, www.mellowtime.com

Geraardsbergen
Muurrock: Music festival featuring DJ Zaki, Turbopascals, 15 Weeks, Jim Cole & Band, The Blackbox Revelation, Jasper Erkens, Flip Kowlier, Jerboa and Peter Van De Veire AUG 29-30 at Jeugdcentrum De Spiraal, Zakkaai 29 www.muurrock.be

Don't miss this week



Shutterstock

Urban BBQ

31 August, from noon, Kunstberg, Brussels, 02.375.96.08, www.urbanbbq.be

Urban BBQ
Here's one for the apartment dwellers: Brussels throws a huge barbecue for the whole city on Kunstberg, just down the hill from Warande Park. And there's no hot dogs here: they've hired five of the country's best chefs to whip up some truly unique outdoor eats. Didier de Roover and Kristof Begyn of Vilvoorde's Kijk Uit, for instance, will prepare marinated Alaskan salmon with shiitake mushrooms and spring onions, plus a salad of greens with lime and chilis. Crab and breast of duck is also on the menu, and you get all your food on one plate for €5. If you're still not convinced, there is live music, and the whole thing takes place under a huge canopy – just in case.

Ghent

Aanrijding in Moscou te Ledeburg:

Free open-air screening of the movie in the neighbourhood where it was filmed, plus live music and karaoke

AUG 29 from 18.00; film at 21.30 on Ledeburgplein www.circagent.be

Jazz in 't Park: 15th edition of this free outdoor jazz festival, featuring Moker Jazz Band, Mimi Verderame & the Victor Da Costa Quartet, Jacques Pirotton Quartet and more, plus Jazz on Film open-air screenings Until AUG 31 in Zuidpark, Zuidparklaan 09.269.46.00

Parkkaffee: Music, shows and children's entertainment Until AUG 31 at Parkkaffee, Groenstaakstraat 37 (Mariakerke) 09.227.99.94, www.parkkaffee.be

Tokyo Drums: Japanese music show Until NOV 5 at Capitole, Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5 0900.69.001, www.sherpa.be

Hasselt
Het Grote Verlangen: Flemish/Dutch literary festival with writers, poets and performers Until AUG 31 in various locations across Hasselt 011.26.17.87 www.literairmuseum.be

Leuven
Zomer van Sint-Pieter (Summer of Saint Peter): Weekday lunchtime classical and new music concerts Until AUG 29 12.15 at Sint-Pieterskerk, Grote Markt and 30CC-Wagehuys, Brusselsestraat 63 016.23.84.27, www.midis-minimes.be

Lovendegem
Boombalfestival: Music and dance festival for all ages with folk bands, entertainment and dance lessons AUG 28-31 at Festivalterrein Boterhoek, Boterhoek 8 www.boombalfestival.be

Ostend
Film Festival Ostend: the second edition of this festival that incorporates video gaming and television series into the traditional feature-film line-up. Features the programme Soundtrack of Our Lives plus a Master Selection by Flemish musician and filmmaker Tom Barman. Special appearance by the Dardenne brothers. AUG 28-SEPT 6 across Ostend www.filmfestivalostende.be

Stomp: dance percussion show Until AUG 31 at Kursaal Casino, Monacoplein 0900.69.900, www.musichall.be

Turnhout
Turnhoutse VRIJ-dagen: Free music festival with Don McLean, Soulsister, Ketnet Band and Helmut Lotti, among others AUG 29 20.30 (kids' programme from 15.30) on the Grote Markt www.turnhoutsevrijdagen.be

Watou
Poëziezomer (Poetry summer): Annual indoor and outdoor festival of contemporary art, architecture and poetry Until SEP 7 in venues across Watou www.poëziezomerswatou.be

INTERVIEW

Geert Bourgeois

Geert Bourgeois is the Flemish Minister of Administrative Affairs, Foreign Policy, Media and Tourism. That makes him the guy in charge of polishing Flanders' image abroad.

What does the brand "Flanders" mean to you?

In our international communication strategy, we selected six strong areas for Flanders as a basis for our position. These are openness, dynamism and multilingualism; *savoir-vivre*; the enormous diversity in such a small area in the centre of Europe; the advanced technology; our rich history and splendid historical cities; and, finally, the modern art, culture and design.

This is a lot to put into a single message, but it is difficult to choose between them. Besides, we constantly have to focus on different target groups, whether tourists, diplomats or foreign business people. On the basis of these six strong points, we can always pick out the right characteristics to speak to a target group. The logo that I designed is also fully based on this idea. Flanders is Flanders only due to a combination of these strong points. The logo is made up of a kind puzzle with six coloured parts all together pointing to our official flag, the lion of Flanders.

What is the value of this brand to Flanders?

The market value of a "nation brand" is particularly difficult to measure. In terms of economy and tourism, we can compare ourselves with other countries or federal states. But even for these partial aspects, there are so many factors such as geographical position, tourist attractions, air connections, economic situation and so



on. In my opinion, it is impossible to make a ranking of "nation brands" even if there are international marketing agencies that do this. Up to now, Flanders has not been listed because only independent countries have been compared.

Is public diplomacy important for Flanders right now?

Absolutely. Aside from the normal diplomacy of having good relations with other authorities, it is essential today for countries or federal states to communicate directly with target groups, whether they be tourists, foreign journalists, business people, or academics. Flanders informs and involves these people each in a specific way. A necessary element of this public diplomacy is involving your own people. The Flemish government is also trying to stimulate international contacts of various Flemish target groups, like in the fields of education and

journalism, via exchanges that send business experts to developing countries. Flanders organised cultural activities such as the Dutch-Flemish Low Lands festival this year in Hungary. We want to expand this project in South Africa and in New York.

What can Flanders do to strengthen its image abroad?

We can communicate clearly, openly and honestly as well as stimulate as much as possible contacts between Flemings and other people. Every Fleming is an ambassador for Flanders.

What is your reaction to the very negative articles about Flanders in the international press?

I put this down to a combination of a lack of information by international journalists as to the Belgian context and to intentional misinformation. In French-speaking sources, false information and

news is taken out of context and aired so as to sully the image of Flanders. It is not nice to read such things, but we must also not overestimate the consequences. Also, the people who use such twisted communication forget that it also reflects back on Belgium and Wallonia. These petty tactics do not help anyone.

Is there a way to fight back against poor reporting?

I made a choice to provide objective information channels to foreign journalists, and I regularly make time to answer their questions. The problem is that some stories are very difficult to get rid of. One such story, for instance, tells the tale of a woman from abroad falling on the street somewhere in Flanders. She shouts for help in French and, apparently, nobody helps her. For us, such stories are totally ridiculous, but they are still being told.

Are current political tensions between French and Dutch speakers having an effect on Flanders' image?

In all events, our brand awareness has not suffered. But whether or not there is an effect on our image is difficult to measure as there is no reference point for measurements. All in all, things are not so bad. And we have not seen any effect in terms of tourist statistics: 2007 was a record year for tourism in Flanders.

What is your answer to traditional criticism of separate promotion of Belgium's regions diluting and wasting money and effort?

Due to the bipolar character of Belgium in almost all domains, it is impossible to paint a solid picture of the country. The dispersal of competence for international affairs is a consequence of this lack of a solid Belgian image, not the cause. Most of the international policy aspects can be dealt with much more efficiently and specifically by the federal states. A good example is how Flanders has benefited in terms of attracting tourists and investment, as well as exports.

When it comes to brands, I believe that Flanders has a strong, consistent brand with a clear image. This can, in many areas, be promoted separately much more efficiently than in a Belgian framework. In terms of tourism, the wealth of our historical cities differs enormously from Wallonia with its splendid forests and castles. Also economically, we have totally different strong points than Wallonia. The same can be said for education, health care, public opinion, culture, language, innovation and so on.

Interview by Dafydd ab Iago

online

www.ministergeertbourgeois.be

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Georgia on their mind

"Georgia is a beautiful country with delicious wines, fantastic food and friendly people. When you look at it that way, it's no wonder the Russians wanted to take over."

Patrick Worms
Flemish PR consultant now
advising the Saakashvili
government

Policy review

"The despair grows greater every day."

Pieter De Gryse
Director Vluchtelingenwerk
Vlaanderen
commenting on the
government's new asylum
policy

Cool as a cucumber

"I still don't believe it. Blanka was the major favourite, but I'm always there at the big championships, and I'm always ready. I like the pressure."

Tia Hellebaut
after winning a gold medal
at the Beijing Olympics

Raoul Servais **Kamy Hat** **Boattrips**

Goedel Liekens **uitgeschakeld**

BodyWorlds **Gordel**

next week in Flanders Today