

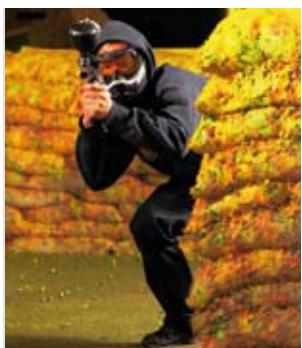
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Flanders' Open Monument Day lets visitors into normally secretive places, like archaeological sites, engine rooms, convents and water towers. Find out what goes on behind the scenes of your neighbourhood monument



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Gabriel Rios has changed his tune in the last year, writing new music with jazz pianist Jef Neve and percussionist Kobe Proesmans. We talk to the singer about this fruitful collaboration and his move to the Big Apple



**Action hero for a day** .....10  
Becoming an international sensation in the 1980s, paintball is still going strong in Flanders, where you'll find a surprising number of terrains, both indoor and out. Our journalist tells you what it's like to raise arms against your friends



#146

# For richer, for poorer



© Paul Hermans

**After the economy ministry released figures on the most- and least-expensive places to buy a house in Flanders, we set out to see if the towns are really so different**

ALAN HOPE

Sint-Martens-Latem is a peaceful, leafy village to the southeast of Ghent, on one of the prettiest stretches of the River Leie. It's bordered on one side by the busy Kortrijksesteenweg, but this stretch of the road is lined with dealerships for Audi and Chevrolet, not with a mattress store or a lumber yard. As you walk to the centre of town, there are a great many high hedges around, and garden walls. They may be rich, but they're also discreet. "You have the Leie which runs around, and then you have the golf club, and the centre is very small," explains Charlotte Laridon,

an estate agent for Engel & Völkers, which has an office on the Kortrijksesteenweg. "If you look around, you see that the properties are all large, on lots of land with large villas from the 1950s and '60s that have always belonged to the same families – rich industrial families who came to live here."

It hasn't changed much since the 1960s. According to figures released by the federal economy ministry last month, it costs more to buy a house in Sint-Martens-Latem (*pictured*) than anywhere else in Flanders.

► *continued on page 5*

## Clijsters wins over New Yorkers

LEO CENDROWICZ

Flemish tennis star Kim Clijsters has been boosting her fan base in New York as much as her tennis, as she progresses into the second week of the US Open. Defending champion Clijsters (*pictured*), who is already one of the most popular figures in the women's tennis circuit, crossed disciplines as she threw out the first pitch at a New York Mets game, a traditional honour for US Open champions.

On the court, meanwhile, she made short work of her old friend, Serbia's Ana Ivanovic, to earn a quarter-final place. However, Clijsters, seeded second this year behind Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki, has failed to go beyond the quarter-finals in her last two Grand Slam tournaments.

Flanders' other Grand Slam hopeful, 15th-seeded Yanina Wickmayer fought off a match point in the third-

set tiebreaker to beat Patty Schnyder in the third round. As Flanders Today went to press, Wickmayer, a semi-finalist last year, was due to face 31st-seeded Kaia Kanepi in the fourth round. ♦



► [www.usopen.org](http://www.usopen.org)

## Government talks break down

**"A missed opportunity," says Di Rupo, as the Dutch and French speakers reach a stalemate over Brussels**

ALAN HOPE

Seven-party talks to try to create a new government for Belgium have broken down. French-speaking socialist Elio Di Rupo, charged by the king with finding enough common ground to form a coalition, last week went to the royal palace in Laken to hand in his resignation for the second time. This time the king took it under advisement. Di Rupo said he would now be negotiating as chairman of the PS party but would approach the talks "constructively".

Meanwhile, in an effort to break the impasse, the king has appointed André Flahaut and Danny Pieters, the speakers of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively, to bring the party leaders back to the table in a more positive frame of mind. Flahaut represents Di Rupo's PS, while Pieters belongs to Bart De Wever's N-VA – the winner in Flanders of the June elections.

► *continued on page 3*

## OFFSIDE

### To beer or not to beer

© Shutterstock



If you're asking Belgians, the question is not if they like beer, but where and in what conditions. So it appears, anyway, according to the latest Beer Barometer, issued last week by the Beer & Society Information Centre. The survey was carried out at the end of July among online visitors to websites of three local newspapers.

First the bad news: in a restaurant, nearly 67% of Belgians, almost exactly two out of three, will choose wine with their meals; only 25% will choose beer. But beer drinking is in the ascendance – food and beer pairing is the latest fad in the restaurant industry. The sommelier of the future will be expected to know his Chimay from his Chateauneuf du Pape.

Now the good news: when they go to a café, 94% of those surveyed would choose beer. You may well raise an eyebrow at such results, but consider that nearly 10% of people drink no alcohol at all in a café. Somehow, it appears that some tee-totalers are drinking beer. And nobody is drinking any of those rows and rows of alcoholic drinks every café has lined up behind the bar.

When asked what they prefer to drink at home, 40% of people (mainly French-speaking and male) said beer; the same number (mainly Dutch-speaking and female) said they preferred non-alcoholic drinks. The share of wine is down from 22% to 18%, presumably under the influence of Flemish women.

That being said, the preferences of Belgians are clear: of those who prefer beer, the prize goes to pils, though the share is falling from 52% in 2005 to only 36.5% now. Strong blond beers like Leffe have risen over the same period from 7% to nearly 14%. Blanche, Trappist and abbey beers have all risen. Belgians may be drinking less beer, but they're drinking it more discerningly.

## FLANDERS TODAY

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Editor: Derek Blyth

Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw

News editor: Alan Hope

Agenda: Sarah Crew, Robyn Boyle

Art director: Michel Didier

Prepress: Corelio P&P

Contributors: Rebecca Benoot, Robyn Boyle, Leo Cendrowicz, Courtney Davis, Stéphanie Duval, Suki Jenkins, Anna Jenkinson, Katrien Lindemans, Alistair MacLean, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Emma Portier Davis, Saffina Rana, Christophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton

General manager: Christine Van den Berghe

Publisher: Corelio Publishing NV

Editorial address:

Gossetlaan 30

1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22

editorial@flanderstoday.eu

Subscriptions:

subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu

or sign up online at [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu)

Advertising: Evelyne Fregonese

02.373.83.57

advertising@flanderstoday.eu

Verantwoordelijke uitgever:

Derek Blyth

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FLANDERS TODAY  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2010

## News in brief

Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits marked the start of the new school year last week with the launch of a working document on **safety in schools**. Municipalities can apply for subsidies from the Flemish government for works carried out to make the surroundings of schools safer if they lie close to a main road. The document also lays out a programme of cooperation between municipal authorities, school and police and gives some examples of best-practice in making the environment as safe as possible for parents and children arriving and leaving on foot or by bike. "It's up to everyone to make an effort to make sure children are delivered to school safely," Crevits said. "This document will help with that."

Visitors to Antwerp's new justice palace, known locally as the Vlinderpaleis (Butterfly Palace) because of its distinctive architecture, will be able to leave their children at a **new crèche** in an attempt to avoid the frequent disturbances caused by visitors with small children. "Sometimes it's like a playground in here," says Jacques Mahieu, president of the court of first instance.

A 13-year-old boy last week intervened to prevent a woman **from setting fire to the home** of her love rival in Ostend. The woman from Jabbeke poured petrol over the front door, windows and car of the other woman, who was at home at the time. The boy saw what she was doing and asked a passerby to call the police. The woman abandoned her plan and fled but was later picked up by Ostend police.

Belgacom has **increased upload speeds** for internet clients to a maximum of 4.5 Mb/s, with download speeds for more expensive packages going up to 30 Mb/s. The company said there would be no

increase in charges. Meanwhile, Scarlet, an internet service provider owned by Belgacom, is to scrap limits on data transfers on all of its packages from 1 October.

The Erasmus University College in Brussels will this year become the first higher education establishment in Flanders to offer **courses in forensic research**. So far, 27 students (possibly inspired by the CSI television series) have signed up for the course. Traditionally, forensic research has been the province of graduates in other scientific disciplines who follow dedicated professional courses. Never before in Flanders has the option been offered to undergraduates.

The Brussels public transport authority MIVB has launched a newsletter for young people aged 13 to 18 to provide **information on mobility** in the capital. The first issue deals with new control measures on the metro and a campaign to show more respect on the bus.

■ [www.mivb.be](http://www.mivb.be)

## FACE OF FLANDERS

### Jef Ulburghs

Catholic priests, let's face it, are not at the highest point of their reputation these days. So it's refreshing to read a lot of kind, admiring words about one of their number, the Limburg priest and social activist Jef Ulburghs, who died last week at age 88.

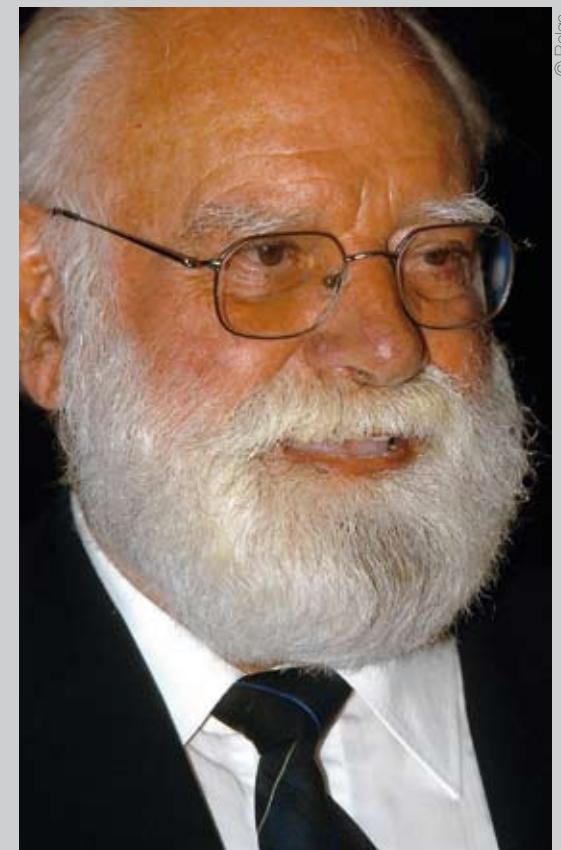
Ulburghs, according to a commentator on one news website, recalling Matthew 25:40, was "the kind of priest who perfectly understood Jesus' message: Whatever you do to the least of mine, you do to me". Another obituary referred to him as a "liberation theologian". The two notions are not far apart.

Ulburghs was born in Heusden-Zolder, where his father was a livestock dealer. He studied in Beringen and then decided to become a priest, inspired by the work of Jozef Cardijn, the founder of the Catholic Workers Youth movement who later went on to become a cardinal. Ulburghs studied for ordination at the seminary in Liège.

His first posts were in the Liège area, until Hasselt became its own bishopric in 1967. He then moved back to Limburg, bringing the experience he gained working with coal and steel workers in Liège.

Ulburghs joined the picket lines of the miners' strike in 1970, along with a hunger strike in Chile protesting at the North-South divide. His first elected post saw him on the city council of Genk as an independent socialist, where he continued to fight for the rights of the working classes. In 1984, he was elected to the European Parliament. In the meantime, he helped to set up the People's Health organisation which provided health care, much to the dislike of the medical establishment, to poor people.

Later he was attracted away by Agalev, the Flemish green party now known as Groen!. With that party, he sat on the Flemish Council (now the Flemish Parliament) and the Genk city council. His various salaries were donated to social causes.



© Belga

Through the years, Ulburghs wrote or contributed to 14 books and continued studying, earning a doctorate in political science at the age of 83. He once said: "The only place to discover God is in the facial expression of the man who suffers, struggles and still hopes." Ulburghs died at home in Heusden-Zolder, surrounded by his family.

## Caught in the act

Angry pedestrians and cyclists have decided to name and shame drivers who park on pavements or bike paths by posting photos and number plates to a new website. But the initiative has been criticised by the Privacy Commission  
→ <http://brussels.mybikelane.com>



## Elio Di Rupo: "Intransigence", De Wever: "Wall of resistance"

→ continued from page 1

The negotiations broke down over the question of extra subsidies for Brussels, something the city has been demanding for years and which most observers, including the credit rating agency Standard & Poor's, agree is much needed. The Flemish parties insisted that extra funds depended on the splitting of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV) electoral district and a revision of the financing law that governs the flow of money from the federal level to the regions and the communities.

### THE WEEK IN FIGURES



#### €65 million

damages demanded from the Belgian state by 13 people whose mothers took the drug thalidomide between 1957 and 1962, leading to severe birth defects. The claimants say the state allowed the drug onto the market without screening for possible dangers

#### €1,381

average debt owed by every man, woman and child in Flanders, according to interior ministry. The debt is highest (€1,544) in Antwerp province and lowest (€1,123) in Limburg

#### 300

fluorescent condoms offered as first prize in a photo competition run by social networking site Netlog and sex health advisory Sensoa. Senders of original – and non-pornographic – photos of condoms will be rated by visitors to the site, with the winner getting both the prize and the honour of being named "safe sex friend".

[www.allesoverseks.be](http://www.allesoverseks.be)

#### 60 seconds

time gained by trams passing the busy Meiserplein in Schaerbeek if a tunnel were to be constructed, at a cost of €200 million. The cost-benefit has been rejected by Brussels mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels, and the tunnel proposal shelved

#### 1,016,362

people affected if a flood like the one that hit Pakistan should happen here, according to a website designed by 12 young advertising hopefuls working for the Red Cross. The site allows you to fill in your own postcode to see if you would survive the disaster. [www.overleefijipakistan.be](http://www.overleefijipakistan.be)

In this context, the regions – Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital – are important to differentiate from the communities – French-speaking and Flemish. Brussels is a region, but the people who live there belong to one or the other community. The Flemish parties refused to allow Brussels to receive a "blank cheque" and insisted the subsidy – €500 million in the first year – be conditional on a rewriting of the financing law. The proposal from Di Rupo (pictured) had €250 million tied to a renegotiation of the financing law, but made the other €250 million a year conditional only on the splitting of BHV. The Flemish socialists and Greens were willing to accept that, but N-VA and the Christian Democrats (CD&V) party of acting prime minister Yves Leterme (as well as Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters) could not. "The large majority of the parties around the table made it clear they wanted an agreement," said Di Rupo later. "We were very close to the finishing line. We have missed the opportunity to reform the country in a positive way."

The French-speaking side is in no hurry to see the financing law changed because it would almost inevitably lead to a smaller subsidy for Brussels. Di Rupo admitted that the French-speaking side may have been deaf to Flemish concerns in the past but that now the reverse seems to be the case. "Apparently we didn't hear the message being sent to us clearly enough in the past," he said. "But today we realise that some Flemish parties in turn are making that same mistake, refusing to understand

what it is the French-speaking parties are defending."

Di Rupo described the Flemish intransigence over the refinancing question as a willingness to see Brussels and Wallonia "pauperised". And he maintained that De Wever had gone back on an earlier pledge not to raise the financing law question. De Wever denied this. "I met a wall of resistance," he said. "I can only conclude that [reform of the financing law] wasn't what they wanted. They don't want fiscal autonomy. They don't want to be responsible for their own expenditure. They just see it as 'people getting poorer'. I can't accept that."

For all that it ended in chaos, the negotiations did manage to find some common ground on most subjects:

- The splitting of BHV, leaving the Halle-Vilvoorde portion as a Flemish electoral district, with Brussels as a district on its own
- The creation of a High Level Group to set up the review of the financing law, with one representative of each party and two experts, as well as support from the National Bank
- A timetable for reform of the financing law: first report in October, second in January, final report and political decision in March 2011
- Powers over spending of €15 billion transferred from the federal government to the regions
- A series of measures regarding Brussels, including a new community commission to oversee the payment of child support and



© Reuters

part of health care, and proposals to ensure bilingual reception in police stations and hospitals

- A three-region agreement covering roads, mobility and public works in and around the capital

According to the French-speaking parties, those sections of the talks can now be reset to zero: what may seem to have been agreed now falls with the rest of the negotiations. "This is regrettable for everyone who was looking for a solution," said Caroline Gennez, chair of the Flemish socialists.

"We worked hard to find a solution," said Wouter Beke, chairman of CD&V, "but in the end it seems it was impossible." ♦

### FIFTH COLUMN

#### Condemned to each other

The preliminary *preformation* talks on forming a government have entered a new phase. Now that *preformateur* Elio Di Rupo has thrown in the towel, the king has sent in André Flahaut of the French-speaking socialists (PS) and Danny Pieters of the Flemish Nationalists (N-VA) as mediators. Flahaut and Pieters are well-respected within their own ranks, but no-one expects them to find a solution to the deadlock. Their appointment is mostly a smokescreen to allow the key players – PS's Di Rupo and N-VA's Bart De Wever – to reach a new understanding.

The king's move makes one thing clear: in spite of their differences, it is up to PS and N-VA, winners of the federal elections to the south and north of the language border, to form a new government. This marks an end to speculation about the liberals joining the federal government. (Until now only N-VA, socialists, Christian-democrats and greens took part in the talks.)

Last week, Didier Reynders, president of the French-speaking liberals (MR), showed himself more than eager to join in. His offer on state reform went much further than anything the other French-speaking parties were willing to concede. Open VLD, the Flemish liberals, showed more restraint, but it is hard to see how they could refuse to join a government – if invited.

From De Wever's point of view, taking the liberals on board makes sense. De Wever's economic instincts are for right-wing recipes, often inspired by the employers' organisation Voka. Cutting back on unemployment benefits, reforming employment regulations and reducing corporate taxes are, however, a hard thing to do when sharing power with socialists. A satisfying agreement on institutional matters might make this pill easier to swallow, but so far there are no signs of that.

Bringing in the liberals would be bad news for the Flemish socialists, SPA, who would no longer be needed mathematically to make up a majority. Moreover, they even risk being left out of the Flemish government, too, as they are isolated there on the issue of the Oosterweel plan. To make matters worse, De Wever, who abhors socialism as it is, was greatly irritated when SPA president Caroline Gennez "missed a chance to shut up" after the recent breakdown in the federal talks.

But the Flemish liberals have been given the cold shoulder. It looks like the king has not forgotten who started all this. It was, after all, Open VLD who caused the federal government to fall over the issue of BHV. King Albert obviously saw no point in inviting the killjoys to the party.

ANJA OTTE



Researchers from the Institute for Astronomy in Leuven have discovered the secret behind a cloud of water vapour surrounding a dying star. The cloud was first spotted in 2001, and astronomers assumed it was caused by the destruction of comets. Now new data gathered using the Herschel telescope reveals the vapour is too hot (up to 800 degrees Celsius) to have been caused that way. Instead, according to Dr Leen Decin, leading the team, ultraviolet light from stars in the vicinity is able to penetrate the dusty envelope that surrounds the star, known as IRC+10216, and break down molecules of silicon monoxide and carbon monoxide, releasing oxygen atoms which then pair with hydrogen to form water. "This is a good example of how better instruments can change our picture completely," said Dr Decin, whose paper is published in the latest issue of the magazine *Nature*. The discovery could help explain how water vapour arrived on Earth.

→ [www.esa.int](http://www.esa.int)

#### Gordel goes forth in the sunshine as talks collapse

This year's Gordel walking and cycling event in the Flemish municipalities ringing Brussels was marked by fine weather, but also by a return of the vandalism that has marred previous years, as protesters against the Flemish character of the event threw nails onto the road to damage bicycle tyres. Despite that, more than 80,000 people took part.

Earlier, the head of Bioso, which organises the event, said this year's Gordel (which means "belt") could be the last, if politicians were able to reach an agreement on splitting the electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (see main story, p1). By the time Sunday came, however, that possibility had been ruled out for the time being.

Elsewhere, the French-speaking mayor of the Brussels commune of Oudergem warned that a campaign running on De Lijn buses to encourage people to learn Dutch was in "dubious taste" and risked making Brussels, where many De Lijn buses run, more Flemish. ♦



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# For richer, for poorer

## Ronse is renovating its old textile workers' housing to try to appeal to new buyers

→ *continued from page 1*

"Latem is very central," continues Laridon. "In no time you're at the coast, but you're just as quickly in Brussels. There's also a fast connection to Kortrijk, and the same for Antwerp. In my opinion, that combination, together with the more picturesque aspect and the whole atmosphere of the village, is what makes it so attractive."

She shows me a prospectus for a house at €360,000: four bedrooms on 600 square metres of land. Another offers a villa on six acres for €2.85 million. The range is clearly wide. The average price for a house here is €345,000.

"There aren't many villas for sale here," she explains. "They're kept within the family and passed down the generations, so the supply is very small."

For Latem mayor Freddy Massenhove, the high price of houses is a double-edged sword. "On the one hand, it's a sign of prestige, an indication that people consider living here something worthwhile, something they appreciate. It's a measure of our worth. And one benefit of a well-off population is that we can keep local taxes very low."

On the other hand, it can be a problem.

House prices are typically pushed up by newcomers willing to pay a premium to live in a particular area for whatever reason – in Latem's case, the location, the bucolic setting, the upscale amenities, including its high-end golf course. High prices spread to other properties in the area, until eventually prices are up across the board.

That's good news for sellers, but not for buyers, and particularly bad news for locals. The chances of a young couple getting a foot on the first rung of the ladder in a place like Latem are slim, so local young people have no option but to move away.

"We see that in the population figures; young people leave by the time they're 25, and only start coming back again

after the age of 40," says mayor Massenhove. Latem is one of 131 municipalities in Flanders that gives priority to buyers who can demonstrate a link to the area. But priority doesn't help if you can't afford the properties in the first place.

The city is now working with a developer on a housing project called Hooglatem "that will provide affordable housing, with 450 homes planned over the next 20 years," Massenhove says. "The first phase of 65 homes has been granted a permit. There are also about 45 low-priced homes to come in the centre of town."

Philippe Buysse, secretary of the Royal Latem Golf Club, says a "good number" of his members live in the local area, confirming the idea that the club is a big attraction for people moving to the village. "Latem is a special place because of its location, and the golf club is part of that environment," he says.

The club's setting, surrounded by villas, makes it "exclusive," he says. At the same time, the fact that those villas back onto one of the smartest golf clubs in the country makes them all the more desirable.

### Meanwhile, on the other side of the tracks...

To the naked eye, there's no reason why Ronse should be the cheapest place in Flanders for houses, on average a remarkably low €113,000. The prospect as you come into the East Flemish town by train isn't the most salubrious – but, then again, railways generally don't give the best view of a town.

The area around the station and the nearby centre are flowery and remarkably clean. Yes, there are more downscale parts of town – the strip-mall along César Snoeklaan is lined with the usual suspects: Lidl, Zeeman, JBC. On the whole, however, it's the perfect example of a genteel provincial town.

Yves Deworm is alderman for housing, and he's quick to point out that if you're looking for an

ordinary terraced house, villa or apartment in Ronse, you'll pay about the same as in many other places in Flanders. But Ronse – just 30 kilometres from Sint-Martens-Latem – has a special feature that pulls average prices down.

"Ronse is an old textile town," he tells me. "There are still a lot of small workers' houses dating from about 1900, grouped around the factories. Many of them are now standing empty because they're not really the kind of thing that attracts even young people."

This is because the houses are only about 4.5 metres wide, "so the only way you'd have something liveable is if you knock two of them together – if you can find two side by side," Deworm says.

In addition, the houses, now more than a century old, are far from meeting the energy and environmental expectations of new buyers. "We've tried renovating 35 of the houses, but we just don't have the resources to do more," explains Deworm. One local estate agent has one for sale at only €55,000 – but it only has a floor area of 56 square metres, and it needs fixing up.

At the upper end of the scale, you'll easily find villas selling at €450,000, not far off the average price for Sint-Martens-Latem.

The average price for an area may give a broad general picture, but it doesn't tell the whole story. Between the top and the bottom of the rankings, there's less difference than bare figures would lead you to expect.

A local estate agent explained that there's another problem about property in Ronse: there's too much of it, and properties tend to stay on the market for longer. "We don't know why that is," she says. ♦

→ <http://bestat.economie.fgov.be>



Numbers can be deceiving: Ronse, with the cheapest housing in Flanders, is no poverty-stricken town

### Meanwhile, in Brussels and Wallonia

The cheapest houses in Flanders are not the cheapest in the country, and the same goes for the dearest.

Houses in Ronse, which lies in East Flanders, just on the border with Wallonia, cost an average of €113,000, the least expensive in Flanders. The lowest average price in Wallonia is around €107,000. Villas in Ronse cost on average €212,000, but everywhere in Wallonia is cheaper (apart from some more upscale municipalities around Namur and Liège).

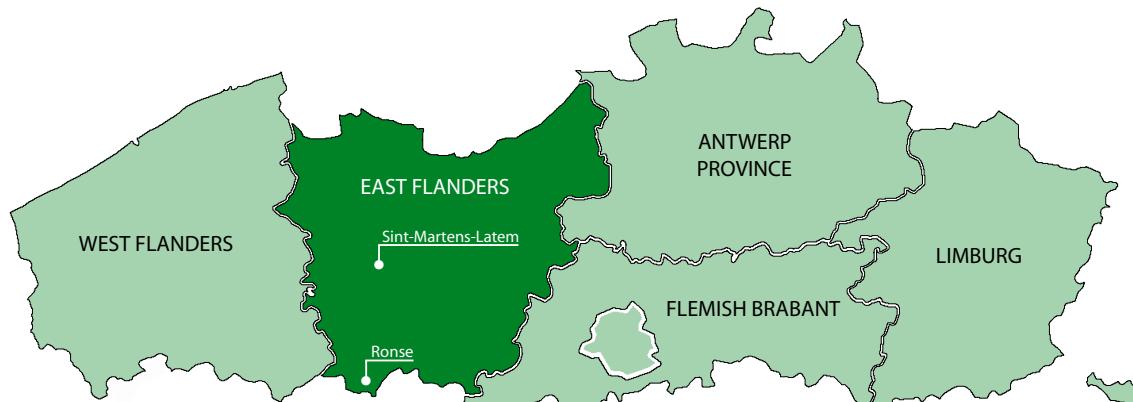
Apartments in Ronse cost on average €146,000; in Wallonia they're on average less expensive, except in Walloon Brabant. As Ronse lies so close to Wallonia, the competition has a downward effect on prices in Ronse.

Sint-Martens-Latem is not, by the same token, the most expensive place to live in Belgium. The average price in Latem of €345,000 is easily topped by houses in Brussels. The average price in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe, for instance, is a whopping €428,000.

Apartments in Latem cost on average €464,000 but that reflects the extreme scarcity; in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe, where they are more abundant, they cost €275,000. And a villa in Latem at €588,000 is nearly half the price of something comparable in Ukkel at €1,022,000.

In the villa category, Latem, in fact, also lies far behind Knokke-Heist on the coast, where the average price is no less than €1,114,000. Villas also cost more in Kraainem, Flemish Brabant, and about the same as Latem in Brasschaat, Antwerp province, a municipality that attracts many Dutch expats.

In Knokke-Heist, where there are many apartments for sale, the average price is about €40,000 less than in Latem. An apartment in Brussels will cost on average €186,000, but that figure combines the lows (Sint-Joost-ten-Node at €123,000) and the highs (Sint-Pieters-Woluwe at €275,000).



# Flanders' brain gain

**From a Czech village to Ghent's top bio-tech institute, plant science mastermind Jiří Friml is raising the bar of Flemish research**

TANIA RABESANDRATANA

Jiří Friml was born in a small Moravian village in the Czech Republic's south east, a long way from the Flanders Inter-university Institute of Biotechnology (VIB). But, thanks to becoming a trailing spouse and to Flanders' Odysseus programme, he landed there, garnering the institute's international attention and hundreds of thousands in research awards. Friml (pictured) studied biochemistry in Brno, Czech Republic, before heading to Germany, where he earned a PhD at the prestigious Max-Planck institute in Köln. Only one year later, the Volkswagen Foundation awarded him a €1.7 million grant to set up his own research group in Tübingen. In 2007, he took a professorship offer in Göttingen – until life got in the way.

"My wife is also a plant scientist, and she was always following me," Friml explains. So when his spouse found a position at the department of Plant Systems Biology (PSB) at the VIB, an institute of Ghent University, Friml also looked for opportunities in Flanders.

"I just got lucky that the Odysseus programme was launched that same year," he recalls. The Flemish brain-gain scheme awarded the biologist about €7 million over five years to build his team. Three years later, Friml's research group at the PSB boasts about 20 staff members – twice as many as his previous team.

"The VIB at Ghent University is one of the best institutes for plant research in Europe, certainly one of the top three," says Friml. "It has good people, excellent equipment and a good international visibility. It also has professional staff who take over as much administrative work as possible." It sounds unimportant, but scientists not burdened by admin can dedicate most of their time to actual research: analysing results, setting up collaborations and writing scientific articles. Last, but not least, his "two daughters are extremely happy in Flemish schools."

The Czech researcher is now 37 and has pretty much reached the top. In June, he received the €750,000 Körber European Science Award 2010. "Career-wise it's true that there aren't many challenges left for me," he says with a smile, "but what drives me primarily is a desire to understand how things work."

## The secret life of plants

Friml studies how plants develop and adapt to the world around them, focusing on the transport and distribution of a plant hormone called auxin. In 2003, he and his team discovered that auxin forms gradients in plants: it has increasing concentrations in different parts of the plants. This determines development processes such as the formation of embryos or flowers or the branching of roots and shoots. "We formulated the concept of the asymmetrical distribution of auxin, which exists in all higher plants," Friml explains. He studies how this signal varies depending on light and gravity, for instance.

Such fundamental research can lead to important applications in agricultural sciences. Some private companies at VIB in Ghent are interested in applying Friml's findings in plant models to commercial crops like corn and rice. For instance, plants compete with other plants to access resources, including water, food and light. "In the field, you don't want plants to spend energy to compete with their neighbours," Friml explains. "On the contrary, you want each plant to use energy to form leaves, in order to produce sugar and fruit."

By modifying the production of auxin, scientists could produce transgenic crops, like plants with longer roots that could reach deep water resources or roots with more branches to capture scarce nutrients. Friml's team also discovered a previously unknown signalling pathway for auxin. "It's a bit like finding a new effect and pathway for insulin" in human beings, Friml notes.

There is still a lot of work to be done to understand the inner workings of the hormone signalling in plants. The biologist remains passionate about studying the vegetal world and about fundamental research in general. "We shouldn't forget that many fundamental discoveries come from studying plants: the discovery of cells and genes for instance," he points out. "Plant research is useful per se to understand how living organisms function. In fundamental research, knowledge comes from unexpected directions." And can lead to unexpected applications. ♦



## The Odysseus programme

In 2006, the Flemish Government launched the five-year Odysseus programme to attract Europe's best brains to Flanders. With an overall budget of €57 million, the programme has two arms: one for established researchers who are already leaders in their field and the other for promising scientists in the early stages of their careers. All grants help researchers to set up projects that will enhance Flanders' international scientific profile. So far, more than half of Odysseus funds have gone to biological and medical sciences, but researchers from all disciplines are welcome to apply, including social sciences, humanities and engineering. The next deadline for proposals is 1 December 2010. Potential candidates must first approach one of five universities – the Catholic University of Leuven, Antwerp University, Ghent University, Hasselt University or the Free University of Brussels (VUB) – to see who could host their research project. The host universities then submit applications to the Research Foundation Flanders.

► [www.fwo.be](http://www.fwo.be)

## When doors creak open • Open Monument Day looks at the four elements

ALAN HOPE

Hundreds of buildings across Flanders are open to the public free of charge on 12 September, the annual Open Monument Day. The theme this year is the four elements – fire, water, air and earth. More than 200 Flemish municipalities are taking part in the event – 16 more than last year. The packed programme includes more than 500 monuments, archaeological and landscape sites, as well as hundreds of activities across the region.

### Fire

Flemish Brabant represents fire in the shape of the newly restored Vuurmolen, or Fire Mill, in Overijse, which used to mill grain. In Leuven, meanwhile, the Institute for Thermotechnics at Arenberg Castle will be open for guided visits, which will take in a working steam engine and a jet engine.

### Water

Water is represented by bus trips to sites in Bilzen, Riemst, Lanaken and

Voeren in Limburg province, including water towers, springs and the banks of the Maas river.

### Earth

Earth is represented in Antwerp province by the series of works that have been going on since 1950 in the De Zegge area near Geel, where a former marshland was drained and made available for agriculture, leaving behind a new landscape of woodland, heath and hayfields.

### Air

Steam is what happens when fire turns water into air, and steam power is on show in the Kortrijk area of West Flanders. Visitors can tour a distillery, a flax producer and a linen processor, all of which were once equipped with steam-driven machinery.

De Lijn is offering unlimited travel by tram or bus throughout Flanders on Open Monument Day for a flat price of €2.50.

► <http://openmonumenten.zita.be>



The machine room of the Leuven Institute for Thermotechnics

# Belgium has €61 billion in black economy

**"Shadow economy" is the fifth largest in Europe, according to new study**

ALAN HOPE

Belgium's black economy is worth an estimated €61 billion, according to a study carried out on behalf of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). That puts it in fifth place among developed nations (see table).

The study was carried out by Professor Friedrich Schneider of the University of Linz in Austria, an expert on the black economy, or what he calls "shadow economy", defined as economic activities that circumvent government regulation or taxation. The main reason for entering the shadow economy is to avoid paying tax and other charges on wages, but it is also attractive to avoid regulation (common in the construction industry) or to allow the employment of workers who are not permitted to work, and can therefore be employed more cheaply. These cases are often combined, so, for instance, a contractor might employ asylum seekers so he can pay them low rates, avoid social security and ignore safety rules.

The economic crisis has had a widespread effect on the black economy, as people whose earnings have gone down (or failed to go up

sufficiently) attempt to make up for it by increasing their shadow earnings. In the OECD countries as a whole, the average size of the shadow economy, expressed as a percentage of GDP, has gone up from 13.3% in 2008 to 14% in 2010. In Belgium, the share went up from 17.5% to 17.9%, which represents the equivalent of €61 billion circulating in the economy out of the reach of any regulation.

The Schneider figures correspond to estimates produced earlier this year by the socialist trade union ABVV, which said that tax evasion alone was costing the treasury €20 to €24 billion a year, or 7% of GDP. That figure comes close to the €25 billion hole in the federal budget the government will have to plug in the coming years.

The report lacks a breakdown of those sectors where the shadow economy is most prevalent because the data was not available, Schneider said. However he did provide a breakdown for Germany, Austria and Switzerland which showed that construction was by far the biggest problem sector, followed by the motor trade, the catering industry, entertainment and personal services,



© Shutterstock

which includes hairdressers and cleaning personnel.

Asked why they had recourse to the shadow economy, the main reason among those polled in the developing countries was too much government regulation, or what Schneider calls "tax rebellion": people feel the government is wasting enough of their money and refuse to give them more. The poor provision of services in the countries of southern Europe is a perennial complaint. The high-tax economies of Scandinavia are also clear targets for tax rebellion. The arrival of Belgium in fifth place

on the table, meanwhile, should give the new government, when it is agreed, food for thought. ♦

#### Black economy as a percentage of GDP

Greece	25.2%
Italy	22.2
Spain	19.8
Portugal	19.7
Belgium	17.9
Sweden	15.6
Norway	15.4
Germany	14.7
Denmark	14.4
Finland	14.3

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Autos • Sales boom

New car sales in Belgium leapt by 25% in August to 37,429 vehicles, boosted by the government's "ecobonus" subsidies. The latest result brings the total for the first eight months of the year to some 400,000 cars, or 17% more than for the same period in 2009. Best-selling brands for the year so far are Renault, up 26%; Peugeot, 20% higher; and Volkswagen, increasing some 30%. The industry expects to reach 500,000 vehicle sales by November, which is well on the way to a record year. A total of 6.7 million vehicles are registered in Belgium, including 420,000 motorbikes and 700,000 trucks.

### Dredging • Deme

Antwerp-based dredging company Deme has won a contract worth €261 million to build two offshore wind farms located 32 kilometres off the north coast of the Netherlands. The deal comes a week after the company finalised contracts worth €250 million in Russia and Angola.

### Economy • Confidence

Consumer confidence rose in August to its highest level in almost three years as economic indicators improved again. Meanwhile, the National Bank indicator on future business prospects was also higher last month.

### Gas Transport • Fluxys

The national gas transport operator Fluxys is to acquire a 19% stake in the German Wingas share of the North European Gas Pipeline, which will bring Russian gas to Europe. The company is also considering the acquisition of a 25% share in a gas terminal to be built in Dunkirk, France. The project is likely to compete with anticipated developments at the Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) terminal in Zeebrugge, barely 75 kilometres from Dunkirk.

### Pharmaceuticals • Thrombogenics

Leuven-based biotechnology company Thrombogenics is poised to bring its first medicine to the market to cure ocular deficiencies after completing the required testing procedures. The company will introduce its approval requests to the US Federal Drug Administration and to the European Emea authority shortly.

### Public finances • Banks

Belgian banks have paid the treasury some €700 million in taxes and guarantees as compensation for the state bailout during the financial crisis of 2008-2009. This welcome boost to the public finances includes dividends paid by BNP Paribas on the stake held by the state in the French-owned bank.

## Floraliën going to Taipei

MARTIN BANKS

The Ghent Floraliën has been chosen to participate at a new international horticulture event in Taipei later this year. The International Horticulture Exposition in the Taiwanese capital will bring together the world's leading gardeners and is expected to attract some six million visitors during its November to April run.

A spokesman for the Floraliën, which organises the major international flower and plant event every five years at Flanders Expo, said that the occasion offers a rare opportunity to showcase the best of Flemish horticulture and gardening products. It will also be an important chance to develop business opportunities with exhibitors from the estimated 25 other countries represented in Taipei.



Displays from this year's Floraliën in Ghent

## Besix under suspicion

Belgium's biggest building contractor, Besix Group, is suspected of falsifying its result over a period of more than 10 years, according to *De Tijd* financial newspaper. Besix is alleged by *De Tijd* to have systematically hidden earnings from subsidiaries in the Middle East between 1990 and 2001, during which time "tens of millions of euros" in profits went unreported.

The company was recently reported to have won a contract to build a hospital in Abu Dhabi at a cost of

€560 million. It was also selected to build the new Utrecht central station.

The lawyer for the company denied there was anything illegal and referred to the case as "an accounting matter". The prosecutor is said to be considering bringing charges against 75-year-old Paul De Meester, former chairman of the group and a familiar figure on other boards across the country, together with an unnamed member of the Stulemeijer family, which originally set up the group. ♦

## Dexia credit line attacked

A Flemish minister and a local charity have attacked a high-interest loan aimed at students. The loan, which involves a 13% interest charge, is being offered by Dexia, the bank chaired by former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene. The rate was described as "perverse" by Welzijnzorg (Welfare Care), which battles poverty. The high price of the product is in direct opposition to the needs of the target group, the charity said – those who need help with

school and study costs. Flemish education minister Pascal Smet commented that the credit was unnecessary in Flanders thanks to measures like the maximum bill, which limits the amount parents have to pay for expenses during a school year. A Dexia spokesperson said the credit line has been in existence for years but was not previously marketed to students. ♦

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# The dangerous return

Just ahead of a new album release, Gabriel Rios is embracing the unknown in America

LISA BRADSHAW

Hearts were broken last May. Gabriel Rios, the exceedingly talented Latin lover of so many Flemish women's (and not a few men's) dreams was moving to New York. He came here 15 years ago to make his fortune, and now that he's made it, he's abandoning us for the Big Apple, taking his romantic guitar riffs, star-making smile and best-selling singles with him. This was an easy scenario to conjure, but in fact, Rios is doing the opposite. He's going to the city where dreams are made to start all over again. "I want to be in that place where you just have your sound, and these people have probably never heard of you."

Rios followed a girl to Flanders in the mid 1990s and stayed to make music. He was successful immediately. "Maybe it has to do with the fact that I'm the only Puerto Rican here," he tells me in his trademark quiet, dulcet voice. "The songs were sort of exotic."

Although he has only two albums and a just a few recognisable songs – most notably "Broad Daylight" and "Angelhead" – he consistently sells out show after show and draws giant crowds to festival stages to hear his sometimes understated, sometimes upbeat Latin-infused pop, with hints of jazz and plenty of electronics. With numerous television and radio appearances – and now a collaboration with jazz and classical pianist Jef Neve and percussionist Kobe Proesmans – Flemish audiences simply never tire of him.

Which is why, contrary to what you read a few months ago, the 32-year-old has not left Belgium behind. He is rather splitting his time between the city that never sleeps and Ghent, the city that raised him to be a singer.

**Lisa Bradshaw:** You were still a teenager when you came to Belgium from Puerto Rico, but you had already played guitar in a band.

**Gabriel Rios:** Yeah, it was sort of like a punk rock band, but not very dangerous [laughs]. Then I started getting interested in weirder stuff, and that's how I got in contact with Belgian music, which back then was the weirder stuff, like dEUS. I thought, if this strange blend is on the radio, I can do it, too. And I saw Belgium as European, so I thought it was this huuuuuge place!

Then all of a sudden, I met this girl from Belgium. I've talked a lot in the press about meeting this girl. When I think about it now – I don't want to destroy this romantic tale, but what went with that was also a feeling of wanting to go somewhere drastically different. Europe for me at that time was still a very romantic place. So I enrolled in the art school in Ghent. It gave me purpose. I studied painting and sculpture and then made a record.

#### Just like that?

I met Jo Bogaert [another expat, Bogaert came to Flanders from the US and founded the band Techtronic, whose "Pump Up the



*Jam* was a world-wide dance hit], and he introduced me to samplers and beats. I made both the albums like that. It was easy in the sense that everything started to work, and I could go from one thing to another. In New York, this kind of thing would have been impossible. Here I could take my time to find my way. Music here is a big deal, and there are so many opportunities. There are so many festivals and a circuit. It was like going to school and learning.

#### As you went from your first album *En Vivo* to your second, *Angelhead*, your work got more electronic.

It did, it surely did. It got really cold somehow. I wanted to make something with really cold sounds, but then when I got what I wanted, I didn't want it anymore. I was playing a lot of festivals, so I geared towards pop-dance songs that we could play live. It was something that I had to get out of my system, but I realised that is wasn't what I wanted to do anymore. I tried to remember what kind of music I used to like. And what I liked were songs where the singer/songwriter was actually singing to you, more of a direct connection. I realised that maybe that's what I should be doing. Recently, you have acoustic segments, even at festivals, where someone plays for thousands and thousands of people, and they really listen. That's going back to how music really was. To me, it's a challenge now to make songs that powerful.

#### Hence your collaboration with Jef Neve and Kobe Proesmans, which has once again turned into something extremely successful for you.

I had played with them both before, and I realised those were the three elements I needed: piano, drums and guitar. When

you are in a bar or in someone's house, and there's a guitar, piano and percussion, you can't hide. So that's how it started; we started stripping it down. Jef is very instinctive and has an emotional style. I loved the vibe that he gave me. And with audiences, we were also connecting that way. We were incredibly enthusiastic about being challenged again. We were kind of like kids, and that kind of enthusiasm shows in the songs. They're very playful; I think audiences are feeling what we feel.

#### So how do you describe the music the three of you are making?

Old Puerto Rican classics and pre-pop when people were arranging it – when someone was writing the music and someone else arranging it and someone else playing it. It's sort of a craft element. There are a lot of songs on the new album that are pop songs, it's just that we're playing them with only piano, drums and guitar.

#### So you've made an album as a trio.

Yes, it's called *The Dangerous Return*, and it comes out next month. I got to work with people who make arrangements for classical music – a lot of woodwinds and brass and crooner-ish vibes. Strange things that I've never lived but that I always liked. I'm working with people who see music in a very different way than those that I've worked with before, which is really cool.

#### So why are you spending so much time in New York then?

Sometimes I did these solo gigs where I went to Scotland or Ireland, for instance, and the feeling I had... I was alone, I just had my guitar. I wanted to be in the position again where I play my new songs

for people who don't know me, where I have to create another life for myself. It's a cliché to go to New York and look for that, but it really is like that there. You don't have time to prepare anything or even think about yourself too much. People are connected, and the crowds are really warm. It's not what I expected, but it gives me a lot of energy.

I go to a boxing gym in the middle of Brooklyn, which is very sweaty and rusty, and I put the gloves on, and I don't even know why I'm doing it, and the trainer says 'just react'. I'm always thinking, and he says 'just react'. That's the feeling I get from New York; you don't have time to think. It's me and the guitar; there is no time to think about it. You just have to start playing and singing. Maybe that's what I was looking for. ♦

#### Gabriel Rios, Jef Neve and Kobe Proesmans

10 September, 20.30  
Openlucht Theater Rivierenhof  
Turnhoutsebaan 246  
Deurne (Antwerp)

→ [www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)

# Killing me softly

Call it team building or playing war, paintball is as popular as ever in Flanders

COURTNEY DAVIS

“I killed two people!” Galbha Duggal excitedly exclaims, face shiny with sweat. She is bouncing with enthusiasm, talking in a stream of consciousness. “Oh my god, it feels so good. I understand why people do this. I wasn’t enjoying it before, but now I get it.” All the while, she’s eyeing the door, ready to return to the terrain with her semi-automatic.

A petite 22-year-old foreign exchange student at the University of Ghent, Duggal isn’t your typical cold-blooded killer. But then, this isn’t murder – it’s paintball.

A sport that began in 1981 in the American state of New Hampshire (whose motto is appropriately “Live Free or Die”), the game is now played worldwide, both indoors and out. Rules vary and, with them, strategies, but one guideline is constant: don’t get hit by a paintball.

Armed with heavy guns, each with 100 “bullets” of paint, our two teams trudge onto the battlefield inside a warehouse well off the N458 leading out of Ghent.

Dotted with wooden bunkers and stacks of tyres, the green turf is slick with spent ammunition, and every construction is a Jackson Pollock imitation of splattered paint.

A whistle blows, and our groups – a healthy mix of guys and girls, expats and Flemings – hide behind walls, dodge bullets and dive for cover. The air explodes with the thwacking sound of paintballs bursting and the occasional exclamation of “I’ve been hit!”

Our two teams of eight play various versions of “capture the flag”, using a mix of guts, strategy and luck to win. If anyone is hit during the game, they raise their arms and gun in surrender and exit to a safe area, where they can watch the remainder of the action play out. At the end of each 15-minute segment, a winner is declared (if it isn’t already obvious), and everyone readies themselves for the next round.

## A whole new side to your friends

The most interesting part of the evening’s adventure isn’t so much the winners and losers but the various personalities and dynamics revealed under the pressure of the game. Suited up in coveralls and masks, descriptors of gender, fitness, country or size no longer applied. The best sniper, for instance, proved to be a novice Englishwoman.

Personalities also shifted. Some players tried to strategise, commanding a leadership role, while others would ignore group efforts entirely to go commando. “Working on a paintball terrain is certainly interesting psychology-wise. We learn a lot about human behaviour,” confirms Pieter Bruyland, co-owner of Paintball Gent. “Women have been frightened beforehand by exaggerated stories of bruises and tend to play more defensively, staying towards the back, but there are a lot of exceptions to this. We actually prefer to have women in the group, as their presence seems to calm down the men. The males show less testosterone-fuelled – meaning stupid – behaviour.”



Multi-coloured paintballs give a distinctive look to indoor terrains like this one in Ghent

This still happened in our group. Upon entering the safe zone, one overzealous participant named and pointed at every person he slayed, as if to reinforce the power and pleasure derived from the kill. The first and only time I actually managed a direct hit, I immediately apologised (indicating just how mentally ill-prepared I was).

As organiser of the event, I was looking forward to improving upon my poor childhood hide-and-seek skills, where I perpetually wet my pants out of fear. I wanted to surprise myself with a discovery of natural abilities. Instead, my first time out, I took a shot to the forehead, just beyond the protective covering of my mask. The bad luck left my hands shaking from the shock as a lump began to form. My dread increased with each return to the field, until a multi-shot ambush of my cowering body gave me a valid excuse to quit.

## War games

Certainly not the case for my companions. From the comfort of a protected viewpoint, I relished the rare spectacle of my friends and colleagues transformed into aggressive action heroes. Running directly towards the enemy while shooting didn’t always succeed, but it certainly was applauded. Barrel rolls, sprinting and crawling, everyone was a star in their own movie.

Bruyland, however, is uncomfortable with comparing paintball to war. “A common misunderstanding about paintball is that it is playing war,” he says. “This is something we try to avoid. We see paintball as a sport and promote it that way, with lots of strategy, teamwork and, most of all,

fun. Aggression and fighting have nothing to do with it.” Paintball, he explains, is less about re-enacting your favourite video game and more about working together. The majority of the customers that come to Paintball Gent are team-building efforts, bachelor parties and youth clubs. “Teamwork is essential, so mostly the teams who work together win the most games,” he says. “Real soldiers, for example, do not play any better than civilians, which proves it is a sport that has nothing to do with war.”

Given the volume of many guns firing simultaneously, the thrill at shooting a gun and the inherent motivation of competition, the potential for escalation is valid. Paintball Gent works to prevent any aggressive scenarios through a number of rules. While they are open seven days a week, it is by reservation only. Deposits are required, and a minimum age of 14 is enforced. Bringing your own equipment is not allowed. No small groups or individual players are allowed: 16 players is the bare minimum. A 10-metre shooting distance is enforced, and, before every session, a safety video is shown.

The rules aren’t arbitrary: they keep the game safe and the players happy. “Warning people in the briefing that fair play is absolutely necessary makes a lot of difference,” says Bruyland. “We never mix separate groups together, so players always know each other in one way or another.” Despite people trying to kill each other for three hours, what Bruyland says holds true. Over beers in a café later, our group is animatedly discussing strategies and replaying scenes. They sit comparing ping-pong sized marks in varying shades of red. Tiny Duggal proudly displays her war wounds and grins. “It was totally worth it.” ♦

→ [www.paintballgent.be](http://www.paintballgent.be)

## More paintball • A guide to paintball terrains in Flanders



In contrast to Paintball Gent, many paintball sites wear their war games approach on their sleeves: at **Stafort**, the outdoor terrain is on the site of Stabroek fort in northeast Antwerp province, and players wear fatigues. The site is also home to laser gaming, go-karting and other adventurous activities.

→ [www.stafort.be](http://www.stafort.be)

**Paintball Adventure Sports** in Leopoldsburg, Limburg province, also offers outdoor paintball (pictured).

→ [www.paintballadventuresports.com](http://www.paintballadventuresports.com)

At Eeklo’s **Area 23** (East Flanders), you can play in smaller groups of eight.

→ [www.area23.be](http://www.area23.be)

For less hassle and more competition, you can bring your own equipment and play at **p8ntball** in Vilvoorde, just outside Brussels.

They also have a shop with paintball gear.

→ [www.p8ntball.be](http://www.p8ntball.be)



# A breath of fresh air

Local patients help filmmakers put together a realistic portrait of cystic fibrosis in new film *Adem*

IAN MUNDELL

You'll see the posters everywhere this week: two young men running across the sand on a wintry day, one in red, one in black. It's not the sort of image you'd expect from a film about a medical condition that ruins the lungs, but then *Adem* is not a conventional "disease of the week" film.

Where Hollywood films about fatal illnesses tend to be cloying and sentimental, the Flemish *Adem* – about living with cystic fibrosis – is defiant and darkly humorous. For instance, when the lead character Tom meets his brother after a long absence, he gets a glimpse of his own future fighting the disease. Instead of getting emotional, he breathes heavily and cracks a Darth Vader joke.

This unconventional approach is fine with the Belgian Cystic Fibrosis Association, which was closely involved with the making of the film. "We think it's a great idea to make people aware and talk about CF, but in a totally different way," says its director, Karleen De Rijcke. The film's target audience is certainly different from that usually addressed in the association's public awareness campaigns. "The young adult population is not so easy to reach, and this is more for the young, active and – how can I put it – fast-living generation."

Tom (Stef Aerts) is 17 when the story opens. He likes to party and hangs out with a tough crowd, a lifestyle he brings with him to the hospital. On this particular



Stef Aerts (left) and Wouter Hendrickx get up to a bit of tomfoolery in *Adem*

visit, he meets the older Xavier (Wouter Hendrickx, *De helaasheid der dingen*), who has lived a robustly active life despite his CF, and they strike up a competitive friendship.

At the same time, Xavier is trying to resolve his relationship with Anneleen (Marie Vinck, *Loft*). She wants children, but with Xavier they are certain to be born with CF. Romance also beckons Tom when he meets Eline (Anemone Valcke, *Aanrijding in Moscou*) across the glass divide of an isolation ward. As the months and years pass, these relationships evolve, just as the disease takes its inevitable course.

The team behind *Adem* (released internationally as *Oxygen*) comprises first-time director Hans Van Nuffel and Jean-Claude Van Rijckeghem, who also wrote and produced *Aanrijding in Moscou* and *Man zkt vrouw*. They approached the association early on to see how they could collaborate on the project. Introductions were hardly necessary, however, since Van Nuffel has CF himself.

"They asked our advice as medical specialists," De Rijcke recalls. "We read the script and immediately we thought it was a really good story. Even if it wasn't about CF, it would still be an interesting movie about making choices and living your life within certain circumstances."

Naturally compromises had to be made to tell a dramatic story in 98 minutes. Focusing on the characters' time in hospital gives a rather grim picture of life with CF and, as Tom's health worsens, it becomes clear that he is a severe case. "Luckily most people with CF in their early 20s would be doing better in Belgium," De Rijcke explains. However, the film is realistic. "I think that

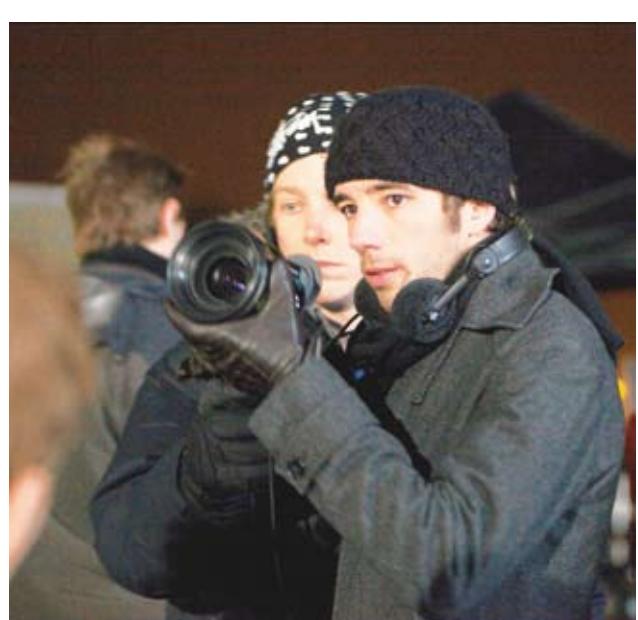
people with CF and the families here will recognise it as their reality."

As well as giving advice on the screenplay, the association helped the filmmakers and actors meet people with CF from different age groups. The resulting performances are very convincing. "When I see these actors I think of real-life patients," says De Rijcke. "The only thing that wasn't realistic was the way they coughed. Coughing is a typical symptom of CF, and you could hear that it was not like a real CF cough."

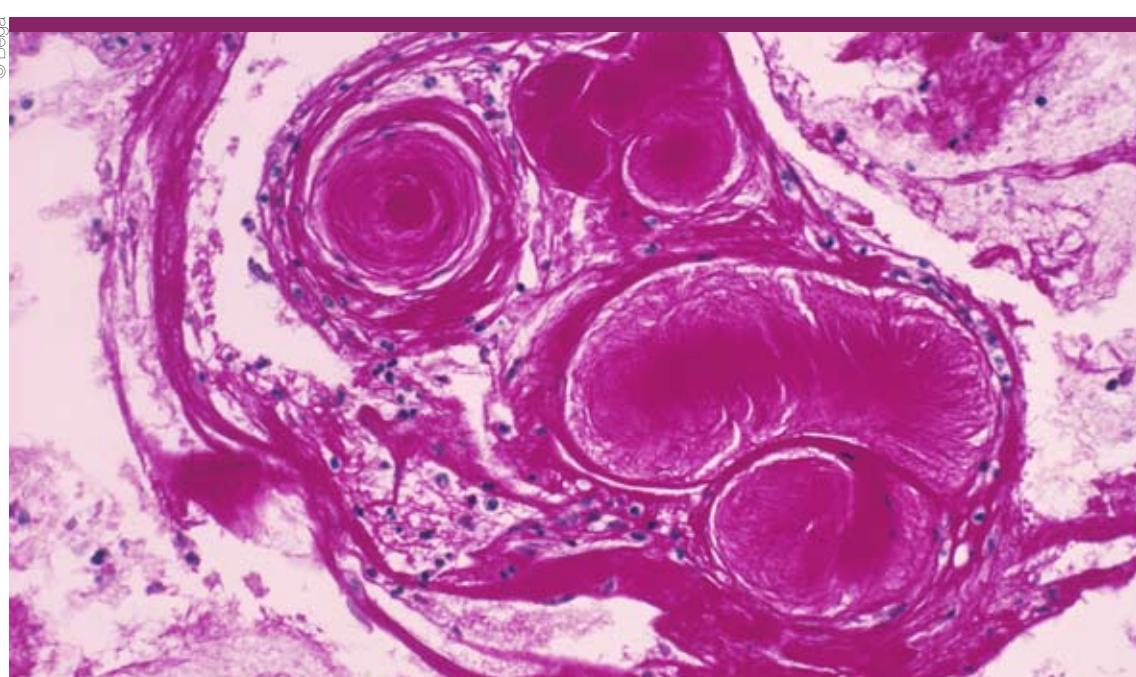
The solution was to record real CF patients coughing and dub the sound into the film. "We found people who were willing to do it! They realised that to be a good story it should be accurate."

The association also invested €50,000 in the film. "For us, it was a relatively large amount, but in the total budget of the film, it wasn't such a big deal," De Rijcke explains. "But [the filmmakers] said that it was quite important for them because it clearly showed our interest. It helped them to get support from other sources, knowing that the disease group also supported the project." It's clear that the film will generate a lot of publicity, and De Rijcke is particularly keen for it to raise awareness of organ donation. Despite Belgium having a system where everyone is a potential donor unless they opt out, doctors still tend to ask permission of family members and follow their wishes. "Maybe the movie will make it an issue in families, and they will talk about it," she says. ♦

*Adem* opens this week in Brussels and across Flanders  
→ [www.ademdefilm.be](http://www.ademdefilm.be)



Role model: *Adem* director Hans Van Nuffel, 28, has cystic fibrosis



Light micrograph of a section of an airway of the lungs in a case of cystic fibrosis. The airway is clogged with mucus, causing the severe breathing problems seen in this inheritable condition

## What is cystic fibrosis?

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is an inherited disease that affects the internal organs. Cells that usually produce fluids to lubricate tubes and ducts instead produce a thick mucus that clogs them up. In the lungs, this leads to breathing difficulties and frequent infections.

"It's a hard disease," says Karleen De Rijcke of the Belgian Cystic Fibrosis Association. "You have to fight against it, and there's a lot of treatment to undergo every day." While there is no cure, people with CF can live into their 40s and beyond. The outlook in Belgium is particularly good. "There are very few young children or even young teenagers who are not doing well."

The association includes 1,200 people with CF, thought to be every patient in Belgium. "We try to meet all the needs of people with CF and their families," De Rijcke explains. "That includes giving information about treatments, facilities and social administration. We try to make the public aware of what CF is and what people's needs are. And we also give actual support to families."

That includes financial aid for treatments, special foods and medical equipment, while in the most severe cases the association will pay the additional costs for lung transplants not covered by social security. It also supports specialist clinics and research on new treatments.

→ [www.muco.be](http://www.muco.be)

# Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

In times like these, where we have to do more with less, there are two types of managers. **Those who cut costs** across the board, and **those who even now choose to continue to invest** prudently. Which type are you? The financial crisis and the uncertain economic situation are confronting managers with new challenges, but all too often they are also driving them to take decisions that are infused with panic and doom-and-gloom. But the ones who are forward-thinking and keep to their own course don't slam on the brakes – instead, they invest in the future.

## Knowledge determines your competitive power

An organisation that wants to maintain and strengthen its competitive position in the global economy must be powered by a well-oiled knowledge engine. Your workforce is your greatest capital and lifelong learning is an absolute necessity. The acquired knowledge flows back into your company and your knowledge capital grows larger and larger, increasing your competitiveness. This will keep you competitive in the rapidly changing economic context. We call this 'learning with impact'.



## Investing in training: costs versus benefits

Too often, training is still regarded as a cost instead of an investment. However, companies that view their personnel policy from a strategic standpoint continue – even when the economy becomes a serious challenge – to invest in training programmes for their most strategic employees. Investing in talent and training now guarantees you a significant jump on the competition when the economy gets going again.



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**Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School**

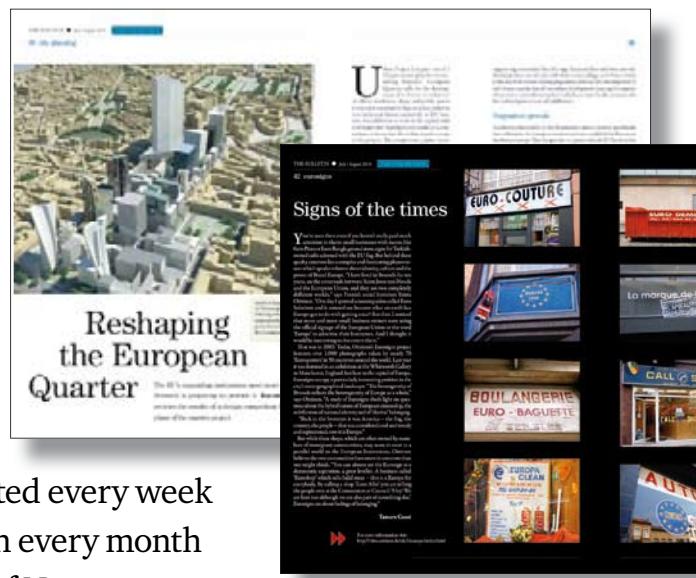
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# Capsule

SAFFINA RANA

As I walked down the Park Duden hillside to the Brussels PleinOPENAir festival with a bunch of friends last month, a sudden crescendo of keyboards, drums and what sounded like clarinet, scared the magpies out of the trees. Playful electro riffs entwined around each other and a beautiful harmony of female voices rose into the air.

Then suddenly they began shouting in full riot-girl fashion and a saxophone broke out. We exploded into smiles. It was all at once an enthralling, uplifting and joyful outburst. "I really hope that's the band and not just a CD," said one of my friends. It wasn't a CD.

We hurried down the hill to find five girls clad in knee-length boots and futuristic grey and fluorescent yellow dresses. Those not on keyboards stomped furiously about the stage, keeping perfect pitch. They were clearly having a good time. Behind them skulked the male members of the band, on guitar and drums.

This was the Antwerp eight-piece Capsule, and their energy ensured that a constant stream of people made their way to the front of the stage to join those already jumping up and down appreciatively in the twilight sun.

Some of their songs, like "Ramschläger", were wild and

fast, delivered in German. Some, like "Ain't No Jesus" were eerie, atmospheric narratives bordering on a choral tradition. Some had jazz-blues and swing elements like the surprising arrangement of the 1980s Rockwell song about paranoia, "Somebody's Watching Me". Most were in English, and all were catchy.

The added oomph of the sax and clarinet riffs and their ability to fuse styles had me believing that at least a few of the band were classically trained. But not so, according to Saar van de Leest, one of Capsule's three lead vocalists, who also plays clarinet and keyboards. "Not everybody in the band can even read music, but most of us come from very musical families," she tells me as we sit under the awning of rock bar Homey in Antwerp.

Van de Leest began playing the flute when she was eight. "But then I discovered boys, and they got in the way," she says, rolling a cigarette. I didn't pick up an instrument again for 11 years. When I did, it was a clarinet." She and her good friend Florence Henry – lead vocalist and the band's sampler fiend – got together to jam in their early 20s. "We had both broken up with our boyfriends and thought, 'let's go into the basement and make some music,'" says Van de Leest.

The rest of the band came together

organically, a couple of years after Van de Leest and Henry had created CDs of their compositions and were repeatedly being asked to perform. "We didn't want it to be just the two of us," Van de Leest says.

The band has been going five years now and has started its own label, Rotakt. "But we can't live from our music yet; we've all got day jobs," says Van de Leest. Judging from the sold-out suitcase full of CDs after the PleinOPENAir gig, it might not be long before they can. ♦

**10 September, 21.00**

**Kinky Star**  
**Vlasmarkt 9, Ghent**

**1 October, 21.00**

**La Campine**  
**Kempisch Dok – Westkaai**  
**Antwerp**

→ [www.rotaktrcords.be](http://www.rotaktrcords.be)

**MORE ROCK FUSION THIS WEEK**

**Rewind Festival** → **Vooruit, Ghent** →

**School is Cool** → **Thoprock, Bruges**

**Flat Earth Society** → **De Spiegel, Sint-Niklaas**



## Antwerp

**Café Capital**  
Rubenslei 37 – Stadspark;  
[www.cafecapital.be](http://www.cafecapital.be)  
**SEP 9** 18.00-5.00 Bar Jeudi: food lounge, exhibitions, music and dance party

**Jolly Joker**  
Rijnkaai 14; [www.jollyjoker.be](http://www.jollyjoker.be)  
**SEP 10** 21.00 Het Dwaallicht + Schoon Madammen + Gregor Terror and the Calypso Gigolos + DJ King B and Merdan Taplak  
**SEP 11** 22.00 Sir OJ + Ruby Suns + Jules X + Benny Bang

**Openluchttheater Rivierenhof**  
Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,  
[www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)  
**SEP 8** 20.30 Admiral Freebee  
**SEP 10** 20.30 Gabriel Rios, Jef Neve & Kobe Proesmans  
**SEP 11** 20.30 Kid Creole & The Coconuts + Leki & The Sweet Mints

**Trix**  
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00  
[www.trixonline.be](http://www.trixonline.be)  
**SEP 9** 19.30 Skeletonwitch + Warbringer + Angelus Apatrida  
**SEP 12** 20.30 Wintersleep  
**SEP 13** 19.30 Dead To Me + Off With Their Heads  
**SEP 14** 20.30 Francis Rossi  
**SEP 16** 20.30 TRIXTRAXfestival feat. I Love Sarah + Hoquets

## Brussels

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
[www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)  
**SEP 15** 20.00 Isobel Campbell with Mark Lanegan  
**SEP 16** 12.30 Sarah Ferri

## DON'T MISS

### Monkey Sandwich

**10 September, 20.00**  
**KVS Bol, Brussels**

And now for something completely different... Wim Vandekeybus transforms his usual busy, savage multi-dancer productions into one dancer facing a screen of moving images for this new work. As the dancer (Damien Chapelle) interacts with the film's characters, he tries his best to do good – but has quite the opposite effect. At once a treatise on individuality and loneliness as on cause-and-effect, this new work is highly anticipated as it introduces the filmmaker Vandekeybus has been working towards becoming. After the premiere at KVS, the production tours, starting with the Vooruit in Ghent.



→ [www.ultimavez.com](http://www.ultimavez.com)

## Turnhout

**De Warande**  
Warandestraat 42; 014.41.69.91  
[www.warande.be](http://www.warande.be)  
**SEP 11** 20.15 Admiral Freebee + Discobar Galaxie



## Antwerp

**Buster**  
Kaasru 1; 03.232.51.53  
[www.busterpodium.be](http://www.busterpodium.be)  
**SEP 8** 21.00 Framework  
**SEP 9** 21.00 Buster Jam  
**SEP 10** 22.00 Natasha Kelly - Pascal Mohy  
**SEP 11** 22.00 Sista Flex  
**SEP 15** 22.00 Playtime session  
**SEP 16** 21.00 Buster Jam

## Café Hopper

Leopold de Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33  
[www.cafehopper.be](http://www.cafehopper.be)  
**Until SEP 27** 21.00 sixTension  
**SEP 12** 16.00 Cruise Control

## Brussels

**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
[www.art-base.be](http://www.art-base.be)  
**SEP 12** 18.00 Dimi Dumo Latin Jazz Trio

## Café Bonnefooi

Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31  
[www.bonnefooi.be](http://www.bonnefooi.be)  
**SEP 8** 22.00 Sarah Ferri  
**SEP 14** 22.00 Mr X behind The lock Door

## The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
[www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)  
**SEP 8** 20.30 Wawaron Quartet  
**SEP 10** 21.00 Amina Figarova Sextet  
**SEP 11** 21.00 Gino Latucca Quartet

## Théâtre Marni

Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80,  
[www.theatremarni.com](http://www.theatremarni.com)  
**SEP 8** 20.00 Soirée Mognoscope: Charles Loos, Paolo Loveri Trio, Wappa Tonic Quintet  
**SEP 10** 20.00 Soirée Mognoscope: Bernard Guyot-Sabin Todorov, Fabrizio Graceffa Quartet, Osman Martins  
**SEP 14** 20.00 Yves Peeters Group



## Antwerp

**De Roma**  
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
www.deroma.be  
**SEP 9** 20.30 Donovan & Band  
**SEP 10** 20.00 Folklof: Nele Paelinck, accordion + The Folklore Orchestra featuring Elly Aarden  
**SEP 11** 19.30 Suikerfeest: La Nuit du Maghreb with Orchestra Ismailia & Mimoun Rafraou, more

**Spiegelent Magiq NoordKasteel**  
Oosterweelsteenweg 3;  
www.jackyland.be  
**SEP 9** 20.30 Jacky's Magiq Sessions: Ambrassband + Schwarzwaldklinik + Antwerp Gipsy DJ Crew

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**SEP 11** 20.30 Semara Ratih (Indonesia)

**Bruges**  
**Fnac Brugge**  
Markt 18-19; 050.47.62.62 www.fnac.be  
**SEP 11** 16.30 Bai Kamara

**Brussels**  
**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
www.art-base.be  
**SEP 10** 20.00 Larisa Quartet, boleros, tangos, bossas, Mexican waltzes  
**SEP 11** 20.00 Vinyllo

**The Music Village**  
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
www.themusicvillage.com  
**SEP 9** 20.30 Rey Cabrera y Sus Amigos

**Kortrijk**  
De Kortrijkse Schouwburg  
Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50  
www.dekreun.be  
**SEP 11** 20.15 Zap Mama: ReCreation



## Antwerp

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28  
www.desingel.be  
**SEP 13** 20.00 Symphony Orchestra of Flanders conducted by David Angus, with Philippe Raskin, piano; Rachmaninov, Dvorák (bookings from 050.84.05.87 or info@symphonieorkest.be)

**Bruges**  
**Concertgebouw**  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
www.concertgebouw.be  
**SEP 11** 20.00 Symphony Orchestra of Flanders conducted by Ivan Meylemans, with Lorenzo Gatto, violin: Rossini, Vieuxtemps, Liszt (bookings from 050.84.05.87 or info@symphonieorkest.be)

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## Ghent

**Handelsbeurs**  
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65  
www.handelsbeurs.be  
**SEP 15** 20.15 ORCIM Ensemble: Onverwachte variaties  
**SEP 16** 20.15 Wim Mertens Ensemble

## Ostend

**Leopoldpark**  
Leopold II-laan; www.oostende2010.be  
**SEP 13** 19.30 Vocalicious



## Bruges

**City Hall**  
Burg 12; 050.44.81.11 www.ideefixe.be  
**SEP 9-11** 21.00 Georges Bizet's Carmen performed outdoors, conducted by Eric Lederhander and staged by François de Carpentries (in the original French with Dutch surtitles)

## Brussels

**De Munt**  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
www.demunt.be  
**SEP 9-21** 15.00/20.00 Yvonne, Princesse de Bourgogne by De Munt composer-in-residence Philippe Boesmans, conducted by Patrick Davin, libretto and staging by Luc Bondy (in French with Dutch and French surtitles)

## Deinze

**Ooidonk Castle**  
Ooidonk dreef 9; 09.282.35.70  
www.ooidonk.be  
**SEP 16-18** 21.00 Georges Bizet's Carmen performed outdoors, conducted by Eric Lederhander and staged by François de Carpentries (in the original French with Dutch surtitles)



## Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**SEP 11** 20.00 Indian dance with Madhavi Mudgal (part of Asia on Stage)

## KVS Bol

Lakenstraat 146; 02.210.11.12  
www.kvs.be  
**SEP 20** 20.00 Premiere of new work Monkey Sandwich by Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus (dance, multi-media)



## Antwerp

**Fakkelteater**  
Reyndersstraat 7; 03.232.14.69

**GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!**

## Saltimbanco

**22 December – 2 January**  
Lotto Arena, Antwerp

It's time to reminisce with Cirque du Soleil as it brings its first-ever production back to Belgium for only nine short days this winter. The title was inspired by the Italian phrase "saltare in banco", which means literally "to jump on a bench", and this show is a celebration of the freaks, geeks, hustlers and dreamers who make up the urban experience. It's one of Cirque's most colourful shows, which is saying a lot, and absolutely perfect entertainment for that loooong winter school break.

→ [www.lottoarena.be](http://www.lottoarena.be)



[www.fakkelteater.be](http://www.fakkelteater.be)  
**Until SEP 19** 15.00/20.30 Fast Forward in Dossier: Ronald Akkerman, directed by Barbara Rubin (in Dutch)

**Theater aan de Stroom**  
Blancefloerlaan 181; 070.22.33.30  
www.theateraandestroom.be  
**SEP 9-10** 3 times vary  
Fluistercompagnie in Bent, directed by Jean-Paul Van Steerteghem (in Dutch)

**Theater Zuidpool**  
Lange Noordstraat 11; 03.232.81.04  
www.zuidpool.be  
**SEP 10-11** 20.00 Sofie Decleir in Opus XX (in Dutch)

**Ghent**  
**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060  
www.vooruit.be  
**SEP 14-24** 20.00 Compagnie Cecilia and Het Paleis in Schöne Blumen (Beautiful Flowers), written and directed by Arne Sierens (in Dutch)  
**SEP 14-18** 20.00 tg STAN in Zomer gasten (Summerfolk) by Maxim Gorky (in Dutch)

**Ypres**  
CC Ieper - Stadsschouwburg  
Vandenpeereboomplein 31; 057.239.480 www.acci.be  
**SEP 8** 20.15 Wouter Deprez in Je Zal Alles Worden (You'll Become Everything) (in Dutch)



**Biblioteca Wittockiana**  
Bemelstraat 21; 02.770.53.33  
www.wittockiana.org  
**Until SEP 11** Parti pris: the duo Léon Wuidar and La Pierre d'Alun, books and illustrated bookbindings

**Until SEP 11** Françoise Clabots, books, objects, prints and drawings

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**Until SEP 26** GEO-Graphics: Mapping Historical and Contemporary Art Practice in Africa, African objects from Belgian museums come face-to-face with work of contemporary African artists (part of Visionary Africa)

**Until OCT 10** A Passage to Asia: 25 Centuries of Exchange between Asia and Europe, a selection of 300 objects, including funeral urns, jewellery, semi-precious stones, gold and glass, Buddhist and Hindu images, ivory, manuscripts, textiles and archaeological finds

**Brussels Info Place (BIP)**  
Koningsplein; 02.563.63.99  
www.biponline.be  
**Until DEC 31** Europe in Brussels: Fragmented Past, Shared Future?, video exhibition looking at the European quarter, from its beginnings to the present day ([www.europeinbrussels.be](http://www.europeinbrussels.be))

**De Elektriciteitscentrale**  
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45  
**Until OCT 3** Fighting the Box: 20 Belgian Designers, 20 Stories Behind the Products, the relationship between local designers and the international industry

**De Loge Architecture Museum**  
Kluisstraat 86; 02.642.24.80  
www.aam.be  
**SEP 15-OCT 10** Dynamo Belgian Young Design Awards, works by the young Belgian designers who participated in the Dynamo Prize competition

**European Quarter**  
Wetstraat; www.thehumanrightsproject.org  
**Until SEP 10** The Human Rights Project, outdoor exhibition of photographs of South Africa by Lukas Maximilian Hüller and Juliane R Hauser

**Jewish Museum of Belgium**  
Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63  
www.mjb-jmb.org  
**Until OCT 3** Bericht aan de bevolking: De joodse geschiedenis op affiches

(Message to the People: Jewish History in Posters), more than 250 documents from the museum's collection

## Magritte Museum

Koningsplein 1; (0)2 508 32 11, www.musee-magritte-museum.be  
**Until JAN 2** The painting The Threatened Assassin comes to the museum on loan from MoMA in New York to hang beside its companion piece The Secret Player, bringing Magritte's sole diptych temporarily together

## Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33  
www.legermuseum.be  
**Until OCT 30** Lisolo Na Bisu (Our Story) and Tokopesa saluti (We Salute You), objects, documents photographs and audiovisual material reveal 125 years of Belgo-Congolese military relations

## Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11  
www.fine-arts-museum.be  
**Until SEP 26** Charles van der Stappen (1843-1910), sculptures by the Belgian artist

**Until SEP 26** Marcel Broodthaers, modern works with objects from everyday life by the late Belgian artist

## Town Hall

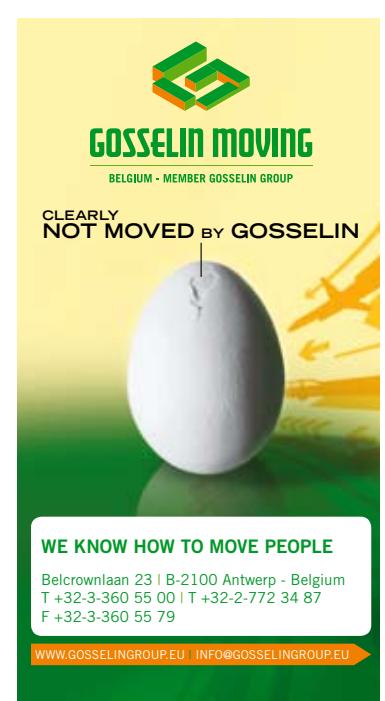
Grote Markt; 02.279.64.31  
www.brussels.be  
**Until SEP 19** The Age of Symbolism in Latvia, paintings, etchings and drawings from turn-of-the-20th-century Latvia, including work by Jānis Rozentāls, Vilhelms Purvītis and Jānis Valters

## WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50  
www.wiels.org  
**Until SEP 12** Wangechi Mutu: My Dirty Little Heaven, collages by the New York-based Kenyan artist, Deutsche Bank's Artist of the Year  
**Until SEP 12** Martin Laborde: The old sow sent them out to... they got into it and rolled down the hill, works by the American and 11 other artists based on the text of the children's story The Three Little Pigs

## Yaruna

Waversesteenweg 214B; 02.512.93.12  
www.anunsroom.com



**Until OCT 14** Jeanne: A Nun's Room, interactive installation by Scottish artist Paul Morris

## Deurle

**Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens**  
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23  
www.museumdd.be

**Until SEP 19** Biënnale van de Schilderkunst: het sublieme voorbij (Biennale of Painting: The Sublime Past), a subjective look at painting over the last 100 years (See also Roger Raveelmuseum in Machelen-Zulte)

## Gaasbeek

**Gaasbeek Castle**  
Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30  
www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be  
**SEP 10-NOV 7** Dragon Brood!, collection of works and objects on the theme of dragons

## Ghent

**Design Museum**  
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99  
www.designmuseumgent.be

**Until OCT 24** Super Normal: Sensations of the Everyday, objects from around the world selected by designers Naoto Fukasawa and Jasper Morrison

**Until OCT 24** Piet Stockmans: Retrospective, works by the legendary Flemish porcelain designer

**Until OCT 24** Nilton Cunha: Good Luck, works in silver and Corian by the

## WEEK IN FILM

LISA BRADSHAW

### Philippe Blasband Retrospective



It might seem a bit premature for a retrospective, but, with the release of his fourth feature, Iranian-born Philippe Blasband is becoming one of Belgium's most interesting directors. His writing credits are in fact vast, so it's a mystery why more films with his name on them were not included in this series at Flagey, but at least you've got a chance to see all the features he directed, plus three shorts.

Blasband's new film, *Maternelle* (pictured), has its premiere at the event before opening wide on 15 September. A bit of a departure for the Brussels-based director of more social dramas, it's a comedy about a woman who knew little about her recently deceased mother – a situation that the mother's ghost is keen to rectify. Other films include *Un honnête commerçant* (*Step by Step*), a tense cat-and-mouse game between a heroine kingpin and two detectives; *La Couleur des mots* (*The Colour of Words*), in which a young woman struggles with the language disability dysphasia (a condition Blasband's son also has); and the highly recommended *Coquelicots*, in which the separate lives of three prostitutes unexpectedly come together. All features are subtitled in Dutch or English.

→ [www.flagey.be](http://www.flagey.be)

Flemish designer

**Dr Guislain Museum**  
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95  
www.museumdrguislain.be

**Until SEP 12** De werel andersom (The World Inside Out), art brut from the abcd collection in Paris, including work by Adolf Wölfli, Henry Darger and Martin Ramirez

**Until SEP 12** Innocent, Yet Punished, photographs of mentally ill criminals by Ghent-based photographer Lieven Nollet

**Museum of Fine Arts**

Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00 www.mskgent.be

**Until OCT 3** Stijn Cole: Sunset/Sunset, contemporary works by the Flemish artist-in-residence

**Museum of Modern Art (SMAK)**

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03

www.smak.be

**Until OCT 3** Xanadu! The SMAK

collection presented by Hans Theys  
**Until DEC 3** Inside Installations, 10 installations from the museum's collection

**SEP 10-OCT 17** Coming People, group exhibition of final year projects of students at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and St Lucas College of Science and Arts

**SEP 10-NOV 21** Tegenlicht (Backlight), young visual artists and writers confront famous artists from the literary, arts and music scene

**Hasselt**

**Fashion Museum (MMH)**

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.239.621

**Until JAN 9 2011** Devout/Divine: Fashion vs Religion, examples of religious symbolism in designs of the past decennia

**Literair Museum**

Bampsalaan 35; 011.26.17.87

www.literairmuseum.be

**Until NOV 7** Tom Schamp: Feest in de stad (Party in the City), work by the Flemish illustrator

**Kemzeke**

**Verbeke Foundation**

Westakker; 03.789.22.07

www.verbekefoundation.com

**Until OCT 31** Green Summer, ecological projects and art works

**Until OCT 31** Stan Wannet: De Hondenmepper, moving installations and robotics by the artist-in-residence

**Until OCT 31** Wout Hoeboer (1910-1983): Dandy Dada, retrospective of the surrealist Dutch painter

**Kortrijk**

**Museum Kortrijk 1302**

Houtmarkt-Begijnpark; 056.27.78.50,

www.kortrijk1302.be

**Until JAN 9 2011** OnGELOOFlijk: van hemel, hel en halleluja (UnBELIEVeable: From Heaven, Hell and Hallelujah), religious objects and symbols from the past 500 years

**Leuven**

**Museum M**

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28;

016.27.29.29 www.mleuven.be

**Until SEP 12** Angus Fairhurst, retrospective of the the late artist, a member of the Young British Artists movement

**Saint Michael Church**

Naamsestraat 57a;

www.gijsvaerenbergh.com

**Until OCT 31** The Upside Dome, installation by Flemish artist duo Gijs Van Vaerenbergh

**Machelen-Zulte**

**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00

www.rogerraveelmuseum.be

**Until SEP 19** Biënnale van de Schilderkunst: het sublieme voorbij (Biennale of Painting: The Sublime Past), a subjective look at painting over the last 100 years (also at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle)

**Meise**

**National Botanic Garden of Belgium**

Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20

www.plantentuinmeise.be

**Until OCT 24** Boxes Brimming with Life, photo installations by Flemish wildlife photographer Tom Linster  
**SEP 15-OCT 17** Watercolours of mushrooms, paintings

## Ostend

**Japanese Garden**

Koningspark; 059.70.11.99

www.krisdewitte.com

**Until OCT 3** Kris Dewitte: Set & Still, photos from Belgian film sets by the Flemish photographer

**Tervuren**

**Royal Museum for Central Africa**

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11

www.africamuseum.be

**Until SEP 30** Bonjour Congo, photographs and documents from Brusselaars on the presence of the Congo in Brussels

**Until JAN 9 2011** Congo River: 4,700 Kilometres Bursting with Nature and Culture, interactive exhibition on the lifeblood of Congo, from source to mouth

**Until JAN 9 2011** 100 Years in 100 Photographs, outdoor exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the African Museum building  
**Until JAN 9 2011** Indépendance! Congolese Tell Their Stories of 50 Years of Independence, multi-media exhibition looks at the Democratic Republic of Congo from independence to today

**Ypres**

**In Flanders Fields Museum**

Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220

www.inflandersfields.be

**Until OCT 10** More Force Than Necessary, photos and films by Brazilian artist-in-residence Rodrigo Braga



**Belgium's EU Presidency:** Belgium takes the helm of the European Union Council for six months and launches a series of events to mark its presidency

**Until DEC 31** across the country

www.eu2010.be

**Festival of Flanders:** International music festivals fill streets, squares and waterways with guerilla and organised concerts, from classical and mediaeval to traditional world and modern regional music

**Until OCT 24** across Brussels and Flanders

www.festival.be

**Open Monument Day:** Annual heritage day during which culturally significant buildings, monuments, archaeological sites and landscapes are open to the public

**SEP 12** across Flanders

www.openmonumenten.be

**Vlaanderen Zingt:** Huge group sing-alongs to live music on public squares

**Until SEP 26** across Flanders

www.vlaanderenzingt.be

**Festivals & Special Events**

**Antwerp**

**De Stad van Elsschot:** Months-long celebration of 20th-century Antwerp author Willem Elsschot on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death, featuring theatre, film and Dicht bij Elsschot, the first public exhibition of his complete archives

**Until DEC 31** across Antwerp

www.destadvanelsschot.be

**Mega Fair:** Sale and demo of new and used musical instruments, computers, games and electronics

**SEP 12** 10.00-17.00 at Antwerp Expo,

Jan Van Rijswijkstraat 191

03.260.81.22, www.antwerpexpo.be

**Monster Jam 2010:** Monster trucks show

**SEP 11-12** 13.00 at Sportpaleis,

Schijnpoortweg 119

0900.45.045, www.monsterjam2010.be

**Stoffen Spektakel:** Fabrics fair

**SEP 12** 10.00-17.00 at Antwerp Expo,

Jan Van Rijswijkstraat 191

03.260.81.22, www.stoffenspektakel.nl

**Bruges**

**Brugge Centraal:** International city

festival with dance, theatre, music,

literature, film and exhibitions,

including Een visie op Centraal-Europa

by Luc Tuyman and Van Eyck tot

Dürer

**SEP 17-JAN 30 (2011)** across Bruges

www.bruggecentraal.be

## Brussels

**Balloon's Day Parade:** Flying parade of giant balloons in the form of comic strip or animated film heroes

**SEP 12** 13.00 from Paleizenplein to Grote Zavel

www.balloonsdayparade.be

**Bruegel Feesten:** Folkloric festival featuring parades of dancers, musicians and giants

**SEP 12** between Hoogstraat and Blaesstraat, and at Kapellemarkt

www.bruegel-marolles.be

**Brussels Design Market:** Market featuring unusual design pieces from the 1950s to 1980s

**SEP 11-12** at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86c

www.brusselsdesignmarket.be

**Design September:** A city-wide celebration of all things design, with exhibitions, sales, open door studios, conferences and special guests, including Michele De Lucchi, a headliner during the rise and fall of the MEMPHIS design collective

**SEP 11-OCT 1** across Brussels

ROBYN BOYLE

# bite



## Bua's Thai Eethuisje

When I'm in the mood for Thai food, no distance is too far. My most recent craving took me to Kortrijk in West Flanders. It was a gamble, as the only information I had on the restaurant came from a website with dancing, sunglass-wearing chilli peppers.

All worries vanished, however, after we were greeted by the cheery Thai hostess, in English, and seated at one of only five tables in the snug (meaning small) space. A sneaky glimpse into the back room disclosed a miniature kitchen, bunches of green herbs and limes covering the counters. This looked promising.

Tummies grumbling, my companion and I didn't waste any time mulling over the menu. One small portion of Tom Yam Kung soup and an order of Dim Sum, please. In the meantime, we amused ourselves by sampling the various flavours of *kroepoek* (prawn crackers) that came in a rainbow of colours.

The starters arrived within minutes: one not-so-small-after-all earthenware bowl leaking tangy aromas and one bamboo basket stuffed full of steamed cabbage and luscious little dumplings. Swimming in the spicy-sour broth of the soup were giant peeled prawns, diced mushrooms, kaffir lime leaves, scallion and lemon grass, plus heaps of fresh coriander floating on top.

I slurped it down very quickly, regrettably, as I'd prefer to have drawn out the experience. The dim sum were just as appetising, six balls of soft, thin dough wrapped around a mixture of prawn, fish and crab. These were served with two sauces – soy and a spicy sweet & sour – although they had plenty of flavour all on their own. Thai Singha beer, a light and easy-to-drink lager, provided an ideal antidote to all that heat.

Our main dishes arrived on enormous platters – Thai House Express for me, the chef's personal favourite, and Keng Ped for across the table, because it was the only menu option made

with coconut milk. Every dish comes with a choice of meat or fish options and according to your preferred level of spiciness.

My House Express, then, was medium spicy with prawns – no less than 12 of them, extremely generous by Belgian restaurant standards. Next to this lay a myriad of fresh vegetables, competing for attention with lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves and sweet Thai basil. I could taste each and every individual ingredient on the plate, their flavours accentuated by the red curry base instead of being dominated by it, as is so often the case.

My companion was also pleased with his Keng Ped with chicken, also in a medium spicy red curry sauce, but with sweet coconut milk to balance it out. Despite containing the same veggies and spices as mine, his dish was notably different – softer, less fiery. Both came with a side of aromatic, perfectly cooked white rice. It wasn't until the end of the evening that we came to find out that the "hostess" is in fact boss, chef, server and cleaner. Together with daughter Gwenda, who helps serve, Bua (pictured) has been running the show here since opening six years ago. She treks to stores across Flanders on a daily basis to find all the fresh Thai products she needs. And that's a lot: the restaurant is also very popular for take-away.

Food aside, Bua obviously enjoys the contact with the public. "Nobody is a customer to me; they're more like family," she tells us as she brings complimentary mugs of tea and coffee. "I'm so honoured when they come back again and again."

► Plein 48, Kortrijk; 056.25.62.68

🕒 Tue-Sun, 18.00-23.00

★ Royal portions of Thai hospitality and flavour

→ [www.thai-eethuisje.be](http://www.thai-eethuisje.be)

Contact Bite at [flandersbite@gmail.com](mailto:flandersbite@gmail.com)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I have a frequent traveller account with Eurotunnel and visit Belgium at least five times a year. Knowing what is on at any one time is a real problem, but you have saved the day on many occasions. I have climbed to the top of Sint-Rombout's tower in Mechelen, seen the large market in Sint-Niklaas and visited the Hops Museum in Poperinge. Today we have seen the sand sculptures in Blankenberge. All these trips are due to articles in your paper – keep up the good work.

Marion and David Hook  
Blackwood, South Wales

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



### • mop •

Have you heard the one about the three *bouwvakkers* – construction workers? The classic opening for *een mop* – a joke – but not something I have the gift for telling face to face. I usually get the parts in the wrong order and end up having to laugh the loudest to cover my confusion. So that's why I'm trying it out on paper.

Chances are that you've heard this one, but, as parents everywhere are getting used to squeezing sandwiches into *brooddozen* – sandwich boxes – now that the new school term has started, the joke does have a topical touch to it, though only just.

So there were these three *bouwvakkers* having their lunch break up on a skyscraper with their *brooddozen* on their knees and their legs dangling from a girder. One was from Flemish Brabant, one from Ghent and one from Limburg (which would normally involve the three dialects, but I'll ignore that here).

You may have worked out that the joke is going to be about the Limburgers, who in fact have a tendency to speak in an unrushed fashion, which some people interpret as a sign of mental slowness.

So on with *de mop*. The *Brabander* complains as he opens his *brooddozen*: "Weer dezelfde boterhammen met kaas – Again the same cheese sandwiches." He's so fed up, he says: "Als ik morgen weer kaas meeheb dan

spring ik van deze stelling – If I have cheese again tomorrow, I'll jump from this scaffolding."

Being a classic joke everything happens in threes, so the *Gentenaar* says the same about his salami sandwiches and the *Limburger* about his choco-covered bread. Fast forward, and the next day the trio lies dead 20 storeys down.

This being such an unusual tragedy, the three *bouwvakkers* are buried together, which gives the *weduwen* – widows – the chance to commiserate. "Had onze Kevin nu gezegd van de boterhammen met kaas, had ik andere gemaakt – Had our Kevin said something about the cheese sandwiches, I'd have made different ones," cried the *Brabantse weduwe*. Ditto *de weduwe van Gent*.

The *Limburgse weduwe* joined the wailing by praising her husband: "En mijnen Gerard het mij nooit zijn boterhammen maken – And my Gerard never let me make his sandwiches. Hij stond erop dat hij ze zelf smeerde – He insisted on making them himself."

Well, I think I got the parts in the right order, and hope I haven't offended any Limburgers, who are all above average and live in the best part of the country.

Though I'm left wondering if boring sandwiches really tipped the three over the edge, or was there another reason? It might be interesting to know which workmates witnessed all this. But there, I'm spoiling the joke.

## THE LAST WORD . . .

### Over . . .

"For me, it's no. I'm sorry."

Bart De Wever of the Flemish nationalist N-VA party after talks to form a government broke down

### ... and out

"Game over."

Elio Di Rupo, the man charged with forming a government

### The question

"Aside from the muffled anger, the total surprise, the endless disappointment, we'd like to ask the people of the north of the country one thing: what is it you want, in fact?"

Béatrice Delvaux, editor of *Le Soir*, in a reaction to the end of negotiations

### The end?

"We need to prepare ourselves for the end of Belgium."

Vice-premier Laurette Onkelinx of the French-speaking socialists