

Get out the vote

You, too, can vote in local elections in Flanders if you register this month

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Limburg libations

A whistle-stop tour through the east province's breweries

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Happy Flemish Day

We talk to the busiest man on 11 July, Raymond van het Groenewoud

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Understanding dystonia



A Flemish foundation is shining a light on the painful contortions suffered by people with a little-recognised movement disorder

Andy Furniere

About 10,000 Belgians suffer from the movement disorder dystonia, but almost no one outside of medical circles has ever heard of it. A Flemish patient has joined forces with the VIB, KULeuven, a British expert and photographer Lieve Blancquaert to raise awareness of the condition that has affected her since childhood.

For 16-year-old Madina, sitting up straight and keeping her eyes open as she does in our cover photo is a rare achievement. She, like thousands of others in Flanders, suffers from dystonia, a condition that means she struggles to control her muscles, to sit upright or to even talk. There are many more like Madina, including Greet Ruelens from Antwerp, who had to search for four years and travel to the US to find a doctor who recognised the neurological movement disorder that was pulling at the muscles in her neck. Although it is estimated that around 10,000 Belgians suffer from dystonia, little or no research into the condition was taking place here. But now the Foundation for Dystonia Research set up by Ruelens and her wife has joined forces with the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB) and the University of Leuven (KUL) to establish a research lab.

And Flemish photographer Lieve Blancquaert has taken a series of portraits of dystonia patients in the hope of raising awareness among medical professionals and the general public. It was as a child that Ruelens, now 53, noticed the first signs of the disorder that was going to affect her later life. "I was seen as a very nervous child because my head often shook uncontrollably," she recalls. "Stressful situations made this 'tic' worse; I remember what a hell it was to sing or to recite a text in front of the class."

Growing up, the symptoms hindered her daily life. "I often knocked over things such as glasses, which made me look very clumsy. Although I followed courses, I could never control my finger movements enough to be able to type. I was also often inexplicably tired."

Through constant practice and willpower, she succeeded in steadyng her hand to become a graphic designer. With her wife, designer Lieve Van Gorp, she developed a flourishing fashion label.

About 15 years ago, Ruelens' physical problems increased. "After a normal working day at our label, my neck was terribly stiff, and my whole body was shaking violently – seemingly from exhaustion," she says. In the following years, the disorder made work impossible. The muscles in her neck started pulling her head back in a painful cramp, until she could no longer sit up straight.

© Lieve Blancquaert

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FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Pascal Paepen

Pascal Paepen will be a familiar face to anyone who watches the news on VRT; he's the one who provides financial insight and analysis with the authoritative voice of a banker in the City of London. In future, though, that authoritative voice will be heard in a different context: Paepen announced last week that he's giving up his lucrative City job to return to Flanders to become a schoolteacher.

Paepen began his career in finance with the Kredietbank, later the KBC, and 12 years ago moved to London to work for them there as a trader. Along the way, he became the in-house expert for VRT and for the Flemish daily *De Morgen*.

Now he's returning to the house he bought seven years ago in Mol, Antwerp province. The idea has been rolling around in his head for some time, he told *De Morgen*. "I heard education minister Pascal Smet say that he wanted all students to take a course in economics from next year. I think that's a great idea, because I myself never had an economics lesson until I was 18."

Paepen, 44, also simply wanted a change: "At my age, your career can still take another direction. If I were to wait any longer, maybe I wouldn't have that

choice any more, and I'd be in danger of having to do the same thing for the rest of my life." Not only will Paepen have to obtain teaching qualifications – the GPB exists for people who come to teaching via a career in the outside world and is becoming increasingly popular – he'll also have to accept a substantial cut in income.

"I've made a good living," he admitted. "Here, that might make some people envious, but in the City, people would laugh at me! Every year I await bonus-day anxiously. If I get one, it's about half to a whole year's salary. That's not exaggerated or decadent, like some other bonuses, but I've never complained."

The decision will please the education authorities, who not only want to see more men teaching in schools but also more people with experience of the wider world. According to one former trainer interviewed in the teaching profession's magazine *Klasse*, teachers who come in by the side door "bring the philosophy of corporate culture into schools. That has an enormously positive influence on group learning. They understand that teaching doesn't stop at the classroom door".

FLANDERS TODAY

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EDITOR Lisa Bradshaw

DEPUTY EDITOR Sally Tipper

NEWS EDITOR Alan Hope

AGENDA EDITOR Robyn Boyle

ART DIRECTOR Paul Van Dooren

PREPRESS Corelio AdPro

CONTRIBUTORS Daan Bauwens, Rebecca Benoot, Robyn Boyle, Leo Cendrowicz, Sabine Clappaert, Courtney Davis, Katy Desmond, PM Doutreligne, Nicholas Hirst, Stéphanie Duval, Andy Furniere, Catherine Kosters, Toon Lambrechts, Katrien Lindemans, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Tom Peeters, Marcel Schoeters, Christophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton

GENERAL MANAGER Joske Plas

PUBLISHER Corelio Publishing NV

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Gossetlaan 30 - 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden
tel 02 373 99 09 - fax 02 375 98 22
editorial@flanderstoday.eu

FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS

subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu
or sign up online at www.flanderstoday.eu

ADVERTISING

Evelyne Fregonese
02 373 83 57
advertising@flanderstoday.eu

VERANTWOORDELIJKE UITGEVER

Joske Plas

News in brief

Former federal police chief **Fernand Koekelberg** returned to duty at police headquarters in Etterbeek last week, after his dismissal by interior minister Joëlle Milquet was overturned by the Council of State. Koekelberg was suspended over allegations of mismanagement of funds and later accused of rape by a former girlfriend. His suspension was later made definitive, but the Council of State ruled that it had come after a legal deadline had passed and so was not lawful. Christine De Bolle, meanwhile, has taken over as the new chief of the federal police. Koekelberg's return was short-lived: He was immediately suspended again for four months while the ministry started a new procedure to make his dismissal final.

The Bulletin, for almost 50 years an essential part of life for English-speaking expats, has stopped publishing its twice monthly magazine to move entirely online, Ackroyd Publications has announced. "TheBulletin.be ... will be given a thorough facelift in the summer months and will be expanded, with a number of new community tools," the company said in a press release. "TheBulletin.be will develop to become the ultimate practical guide for international residents in Belgium, made by and for the members of the community." Ackroyd, owned by Corelio, also publishes *Flanders Today*, *Wallonia and Brussels*, a *Newcomer Guide* and an annual *Education Guide*.

▶ www.thebulletin.be

The Council of State has struck down the regional planning order for the town of Doel on the Scheldt estuary, following a long legal battle by supporters of the town's residents. The Flemish government's plan to turn the land over for extension of activities in the Port of Antwerp was

earlier suspended by the Council of State and has now been definitively struck down. The government has submitted a new plan.

The towns of Asse and Kapelle-op-den-Bos in Flemish Brabant have opened condolence books for **Kaat Tilley**, the Flemish designer who died last month. Tilley was born in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, and later made her home and workplace in a converted mill just outside Asse. Last week it was revealed that she had died of a pneumococcal infection.

Traffic approaching Brussels faces problems in the coming weeks from two sets of major roadworks. The E40 at Aalst will see resurfacing work on the Brussels-bound carriageway over the next three weeks, and at Kraainem, works on the viaduct will reduce traffic in both directions to two lanes until the end of August.

TV phone-in games are not fraudulent, according to the government commission that oversees games of chance. The games, in which viewers are invited to call a premium phone number with the answer to a riddle, were scrapped by TV stations last year after an investigation showed it was virtually impossible to provide a correct answer. The commission said that, while a correct answer would be difficult, there was no question of fraud. However, there is little chance the games will find their way back onto the airwaves after the bad publicity that led to their withdrawal.

The government of Flanders and the Flemish Community Commission have agreed grants totalling €1 million for 22 **extracurricular**

school projects across 11 communes in Brussels. Each project, in areas such as sports, social activities, literacy and culture, receives a maximum of €50,000. One of the aims is to provide a structured Dutch-speaking after-school environment for children, many of whom do not speak Dutch outside of the classroom.

The city of Antwerp has launched a trial project to provide **free wifi in the area of the Central Station** and along the newly refurbished Keyserlei. The project will run until May 2013.

Authorities at Sint-Baaf's Cathedral in Ghent have taken on extra security staff after the **theft last week of an artwork** in the temporary exhibition *Sint-Jan*. The work, a marble sculpture by contemporary artist Jan Van Oost, depicts a disembodied hand grasping a skull. Organisers also introduced an entry fee for parts of the exhibition and curtailed opening hours.

About 800 people last week attended the **funeral of Debbie Maveau**, the 23-year-old from Desselgem, West Flanders, who was found dead after failing to return from a trip to Nepal. Police in Nepal have opened a murder investigation.

The governor of West Flanders, Carl Decaluwe, said he will look into the possibility of giving lifeguards at Belgian beaches the **power to impose fines on bathers** who refuse to obey safety instructions. "Swimmers often don't listen to the guidelines given by lifeguards, who are often threatened or challenged to a fight," he said. During the summer months, 450 lifeguards patrol 82 areas of the coast.

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

No comment, judge orders

Everyone realises that friends on Facebook are not the same as friends in real life and that people can easily be "unfriended". But a judge in Ninove, East Flanders, was faced with a trickier situation.

A local man's wife left him, which he apparently took badly, as he began posting vicious attacks against her on Facebook. Despite the kindly advice of friends to cool it, the man continued to show that hell hath no fury, as Congreve might have said, like a Facebook friend scorned.

The estranged wife filed a complaint with the justice of the peace, who sits in every municipality to deal with minor civil disputes. The wife lodged a complaint based on Article 223 of the civil code, which permits a justice of the peace to intervene in such matters when the



divorcing parties have not (yet) registered an official divorce procedure. Such disputes usually concern living arrangements,

child support or property issues. This is thought to be the first time a case has been about boorish behaviour online.

The justice ordered both parties to refrain from "defamatory or insulting comments about each other and the children on public forums such as social media" and set a penalty of €100 per infringement if the instruction was not followed.

Facebook operates a set of "community standards" that forbids, among other things, harassment. "We allow users to speak freely on matters of public interest, but take action on all reports of abusive behaviour directed at private individuals," reads its policy. "Repeatedly targeting other users with unwanted friend requests or messages is a form of harassment."

Understanding dystonia

The foundation is raising awareness among the public as well as medical professionals

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Labelled a hypochondriac

But none of the doctors who examined Ruelens detected the cause of her agony. "Because I was always tired, some thought I had chronic fatigue syndrome, while others assured me I was just stressed," she says. "When I kept on returning, the doctors started to think I was a hypochondriac."

After four years of visiting doctors and eventually reading about the symptoms of dystonia, Ruelens finally received the correct diagnosis in the US. "The specialist saw me coming in with my head pulled back and immediately told me I had dystonia. It was a shock but also a relief to know the origin of my troubles."

The doctor explained that the disorder caused her brain to send the wrong signals to her muscles. The consequent sustained muscle contractions were resulting in abnormal postures and twisting movements. In Ruelens' case,

Dystonia has both hereditary forms and developed forms. The latter affect people who rely on fine motor skills, and it is thought that the excessive motor training contributes to the development of dystonia. But research at the VIB centre will focus on the molecular and cellular pathology of hereditary dystonia. For this, the centre has enlisted Rose Goodchild, a British dystonia expert who previously led a research group at the University of Tennessee. Goodchild will lead a team here that will grow to around 15 researchers.

Her lab will search for the molecular and cellular defects that lie at the basis of the hereditary forms of dystonia to find out how genetic mutation disrupts the correct working of neurons. Goodchild suspects that a defect in the protein Torsin A leads to dystonia and will perform tests on mice and flies to test the hypothesis. "It is not certain whether this can lead

"In my mind is still the image of the woman I used to be"

the muscles in her neck tugged her head backwards, as though someone were pulling it with a rope.

To spare others the same experience, Ruelens and Van Gorp launched the Foundation for Dystonia Research four years ago to improve awareness of and research into dystonia. While active in the US at first, they looked for options to support a Flemish initiative. After a difficult two years, their questions were received with interest by neurologist Bart De Strooper, head of the VIB Centre for the Biology of Disease at KU Leuven. Both the foundation and VIB are now investing €1 million in the work of a new research group focusing on basic dystonia research for at least the next five years.

Kinds of dystonia

Although dystonia is the third most common movement disorder after Parkinson's Disease and essential tremor, the new lab is only one of around 20 high-level groups worldwide concentrating on basic dystonia research – and most of them are in the US. "I estimate that there are approximately 10,000 dystonia patients in Belgium, which is roughly the same number as for multiple sclerosis," explains De Strooper. "But unlike that disease, dystonia is relatively unknown. The research is still in its initial stage and mostly combined with clinical care. This makes our project fairly unique, especially in Europe."

to a quick breakthrough, but this basic research is the path we have to follow to detect the causes of dystonia," she explains. "Once we discover a specific cause, we could convince the pharmaceutical industry to create a certain medicine."

No immediate miracles

De Strooper, director of the Alzheimer's department at the VIB, accepts that Goodchild cannot perform immediate miracles. He makes the comparison with the research into Alzheimer's. "Fifteen years ago, I took part in the birth of the field of Alzheimer's research. Today, genetic defects have been marked, and there is a definite dynamic in the research," he says.

"My expectations are that Goodchild's group can help create a similar drive worldwide. And their findings can enhance our understanding of other disorders as well."

Ruelens says she does not expect a cure will be discovered in her lifetime: "I only hope that improvements in treatment can improve the quality of life of patients."

One current treatment is deep brain stimulation, which involves surgeons implanting an electrode in the brain and a stimulator under the skin elsewhere on the body. Through the stimulator's electrical impulses, the electrodes influence brain signals. Aside from being very expensive and not a suitable treatment for children, "this operation can, in certain cases, carry high risks," says Goodchild. More



© Lieve Blancquaert

Greet Ruelens spent four years hunting down a diagnosis for her uncontrollable movements that made it impossible to sit or stand up straight

common are regular injections with Botulinum toxin, or Botox. "Botox paralyses the nerves so they don't react to the brain signals," she explains. "This can, of course, also severely limit the person's movements."

Although it's not ideal, Botox injections are of vital importance to dystonia patients like Ruelens. "The injections and the muscle relaxants have improved my life quality up to 50%," she says. "With support for my head and back, I can now sit straight in my electric wheelchair and go places. I don't have to lie down the whole time anymore. That's why it hurts me when I hear other patients complaining that they sometimes have to wait half a year for a Botox injection at a specialist. If you don't get

it every three months, your health and comfort decline very quickly."

Enter Lieve Blancquaert

With their foundation, Ruelens and Van Gorp want to raise awareness among medical professionals so they recognise the symptoms and apply proper care immediately and regularly. They also want to sensitise the general public "so that people realise these abnormal postures and twisting movements are the signs of a neurological disorder, like Parkinson's disease. It's a serious matter, not something to laugh about," Ruelens says, emotionally. To that end, Flemish photographer Lieve Blancquaert has shot several series of portraits of dystonia patients. The title, *1/125 sec*, refers to the high

shutter speed Blancquaert had to use to capture the person behind the dystonia. The shoot was a challenge not only for the photographer but also for the models. "It was hard to show to the camera what the disorder has done to my body," explains Ruelens. "Although I feel I have developed a thick skin over the years, I almost had to cry when I saw the photos. In my mind is still the image of the woman I used to be."

But she has not let the condition rule her life. Apart from their foundation, Ruelens and Van Gorp have also established a platform to support female artists: the Foundation for Woman Artists. "These are our two babies that we devote our energy to with a lot of love and enthusiasm," she says, "and we enjoy life no matter what."



Lieve Blancquaert's photos taken at 1/125 frames per second illustrate the movements of people with dystonia, such as Annick, above

Kim De Gelder must face jury

The accused in the Dendermonde crèche killings is fit for trial, says court

Alan Hope

Kim De Gelder, accused of the stabbing death of two babies and a 54-year-old caregiver at a crèche in Dendermonde in January of 2009, will be sent for trial at an assizes court in Ghent, a court last week ruled. The assizes court is the only occasion in Belgian law for a trial by jury and is reserved for the most serious charges. De Gelder, now 23, has also admitted to the murder of an elderly woman in Vrasene days before the crèche attack. De Gelder's defence had pleaded for his internment in a psychiatric institution, arguing that he was

insane and unfit for trial. A committal hearing in Dendermonde passed that question to a higher court in Ghent, which rejected the application. The jury will now decide whether he is to be interned or imprisoned.

Jaak Haentjens, De Gelder's lawyer (*pictured*), said he was disappointed by the decision but understood it in the circumstances. "I know the victims have a lot of questions, but I doubt whether they will get any answers". He will continue to plead De Gelder's insanity in the trial, which will begin at the end of this year or early in 2013.



photo credit: Belga

Education reform sparks much debate

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters has called for a discussion of education reform proposals to move from the public sphere into the confines of the government to avoid the issue becoming a political football in the run-up to the local elections in October.

Education minister Pascal Smet (SPA) was severely criticised by the N-VA for his proposals, which involve a reorganisation of years one and two of secondary school, for students aged roughly 12 to 14. The current system of choosing a learning stream – general academic studies, technical, career-oriented and, to a lesser extent, artistic studies – would be replaced by a single educational plan for all students.

The aim of the change, says Smet, is to allow students more experience before they make a choice of study track. At present, some experts argue, too many children are pushed too early into the wrong academic stream. If all students from 12

to 14 were to follow the same stream, Smet argues, their real aptitudes could better be determined. Critics, including the N-VA, accuse Smet of wanting to level out the whole education system, which would be against the interests of both the best students and the less academically inclined. Smet disagreed, stating: "I want to make the strong students stronger and the weaker students stronger, too."

"I have nothing against political discussion," Peeters told VRT radio, "but it should take place within the Flemish government, not on the street." Reactions on both sides, he said, have "spread unrest needlessly." The government's original agreement from 2009 holds that a proposal for the reform of education, including the proposal currently under discussion, should be ready and agreed by all coalition parties by 2014.

Better rules for rabbits

Animal rights organisation Gaia has reached an agreement with the Boerenbond, or Farmer's Union, and its Walloon counterpart to stop keeping farmed rabbits in battery cages. From 2016, all rabbits must be kept in a "park system" (*pictured*) where they have more freedom to move around, though still being kept indoors. "This should improve the welfare of rabbits considerably," said Michel Vandenbosche of Gaia.

Boerenbond called for the retail sector to help make sure that Belgian farmers would not be put at a competitive disadvantage as a result of higher farming costs. Representatives of Colruyt and Delhaize have promised to

help. Agriculture minister Kris Peeters promised to propose a 28% subsidy for the installation of the park system.



THE WEEK IN FIGURES

25'31"

spent by the average person in Flanders without electricity in 2011 as a result of grid problems, less than the 27-minute average in 2010

11,479

children signed up for boarding schools in Flanders in the school year 2010-2011, a 4.2% increase since 2007 in both primary and secondary levels

2,902

legal procedures started last year against irregularities in house construction in Flanders. Most of the infringements involved building without a permit; Antwerp province, with 747 procedures, was the worst performer

194,205

new viewers a day tuned in to the Canvas channel of the VRT since it was split off from children's channel Ketnet. (The 234,218 viewers for the European football championships not included)

121,500

people contacted Tele-Onthaal, the Dutch-speaking helpline for people experiencing psychological difficulties, in 2011, the first time the annual total has gone down in four years. Chat contacts rose in the year by almost 20%

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Steeple chase

School's out, and one of these days the Flemish Parliament will be closing its doors, too. Not one day too soon, if you ask Flemish MP Eric Van Rompuy of CD&V. Van Rompuy, the younger brother of European president Herman, is one of the Flemish Parliament's most senior members. After he missed out on a ministerial portfolio in 2004, he took his brother's advice to "be free". In practice, this means that he speaks out on his blog whenever he feels like it, even when his party would prefer he didn't.

In his latest post, he voices an irritation that has been growing in Christian-democrat ranks for months. CD&V is the largest party in the Flemish majority, but it is overshadowed by the constant bickering between its two coalition partners N-VA and SPA.

Only recently, N-VA's Bart De Wever, the man with the most votes in the last election, roasted an educational reform proposed by the socialist education minister Pascal Smet, even though it had been discussed in a parliamentary commission, with the support of N-VA. Electoral motives seem the most important reason, although Smet's communication gave N-VA ample ammunition.

The incident is just one of long list. Oosterweel, UPlace, the so called misery tax... In such issues, the socialists tend to change their minds. This annoys CD&V as well as N-VA, but N-VA is always more vocal about it.

According to Van Rompuy, De Wever runs a "steeple chase": Antwerp mayor, minister-president of Flanders and, finally, the end of Belgium. "He is not concerned with governing but with electoral strategy."

Van Rompuy goes on to accuse De Wever of contempt for the current Flemish Parliament (as well as for the Senate) – "a mere intermezzo before he makes his imperial entrance in 2014". Proof? His absence from parliament during the debates on BHV and the educational reform. "In the evening, we find out what his opinion is in [news programmes] *Villa Politica* and *TerZake*, but a debate is beneath him," according to the younger Van Rompuy.

So where does that leave CD&V? According to Van Rompuy, his party is "disgusted" by the spectacle. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters (also CD&V) had hoped to make his government a beacon of stability. Instead he has to put out one fire after another. Recent interviews show a certain sense of weariness in the minister-president. Time for a holiday.

The foreign vote

At the local elections this October, you, too, can cast a ballot

Anja Otte

Belgian politics can be bewildering at times, but the local elections are all about issues close to home. Councils decide what happens in your town in matters such as education, public works, safety, sports, culture and work. Your vote can help change the face of your town – or help keep things as they are, of course.

Register!

Non-Belgians can vote for local representatives (and, in Antwerp city only, district reps), provided they:

- are 18 years old or over on 14 October, 2012
- register on the voter list before 1 August
- are not excluded from voting by a judicial ruling

For people from outside the European Union, there is an extra requirement:

- to have resided continually in Belgium for five years

Non-Belgian nationals are not allowed to vote in provincial or national elections, whether they are EU citizens or not.

You can register to vote at your local town hall, where you can also find a leaflet in simple Dutch. The same information is on the Vlaanderenkies.be website. The Brussels Region has its own publication, with similar information.

Once registered, you will be treated as all voters are. Beware, though, voting is compulsory in Belgium. Once you are registered, you *have*

to vote. This means that you have to show up on voting day at the polling station, with the notice you will receive some weeks in advance and an official ID. Failure to show up to any local election may result in a fine.

The act of participating

“Voting is an act of participation, of good citizenship”, says Flemish minister of the interior and integration Geert Bourgeois. “I suppose that people who feel involved with their communities will vote. People who do not join organisations, schools or neighbourhood comities will probably be less interested.”

In the 2006 local elections, 110,973 EU citizens in Belgium (about 21% of the total) were registered to vote. Because EU citizens come and go, the numbers of those registered can change substantially from election to election. So far this year, only 14% of EU citizens in Belgium are registered to vote in local elections. The numbers for non-EU citizens are lower still: only about 4% were registered by the end of May, compared to 15% in 2006.

But according to the federal Interior service, these numbers are not that bad: A study by the European Commission shows that average registration rates among EU citizens for local elections in other countries stands at 10%. Belgium does better than that. Bourgeois notes that the numbers are lower, though, than what some expected. (His party N-VA voted

against the foreigner’s right to vote, a very divisive issue, in 2004.) “Compulsory voting scares off some people,” admits Inge Jooris, spokesperson for the Groen party. “They think that they will have to vote at every election, even when they leave the country. They do not realise that it is just as easy to remove your name from the voting register as it is to register.”

Groen has produced a YouTube clip to encourage non-Belgians to vote. The clip is remarkable in that it does not ask people to vote for Groen (although that may ultimately be its goal). “Democracy and participation have always been important to us as a party,” Jooris explains. “People who live here pay taxes. They have the right to decide what happens with that money. Also, voting makes people more involved in the communities in which they live.”

EU citizens can even stand as a candidate with one of the parties. To find out more, contact the party of your choice.

So that leaves just one question: who to vote for? Well, that is entirely up to you. One local tradition we can advise you on, however: Most Flemish prefer to remain discreet about their political preference. On voting day, if you ask who they voted for, the enigmatic answer will invariably be “*voor de goede*” (for the right ones). So there’s our advice: Vote for the right ones.

► www.vlaanderenkies.be
► www.brusselverkiezingen2012.irisnet.be



© Dirk Waem / BELGA

Council presidency follows bail-out

EU rep from Cyprus tells Flemish parliament that leadership will be challenging

Mark Latham

Cyprus, the most far-flung member of the European Union, took over the six-monthly rotating presidency of the Council of Ministers on Sunday with a pledge to act as an honest broker between the member states and EU institutions during what is likely to be a crucial period for the 27-member block.

Just days before taking over the rotating presidency of the EU from Denmark, the tiny island nation



became the fifth eurozone country to ask for a multi-billion euro bailout. The move followed the decision by a credit rating agency to cut Cyprus’ sovereign rating to junk status and an urgent need to recapitalise one of the country’s main banks.

Speaking at the Flemish Parliament last week, Cyprus’ deputy European affairs minister Andreas Mavroyiannis, who has previously worked as the country’s ambassador to Ireland, France, the UN and the EU, said that the bailout was necessary because Cypriot banks had lost €3 billion as a result of last November’s agreement to write off huge swathes of Greek debt. The €3bn loss represents almost half of the country’s annual government budget of €7bn and a sizeable chunk of its annual GDP of €23bn.

For a country with a population of just 800,000, providing a lead to the EU for the following six

months will be a challenge, 56-year old Mavroyiannis (*pictured*) admitted to Axel Buysse, Flanders representative to the EU, who was interviewing him before the parliament.

It is the first time that Cyprus has been at the helm of the union since joining in 2004. Because of its distance from the centre of continental Europe, the plan is to pilot a “Brussels-based presidency” with most of the meetings being held in Brussels rather than Cyprus. The country plans to triple the number of civil servants manning its representation to the EU during the presidency, with an extra 150 being drafted in from ministries in the capital Nicosia. Nevertheless, some of the most important meetings will take place in Nicosia, where a former hotel has recently been converted into a conference centre that will be used to host around 15 ministerial meetings between July

and December. The most pressing challenge over the coming months will be trying to find solutions and reaching agreement on solving the eurozone debt crisis. Mavroyiannis said he hoped that roadmaps on banking and economic governance would be in place by the end of the year and that, as a result, Europe would be able “to respond better to the challenges of our times”.

Another key aim will be to make progress on setting the EU’s budget for the period 2014 to 2020, the so-called multi-annual financial framework. “We will build on the work of the Danish presidency in the hope of reaching agreement by the end of the year,” Mavroyiannis said.

Another priority, he said, would be to reach agreement on an integrated maritime policy. The policy, which would provide a framework for a wide variety of activities from

fishing, shipping to offshore wind farms, has largely been kicked into the long grass since 2007, when Portugal held the presidency of the EU. Other areas that Cyprus hopes to deliver on include the establishment of a common EU asylum policy and ironing out problems with the border-free Schengen area.

On the same day as Mavroyiannis’ speech to the Flemish Parliament, some 400 Turkish Cypriots marched through the streets of Brussels to protest against Cyprus’ presidency of the EU, claiming that their rights are being ignored.

The protest was a further reminder of the tensions that will accompany the island’s presidency. Turkey has said it will suspend relations with the Cypriot presidency, due to a lack of progress in reunification talks on the island.

► www.cy2012.eu

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Growth plans on target

Minister-president presents Flanders' response to Europe 2020 strategy

Alan Hope

The ambitious plans of the Flemish government to turn Flanders into one of the top five economic regions of the European Union by 2020 may have suffered some setbacks because of the economic crisis, but the plans are still on track, minister-president Kris Peeters assured an international meeting of regional representatives recently in Brussels.

The government gathered with its counterparts from places like Scotland, Catalonia, Nord Pas de Calais and some of the German Länder, to take stock of the Flanders in Action plan – Flanders' response to the Europe 2020 strategy proposed by the European Commission for reviving the EU economy.

"If we look at the challenges we face, we see that Flanders is doing considerably well economically," Peeters (pictured) told delegates. "Flanders is a leading region in the field of labour productivity [fourth place], labour costs per product unit [fifth place], workers in high-tech industries and services [fifth place] and the distribution of innovation across the sectors [fourth place]."

The programme, Peeters noted, was drawn up in 2009 at the very beginning of the crisis. "Things have changed. Some challenges have become

more urgent and need to be tackled first. One-quarter of the economic indicators experienced a negative evolution over the last few years. The economic crisis has significant implications on productivity and unemployment."

Top priorities

The Europe 2020 strategy establishes three priorities: growth, based on innovation and know-how; sustainable growth, with low emissions and intelligent use of raw materials; and growth for all, embracing equal opportunities and maximum employment. The Flemish government's Pact 2020 translates that into a set of 20 targets under five headings: welfare and prosperity; a competitive and sustainable economy; more workers gainfully employed in suitable jobs; high quality standard of living; and efficient and effective government.

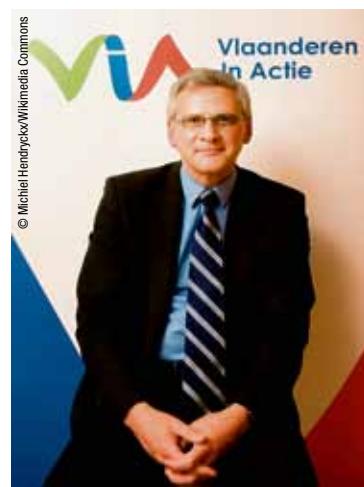
Peeters presented the latest study by the Flemish civil service, which determines which of the 135 indicators are on track for reaching their Pact 2020 target, which have already reached it and which are encountering difficulties.

On business, Flanders has already reached its target of a place in the top five European regions for labour

productivity, the numbers employed in industry and services and the spread of innovation across all sectors. However, while the ratio of investment to income of businesses is on an upward trend, the number of exporting companies is in decline. The government's figures on inward foreign investment also show an increase, but the performance in Flanders for 2011 was disappointing. On innovation, Flanders is on track to reach its target of 3% of GDP being dedicated to research and development by 2020: from a high of 2.38% in 2001 and a dip to under 2% in 2006, that figure has now climbed to 2.15%.

In some areas, Flanders has set targets that exceed those in the Europe 2020 package. An example is the "learning society", which covers education and training. Europe's goal for the numbers with a university degree is 40%, but Flanders is aiming for 47.5%. The EU goal has already been reached for people aged 30 to 34, while for the 20 to 29 age group, it stands at 35%.

Out of three indicators in the fields of mobility, energy and environment, one has already been achieved, Peeters said. However, while four out of 10 indicators are moving in the right direction, one-quarter of all are



going the wrong way: for example, the Kyoto Protocol targets on greenhouse emissions were reached in 2009, ahead of time. Since then, however, things have gone backwards.

"The successful implementation of any long-term strategy requires the right balance between perseverance and flexibility," Peeters said. "You cannot stray from your goals if you want to remain credible. But at the same time, you have to be able to respond to a changing world. Flanders in Action is still on track. Despite the current crisis, 90% of our strategic projects are on schedule. Several projects have even been completed."

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos

► Ford

The Genk-based Ford assembling unit will receive €28 million in aid from the government of Flanders to build the new Mondeo line. Ford's commitment to building the model in Genk assures full employment levels (about 4,500) at the plant until 2020. Further aid is expected for the S-Max and Galaxy vehicles.

Brewing

► AB Inbev

Leuven-headquartered AB-Inbev, the world's largest beer group, has acquired the 50% it didn't own in Grupo Modelo, the Mexican brewer of Corona, for \$20.1 billion. The move is AB-Inbev's second largest acquisition after buying Anheuser Busch in 2008.

Hotels

► Radisson

The Antwerp Radisson Park Lane hotel has been seized by authorities following a court decision ruling that the hotel was built in the mid-1990s using illegal funds in part. The decision is not expected to affect the hotel's operations.

Oil production

► Exmar

The Antwerp-based gas transport and shipping group has signed a contract to develop a second Opti-Ex hurricane-resistant oil platform, worth up to \$500 million, for the US LLOG oil group for use in the Gulf of Mexico. Exmar, expected to own part of the platform, will net some €20 million on the deal.

Property

► Atenor

The Atenor property group has sold a 32,000-square metre office block to the European Parliament for some €125 million. The facility, located close to the European institutions, will replace an existing building and is expected to be inaugurated in 2016.

Retail

► Premaman

Brussels-based children's and maternity clothes retailer Premaman has been sold to the French Orchestra group for an undisclosed amount. The company operates 194 stores in Belgium and an additional 100 in the rest of Europe and the Middle East. It was owned by the Escoido family but had been facing growing competition from other retailers such as Zara and H&M in recent years.

Supermarkets

► Albert Heijn

Dutch supermarket group Albert Heijn recently inaugurated its fifth and sixth outlets in Roeselare and Beveren. The company expects to have some 50 stores in operation in Flanders by 2016.

Poor June weather brings gloomy sales forecasts

The summer sales got off to a good start last weekend, aided by the sunny weather, as the retail sector hoped for a high turnout to help pull them out of the dip in sales caused by dismal weather in the months leading up to the holidays. As the Royal Meteorological Institute announced that June was the wettest this year since 1966, the retail industry reported a fall in sales of 7%, with 60% of all shops selling less

in the spring than last year. In April, retailers had estimated sales up 5% on the first quarter of 2011, which makes the slide in May and June even more remarkable.

Also according to the sales survey, 64% of shops plan to start the sales with a 30% discount. Meanwhile, 29% expect the sales period to bring in less than it did in 2011, with 53% anticipating the same turnover; only 18% are looking forward to better sales.



Vlaamse Post to compete with bpost

The first private competitor for the state-owned post office will start operating in Flanders in September. Vlaamse Post is the initiative of a group of local companies and will start operating with the delivery of printed materials, mainly advertising. The postal services market in Europe was liberalised in 2011, but so far no competitor for the post office, known as bpost, has emerged. Vlaamse Post staff have been pounding the pavements of Flanders since last year, spokesman Laurens Van den Wijngaert said, to map every mailbox in the region, taking note of those which have "no advertising" stickers attached and compiling a database of every area showing the size of each plot of land and the approximate income of each household, the better

to serve direct mail clients. The company is currently looking for 100 part- and full-time employees. The companies behind Vlaamse Post are remaining anonymous for the time being, as each of them is at present a client of bpost. From 2014, Vlaamse Post aims to become a full-service postal business. "Will there be Vlaamse Post stamps? Will we work with our own network of post offices?" Van den Wijngaert said. "Apparently we will."

► www.vlaamsepost.be



Restrictions on night-shops in Ghent

The city council of Ghent has introduced a new regulation that will refuse licenses to new applications to open a night-shop or phone-shop if the premises are within 500 metres of an existing shop of the same sort. Night- and phone-shops require special permission from the municipality

because their opening hours are outside normal business hours. The city has 92 such shops, many of them concentrated in particular areas, causing a nuisance to local residents, the council said, through noise, drunkenness, increased traffic and parking.



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Bottom's up

To understand Limburg's beer, one must go straight to the source

Diana Goodwin

Limburg has its share of famous breweries, including Achel, one of the seven Trappists, and Cristal Alken, whose pils is found in every cafe and backyard barbecue in Flanders. But it's also home to several innovative craft brewers, who combine a love of beer with a shrewd knack for the growing business of beer tourism. Marc Limet began his lifelong romance with Belgian beer at the age of 18, when he and his friends began travelling to small breweries to taste traditional-style brews. One of their favourites was a small farmhouse brewery on the outskirts of Sint-Truiden.

The owner, Jean Clerinckx, started Kerkom in 1988 on the site of his family's old brewery, which had closed 20 years before. When Limet first visited, Kerkom had only one beer, a blonde, and the cafe was only open on Sundays. He and his friends spent many a Sunday afternoon drinking that blonde and talking with the brewer.

When Clerinckx retired in 1997, he asked his young friend, the beer enthusiast, to take over. Limet didn't exactly jump at the opportunity. Despite his love of beer, he had never planned to run a brewery himself. Finally, he realised it was the chance of a lifetime. "If I don't do it, I'll regret it for the rest of

my life," he told himself. It was a rocky start. Kerkom by then had added a brown, and, like his predecessor, Limet brewed just the two beers. The first year, he and his team produced only 250 hectolitres of beer. In 2000, they added two *saisons*, based on the seasonal "farmhouse" brews native to Wallonia. The first takes its inspiration from the local Haspengouw region, famous for its fruit trees. Made with pear syrup and honey, Bink Bloesem was inaugurated during the annual Blossom Festival in Sint-Truiden. Limet already had the idea to make a winter beer with the name Winterkoninkse, after a small wren native to Belgium, when he saw an illustration in a book that showed the *winterkoning* sitting on a hops vine. The brewer took that as a good sign and put both bird and hops on the label.

A burst of new beers

In 2002, Kerkom was asked to brew an abbey-style beer for the first Open Abbey Day in Sint-Truiden. Adelardus Dubbel is named after the city's first abbot. A few years later, Kerkom came out with a Tripel to celebrate the opening of the abbey tower. Both beers are made with the addition of *gruut*, a blend of medieval herbs originally

used by monks as a preservative in brewing before the advent of hops. Kerkom has three other beers: Kerkomse Tripel, a special dark called Winterkoningske Grand Cru, and the newest, Bloesem Kriek (not to be confused with Bink Bloesem). Bloesem Kriek is a sweet cherry beer, but, during the summer months, you can find a traditional-style sour kriek on draft in the brewery's cafe. The busiest time for the cafe is in spring, when tourists flock to the region for the apple and pear blossoms. The outdoor terrace, enclosed within the walls of the old four-sided farm, is an ideal place to sip a beer. Just in front of the entrance is an information board showing walks in the area.

Abbot's refuge: Ter Dolen

Despite being 40 kilometres away, another Limburg brewery also has close ties with the city of Sint-Truiden. Ter Dolen, in Helchteren, was originally the summer home and refuge of the abbot of Sint-Truiden. Unlike in Kerkom, there was no brewery at Ter Dolen before Mieke Desplenter bought the castle property in 1994. She comes from a long line of brewers, and her family members run several other breweries scattered across Flanders. Brewing is in her blood.

Ter Dolen makes three abbey-style beers: a blonde, a brown and a Tripel. A special arrangement with the non-profit organisation responsible for the former abbey buildings in Sint-Truiden allows Ter Dolen to use the official "abbey beer" seal. Ter Dolen's newest beer appeared just over a year ago. It's called Armand, after Desplenter's father, a brewer who provided the original recipe for Ter Dolen blonde. Armand is an unfiltered, bitter beer made with Cascade hops from the US, and the only place you can get it is in the brewery's own cafe.

The cafe and brewery are housed in what were originally the farm buildings of the castle. At weekends, you can take a tour of the brewery, followed by a drink in the cafe or on the terrace in the farm's courtyard. (The castle itself is not open to the public.)

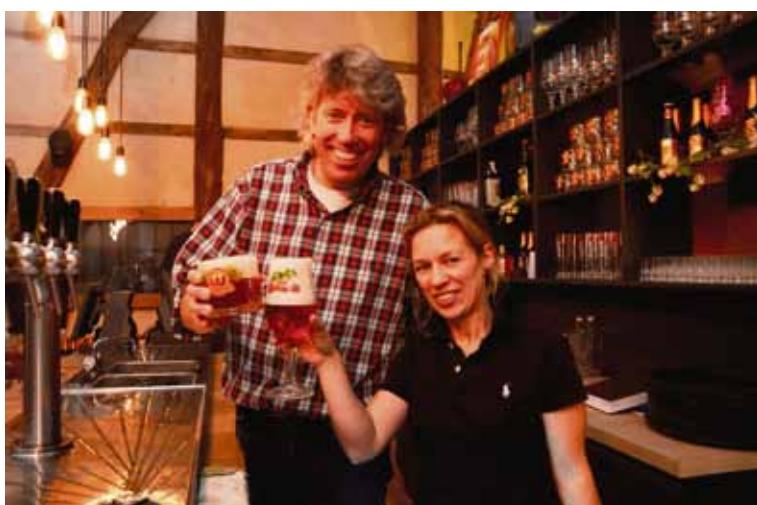
Ter Dolen is very popular with locals and tourists, who arrive by car, bicycle and on foot. Tourism in Limburg in general is booming, with visitors – mostly from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany – drawn by the nature, ideal for walking and cycling, and by *streekproducten* like local craft beer, cheese and fruit syrup.

Secret blends: Wilderen

The newest draw for beer lovers the brewery, distillery and cafe in Wilderen, just outside Sint-Truiden. Opened last summer, the cafe is full to capacity on weekends, and



Find a sour kriek only in the summer at Brewery Kerkom



Welcome to Wilderen: Mike and Roniek Janssen

the brewery is already becoming a top tourist attraction for the Haspengouw region.

Owner Mike Janssen has been brewing beer and opening cafes for more than 20 years. He says Wilderen is his last brewery, and it's hard to imagine him topping it. At Wilderen, he jokes, he has "everything I ever wanted!"

The brewery is state-of-the-art, a self-contained, fully-automated system in a new facility. Brewer Roland Vanderlinden, formerly of Ter Dolen, has two beers in production here: Wilderen Goud, a blonde, and Kannunik Tripel, made from four types of grain, two kinds of hops and a secret blend of three spices.

Next door, the old distillery from 1890 is virtually unchanged since its closure in 1939. Miraculously overlooked by the Germans, it's a monument of industrial archaeology, the original copper vessels and distillation tower still intact. It was this, more than anything, that convinced Janssen to buy the property, which also included a farm dating to the 17th century.

Janssen left the original distillery as it was and installed a new one next door, where he produces both a *graanjenever* and an *eau-de-vie* called "eau-de-bière", made from the Kannunik Tripel. He also has a dozen barrels of whiskey in aged oak barrels from Kentucky laid down in

the cellar and will release the first bottles in August 2014.

Wildereren has one of the most impressive beer cafes in Limburg. Installed in a restored barn, it boasts huge wooden beams, authentic wattle-and-daub walls and a large open hearth in the centre of the room. The open, airy interior strikes a perfect balance between old and new, with an atmosphere that's both authentic and modern.

Finally, the outdoor terrace, between the 18th-century barn and the 19th-century distillery, seats up to 500 and includes a playground for kids. On weekends, tours take visitors through the old distillery and the brewery. A visit to Wilderen combines history, architecture, brewing and local gastronomy, followed by a leisurely drink in beautiful surroundings.

Ultimately, that's what brewing in Limburg is all about: not just a love of beer, but an appreciation for local heritage and a strong sense of hospitality. For these brewers, beer isn't just a product. It's something to be enjoyed with family, friends – and visitors – while sitting in a cosy cafe or on a sunny terrace.

► www.brouwerijkerkoma.be

► www.terdolen.be

► www.brouwerijwildereren.be



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Summer days

Our weekly series on keeping the kids occupied during the school holidays

Alan Hope

Motte fortress

Kids all love a castle, but the Hoge Wal in Evergem, East Flanders, is something more primitive. A *motte* is a fortress built on a mound, and the Hoge Wal, built in 1190 by Zeger II, is one of the best preserved in Flanders, with an inner keep and an outer fortress, as well as a moat. For children aged five to eight, there's a book of discovery with puzzles to be solved, while the older kids have a mystery to unravel with an audio guide. *Monday-Friday from 8.45 to 11.45, plus Tuesday from 14.00 to 19.30 and Wednesday from 14.00 to 16.30*

► www.mottekasteel.be

The Spell

In the grounds adjoining the Nos Pilifs farming community in Neder-Over-Heembeek on the edge of Brussels, The Spell is a fantasy journey through a magical land

peopled by witches, warriors, princesses and others. You never know who might pop out of the bushes next. We've done it with a mixed party of 11-year-olds, and they all had a great time. Every step is a riddle to be solved. *Wednesday-Sunday from 13.00 to 18.30*

► www.sortilege.be

Toy fashion

Do you remember the toys that were all the rage when you were growing up? From hula hoops to Tamagotchi, they all seemed at the time to have taken over the world, but what will the kids of today make of such nine-day wonders? Find out at the exhibition *Toy Fads* at the Toy Museum in Mechelen, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary. For you it's a trip down memory lane; for the children it's a voyage of discovery.

Tuesday-Sunday from 10.00 to 17.00

► www.speelgoedmuseum.be



Sound Factory

The Sound Factory is an interactive exhibition in the Concertgebouw in Bruges. Visit the top floor and roof terrace of the Lantern Tower overlooking the city to try your hand at everything from carillon bells to digital instruments operated by a touch-screen, as well as a musical journey composed especially for a staircase. You can also compose your own symphony

on a series of iMac computers. *Tuesday-Sunday from 9.30 to 17.30*

► www.sound-factory.be

There are more delights of music and sound to discover at the Klankenbos in Limburg: www.flanderstoday.eu/content/sounding-it-out

Insect Hotel

What if instead of chasing insects away, you gave them their own accommodation? At the Watersnip nature centre in Beringen, Limburg province, children can discover the uses of an insect hotel in their own garden, how to make one and what sort of guests to expect. The centre also has a wealth of information on the nature of the area, and there are four walking routes mapped out for visitors. *Tuesday-Sunday from 13.00 to 17.00*

► www.tinyurl.com/insecthotel

Archaeology workshop

Children like nothing better than getting their hands dirty, especially when you don't want them to. At the Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren, though, you can even take part with them in a one-day workshop on archaeology, armed with tape measure, spade and trowel. The price is included in the museum entry. The museum itself is also a rich source of information on the historical past of the region, with films and a free guide in English. *Workshop in Dutch only, Tuesday-Sunday, 13.30 to 16.30; museum open Tuesday-Sunday from 10.00 to 18.00*

► www.galloromeinsmuseum.be

More links to activities for children and teens can be found on our website www.flanderstoday.eu

Contributions to this article were made by Olga Hope

New variety established as Peace Treaty Rose

In 1814, a single rose became the symbol of the Ghent Peace Treaty. The four diplomats who signed the treaty that defined the borders of Canada and the United States each had a rose devoted to them; a fifth rose was called the Peace Treaty Rose. In the 200 years since, the variety of the Peace Treaty Rose was lost and forgotten.

Now the organisers of Ghent's Peace Treaty commemorations, which kicked off earlier this spring, have joined forces with the city's Floraliën horticulture association to make sure this rose finds a home in all three countries – Belgium, the US and Canada. But first they had to figure out what kind of rose it was and get it developed. "We found descriptions in our archives at Floraliën, written by John Adams. There is an exchange of letters about the roses," explains Floraliën director Jan Oprins.

They determined the approximate variety of the rose and discovered that a local grower had already developed a variety of striking similarity. "It's slightly different in that it's more climate resistant than was able to be developed 200 years ago," says Oprins. "It's a bit healthier, more resistant to disease."

Now the organisation is working with representatives from both the US and Canada to get the rose planted in all three countries, which import laws make challenging. The goal is that the rose would be planted in Ottawa's new city garden and in the White House gardens in Washington, DC. **Lisa Bradshaw**

► www.treatyofghent.org

Brussels welcomes the world's first Smurf store

At the world's first dedicated Smurf store in Brussels' Central Station, fans of the little blue creatures will find all kinds of goodies. A new Smurf statue nearly five metres high shows visitors the way to the store and to its host, the Museum of Original Figurines (Moof). The Smurf store, based on the iconic comic figures created by Brussels illustrator Pierre Culliford in the 1950s, was launched last week in the presence of Nine and Véronique Culliford, respectively the widow and daughter of Culliford (better known as Peyo). "We have been thinking about such a store for about 20 years; it was one of my father's dreams," says Véronique. At the moment, the shop sells Smurf products that are already on the market such as toys, clothes, watches and figurines. "But we want to stand out and create a range of exclusive gadgets," says Véronique.

There are no definite plans to start a chain of Smurf stores yet. "We look at this as a try-out," she says. "Hopefully other opportunities will arise."

On the plaza of the Grasmarkt, in front of the Horta Gallery, a giant statue of a Smurf on a mushroom acts as a billboard for the store. Belgian sculptor Maryline Garbe created the Smurf in white stone and not in its usual blue colour. "The statue will be visible whether you see it in the sun, in the rain or at night," Garbe explains. The Moof museum, meanwhile, exhibits both a Smurf village and prototypes used for the Hollywood movie *The Smurfs*. Later this year, the city of Brussels will commemorate the 20th anniversary of Peyo's death with the unveiling of the very first Smurf wall fresco. **Andy Furniere**



Inside the new Smurf store at Brussels Central Station

Reaping what you sew

Landscapes both natural and man-made in *Sense of Place*, the cornerstone of this year's Summer of Photography

Tom Peeters

You're driving through a beautiful Irish landscape, thinking you're really in the middle of nowhere. Suddenly you bump into abandoned properties – not old barns or sheds but brand new housing, never used, curiously connected, or rather disconnected, to the natural environment.

When the Celtic Tiger – Ireland's 12 year economic boom – collapsed in 2008, "the property speculation bubble burst practically overnight, and private investors just stopped building," explains photographer Anthony Haughey, who took a special interest in these so-called ghost estates. "At this very moment there are about 2,000 unfinished projects in Ireland and about 620 ghost estates."

Haughey began photographing them. "I think it's my role as an artist to hold a mirror up to society."

The striking result can be seen in *Sense of Place* at Bozar in Brussels, one of the cornerstone exhibitions of the country-wide Summer of Photography. *Sense of Place* investigates the landscape of Europe and, more specifically, our complex relationships with it. "Landscape is not timeless; nature evolves and changes both in itself and in response to human actions," says Liz Wells, professor of photographic culture at Plymouth University and curator of *Sense of Place*. "Histories are literally absorbed into the soil."

Indeed, Haughey, one of the 40 photographers on display here, focused on how nature has been infected for the long term. Taking his pictures at dusk or after dark, he created an even more estranged effect, making these ghost estates an even bigger embarrassment for the government and local planning than they already were.

Serenity and social progress

Sense of Place is divided into three geographical regions: North, Central and South. But as photographers don't like borders, you'll see their topics returning everywhere: on one hand the almost utopian beauty and serenity of the landscape, on the other the undeniable consequences of social activity, economic progress and political scars on the same land, often contrasting.

Sometimes what we perceive as a natural boundary is even false. Jem Southam took photographs of the coastline on either side of the channel, in Normandy and Sussex. Although we may perceive the sea as something that keeps lands apart, the British photographer illustrates that the cliffs on both sides evolved from the same rock



The Mériaillet Buttresses of the Roselend Dam by French photographer Céline Clanet, part of *Sense of Place*

formations, and what we call "the island" and "the continent" are only recent forces of nature.

Natural and human borders form and disappear. The end of the Cold War, for instance, has left us with post-border landscapes. Once important lines have simply vanished. It's these non-places connected with a common history that inspired many of these photographers.

Witness the empty battlefields of Flemish photog Bart Michiels or the desolate border landscape between Bulgaria and Turkey by Vesselina Nikolaeva. Even the large-scale opening photo of an empty Rhine River by Andreas Gursky fits in: Though it signifies one of Europe's busiest shipping routes, connecting the North to the South, the air, water and shore and its rigid lines deliver a natural tranquillity and grace. "But without rivers, no settlements and no inhabitants," says Bozar director Paul Dujardin about the most expensive photograph in the world. "Rhein II" fetched €3.1 million at auction last year.

Rebuilding a lost landscape

It's not only the 160 or so pictures at Bozar that juxtapose tensions and contradictions of the

landscape or show both change and continuity. The Summer of Photography consists of 35 events in five cities, showcasing more than 100 artists.

In Antwerp's FotoMuseum the focus is on the influence of new technologies on photography. One of the photographers of *From Here On* refers to the influence of Google Earth on landscape photography. At Brussels' Contretype, *Construire Le Paysage* shows the landscape as an artistic practice, rebuilt by the photographer using all contemporary technologies available. The Museum of Photography in Charleroi, meanwhile, displays images of innocent beach games at the Belgian coast. Between 1890 and 1960, everything seemed quite idyllic in black and white. We do not find this nostalgia in the big colourful prints of Italian Massimo Vitali, who confronts us with the effects of mass tourism in all its abundance. Nor in the work

of Carl De Keyzer, who travelled Europe's coastlines looking for the effects of climate change and rising sea levels. You can see the work of both photographers at Bozar, but De Keyzer's solo *Moments before the Flood* in Ostend is definitely worth a visit because it really captures these apparently quiet moments before the storm.

So, does the responsibility of a photographer stop at showing us their images? Haughey, at least, took it one step further. His pictures of ghost estates caused a big debate in Ireland. For installations in his home country, he invites architects and town planners to discuss how to repurpose these places. "So building sites that were made for profit and speculation for a few are now being reconsidered as buildings for civic and community use," he says. His video at *Sense of Place* is a strong metaphor for how we all could think about society.

THE WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The Illuminare Centre for the Study of Medieval Art at KULeuven and the city's Museum M dedicated a room in the museum to Veronique Vandekerchoue last week in a commemoration ceremony. Vandekerchoue, who was hit by a car and killed last January, was Museum M's chief curator. She was largely credited with its success since its opening in 2009, as well as significantly impacting the positive relationships between the city, the university and the museum. The room dedicated to Vandekerchoue contains the late-Gothic sculpture collection, and a commemorative plaque has been placed at the entrance to the museum. KULeuven rector Mark Waer inaugurated the university's new distinction of *Clavis Terrarum* on Vandekerchoue, given to an individual outside of the university for extraordinary merit and outstanding achievements. The city is establishing the Veronique Vandekerchoue Chair of the City of Leuven at KULeuven, the first time the city has undertaken such an initiative. The chair will provide €65,000 in financial support to young art historians.

Flemish curator Jan Hoet has come out of the week-long medically induced coma he was in in Soltau, Germany, near where he lives. Hoet was diagnosed with a viral infection in his lungs, which infected his blood, giving him heart problems. The infection is now under control, and Hoet's condition is serious but stable.

Flemish writer Anne Provoost's provocative pamphlet *Beloved Unbelievers: Atheist Sermon* has been translated into English. Originally published in 2008, it starts with the premise that atheists need a sermon, too, and tries to define the difference between "normal" and "extreme" religion. It also comes with a helpful "religiometer" so you can test your level of belief (or lack thereof) against your friends. The text is free to read and download.

► www.tinyurl.com/belovedunbelievers

A number of Brussels organisations, including Visit Brussels and TMA Concept, have collaborated on a new guide and website called **Brussels For All, aimed at people with reduced mobility**. The guide describes the accessibility possibilities of lodgings, venues, attractions and restaurants in the capital to prepare visitors in advance, whether they are in a wheelchair, using a walker, pushing a pram or have sight or hearing impaired. The goal is also to sensitise venues to the needs of all visitors.

► www.brusselvoorallen.be

UNTIL 16 SEPTEMBER

Summer of Photography

Across Belgium

► www.summerofphotography.be

Old is new again

Leading the pack this 11 July, Raymond van het Groenewoud never seems to go out of style

Tom Peeters

Almost 25 years ago, Raymond van het Groenewoud wrote the unofficial Flemish anthem, the slightly ironic ode "Vlaanderen Boven" (Flanders on Top). Ten years ago, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the Battle of the Golden Spurs, he updated the lyrics, and the song became the official party hymn of the celebrations.

Now, in the summer of 2012, Van het Groenewoud (*pictured*) is inviting us all to join him in Brussels on 11 July for Flemish Community Day, with which he is now inextricably associated, his songs for years part of Flemish cultural heritage. For sure, it will be a hectic day for the singer and songwriter, now 62. In the afternoon, he will play at Flagey with the Brussels Philharmonic. In the evening, he will sing his biggest hits for a major crowd on the Grote Markt, surrounded by colleagues such as Helmut Lotti, Hannelore Bedert and Flip Kowlier.

And even later that night, Van het Groenewoud will show up for a guest appearance on the roof of the Beursschouwburg, where local band Tommigun will update his 1984 soundtrack for the cult movie *Brussels By Night*. Prominent Flemish authors will read aloud the stories they've invented around key figures in his songs.

The song master is curious how others will recycle his work. What will award-winning children's book author and illustrator Gerda Dendooven or novelist Christophe Vekeman make of his classics "Twee Meisjes" (Two Girls) and "De Middenstandsblues" (The Retailer's Blues)? Take the first one, about two teenage girls reading

with it."

In fact, he has never had any problem letting go of his songs. "I write and sing them, but then the fantasy of the listener takes over, and you're rid of them," he tells me. "Mick Jagger once said in an interview that he met a guy who told him he understood all his lyrics, but in the end he was wrong about almost everything!" Instead of being annoyed, the Rolling Stones frontman found it amusing. "I took over that attitude, which is far better than continuously feeling indignant and misunderstood."

Vele muziekjes

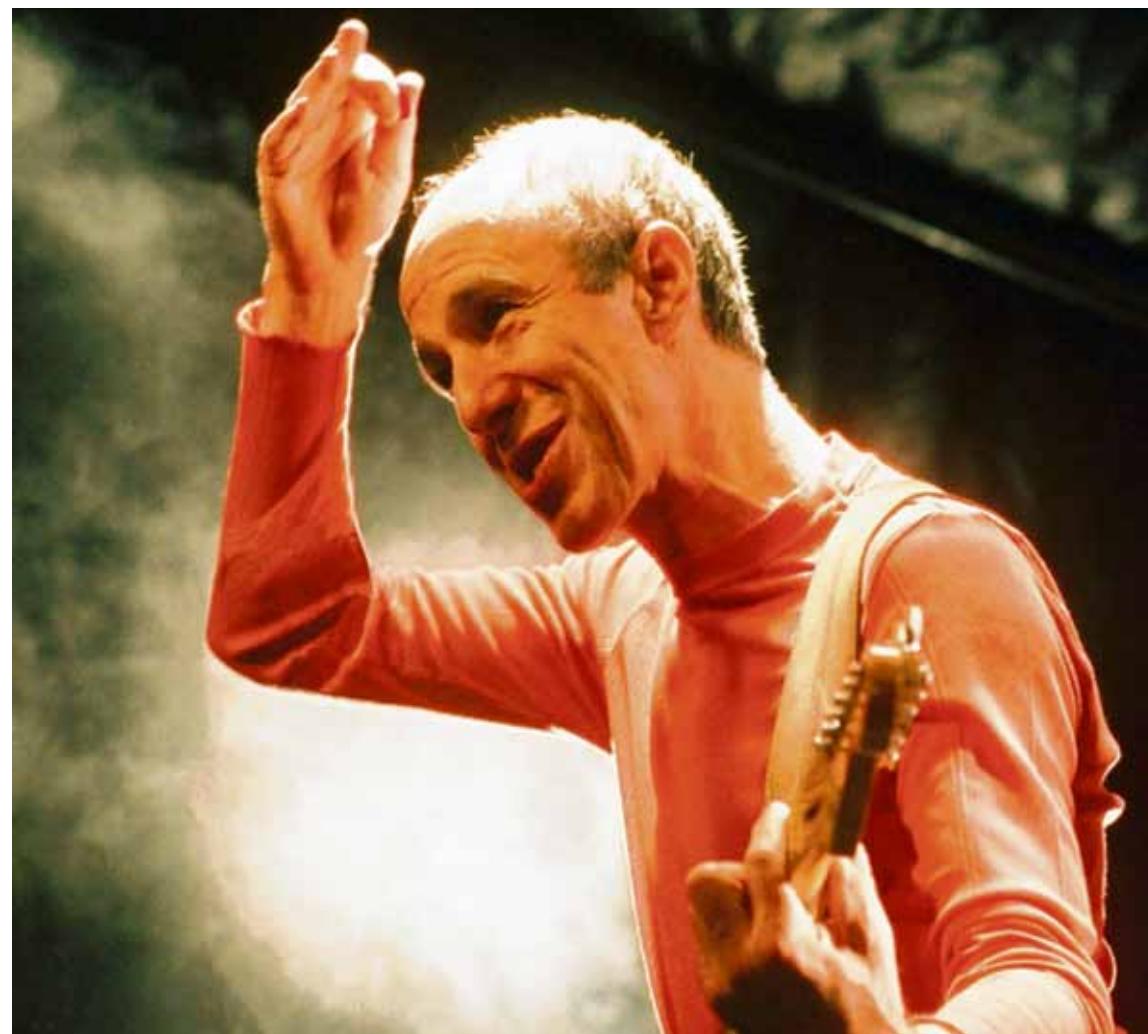
Van het Groenewoud never consciously tried to be an ambassador for Flanders, but he became one in any case. Often his lyrics – sometimes identifiable, other times daring, frequently playful – tell you something about the nature of the people. One might almost forget that his parents were Dutch. To avoid military service, they moved in the late 1940s from Amsterdam to Brussels, where his father started to perform as Nico Gomez and became the leader of a Latin-inspired big band.

That's where all the *muziekjes* in his head come from, which he refers to in his hit "Cha Cha Cha", a fine statement against musical homogeneity. All through his career, Van het Groenewoud maintained a preference for different styles, from intimate and melancholic to funky and danceable. Van het Groenewoud released his first solo album in 1973. His first hit "Meisjes" (Girls) was on the 1977 classic album *Nooit meer drinken* (Never Drink Again). Its line "Meisjes, ze komen zelden klaar, meneer" ("Girls, they seldom come, sir") is still a favourite live.

"As an artist, it's your job to prove you're still relevant, over and over again"

fashion magazines and watching boys at the beach. It's plain, simple and even without rhyme, but the Flemish audience has taken a keen liking to it. Every year it tops the lists of all-time Belgian favourites compiled by radio listeners. "I'm a big fan of the written word," van het Groenewoud says, "and I am particularly fond of the idea that the authors will do their own thing

You can hear the despair of an underappreciated artist, meanwhile, in "Je Veux de l'Amour" (I Want Love, 1980); ironically this song forced his breakthrough in The Netherlands. Later, the gospel parody "Liefde Voor Muziek" (Love for Music, 1991) would be his only number-one song. But it wasn't necessarily through the charts that Van het Groenewoud made a big



impact on the native-language music scene. It's his spirited performances that have shown younger musicians the way.

Leading the Flemish brigade

In fact, supporting him at the Grote Markt on 11 July are two big fans, the young talent Senne Guns en Het Zesde Metaal, the band of singer-songwriter Wannes Cappelle. The appreciation is mutual. "Wannes writes great lyrics, and I'm not telling you a secret when I say Senne's "Goudvis" (Goldfish) is already a classic," says Van het Groenewoud, who also appreciates that, on this special occasion, stages across Brussels are reserved for Flemish artists. "If only to keep a certain balance," he explains, "because Flemish musicians would ultimately forget to profile themselves. They're not so chauvinistic."

He admits, though, that "it's a pity I won't be sharing the stage with some

French-speaking artists. I invited Stromae and Adamo, but they had already other commitments".

Van het Groenewoud thinks that we "live in a very permissive society" with regard to other people's nationalism. He smiles. "One moment we may be thinking that this is the best place on earth, the other moment we joke about that same statement and don't take ourselves too seriously. It all comes down to our individuality, I think. History teaches us why we became such individualists. Through all these foreign occupations, the Fleming became a real artist in surviving. Somewhat stubborn ... One day you're disapproving about that, the next day you think it's charming."

His last album *De laatste rit* (The Last Ride, 2011) was a striking example of this survival. Though he was always more a live than a charts artist, the album quickly went gold. "As an artist, it's your job to prove you're still relevant, over and over again," he says. Van het Groenewoud is still an eager showman: After Flemish Community Day, you can see him at the Gentse Feesten and a bunch of other summer festivals. But at 62, he admits, he's spending more time in preparation. "I feel more comfortable that way," he says. I don't like the stress of being doubtful. I want to be dreamy on stage and have the freedom to go beneath my maximum level. It makes me sound more natural."

11 JULY

Feest in Brussel: Raymond van het Groenewoud

Flagey 15.00; Grote Markt 20.00

► www.feestinbrussel.be

HOW THE PARTY STARTED



The big party on 11 July is in the Grote Markt, where Flemish bands take to the stage

On 11 July, 1302, the militias of the Flemish cities and municipalities, which consisted mainly of infantry, craftsmen and farmers, defeated an army of French knights on the Groeningekouter in Kortrijk. On the battlefield, hundreds of golden spurs, worn by the French, were recovered. The battle prevented a final annexation of the former county of Flanders by the French kingdom and became a symbol of resistance to foreign domination.

But it was only in the course of the 19th century that

people named it the Battle of the Golden Spurs, partially thanks to the romanticised version of the battle in the book Hendrik Conscience's book *The Lion of Flanders*. It's not only the Flemish movement or political parties that meet to celebrate the day. Since 2002, the government of Flanders has handed out "party cheques" to those organising a street or neighbourhood party and hang out the yellow-and-black Flemish flag sporting the mighty lion

Because Ghent dialect is for everyone

The Gentse Feesten

Anouk Turnock

Every July, Ghent is bombarded by musicians, theatre folk and never-ending beer sellers for the 10-day Gentse Feesten. Unlike other city festivals, there's no escaping the Gentse Feesten if you're in Ghent: Huge swaths of the city centre are transformed into Flanders' biggest festival site. Bands blaring at all hours, giant puppets swooping about, folk dancing on squares, good-natured drunkenness. As a *Gentenaar* the Gentse Feesten is the highlight of my year.

The Gentse Feesten is the mother of all Flanders' festivals not just because of its size (1.2 million visitors and counting) but also because of its diversity (street theatre, live music, a puppet buskers festival, a comedy festival and more) and its price (mostly free).

But what really sets the Gentse Feesten apart is the camaraderie. Everybody appears to be happy all of the time. This has something to do with the drink, no doubt, but it's



also about tradition: It's time for the *feesten*; leave your troubles at home.

The Feesten is a fun festival to discover just by wandering around,

though there are annual stalwarts: If you like folk music, you can go to the Baudelo Park where you'll be surrounded by adults sporting dreadlocks who juggle and dance

jigs. Baudelo is the place to go to escape the madness of the Feesten, with its traditional Turkish tea tent, its little stage devoted to kids' circus acts and its dance lessons, where

you, too, can learn to boogie in all kinds of styles.

For something a bit more wild, head for the exotic cocktail bars that line the Polé Polé Festival on both sides of the Graslei/Korenlei canal (pictured). Salsa, African, Latin, reggae, the whole world music scene is at your feet on a stage that bridges the two sides of the water.

The Vooruit hosts the tech fest 10 Days Off, the Kouter square is where you'll find alt-rock space Boomtown, there are brass bands at Sint-Baafs, the Groentemarkt stages cover bands, and in the garden of the Huis van Alijn Museum, you'll usually find a sing-along in Dutch dialect.

And you will find, remarkably, all ages everywhere. Because if there was ever a time when Flemish teenagers find themselves wanting to sing 19th-century drinking songs with their granddads, it's at the Gentse Feesten. This festival is a joy for young or old, for those who love or hate cover bands, for *Gentenaars* and for everyone else.

14-23 July | Across Ghent city centre | ► www.gentsefeesten.be

CONCERTS

Night of the Proms

Night of the Proms is the result of an unlikely marriage between two musical genres: classical and pop. Once again the series of concerts promises to sell out quickly. This year features the super popular Flemish pop-rock artist Ozark Henry, aka Piet Goddaer (pictured). In addition, 23-year-old Dutchman Remy van Kesteren will show why he is widely considered one of the world's most talented harpists. American singer-songwriter Anastacia will be there as well, a little lady with a powerful soul voice and dozens of R&B, pop, rock and dance hits to her name. And you definitely don't want to miss the spectacular performance by New York a capella band Naturally 7, a group of guys who create funky pop songs using only their voices. Add to this multi-talented British rock music vocalist, guitarist and keyboard player John Miles; full symphonic orchestra Il Novecento, featuring pianist and conductor Robert Grosset; and De Electric Band, and you have one unforgettable show. **Robyn Boyle**



8-10 & 16-17 November, 20.30

Sportpaleis, Schijnpoortweg 119, Antwerp | ► www.notp.com

CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Tony Bennett: The legendary American singer of popular music, standards and jazz
JUL 7 20.30 at Koningin Elisabethzaal, Koningin Astridplein 26
► www.zalenvandezoo.be

Deurne

Rumer: English singer with Pakistani roots and an angelic voice
JUL 7 19.00 at Openlucht Theater Rivierenhof, Turnhoutsebaan 232
► www.arenbergschouwburg.be

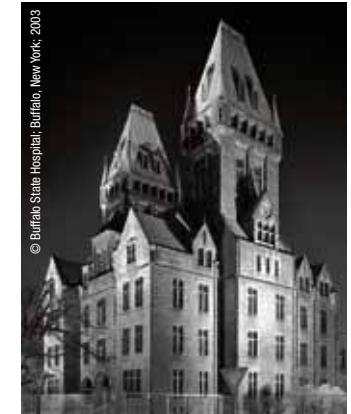
Ghent

Flemish Community Celebration: Outdoor mini-festival featuring De Bende Van Smeerop
JUL 7 at Sint-Jacobs
► www.treppunt.be

EXHIBITION

This is Where My House Lives

Browsing through the gripping photos from this exhibition, one easily forgets that many psychiatric institutions were built by top architects with noble intentions. These buildings were designed to be safe havens for the mentally impaired, but the ones still standing are empty shells, filled with long stark hallways and tiny decrepit rooms; It's hard to believe they did anything for patients but make matters worse. *This is Where My House Lives* presents five variations on the theme "living and madness", starting with *Asylums*, a collection of work by American photographer Christopher Payne, who spent several years documenting the decay of state mental hospitals across the US (pictured). Behind their often grand exteriors lie interiors in disarray, strewn with haunting reminders of the lost souls who once wandered there. German photographer Peter Granser's series *I lost my head* stems from his visit to a psychiatric institution in Normandy and points out where residents did their best to make a home out of their bleak environment. These and more artists' interpretations on the theme make for a most fascinating and thought-provoking exhibition. **RB**



Until 16 September

Museum Dr Guislain, Jozef Guislainstraat 43 | ► www.museumdrguislain.be

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

From Here On: International artists work with the excess of images found on the internet, from Google Earth, Street View, Facebook, Flickr and more, begging the question: Is traditional photography dead?
Until SEP 30 at FotoMuseum, Waalsekaai 47
► www.fotomuseum.be

Leuven

Ines Lechleitner: Works by the Austrian artist that investigate how sound, image and texts are related, including photography, video, sound, drawing, sculpture, performance and artist books
Until SEP 2 at Museum M, Vanderkelenstraat 28
► www.mleuven.be

THEATRE

Horse Parade

In a charming little town called Rozebeke, tucked away in an area of the Flemish Ardennes around the swollen River Zwart, reigns an age-old tradition in honour of the horse. Every second Sunday in July, riders lead their horses to the centre of town for a unique procession. This year, more than 100 of the gracious creatures are expected to strut their stuff in and about town, and even receive a blessing from the church as they pass through. Bring the whole family and relax to the sound of hooves on cobbled streets and intimate live music. **RB**



8 July

Across Rozebeke (Zwart)

► www.tinyurl.com/horse-parade-zwart

MORE FAMILY EVENTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Feest in Brussel: Celebrate the day of the Flemish Community with a special programme for kids led by musician Raymond Van Het Groenewoud, including readings, sing-alongs, concerts, guided walks and more

JUL 11 11.00-18.00 at De Markten, Oude Graanmarkt 5

► www.feestinbrussel.be

Westouter (West Flanders)

Spots op West: Theatre festival with a special programme for kids, with performances in unique indoor and outdoor locations

JUL 5-8 across Westouter

► www.spotsopwest.be

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Cactus Festival

One of the most laid-back music festivals in the country is Cactus. Located in Bruges' lush Minnewaterpark, it's known as much for its chill vibe as its world-class international line-up. This year, come out to hear Paolo Nutini, a Scot with Italian roots, as he croons and strums his way through a number of swinging folk-rock-pop ballads, including "Last Request", "New Shoes" and "Rewind". For something rougher around the edges, don't miss Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell. The big names continue with American singer-songwriter John Hiatt, with a 30-year career and classic songs like "Have A Little Faith In Me" and "Thing Called Love", and folk-rock grunge trio Grant Lee Buffalo, pulling songs from their repertoire of 1990s hits such as "Fuzzy", "Mockingbirds" and "Homespun". The concerts don't stop, with appearances by Razorlight, Emiliana Torrini, Explosions In The Sky and Low, among others. **RB**



6-8 July | Minnewaterpark, Bargeweg, Bruges | ► www.cactusfestival.be

MORE MUSIC FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Vlaanderen Feest (Flanders Celebrates): A majority of cities across Flanders are partaking in celebrations leading up to Flemish Community Day (11 July) with free special activities and entertainment

Until JUL 11 across Flanders

► www.11daagsevlaanderen.net

Ghent

Gent Jazz: One of Flanders' most prestigious jazz festivals, this year featuring Paco De Lucia, Jim Hall Scott Colley Duo, Wayne Shorter Quartet, Melody Gardot, Antony and the Johnsons and more

JUL 5-14 at De Bijloke, Godshuizenlaan

► www.gentjazz.be

Gooik (Flemish Brabant)

Gooikoorts: Tenth anniversary edition of the international folk music festival featuring Mabon, Zlabya, Kardemimmit, MandolinMAN, Gjovalin Nonaj, Trio Perunika and more

JUL 6-8 at Dorpsstraat

► www.gooikoorts.be

Zottegem (East Flanders)

Rock Zottegem: Annual rock festival in the Flemish Ardennes featuring a mix of international and local bands, including Triggerfinger, De Mens, Arsenal, Alanis Morissette, The Cult and more

JUL 6-7 at De Bevergemse Vijvers

► www.rock-zottegem.be

CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Anna Jenkinson

Bubbles

Molenmeers 11, Bruges

What a difference 100 metres can make. One minute I was standing in front of a packed bar in Bruges with throngs of tourists pushing by taking photos of the canal views. The next I was free of crowds and sitting in a rather stylish bar that felt like the find of the day.

The name of the bar? Bubbles. Located in the Sint-Anna district of Bruges, it's a short walk east of the main tourist hub and, as it happens, just around the corner from the three-Michelin-star restaurant De Karmeliet.

Bubbles' big attraction is that it's situated directly on the canal, with no footpath or road separating you from the water. This does mean that it's not the easiest bar to find; you have to enter from the street at the back of the building and walk through a hotel lobby and a restaurant called The Sixties to get there. But it's worth the detour.

No matter where you sit, be it on the high swivel chairs along the bar or the tables for two by the window, you have a view of the canal. And if you arrive early enough (before 18.00) or stay late enough (after the restaurant's diners have left), you can take a seat on the adjoining terrace, which, with its fig and olive trees, lends a Mediterranean feel to the place. Then again, Bruges is known as the "Venice of the North".

The drinks menu has a fairly standard selection of beer, wine, spirits and soft drinks. But given that this is Bruges, there is of course the local Brugse Zot, and, given the name of the bar, it is only right that you'll also find champagne here. It has to be said that the drinks are quite pricey, but you're paying for the location. And what a location!

► www.restaurantssixties.be



BITE

C-Jean ★★★★

Michelin stars are a fickle thing, which is why it didn't faze me when I heard that C-Jean, one of Ghent's top restaurants, lost its star earlier this year. It could be that Michelin was influenced by the change in chef in 2011; Jason Blanckaert left C-Jean to start his own restaurant.

His large shoes have been filled, however, by chef Willem Vandeven. Owner Filip Van Thuyne hired him to carry on the C-Jean tradition of top cuisine made with the freshest seasonal ingredients. This is what Van Thuyne has been doing since 2006 when he transformed his restaurant from your average steak-and-pasta brasserie into the sophisticated and superior dining experience it is today.

Located in the shadow of Ghent's famous towers, C-Jean is located in a classic, renovated townhouse from 1634 with a stepped gable and shuttered pane windows. The interior is sober and calming, predominately white with a wooden floor and ceiling. Colour comes in the form of an entire wall filled with bottles of wine and another adorned with a very provocative photograph: a modern version of Christ's Last Supper, with lingerie models crawling around on all fours.

Our knowledgeable server is with us right away, describing all the different gin choices we have for our gin & tonic aperitifs. We opt for Bombay gin, served with lime. Other types of gin come with their own respective garnish, from cucumber to grapefruit. The drinks are accompanied by a fun trio of teasers, including *Gentse kop* (head cheese), mussels and cauliflower. Every bite is packed with flavour: the head cheese is topped with local Tierentyn mustard, the mussels are in their shell with cucumber and lemon sauce, and the cauliflower is decked with crisply fried

chicken skin and peanuts.

Another house appetiser arrives within minutes: fresh *maatjes* (herring) atop sweet potatoes with a few blades of sea orache and salicornia, edible shrubs that grow near the sea. When it comes time to give our orders we don't hesitate to take the four-course menu at €57 per person, plus another €20 for its carefully paired wines.

Out come a loaf of dark, crusty bread and a bowl of fragrant olive oil from Siurana, a Spanish mountain village. Our first course consists of lightly breaded and fried sardines with artichokes, rich eggplant puree, brittle almonds, mini courgettes, black olives, pickled ginger and a sprinkling of tangy tomato powder. It's a very well thought-out combination of harmonious flavours and contrasting textures and is paired with a crisp, fruity white wine. Next up is a juicy chunk of lamb shoulder surrounded by young carrots, fat green peas, tender leaves of pointed cabbage pan-fried in what must be loads of butter, creamy goat cheese, bitter, lemony sorrel and a *speculoos*-like cookie crumble with nutty, peppery cumin. The lamb is paired with a deep red Carmanère wine from Chile.

Before the dessert, we get a kind of pre-dessert: a platter of five cheeses from famous Antwerp cheesemonger Michel Van Tricht. They vary in terms of strength and pungency, from mild white to the soft and crumbly Achelse Blauwe, a deeply veined, pungent blue cheese with depth, our favourite. The cheeses come with purple grapes, a salad with soy dressing, fresh bread made with hazelnuts and figs and two different sweet toppings.

The finale is rhubarb prepared in three different ways – raw and crunchy, candied and in ice cream form – with spongy bread, raw

cream and celery-like lovage leaves. The coffees come with little raspberry meringue bites, lemon cream-filled cornets and red beet and chocolate tarts.

► www.c-jean.com



© Robyn Boyle

► Cataloniëstraat 3, Ghent; 09.223.30.40

🕒 Tue-Sat, 12.00-14.00 & 19.00-21.00

💶 Menu: €45-€75

ⓘ Chic yet relaxed restaurant with excellent service and highly refined dishes made with fresh, seasonal products

TALKING DUTCH

Putting out the flowers

If the last time I almost blushed when I looked inside this column's all-new email box, this time I almost chuckled. Okay, I confess – I actually did chuckle.

It turns out many readers have had similar experiences with the bizarre English of Dutch speakers when they translate something all-too literally. Like Lucienne Van Hout from Puurs, whose colleague once told an English gentleman: "I am going to put out the flowers this evening!"

Ik ga vanavond de bloemetjes buiten zetten means something like: I am going to go out and have fun tonight. It has nothing to do with daffodils or geraniums.

Or Catherine Purdie, an English-speaking Canadian married to a Fleming, who called her up one day and announced: "Well, the bullet is through the church!" After assuring her that nobody got shot in a church, her husband explained that their mortgage had finally been approved. *De kogel is door de kerk*

means that a decision has been made, it's a done deal.

Ah, the fun you can have speaking more than one language. I feel bad for those who don't – almost half of all Europeans, according to new EU statistics. Their lives must be boring. Imagine the fun you could have speaking even more than two. I hereby estimate that the amount of fun doubles for every foreign language you manage to tame. If that is true, however, it would mean that Belgium is slowly becoming a less fun place.

The same new statistics, published two weeks ago, show that the number of people living in this funny little country and speaking at least two foreign languages has dropped by 16% to exactly half of the population. (As it is with EU statistics, this goes for Belgium as a whole. It is likely that for Flanders alone things are less dramatic.) But there was also good news. Belgium is among those countries with the greatest proportion of people intending to start learning a language in the next year – 13%.

Of them, 60% said they were doing so in order to use a new language at work. That same proportion cited the reason of improving job prospects – often the case in Flanders. If you are among them, more power to you en veel succes, good luck!

Oh yeah, before I forget. My old colleague Natasja from when I used to teach Dutch in Brussels wrote me an email saying that last week, when I wrote about *zin hebben in iets* – feeling like doing something – I forgot to mention *het o zo mooie Vlaamse woordje "goesting"*, the oh so beautiful little word *goesting*, which is similar to *zin*. I stand corrected.



Philip Ebels

The last word...

Turtle takeover

"I'm going to investigate with the environmental service how we can get the population under control in an animal-friendly way. Among other things I'd like to give some of the turtles away"

Strombeek-Bever alderman Patrick Vertongen faces a plague of dumped pet turtles in the town's fountain, aided by dumped goldfish

Election detection

"Let's be quite clear: I'm not going into politics. I couldn't suffer it for half an hour. Although I would have my choice of political parties"

Actor Hubert Damen, famous for his leading role in the VTM police drama *Witse*, on news that four of his series colleagues will be standing for election in October

Crowning achievement

"God punished me for all the hairstyles I used to have. Although a large part of my vanity has disappeared along with my hair"

Flemish crooner Helmut Lotti has accepted the ravages of time

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

Not only the Olympic Games are happening in London this summer – the Paralympics, the ultimate sports competition for athletes who are in some way physically disabled – are being staged, too, and Flanders has just announced its team. We'll introduce you to one of the best hopes for a medal, cyclist Kris Bosmans

Science

It's been 60 years since the Studiecentrum voor de Toepassingen van de Kerenergie, or Research Centre for the Applications of Nuclear Energy, opened in Mol. It was the largest building project in the country after the Second World War. We look at the modern facility's history, current research and new Guinevere project, which claims to burn nuclear energy more efficiently

Tourism

The Kalmthout Arboretum in Antwerp province is a lovely place to visit in the summer, when the trees are green and the butterflies abundant. Outdoor correspondent Denzil Walton will tell us how best to enjoy the reserve that was partially damaged by fire last year