

## Mean streets

A student film prompts new measures against verbal assault in Brussels

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# With a little help from my friend

**A new buddy scheme is helping former psychiatric patients rebuild their social lives, one coffee at a time**

Sabine Clappaert

For most of us, going to the movies, meeting a friend for coffee or strolling through the park are small pleasures we take for granted. Many psychiatric patients, however, are denied these moments of everyday happiness because they are socially isolated. With often only psychiatric staff, close family or other patients to rely on, what they miss most are friends. Buddywerking Vlaanderen, a social support project set up by Flemish minister for health and wellbeing Jo Vandeurzen, aims to help patients rebuild their social lives by offering them the simple pleasure of a friend.

Despite the sharp wind and unusually bleak summer skies, the terraces surrounding Roeselare's town square are packed. Behind glass partitions people huddle down in warm jumpers and extra scarves over coffee, kriek and hot chocolate, desperate for a few moments of fresh air and friendly faces. Somewhere among the rows of tables sit Christine, 59, and Nougéria, 54, one of an estimated 200 duos that Vandeurzen's Buddywerking Vlaanderen project has brought together across Flanders. "Christine is not a 'patient'; she's my friend," begins Nougéria, the buddy with whom Christine, who was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) 10 years ago, meets every Thursday. Christine (photo left) and Nougéria (photo right) meet for coffee on

the very terrace where I interview them today. "This is our spot," grins Christine. "Sometimes we just have coffee and watch the world go by and sometimes, if I feel strong enough, we'll go for a stroll along the store fronts surrounding the square."

### Reaching out

Christine whose physical affliction has isolated her, first met Nougéria two years ago, when she approached Buddywerking South West Flanders to request a buddy whom she could meet with on a weekly basis. "Living with CFS is a huge adjustment, not only for me but also for my family. My illness forced me to quit my job as a secretary. Now



FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

Jan Leyers



Flanders and the Netherlands often seem, as George Bernard Shaw once said about Britain and the US, two peoples separated by a common language. Each has its own rock stars, TV personalities film directors – fairly small populations utterly isolated from each other, with few exceptions. Jan Leyers is one of those exceptions. Two weeks ago, he was given the rare honour of presenting not only a Dutch TV programme but one of the programmes of which the Dutch are most proud. The Flemish celebrity will present this summer's season of the Dutch programme *Zomergasten* (Summer Guests), a three-hour show on VPRO that consists of one presenter, one guest and a string of archive clips. His appointment is all the more surprising in that the show is marking its 25th anniversary, and he's the first Flemish person ever to present it. Jan Anna August Leyers was born in Wilrijk, now a district of Antwerp, in 1958 and made his debut as a pop musician at the age of 20 in a cover band called Beri-Beri. A decade later he formed Soulsister with Paul Michiels, and they scored their biggest hit with the 1988 pop tune "The Way to Your Heart", which reached

number one in Belgium and also made the charts in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. The duo still performs, and Leyers also writes songs for Flemish artists like Clouseau and Natalia. He also broke into television, making a trilogy of documentaries for the VRT on the Crusades, Islam and the spread of humanity, as well as hosting a programme on Beethoven's travels across Europe. In these, he fulfils the role of an Everyman rather than an expert, and perhaps it was his talent for providing a sympathetic ear that led to his being chosen for *Zomergasten*. For this new venture, however, he may turn out to be *too* sympathetic. The Flemish press criticised his first taping of the series, with Dutch musician Henny Vrienten, claiming Leyers was not in control of his guest or his subject. The Dutch critics were more gentle. Leyers, they all agreed, was very polite.

*Zomergasten* airs at 20.15 on Sundays until 26 August on Nederland 2. Soulsister performs on 29 August at the open-air theatre at Rivierenhof Park in Antwerp

► [www.janleyers.be](http://www.janleyers.be)

News in brief

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters joined cycling legend Eddy Merckx and his son Alex on the first leg of their ride from Brussels to London, where the Merckx duo were part of the **official opening of the Belgian House**, the country's hospitality centre for the duration of the Olympic Games. Located in London's Inner Temple, the house is open to the public, who can meet Belgian athletes. Peeters cycled until Ypres and then joined the group later in London for the opening.

The so-called "**misery tax**", paid when a property is divided between two former owners, goes up on 1 August from 1% of the value of the property to 2.5%. The measure, which principally affects newly-divorced couples, was agreed by the Flemish government earlier this month.

A 25-year-old father who left his **six-month-old baby in the back seat of his car** after forgetting to drop her off at the crèche has been charged with involuntary manslaughter after the baby died of dehydration. The man is employed at the military base in Evere, close to Nato. The incident took place on the warmest day of the year, when temperatures inside the car are thought to have reached 50 degrees.

Brussels has been voted one of the **world's best cities for street food vendors** by visitors to the travel website [www.virtualltourist.com](http://www.virtualltourist.com). The capital comes in ninth place for its *frietten*, waffles and seafood, including the sea-snails in broth cooked on the street but rarely approached by tourists. Bangkok in Thailand came top of the list.

The city of Kortrijk has **issued its first "location ban"** on a man who was accused of aggressive conduct towards passers-by in the area around Begijnhof Park. The man is forbidden

to frequent the area until the end of the year. Another three people have been given warnings to stay out of the nightclub area around the station or face a formal ban.

Home buyers and prospective tenants in Flanders will in future be given clear information on the **flood risk associated with properties**, the Flemish government has announced. A new decree obliges estate agents and notaries to inform potential clients of the risks, and a paragraph will be added to the standard title deeds.

More than one-third of the 180,000 ticket buyers to **Tomorrowland** dance music fest, which took place in Boom, Antwerp province, last weekend, came from outside of Belgium. Largely hailed as one of the best DJ events in the world, the festival was voted Best Music Event in the world at the International Dance Music Awards in Miami last March, just before selling out the first day tickets went on sale.

► [www.tomorrowland.be](http://www.tomorrowland.be)

Older people are increasingly resorting to **shoplifting for food** because of economic difficulties, according to a survey carried out by Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed. Cases of shoplifting by the over-60s have increased by 30% over recent years.

The **Flemish League against Cancer** will spend €2 million in the coming year on cancer research, concentrating particularly on cells surrounding tumours, which can be crucial to the success of treatment, but preventing cancer cells themselves from spreading.

► [www.tegenkanker.be](http://www.tegenkanker.be)

Municipal and provincial authorities can apply for subsidies to purchase

equipment to **measure and record noise levels** of music events, the Flemish government announced last week. The proposal from culture and environment minister Joke Schauvliege will provide 40% of the cost of equipment up to a maximum subsidy of €1,000. New laws restrict the permissible noise levels at both indoor and outdoor concerts, and municipalities and provinces would rent the equipment to venues.

A group of 80 young people from West Flanders had to **vacate a camp in Croatia** because of forest fires around the town of Seltjé. A number were taken to hospital suffering from breathing problems caused by smoke, but were later able to join their comrades in a local hotel. The group has since flown home.

Residents groups in the periphery of Brussels have expressed concern over **increased noise nuisance from flights** to and from Brussels Airport as a result of the start of works on one of the runways last week. The works are expected to last for two weeks, depending on weather conditions.

Contrary to popular opinion, **Belgians are only the ninth-worst drivers** in Europe, according to an online poll carried out by Zoover. The worst of all are the Italians, who received 23.7% of the votes. Belgium received 3.9%, just behind the UK.

A driver whose **car was run over by a goods train** near Diest in Flemish Brabant walked free from the wreckage uninjured. The train was blocked for 30 minutes, but rail traffic was not affected. Also last week in Boutersem, Flemish Brabant, a cyclist who passed by a barrier and crossed the track was killed when he was struck by another train travelling in the opposite direction.

FLANDERS TODAY

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OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Beastly news

It's now August, and we're firmly in what the Flemish call *komkommertijd*, or cucumber time, and which in English we call Silly Season. That's when politicians, business leaders and most others take off for holiday climes, supposedly leaving us journalists casting around for things to write about to fill the columns of our papers.

And have no fear: The rat race may have decamped to the Algarve, Tuscany and Oostduinkerke, but the rest of the animal kingdom has gamefully stepped up to the plate to fill up the news.

• A basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) was spotted by bathers off the coast of De Panne. At about two metres long, it didn't cause a panic – despite its name in Dutch translating as "giant shark". Experts led the shark off into deeper waters further from shore.

• A police horse went for a stroll all on its own in the Merode-Montgomery area of Brussels. The horse was spotted inside the Merode metro station, and was later recaptured in neighbouring Sint-Pieters-Woluwe.

• Josaphat Park in the Brussels commune of Schaarbeek has a growing population of rabbits, most of them dropped off by owners who no longer want them. And the Battel area of Mechelen is suffering a plague of rabbits for the third summer in a row, which devastate the gardens of residents, who claim a fall in the fox population has left the bunnies with no natural predator.

• Meanwhile the coastal municipality of Knokke-Heist is bringing in a fake fox attached to a remote-controlled car to try to chase away seagulls who are pestering the area, even attacking



railway workers down the coast in Zeebrugge.

• The wind-turbine park off the coast of Zeebrugge is helping the beleaguered cod (*pictured*) to build up its numbers again, according to researchers at Ghent University. The cod, as well as plaice, sole, goatfish and pout, find a welcoming habitat among the sponges, polyps and mussels growing around the foundations of the turbines.



# With a little help from my friend

**Buddy matching scheme is a lifeline for the socially isolated – and is rewarding for their new friends too**

► continued from page 1

I'm at home full-time and I have very little contact with anyone beyond my immediate family. I approached Buddywerking because I could use a friend who was not part of my direct environment, someone who did not have to deal with the realities of my illness every day – an outsider whom I could talk to, not only about my illness but about other things too."

The fundamental premise of Vandeurzen's Buddywerking system, which has been around since 1995 but has been rolled out in various parts of Flanders only since 2007, is to match a "buddy" – someone in a stable life phase who is prepared to commit to meeting with an (ex) patient once a week for at least a year – with a "participant", to help improve the participant's social life.

Research proves that a well-entrenched buddy system offers many advantages: It takes socially weaker individuals such as Christine, whose physical illness isolates her, out of their isolation. It helps remove stigmas around certain afflictions; it improves the quality of life for the participant; and it decreases the risks of relapse and of suicide.

But the buddy system is much more than simply a matching of patient to buddy. A detailed process supports the duo well beyond the initial matching, from intake interviews with both parties and educational and networking sessions for the buddies, to follow-up evaluations and networking with other organisations in the mental health sector.

## The search begins

"I approached Buddywerking because I needed a friend who was not part of my direct environment"

Marian Deldaele of Buddywerking South West Flanders, who accompanied Christine and Nougeria during the interview, explains: "We take great care to make sure we have a good match between the buddy and the participant. First, we select our buddies through intake questionnaires and interviews during which we get to know them better and make sure that they are indeed suited to becoming a buddy. Being a good listener with a stable and patient personality and empathy for people with certain vulnerabilities is very important," she says. "Once we have ascertained that someone has the capacities to become a buddy, we begin the search for a matching participant. Matching a buddy to a participant is part science, part intuition and experience, according to Deldaele. "We consider things such as character type, age and, of course, hobbies and interests." A match between a buddy and a participant always starts with a three-month trial. "At the end of this period, we talk with both parties to make sure the relationship is developing in a positive direction. It's also a perfect opportunity to find out

whether the buddy needs support on specific topics or whether we could have them attend training sessions to help them better understand or deal with specific situations."

Both Christine and Nougeria still remember meeting each other for the first time. "Nougeria was the first buddy I was introduced to," smiles Christine as she looks over at Nougeria. "I guess we were lucky; we hit it off immediately and now we've been friends for more than two years." Nougeria completes her friend's thought: "The first time we met, I asked Christine: What do you expect of me? She was very clear: She wanted someone she could talk with, not only about her illness but also about both our lives, the things that interest us, things that are happening in the world..."

## Another perspective

Vandeurzen, who rolled out the Buddywerking project to the whole of Flanders at the end of 2011, explains: "We wanted to give our participants a contact in the 'real world'. Not a medical practitioner who analyses them, but someone who is just there, as a bridge to the outside world."

The benefits of the system are clear to Christine. "Having Nougeria to talk to gives me another perspective on the world. Sometimes it's something as simple as helping me see a situation at home in a different light, and sometimes, it's her own life experiences that provide me with valuable insights. Nougeria also works full-time, and we talk about her work sometimes, too which I find

very interesting. It keeps me connected to the real world." Nougeria smiles, placing her hand on Christine's: "We're not always serious; sometimes we also laugh about the silliest things," she winks as they both break into laughter. But not everyone is as lucky as Christine. "We do have more participants than we have buddies," says Deldaele. "There is a waiting list for buddies at the moment. Like the other 12 chapters of Buddywerking, we keep searching and hoping for more enthusiastic people to become buddies. Most pressing are buddies for younger people and male participants." "Spending time with Nougeria is a real boost," concludes Christine. Nougeria waves away her friend's grateful glance. "Helping people get back on their feet, there's a lot of fulfilment in that." They look at each other. "That's why we're here telling our story today," adds Christine. "To help people take that first step to ask for a buddy. We both get so much back from it."

► [www.buddywerking.be](http://www.buddywerking.be)





# Fines for inappropriate language

## A student film provokes calls for action in Brussels

Alan Hope

The city of Brussels plans to introduce fines for sexist comments on the streets from 1 September, it was announced last week. The decision was one of many reactions to a film made by Sofie Peeters, a 25-year-old student at the Rits film school in Brussels, which showed the extent of the problem from the point of view of a young woman.

In the film, made as her graduate thesis, Peeters carries a hidden camera and is accompanied by a cameraman, as she walks in the streets of central Brussels where she lives. At regular intervals she is accosted by men, mostly of foreign origin, who proposition her with offers of drinks and hotel rooms, who ask for her name and telephone number, and who casually hurl sexist insults. The film, *Femme de la Rue* (Woman of the Street), premiered in the city's Galeries Cinema last week and was the subject of a report on the current affairs programme *Terzake*.

The behaviour shown in the film was

“an attack on the human integrity of women,” commented Mechelen mayor Bart Somers, where the problem also exists. He called for an attitude of zero tolerance for such offences. Brussels filmmaker Hassan Rahali, invited to comment by the VRT, said: “I have a wife and three daughters. I absolutely cannot accept this.” The problem, he said, comes from a lack of communication in the upbringing of boys from so-called “macho” cultures.

Wide-spread problem

Karin Heremans, the director of the Royal Athenaeum in Antwerp, which introduced a ban on headscarves in 2009, told VRT radio that her daughters were also subject to sexist intimidation on the streets, but not to the extent shown in the film.

“Sexual intimidation doesn't only happen in the streets of Brussels,” said Hollaback Brussels, the local arm of an international organisation that protests against sexism in public places, on its Facebook page. “It is a large-scale



Still from the film *Femme de la Rue*

problem worldwide that 90% of all women and gay people have to put up with. And it is created by all kinds of people, regardless of cultural background or social status.”

Peeters, speaking on *Terzake*, said that the problem was most prevalent in “certain problem neighbourhoods in the city”. The film was mainly shot in the area around Anneessenslaan and Lemonnierlaan in Brussels, which has a predominantly Moroccan population.

Brussels city will introduce the fines of €250 in September for anyone who harasses women in the street. A police spokesperson urged women to come forward with their complaints and pledged they would all be taken seriously. Peeters herself questioned the value of the measure. “You can hardly take a man like that with you to the police station and ask him to repeat what he shouted at you,” she commented.

## Zwin reserve extended

The Flemish government has provisionally approved the extension of the territory of the Zwin nature reserve on the Flemish/Dutch border between Knokke and Zeeland. The plan involves returning the Willem-Leopold polder to the water and increasing the surface of the Zwin by 120 hectares. The plan will also involve a new visitors' centre. The proposals will now be the subject of a public inquiry running until 29 October, after which a final decision will be taken. The local authority in Knokke has expressed



A bird's-eye view of the Zwin seen from the Flemish side. The watercourse marks the Dutch-Flemish border

concern at the loss of farmland but will not lodge a formal objection.

## Foundling to be fostered

A newborn boy abandoned with the Antwerp charity Moeders voor Moeders last week will be placed in a foster family within a month, according to social workers. The child, who is being called Adriaan De Kleine, was reportedly pressed into the hands of a charity worker by a young woman. Police are carrying out an investigation to try to identify the mother. The child is thought to have been born early last week and was described as being in good health.

Nahima Lanjri, a local member of the federal parliament, said

she would call for a debate after the summer recess on the subject of “discreet births” – the expression used to describe a situation where a woman is allowed to give birth in safety and leave the child to be looked after without registering herself as the mother. The measure would help women who do not want their families to know they are pregnant but who do not want an abortion. Instead of abandoning the baby in what might be dangerous circumstances, the birth could go ahead anonymously under the necessary supervision.

## Police investigate murder of teenage girl

Police investigating the murder last week of 14-year-old Priscilla Sergeant are convinced the killer is someone from her local environment. Sergeant, who comes from Huizingen, Flemish Brabant, was found dead in a field in nearby Dworp. An autopsy later revealed

she had been smothered.

The evening prior to her death, Sergeant had gone to a restaurant in Halle with her 17-year-old neighbour, where they met another neighbour. On the morning after her death, police said, the 17-year-old cleaned the car of the older

man thoroughly. According to his statement, that was something he did regularly. The man has since admitted that Sergeant returned from the restaurant to his home, where she stayed until 22.00 that evening.

Sergeant's mother says she “heard”

her daughter sleeping in their home that night but admits that she never actually saw her. No suspects have yet been identified. The results of a toxicological analysis are awaited.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**1,950**

milligrams of cocaine consumed on average per 1,000 inhabitants per day in Antwerp, the highest figure from a study of 19 European cities. The average was 700mg

**9,956**

minutes of delay caused last year to the public transport network in Brussels by 490 cases of vehicles parked on or too near tram rails. Fines amounted to almost €70,000

**11.64%**

of EU expatriates in Flanders have registered to vote in October's municipal elections, the interior ministry said. Nationwide, the final figure is expected to be under the 21% recorded at the last election in 2006

**937**

reports of mumps infections in Flanders in the first six months of the year, beginning among students at Ghent University in March. The epidemic, mainly in East Flanders, is expected to stabilise over the next few weeks

**55%**

of shoppers in Flanders have changed their habits in the last six months for environmental reasons, according to a survey by the Flemish waste agency Ovam. Seventy percent said they would make choices on environmental grounds in the coming six months

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

## The dwindling Senate

This column has mentioned the split of the BHV constituency many times. This split is part of a package of measures known as “state reform”. As Belgium tends to change its institutions every so many years, this is already the sixth state reform. A far less controversial part of it are the alterations made to the Senate.

The Senate is a solemn institution, and most of its members behave accordingly. Still, it has become largely redundant over the years. In the past, current vice-prime minister Johan Vande Lanotte could hardly hide how much he looked down at the reverent institution of which he was briefly a member, taking not one, but several jobs on the side.

“Furthermore, I think that the Senate should be abolished” has become the Belgian variant of Cato the Elder's phrase – and mostly a joke, too, as it seemed near impossible. Although many parties favoured the abolition, one obstacle always remained: The senators have to vote themselves into disappearance and, in spite of everything, most of them have been far more attached to the job and the decorum that came with it than Vande Lanotte. Or maybe it was the wine cellar, reputed to be the best in Belgium, that kept them there?

When the country was founded, the Senate was installed as a safeguard for the higher classes, much like the House of Lords in the UK. As more democracy set in, the Senate became a “chamber of reflection”: Members could review laws the House of Representatives had passed and discuss complex issues such as abortion, euthanasia and the immigrant vote.

Since 1993 (the fourth state reform), the Senate has also acted on an international level and as a meeting place between the federal state, the regions and the communities of Belgium. To this end, the regional and community parliaments (in Flanders, merged into the Flemish Parliament) could appoint a handful of so-called community senators, who shuttle between their respective assemblies and the Senate.

Only this last function – a meeting place – will remain after the new reform, which will make the Senate a “non-permanent body”, with representatives from regions and communities and powers over the Constitution, the institutions and... state reform. In short, the Senate is not gone yet, but how long will it exist in this shape? Is this reorganisation – a typical Belgian compromise – enough to quiet those who think that it should be abolished?

► [www.senate.be](http://www.senate.be)



# Telenet and VMMa debate costs

## Telecom CEO says broadcasters don't need more money from distributors

Alan Hope

Mechelen-based telecommunications company Telenet has announced €727 million in sales for the first half of the year, a 9% increase over the figure for the same period in 2011. CEO Duco Sickinghe (*pictured*) said the increase was due to sales of product packages, digital TV and mobile internet.

Profits were also up 9% in line with expectations, to €383 million. At the same time, the company announced two new mobile data formulas which it claims could mean savings for 85% of clients.

The number of digital customers rose by 116,700 during the period, so that 68% of all TV customers are now digital. But the company is locked in a stalemate with the Flemish media company VMMa, owned by De Persgroep, which broadcasts VTM, 2BE and Vitaya, over the amount Telenet pays to air the stations. Sickinghe said the VMMa was eyeing his company's results as an excuse to demand more money.

The broadcasters complain (VMMa is not alone in this) that the distributors – Belgacom as well as Telenet – provide their customers with the means to postpone viewing and to skip advertising. That reduces the number of viewers VTM, for instance, can bring to advertisers, and negatively affects the rates the station can charge for advertising, at a time when the market is under continuing pressure.

The problem is not new: Viewers have been time-shifting and skipping ads since the days of the VCR, but now the means of doing so are much more effective and provided by the distributors themselves. The problem has become so severe that a proposal has been discussed in the Flemish parliament to give broadcasters more say in the introduction of new services to digital TV customers. That proposal targets less the existing digicorder and more future services, such as TV-on-demand. As a result of the stalemate with VMMa, none



of the broadcaster's stations is currently on Yelo, Telenet's first tentative step towards video on demand.

"We understand that VTM wants

more money from Telenet," Sickinghe told *De Standaard*. "Objectively, we think that's indefensible. This has nothing to do with the functioning of the

digibox; it's all about money. In the meantime, we're still paying VTM according to the former contract, which has expired. ...I'd like for them to reveal how much they've had from us since 2005, then everyone can judge how bad their situation is. In fact the opposite is true. The sums involved have increased enormously."

The proposal before the Flemish parliament will be back on the table after the summer recess. Sickinghe says that it is unlikely to prove popular in a pre-election period.

Last week also saw the launch, meanwhile, of King and Kong, two new Telenet formulas for mobile internet customers – the fastest-growing sector of the communications business. The King package offers 150 call minutes, 10,000 SMSes and 500 MB of mobile data for €20 a month. Kong offers 2,000 minutes and 10,000 SMSes as well as 1 GB of data for €70. Both plans offer reductions for clients of other Telenet services.

## New maintenance plans for MIVB network

Brussels public transport authority MIVB is considering five candidates for a new contract for the maintenance of the network's escalators. The contract lasts five years and involves two parts: €5.2 million for the 284 escalators manufactured by Otis and ThyssenKrupp, and €2.3 million for the 289 escalators by CNIM, which are substantially newer. The escalators in the Brussels metro suffer from the heavy use by passengers but also from an average of 200 cases of sabotage a day – usually by pranksters setting off the emergency brake.

Meanwhile Brussels mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels

announced that the region had approved studies carried out into the construction of a new underground maintenance yard for the metro at Erasmus in Anderlecht, as well as a thorough makeover for the existing yard at Delta in Oudergem. The changes are part of the plan to automate metro lines 1 and 5, which will lead to more rolling stock and more frequent services.

The Erasmus yard will cost an estimated €73 million, with the Delta renovation adding €12 million to the bill, Grouwels said. A possible public-private partnership for financing is being investigated.

## Diversity hit by spending cuts

Budget cuts within the Flemish government's administration are inhibiting the performance of diversity targets, two officials have said. Year-end figures for 2011 show that targets were not reached for the employment of immigrants and the disabled. The number of women employed in middle and senior management positions, meanwhile, is still under 30%.

At the end of last year, 2.8% of those employed by the civil service were of immigrant origin; the government's target is 4%. Civil servants with a disability or chronic illness sits at 1.2%, compared to a target of 3%. The government has been forced to make savings by cutting personnel. According to emancipation officer Ingrid Pelssers (*pictured*), the government plans to cut civil servant numbers by 6% by 2014 and has already cut 4%. "There are fewer people being taken on, and when there is hiring, perhaps people are less likely to choose someone with a handicap; because



of increased pressure of work, there's less time and manpower to look after them properly," she said. Dirk Vanderpoorten, secretary-general of work and social economy agency, agrees: Fewer new appointments, he says, hits minority groups. Cutbacks tend to affect contract workers more, and immigrants are more heavily represented among that group. The government has a target of 33% of women in positions in

middle and senior management; currently, the figures are 28% and 24% respectively. "Reaching the target is a matter of time," Vanderpoorten said. Senior managers are appointed for a number of years and are only replaced when that term is over. "By chance there were fewer vacancies in the last year. The coming years will see the balance restored."

## Unizo welcomes changes to tax fine policy

Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed, has welcomed an amendment to the policy of fining companies that try to deduct certain expenses from taxable income. The amendment was ordered by federal finance minister Steven Vanackere after protests from business.

Tax authorities have the power to impose a penalty on businesses that attempt to submit private expenses

as business expenses. According to businesses, the measure, designed to combat fraud, was being applied in cases where honest mistakes were made, which Unizo, among others, argued was not the original intent of the legislation.

In a ministerial circular to tax inspectors, Vanackere has now stressed that the penalty is intended to be used in cases of fraud and not where businesses were operating

in good faith. Unizo in a statement described the circular as "a step in the right direction" but warned that the policy left too much to the interpretation of inspectors. The organisation has called for the policy to be thoroughly reviewed at the end of the year and, if necessary, for changes to be made to the original law to remove the question from the discretion of tax inspectors altogether.





THE WEEK  
IN BUSINESS

## Air

## ► Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines has announced the introduction of a new flight six days a week to the Scottish capital Edinburgh, starting in October. From summer 2013, flights will increase to twice daily.

## Electronics

## ► Photo Hall

Unions representing the approximately 300 Belgian employees of electronics retail chain Photo Hall have demanded the new owner maintain jobs after the chain's parent, Spector, announced it was looking for a buyer. Photo Hall last week applied for protection from its creditors while offers are sought.

## Pharma

## ► Thrombogenics

Leuven biopharmaceutical company Thrombogenics saw its share price leap by 20% last Friday after a preliminary report from advisers to the US Food and Drugs Administration recommended giving approval to the company's eye medication ocriplasmin for the US market. The drug is marketed as Jetrea and was earlier in the week the subject of a critical report from the FDA over serious side effects. A final decision by the FDA is expected in October.

## Public transport

## ► De Lijn

The safety monitor of Flemish public transport authority De Lijn recorded 2,090 cases of aggression towards staff in 2011, up from 1,667 in 2010. In 72 cases, the staff member was unable to work as a result of an attack for an average of 21 days. According to mobility minister Hilde Crevits, the increase is partly due to better registration of incidents.

## Supermarkets

## ► Colruyt

Discount supermarket chain Colruyt has recalled a batch of soya beans of the Nice & Easy brand after traces of salmonella were found. The beans come in 500g packs, barcode number 5400141395785, with sell-by dates from 25 to 29 July.

## Telecoms

## ► KPN

KPN Belgium, the subsidiary of the Dutch telecommunications company that owns mobile operator Base, announced a 6.7% increase in turnover in the past quarter to €207 million. KPN is looking for a buyer for Base and last week announced that De Persgroep, the Flemish media firm that owns De Morgen and VTM, was examining the prospectus.

## Handle with care

## Brussels Airport is upgrading its groundbreaking Brucargo freight village

Marcel Schoeters

Brussels Airport wants to upgrade its Brucargo freight village into a "secured gateway" so it can meet the demanding standards required by the pharmaceutical industry and other shippers of high-value cargo. The project is to take shape in the coming year

In terms of volume, air cargo represents no more than 5% of all transported goods worldwide. Calculated by value of the goods, however, its share is closer to 35%. Air cargo is a highly specialised business. It's the preferred – indeed the only – way of transporting products with a limited life cycle, such as fresh fish, vegetables and fruit, as well as highly sensitive products like pharmaceuticals and vaccines, which require special handling and continuous monitoring and temperature control.

Back in 1980, Brussels Airport was amongst the first in the world to set up a dedicated landside freight village – Brucargo. Over the following years, the attitude of airport management towards air cargo hovered between detachment and indifference. The cargo community itself, however, was thriving and enabled the airport to handle around 785,000 tons in its heyday in 2007.

This volume owed a lot to DHL Express, part of Deutsche Post, which used Brussels Airport as its intercontinental hub for Europe. But increasing pressure from residents of neighbouring communities led to a restriction of the number of night flights. As a result, DHL Express decided to downgrade its Brussels operation to a regional hub and transferred its European hub to Leipzig in Germany.

## Back on the map

In 2008, cargo volume at Brussels Airport fell to 660,000 tons. The effect of the downsizing of DHL's activity was aggravated by the economic crisis, and the volume suffered a further slip to 450,000 tons in 2009. In 2010 and 2011 the volume was on the way to recovery with 470,000 tons.

In 2010, The Brussels Airport Company (TBAC) made the decision to set up a Cargo Business Unit, which has spared no efforts to put Brussels back on the map of European air cargo flows. "Apart from trying to convince all foreign cargo carriers to opt for Brussels as a European hub, we decided to embark on a project to upgrade Brucargo into a state-of-the-art cargo village," says Steven Polmans, TBAC's head of cargo. "The ultimate aim is to refurbish Brucargo into a 'secured gateway', offering service and quality levels that can conform to the extremely high standards of the pharmaceutical and related industries."

The Flemish Institute of Logistics (VIL) was asked to look into the



The planned secured gateway at Brussels Airport will help Brucargo become recognised as a state-of-the-art cargo village

idea and came up with a list of recommendations. The project that TBAC is about to launch is based on their findings. The first phase is the easiest to accomplish, as it consists of fencing off the entire Brucargo zone. This may seem logical, but – apart from the airside part of the airport – the Brucargo facility is still open terrain that anybody can walk into, regardless of their intentions. Eventually, the fencing will be combined with an access pass system.

## A complicated process

The second phase of the secured gateway is a more complicated matter. "Its aim is to speed up the processes in the zone from the moment of delivery of the goods to the actual loading on the aircraft within the boundaries of the secured zone," says Freek De Witte, public affairs expert at Halle-Vilvoorde Chamber of Commerce. The CoC acts as a coordination platform for the interests of the private sector in the development of Brussels Airport. Air cargo is a complicated process, starting landside when shipments arrive at the airport for delivery to the premises of the freight forwarder with which they were booked and which is the "architect" of the supply chain. They are then delivered at the warehouse of the ground handling company responsible for packing containers or building pallets. There is also the Customs authority to deal with and, on the import side,

veterinary inspection and the Food Safety Agency.

## Service integration is key

"To make our concept work, these government authorities must be integrated into a single window to avoid duplication of inspections," says De Witte. Security has been a major issue in the logistics chain and especially in aviation since 9/11, even if initially the main concern of the national, European and international regulators was passenger flow.

Air cargo was considered fairly secure because of its lack of visibility by the public and the relative seclusion in the way its operations are carried out. That ended in October 2010, when explosives hidden in ink cartridges were shipped from Yemen to the US and Europe in FedEx and UPS freighters. Since then, most countries and trading blocks, including the EU and the US, have stepped up their regulations on air cargo security. The ultimate aim is to have as many shipments as possible declared "secure" as early in the supply chain as possible – at the shipper's or freight forwarder's premises – but even then a considerable portion of the cargo will have to undergo an additional inspection.

As for security, TBAC is considering a combination of decompression technology and explosives detection

dogs (EDDs). With the former, a technology that has been in use for decades, shipments are put into a chamber able to simulate in-flight pressures that could trigger explosives. EDDs are preferably beagles, but Belgian law categorises EDDs as "surveillance dogs", which for the moment can only be German shepherds.

## Quality control

"It is imperative for us to fully understand and evaluate all the procedures involved in the landside air cargo process to avoid being trapped once the system is running," says De Witte. "But if we manage to get it going, we will be able to offer a standard of quality very much in line with what is taken for granted by the pharmaceutical industry."

If all goes according to plan, the gateway should be up and running by the end of 2013. "The success of the project is dependent on collaboration with the private industry," notes De Witte. "Even if TBAC is the main decision-maker, we want to keep the air cargo community closely involved. The project is financially supported by the Flemish government, which enables me to dedicate two days a week to its development. Eventually, this will have to lead to the set-up of a permanent umbrella organisation with a management and staff of its own."

► [www.brucargoairfreight.be](http://www.brucargoairfreight.be)



# The doping hunters

Seven researchers from Ghent are helping to ensure fair play at the London Olympics

Senne Starckx

At the Olympic Games in London, which started last Friday, it's not just athletes taking their marks, ready for action. The doping hunters at the official Olympic anti-doping lab of sponsor GlaxoSmithKline are standing on the tips of their toes. In two weeks' time, 150 lab researchers have to analyse no less than 6,200 urine samples and 1,000 blood samples – that's 50% of all participating athletes, chosen at random, and every medallist will be tested. The biggest challenge is to deliver a result (positive or negative) for a total of 400 substances within a period of just 24 hours. Because the London lab doesn't have enough experienced people in-house to reach the proposed targets, it has asked two renowned institutes from abroad to assist in their efforts. One is the Flemish Doping Control Laboratory (DoCoLab) from Ghent University. "It's the third time that our lab has been invited to assist in the test analysis at the Olympics," says Peter Van Eenoo, head of DoCoLab. "Although, I must say, for Athens and Beijing only I was invited. Now, for the first time, we are here as a team of seven researchers." The Ghent lab was selected because of its experience and in-house techniques for tracing forbidden substances in athletes' urine and blood. One of these techniques is the carbon isotope ratio mass spectrometer, a high-tech device that can quickly see the difference between natural and artificial steroids.

## Around the clock

Another example of a technique in which DoCoLab specialises is the newly developed method to trace EPO – a form of hormone doping that is particularly popular among cyclers. Van



The Ghent anti-doping lab is on the frontline of the battle to keep the London Olympics drugs-free

Eenoo explains: "We don't measure the hematocrit anymore (*the volume percentage of red blood cells in the blood*). Instead, we now chase artificially applied EPO by looking for certain antibodies of the hormone in

urine samples. This saves us time and allows us to know the result within 24 hours." At the DoCoLab facility in Ghent, researchers are used to reporting test results within 10 days. In London, they have to speed things

up to meet the 24-hour reporting deadline. Furthermore, there are many more samples to be tested, and many more substances to be traced. So will the Ghent team, and by extension the entire London anti-doping lab, succeed? "It's quite a challenge," admits Van Eenoo, "but if we keep ourselves closely to our tight schedule, we can do it. Unlike in Ghent, we work in day and night shifts. So during these two weeks, we don't do anything else than work, eat and sleep. Sadly, there isn't an opportunity to attend a game at the Olympics. But we shouldn't complain; this is our job."

## Caught in the act?

So do doping hunters secretly hope they'll catch some big names in the test facility? Van Eenoo says: "First of all, if a urine or blood sample has a name on it, we stop the test procedure immediately. The guidelines oblige us to test only anonymous samples. And secondly, we hope to catch not only famous athletes who have taken forbidden substances, but in fact every athlete who has doped him or herself." Van Eenoo himself operates mainly in the assessment of borderline cases, with results that indicate that the athlete has doped him or herself, but where the evidence is not 100% certain. "Such cases are very important at the Olympics, because here only the best athletes compete. These people earn a lot of money from their sport, and at the slightest doubt they will try to sue you. Because for them the only way to save their career is to prove that you're wrong. We can't give them that opportunity."

► [www.docolab.ugent.be](http://www.docolab.ugent.be)

## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Thomas Van de Weijer, a student of teacher education at the Provincial University College Limburg (PHL), has developed for his final thesis a **digital survey to track down cyber-bullying** in schools. The web application creates profiles of the surveyed students and through their answers it establishes whether they are probably bullies, victims or bystanders. The survey can be used for students aged from six to 20.

At the base of a windmill at the Thornton sandbank, small **codfish have been spotted in the Flemish part of the North Sea**, where they normally don't occur. Ghent University researchers found that the protected environment served as a nursery habitat, because fishing is not allowed at wind farms and the foundations of windmills provide fish with spaces to hide from predators. Fish also find several food sources in the organisms growing in the environment.

Scientists at the University of Leuven and the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology have made a discovery that **could improve the treatment of melanoma**, a form of skin cancer. Melanomas are currently difficult to treat, as they are resistant to most chemotherapies. The Leuven scientists have identified a protein called MDM4, which has a negative influence on the working of the tumour-suppressing protein p53. After preventing the interaction between these two proteins in melanoma cells, the melanomas were much more susceptible to chemotherapies and other treatments.

Flemish astronaut Frank De Winne has become **head of the European Astronaut Centre (EAC)** in Cologne, Germany. The EAC trains all European astronauts and all non-European astronauts flying to the International Space Station. De Winne will lead about 100 staff members and will train six new young astronauts. He has confirmed that he will no longer go into space himself.

► [www.esa.int/eac](http://www.esa.int/eac)

Nasa has assigned another Fleming, Angelo Vermeulen, as the **commander of a simulated Mars mission in Hawaii**. From next March, the biologist and artist from Sint-Niklaas will explore the possibilities of cooking in space, at a base on the flanks of the Mauna Loa volcano.

The Flemish government has **extended parental leave in the education sector** from three to four months. The new regulation starts on 1 September. The maximum length of a career interruption for education staff has been reduced from 72 to 60 months. **AF**

## Q&A



**Can you describe what a microdrone looks like?**

Imagine a small type of helicopter, almost two metres long, with four rotors that keep the aircraft stable in the air. Underneath hangs a digital camera that

**Geert Verhoeven is professor of archaeology at Ghent University. He tells us about the advantages of the microdrone that his department has been lent**

shoots the images we later use to create 3D models of archaeological sites. The microdrone has a GPS on board, so it automatically follows a configured route. It's a fantastic tool for non-destructive analyses, to avoid digging at a site.

**What are the advantages opposed to other methods of aerial photography?** Obviously, an aeroplane or satellite cannot take pictures from low altitudes of around two metres above the ground. The microdrone can even hover low above a spot for a while, which makes its images far more detailed. We often used a hot-air balloon in the past, but then you also have to take the wind conditions into account. Furthermore,

using a microdrone is less expensive than the other methods and it will be immediately deployable when we need it.

**But it is not yet a common tool for archaeological research?**

No, we are the first archaeological department in the Benelux and France with a microdrone. By renting one for eight years, Ghent University is positioning itself as a European front-runner in the use of new technology.

**Have you launched it in the air already?**

Yes, we have deployed it in Austria to reconstruct the image of a civil amphitheatre at the Roman site

of Carnuntum. This is where I am working during my research project at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology in Vienna. After 20 minutes of photographing, we were able to develop a 3D model in four hours. With classic tools, this task would take us several days or even weeks.

**Will we see the microdrone at work in Flanders as well?**

Definitely: Many departments are showing an interest in its abilities. A geography doctorate student will, for example, make a 3D model of the Sint-Baafs abbey in Ghent with it, to show how it once looked.

Interview by Andy Furniere



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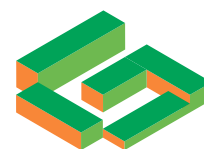
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## GOSSELIN moving

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# Olympic heroes

A visit to the Sportimonium museum is a proper workout in itself

Andy Furniere

At London 2012, the Belgian Olympians need all the encouragement they can get to surpass the tally of two medals won at Beijing in 2008. But just like the athletes of the present, the Olympic heroes of the past deserve applause. Cheer them on at the official Olympic museum Sportimonium, which brings you back to 1920 when the Belgian team achieved no fewer than 36 podium places, in front of a home crowd in Antwerp. The Olympic spirit has clearly taken over the Hofstade recreation park in Zemst, to the north of Brussels, run by the Flemish sport and recreation federation Bloso. From the entrance of the park to the Sportimonium museum in a beach house, visitors are guided by billboards with information about all Belgian Olympic medal-winners since the previous games in London, 64 years ago. At the Olympic Passage exhibition inside the museum, a wall of fame honours these Olympic heroes. You can relive the performances of Baron Gaston Roelants – the Olympic champion in the 3,000m steeplechase of 1964 – and all other medallists through TV and radio broadcasts from the time.

## Flying the flag

The International Olympic Committee last year awarded the Sportimonium the title of “Olympic Museum”, which makes it part of a network of 12 Olympic Museums worldwide. Chris Schwartz, responsible for scientific research at Sportimonium, shows me the showpiece: the Olympic flag raised at the seventh Olympiad in Antwerp, in 1920. “This was the first Olympic flag ever,” she explains.

The Antwerp Games not only introduced the flag: It was also the first time doves were released during the opening ceremony and the first time the Olympic oath was pledged. This honour fell to Victor Boin, from Brussels, whose private collection is set up in an exposition at the Victor Boin Cabinet.

The multi-faceted man won medals in the disciplines of water polo and fencing and was also a sports journalist, war pilot and cultural protector. From 1955 to 1965, he was president of the Belgian Olympic Committee and he remained president of the Belgian Sports Federation for the Disabled until his death in 1974. Boin was the figurehead of Belgian sports at the time, but archer Hubert Van Innis became the most successful Olympic athlete. The local hero from Zemst won four gold and two silver medals at the 1920 Olympics, bringing his total Olympic medal count to nine. The Olympic Passage

includes a souvenir plaque dedicated to him.

## More than just sport

The Antwerp Games proved auspicious for the whole Belgium team, which won the most number of medals in its history (36), with the title in the football tournament a highlight. The organisation went well, although the conditions for the athletes were primitive compared to those enjoyed by today’s competitors. Starting blocks were not yet in use, so the athletes running on the cinder track of the Beerschot Stadium had to dig their own starting marks. High jumpers and pole-vaulters did not land on comfortable crash mats but in a sandpit. Certain Olympic disciplines from that time would also raise eyebrows today, such as weightlifting with one arm and tug-of-wars.

The Olympic competition then included an artistic programme, with contests in architecture, music, literature, sculpture and painting. Belgian artists won one or more prizes in each of the five categories. Among them was Alfred Ost, who won the bronze medal in painting for his poster “The Soccer Player”, displayed at the Sportimonium.

You can also admire posters advertising the events in Antwerp, plus several photos and medals of this edition. But the Olympic Passage offers an overview of the whole Olympic history, from a scale model of Zeus’s sanctuary in ancient Olympia around the second century BC to an Olympic torch that carried the flame of the Athens Games in 2004. Also fun is the collection of Olympic mascots and of the running shoes worn by legendary athletes such as Gaston Roelants and the most recent Belgian medal-winner – high jumper Tia Hellebaut.

## Cinderellas of sport

The origin of Sportimonium (a combination of the words “sport” and “patrimonium”) lies in a scientific research programme set up at the University of Leuven in 1973 to study the history of folk games in Flanders, and the museum has not forgotten its roots. The permanent exhibition appropriately starts with an explanation of these “Cinderellas of the sport”.

“We call them Cinderellas because their worth is mostly undervalued,” says Schwartz. “Now, sports such as *kaatsen* and *beugelen* are only played in East Flanders and Limburg respectively, but they are the predecessors of modern tennis and billiards.” You can not only read about the variety of these indigenous sporting traditions, but also play *trabol* (flat bowls),



© Sportimonium/Rob Walbers

*struifvogel* (a precursor of darts), *krulbol* (curl bowls) and many more in the traditional games park. On rainy days, you can try your hand at *rekker trekker* or *sjoelbak* indoors.

Throughout the permanent exhibition, the history of sports is thematically illustrated. You follow the democratisation of sports from a pastime of the male elite in “British” clubs to recreation available to everyone, also on the domain in Hofstade. You see the evolution from the organisation of hot-air balloon rallies at the beginning of the 20th century to current adventure sports such as bodyboarding, rafting and sky surfing. Flemish sporting heroes like goalkeeper Jean-Marie Pfaff, boxer Jean-Pierre Coopman and motocross rider Joël Smets have donated their gloves, boxing robe and motorcycle.

Children can enjoy mental exercise with knowledge quizzes or test themselves physically at the Sports Lab. In the workshop “Meten met atleten” (Competing with athletes), they can measure their strength, flexibility, endurance, balance and speed in 10 physical challenges and compare their results to those of top Flemish athletes like sprinter Hanna Mariën, former gymnast Aagje Vanwalleghem and rower Christophe Raes.

For visually impaired visitors, Sportimonium has installed a trail of tactile boxes and audio installations. After the visit, everyone can have a go at a game of Showdown, a form of tactile table tennis. Prepare to leave this museum sweating – it’s quite a workout.

► [www.sportimonium.be](http://www.sportimonium.be)



© Sportimonium/Rob Walbers



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© Sportimonium/Rob Walbers

Visitors to Sportimonium in Zemst can work up a sweat as they relive and recreate the Olympics of the past

## CARTOON FESTIVAL



To revive the past artistic competition during the Olympic Games, the Sportimonium organised the International Cartoon Festival Zemst: Olympic Games London. The museum received more than 500 cartoons from more than 46 countries, of which around 100 are on display until 9 September. The winning cartoon (*pictured*) is by the Brussels illustrator Constantin Sunnerberg. A selection of the cartoons will decorate the Belgian House in the Olympic village in London, and kids can use their creativity to participate in the cartoon festival for children.





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# Up on the roof

## A green initiative in Antwerp is leading a fresh approach to city farming

Dan Smith

The building at Ijzerlaan 30 looks like many of the old Antwerp warehouses that have been converted to office blocks. But unlike other offices, the former coffee roasting warehouse is now home to Flanders' first skyfarm. Planting of fruit and vegetables started on the 2,000m<sup>2</sup> roof in May, and produce is already being sold to local restaurants and food outlets.

Known as Stadsvers (City Fresh), the project is an initiative of Greenmarx. The company is already involved in a number of sustainable development projects including renewable energy production and the Moestuinbox – a kit which contains everything you need to establish a square metre of productive garden on your balcony. Greenmarx is working closely with Noösfeer, an organisation dedicated to developing

ideas and projects that get young people involved in sustainable projects. City Fresh combines the goals and skills of both Greenmarx and Noösfeer. Greenmarx provides the infrastructure and know-how needed to grow the produce, while Noösfeer looks after the operational side of the business. That includes providing the labour needed to install, plant and maintain the garden. Noösfeer also markets and

distributes the fruit and vegetables. Both Greenmarx and Noösfeer share the income from the project.

### Sense of community

While City Fresh has been established to make a profit, it is also driven by the need to improve the carbon footprint of food production and develop a sense of community in our cities. "It's about changing the way we do business and organise society," explains Pieter Marx, the founder of Greenmarx.

The ecological benefits of roof gardens are well known. As well as reducing rainfall run-off, they help to insulate buildings. In winter, the soil forms a protective insulating layer. In summer, it conceals the black bitumen that covers most flat roofs – improving thermal comfort inside.

Growing food in the place where it is eaten cuts down dramatically on food miles. Produce can be delivered by bike directly to food outlets, reducing emissions from food production even further. However, it does mean we need to change our eating habits to use more seasonal produce, something that Marx is passionate about: "Growing tomatoes in northern Europe all year round requires oil-fuelled greenhouses, and that model is environmentally unsustainable. We shouldn't be growing sub-tropical plants in Belgium in winter."

Heat normally lost through the building's roof will heat the soil,

extending the growing season for some fruit and vegetables without the need for artificial heating. "With careful planning and enough roof area it should be possible to harvest some produce all year long," says Marx.

### Harvesting new skills

City Fresh provides employment for about eight people from Noösfeer. Most are young people with little or no experience who find it difficult to obtain work in the general labour market. The project provides them with a chance to learn new skills as they plan, plant and harvest crops and market the produce.

Although Noösfeer's 2,000m<sup>2</sup> roof represents a good start, the current operation will only supplement the needs of local food outlets. With demand already high, Greenmarx is on the lookout for even more space. "If we are big enough, we can supply on a full-year basis," says Marx. "There is more than enough roof capacity in Antwerp. We just need building owners to make it available."

Greenmarx is also in discussions with building owners in Mechelen and Brussels to spread the City Fresh concept across Flanders. But that's only part of the vision, explains Marx: "The concept could be applied to almost any flat roof, almost anywhere in the world."

► [www.stadsvers.be](http://www.stadsvers.be)



Workers at the City Fresh project are helping to grow seasonal produce for local distribution from the roof of this old coffee warehouse in Antwerp

# Hidden treasures

## We seek out some fun activities for kids, from a palace to a castle to the coast

Alan Hope

Now that they've done their official duties on national day, 21 July, the King and Queen are off on their summer holiday in the south of France, and they've left the keys to the palace with the neighbours – you. But don't worry, you won't have to water the plants or feed the cats. All you have to do is wander around inside admiring the place. And for the occasion, Technopolis, the science centre in Mechelen, is installing some of its brain-teaser exhibits for children: How do you make sound visible? How can you move objects with brain-waves? The exhibition is open until 9 September, and admission to the palace is free. *From 10.30 to 16.30 every day except Monday.*

► <http://tinyurl.com/palacetour>

► <http://tinyurl.com/techno0p0lis>

From a royal palace to a mediaeval castle is but a short leap, and Gaasbeek castle in Flemish Brabant offers a treasure hunt for kids of all ages, with diamonds hidden throughout the castle, built in the 14th century

but restyled in the 19th. While they're hunting treasure, the adults can enjoy an audio guide to the castle itself. Tickets cost €7 for grown-ups and €1 for kids, and the treasure hunt is free. *Open 10.00 to 18.00 every day except Monday.*

► <http://tinyurl.com/gaasbeek>

The city of Hasselt in Limburg has its own audio guide for kids aged eight to 12, written by children's authors Ed Franck and Kolet Janssen, and recorded for the guide by actors Warre Borgmans and Ianka Fleerackers. All the kids have to do is switch on the MP3 and follow the instructions. The whole project is a cooperation between the city museum, the Literary Museum and Hasselt's heritage office. You can pick up an MP3 player at the Stadsmus city museum for €1, or bring your own. Download the MP3 file and the map with answers to fill in online.

► <http://tinyurl.com/hasseltmp3>

Staying with children's stories, the provincial Suske & Wiske



children's museum in Kalmthout in Antwerp province is offering family days with a three-hour tour for children based on the popular characters from the strips by Willy Vandersteen. Children under 14 pay €3.50 and adults €7. The next ones (at 9.30 and 14.00) are on 25, 28 and 29 August, and after that they're one day a month into 2013. Dates are listed online

and reservations by phone are essential, on 03.666.64.85.

► <http://tinyurl.com/suske-wiskekalmthout>

Alst in East Flanders has a circus festival from 17 to 19 August at various locations in the city, featuring performers from France, Chile, Barcelona and closer to home, among them The Dirty Brothers from Australia

(pictured), who may not be all that suitable for the littlest kiddies. But have no fear, there's plenty more to suit every age group, including the Ganzenfanfare, which is just what the name says: a brass band featuring a parade of geese.

► [www.cirkaalst.be](http://www.cirkaalst.be)

Finally, speaking of nature, conservation organisation Natuurpunt is organising guided walks at various spots along the Flemish coast all summer long, so if you're tired of soaking up the sun, why not pack up the bucket and spade and join them? Most of the starting points are within easy reach of the coastal tram, and each one lasts about 2.5 hours and costs €2.50 per person or €5 for the whole family (members of Natuurpunt go free).

► [www.tinyurl.com/naturecoast](http://www.tinyurl.com/naturecoast)

*Find more links on the web version of this article.*

*Contributions to this article were made by Olga Hope*





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# Anyone for coffee?

Freelance journalist Ilka de Bisschop makes her fictional debut with a novel about love, doubt and caffeine

Rebecca Benoot

Ilka de Bisschop has written about health, lifestyle, travel – you name it. She's an editor for the newspapers *De Standaard* and *Het Nieuwsblad* and now she has added author to her resume. "I always wanted to write fiction," she says. "My grandfather was a screenwriter for *Schipper naast Mathilde* [a Flemish sitcom from the 1950s], and my grandmother loves to tell people that I'd wanted to become a writer ever since I was a little girl. But sadly I can't remember."

Travel, men and major life choices dominate de Bisschop's quirky and light-hearted debut, *Er is tenminste koffie* (At Least There's Coffee), about four women who work in the communications department of a large corporation and who are all about to turn 30. Their boss is leaving, offering them a chance of promotion. Yet these ladies have other things on their mind than ruling the office and are faced with the eternal question: What do I want from life?

Just like her characters, de Bisschop was on the brink of 30 when she decided to turn the page and start writing fiction. "I'd been toying with the idea for a few years, but I was mainly writing standalone chapters, short stories, poems, that sort of



thing, because it relaxes me," she explains. "When I was about to turn 30 I realised that I just had to do it; it was now or never, basically." Like any budding author, de Bisschop got off to a rocky start. "I had lots of ideas and bits and pieces lying around so I started writing," she continues. "The result after two weeks was something completely different from *Er is tenminste koffie*. I actually killed off two of the major characters in the first chapter. Then I started creating portraits, to find out who my characters really were

and this novel grew organically out of these four people. Call it an exercise that got out of control." A well-constructed exercise it seems, as the manuscript – which is filled with tasty Flemish vernacular – got picked up immediately by publishers Linkeroever

## Life's crossroads

Apparently 30 is the new 40, crisis-wise, de Bisschop explains "*Er is tenminste koffie* evolved quite naturally because I was mainly looking at my own environment. Women who are almost 30 are at a crossroads. They realise that their life may or may not have turned out the way they thought it would when they were 18. Love, kids, friends, jobs are all issues that women that age are dealing with. People get disillusioned and single women, especially, often get a sense of meaninglessness around this age." But fret not: De Bisschop has written the perfect antidote to this universal dilemma.

*Er is tenminste koffie* is as light as a feather and features characters we can all relate to at some primal level. This is also why de Bisschop's debut is being labelled "chick lit", although it was never her intention to make a name for herself in this genre. "My

book is about young women," she says, "their relationships and the questions they ask themselves with regards to their life and careers, so in a sense I understand why it is being called chick lit."

Although de Bisschop loves the limitless freedom and creativity of writing a novel, she isn't about to turn her back on her journalistic endeavours just yet; hardly any Flemish author is able to make a living from their writing alone. Even writers such as Tom Lanoye and Herman Brusselmans have several side projects and the bestselling Flemish author Pieter Aspe even has the endorsements from a TV show to pay the bills.

Another upside to writing articles is that "it is easier to deal with criticism or editing, as I've found out," de Bisschop comments. "With a novel, it's far more personal because it's the best you can do at this point in time." Currently this blossoming young author is working on an "epic revenge story" because she didn't want to get pigeonholed early on in her career. "I am also considering writing a sequel to this one, when I feel that the characters and I have evolved into the next phase, but I'm talking a few kids down the line here!"

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The debut feature by Flemish film director Tom Heene has been selected to screen at **International Critics Week at the Venice Film Festival**, which begins on 19 August. The category gathers seven debuts competing for a prize worth \$100,000 (€81,350). The film, *Welcome Home*, offers three portraits of Brussels resident Lila through the eyes of men in her life. Screening as part of the official competition in Venice, meanwhile, will be *The Fifth Season*, the third feature by the Flemish-American couple Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth (*Altiplano*), the first Flemish entry for the Golden Lion in more than a decade. The film, set in a Belgian village where one year spring just doesn't arrive, will compete against films by the likes of Terrence Malick and Brian De Palma.

► [www.thefifthseason.be](http://www.thefifthseason.be)

The premiere of the new **Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises*** began in Antwerp last week with a minute's silence and the reading of a message from director Christopher Logan in memory of the victims of the cinema shooting in Aurora, Colorado in the US in which 12 people were killed.

Music festivals should be obliged to organise virtual exchange counters at all events so that **unused tickets can be returned and resold** openly in an effort to combat the activities of ticket touts, says the mayor of Rotselaar, Dirk Claes. Rock Werchter, the country's largest music festival, takes place in Rotselaar. Last week's Tomorrowland dance festival in Boom, meanwhile, was sold out in minutes when tickets went on sale, but black market tickets were widely available on the internet at inflated prices. Tomorrowland already operates an exchange for unused tickets online.

The French theatre troupe Jeanne Simone, which ran into trouble with the police at the Gentse Feesten, has been **awarded the top prize from the street theatre festival MiramiRO**, worth €5,000. The show involves using public buildings and road signs in improvisations (*pictured*), which, in its first performance, led to intervention by police. Meanwhile, between 1.2 and 1.5 million people visited the city during the 10-day Gentse Feesten, despite rainy weather.



## FRESH FICTION

### In de naam van TienKamelen (In the Name of TenCamels)

By Bouke Billet • Wereldbibliotheek

TienKamelen is an illegal orphan who lives in a retirement home surrounded by people who in the main don't even know which era they're living in. They raise her by telling her stories about the village but it soon becomes clear that her carefree and sheltered life must come to an end. Facing deportation, she must finally come to terms with her past. Bouke Billet's debut



novel takes us on a journey towards adulthood and the true nature of identity. It is filled with humour and compassion and offers us an intriguing look at what it's like to be an illegal immigrant in this day and age.

### De mooiste leugen (The Prettiest Lie)

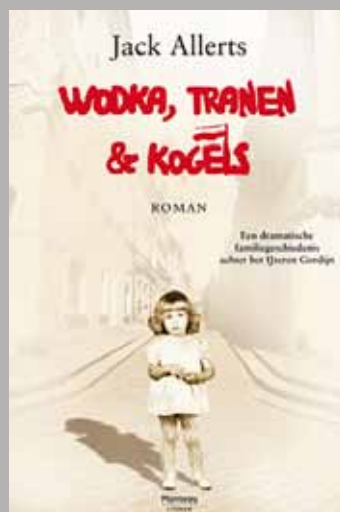
By Erdal Balci • De Bezige Bij

Balci is a Turkish journalist who writes for a variety of Flemish and Dutch newspapers. His latest novel deals with the eternal and unfortunate fate of men. In 17th-century Vienna, as the army of the sultan is about to march into the city, a young man looking for his father and a farmer in search of a better life cross paths with a disillusioned violin-maker who is determined to capture men's fate in song. Witty, wise and sensual, Balci's novel shows that no matter who you are, we are all victims of the human heart.

### Wodka, tranen & kogels (Vodka, Tears and Bullets)

By Jack Allerts • Manteau

Flemish author Jack Allerts lives in Poland and has written a fascinating novel based on



actual events about a rocky chapter in the Polish history, ranging from the Second World War until the fall of communism. The main character, a young girl named Gosia, is being raised in troubled times, a time in which her family isn't quite sure whether to fight against oppression or flee to America like so many others before them. Three generations of the same family are ultimately fighting for freedom on both sides of the Atlantic.

### Ik ben Maan (I am Moon)

By Maan • Wereldbibliotheek

The 25-year-old Maan gives us

a crude and factual account of what it's like to be 25 in 2012. During the course of her quarter-life crisis, which she has documented in 17 chapters, we get to know her likes and dislikes. For example: She likes older men, BDSM and David Foster Wallace. Hates children, doesn't shy away from telling the occasional lie, is a proud bisexual yet scared of the most mundane things. Reminiscent of Charlotte Roche's *Wetlands*, *Ik ben Maan* is brutal, funny and very gutsy and will no doubt shock and awe.





*Accidental encounters*

## Kunstenfestival Watou

Tom Peeters

There's only one place in Flanders where you can sit in a teepee and, as you listen to poetry, the words of writers mix with scenic views of cornfields and the smell of freshly cut grass approaching you through the open canvas. It's one of the simple experiences at this year's edition of Art Festival Watou. The fairly remote village in the Westhoek introduces a collection of images and poetry about coincidental encounters, some of them with lasting effects. The poetry in the teepees comes from Herman De Coninck, Pablo Neruda, Judith Herzberg and other poets who were inspired by unforeseen meetings. But it's not only words that leave traces here. The confusing images of Sofie Muller in the town's monastery are inspired by Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451* and focus on the formative years of human life. A schoolboy dragging his head on the wall leaves a trace of charcoal. You cannot just sweep away your past. A schoolgirl sitting at a desk is upset by fear of failure and has lost her head (*pictured*). The poems of Bart Moeyaert are an understanding companion.

At the same location, the video *A Young Girl Is Growing Up* by the Turkish artist Ferhat Özgür is quite disturbing. A mother removes the long curls



of her daughter with a flat-iron. It seems an innocent domestic scene at first, but soon it raises questions about intergenerational dominance in Muslim culture.

**Forbidden worlds**

Likewise, watching the photos of Taryn Simon, on display in the town hall, is like looking through a keyhole. The series *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* shows images of places you're not allowed to enter. Places where the Ku Klux Klan meet, for instance, or – even more unsettling – the empty cage of a detention centre in Ohio, in which prisoners who are sentenced to death can stroll around for an hour a day.

Most poems on display in Watou are by the Flemish poet Leonard Nolens. This year he received the three-yearly Prize for Dutch Literature for his entire body of work. The poems on the wall in the Douviahoeve represent a brief summary of his oeuvre. The ancient farmhouse that's walking distance from the centre of Watou is also a perfect fit for getting acquainted with the

Cosmopolitan Chicken Project by the Flemish conceptual artist Koen Vanmechelen.

We were especially impressed by the big Jesus and (three-legged) Buddha sculpture, both made of ash, by the Chinese artist Zhang Huan. His installation *East Wind, West Wind* confronts the sculptures, creating a perfect atmosphere for contemplation. The contrast with *O Amor Natural* is enormous. In this movie – call it an ode to physical love – Heddy Honigmann interviewed a well-picked selection of elderly Brazilian people about the erotic poetry of Carlos Drummond de Andrade. Their unashamed stories, about Drummond, his work and their own sex life, are compelling and uplifting.

You could easily say that they are as personal as the photos of Jimmy Kets. He exhibits snapshots of his girlfriend Julie in the little parish hall, which he has transformed into a cosy hotel. He and his muse met in a hotel lobby and the love this accidental encounter produced really splashes from the walls of *Hotel Kets*.

**Until 2 September** | Across Watou

► [www.kunstenfestivalwatou.be](http://www.kunstenfestivalwatou.be)

## SPECIAL EVENT

**Viewmaster 012**

There's nothing quite like pulling up a lawn chair in the grass on a balmy summer evening to watch a movie under the stars. Viewmaster is a favourite annual event in Ghent, offering free open-air cinema in various stunning locations. This year, it takes place at the site of the old Bijloke, so movie buffs will be surrounded by the charming brick walls of the former abbey while stretched out on its perfectly manicured lawn. After the film there's a bar and DJ set. First up, on 3 August, is the 1996 film *When We Were Kings* (*pictured*). This Oscar-winning documentary

highlights the legendary "Rumble in the Jungle" heavyweight boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Mobutu's Zaire in 1974. The aging Ali was expected to lose quickly against the seven-year-younger reigning champion Foreman. The film is supported by a killer soundtrack featuring artists like James Brown, BB King and The Fugees. Films scheduled for the following Fridays are: *Lovers and Lollipops* (10 August), *De Balletten en Ci en Là* (17 August), *Intimacy* (24 August) and *Nosferatu* (31 August). **Robyn Boyle**

**Every Friday in August, 20.00-1.00** | De Bijloke, Godshuizenlaan 2, Ghent

► [www.viewmaster012.be](http://www.viewmaster012.be)

## MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

**Flemish Brabant**

**Strapatzen:** Street theatre festival featuring several top international acts, plus entertainment and southern-inspired food and drink stands

**AUG 4-5 16.00-23.30 in Sint-Pieters-Leeuw (Sat) and Wambeek (Sun)**

► [www.strapatzen.be](http://www.strapatzen.be)

**Zelzate (East Flanders)**

**Katse Feesten:** Annual "cat" festival, named after De Katte neighbourhood of Zelzate, featuring a cat parade with giant cats, a fake cat toss and symbolic black cat burning, plus ongoing concerts, fireworks and more

**AUG 3-7 at Scoutsterrein, Assenedesteenweg 245**

► [www.katsefeesten.be](http://www.katsefeesten.be)





FESTIVAL

Lokerse Feesten

Since 1975, Lokerse Feesten has been giving people a reason to stick close to home during the month of August. This year, that's truer than ever, with a stellar line-up that includes headliners The Beach Boys (*pictured*). Yes, we're talking about the original surfer five-some with such 1960s hits as "Help Me Rhonda", "I Get Around" and "California Girls", among many others. They perform before what promises to be a full festival terrain on 7 August. Other big names include Gorillaz Sound System, Intergalactic Lovers, Absynthe Minded, Milow, The Roots, Trash Radio, The Subs, Selah Sue, The Australian Pink Floyd Show, Arsenal, Suede, Machine Head, Sound of Stereo, Echo & The Bunnymen, Bryan Ferry and... need I go on? **RB**



3-12 August | Grote Kaai, Lokeren | [www.lokersefeesten.be](http://www.lokersefeesten.be)

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Brussels

**Recyclart Holidays:** Summer festival featuring music, exhibitions, workshops, photography and more  
**Until AUG 10 Thurs-Fri, 19.00-00.00 at Recyclart, Station Brussel-Kapellekerk - Ursulinenstraat 25**  
[www.recyclart.be](http://www.recyclart.be)

Geel (Antwerp province)

**Reggae Geel:** Belgium's biggest reggae festival celebrates its 33rd year with concerts by Tanya Stephens, Shabba Ranks, Bob Andy, John Holt and Johnny Osbourne, among others  
**AUG 3-4 at Festivalterrein Geel, Zandstraat 0**  
[www.reggaegeel.com](http://www.reggaegeel.com)

CONCERT

Amy Macdonald

"And you're singing the songs, thinking this is the life, and you wake up in the morning, and your head feels twice the size, where you gonna go, where you gonna go, where you gonna sleep tonight" goes the hit that made Amy Macdonald famous at the age of 18. The Scottish singer-songwriter, now 24, has a deep, powerful voice and a surprising maturity in her songs and lyrics. Macdonald's unique style calls to mind traditional country ballads with a sugary pop undertone. Back in Belgium after her outstanding performance at Vorst Nationaal in 2010, Macdonald will be at AB to play her most soulful numbers, plus a few from her new album *Life In A Beautiful Light*. **RB**



GET TICKETS NOW

2 December, 20.00 | Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 10, Brussels | [www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Genk (Limburg)

**Muziek op het plein (Music on the square):** Free open-air concerts, this week featuring Lipstick Treason and Roel Vanderstukken & Sarah  
**AUG 5 and every Sunday through August 19.00 at Stadsplein**  
[www.muziekophetplein.be](http://www.muziekophetplein.be)

Wevelgem (West Flanders)

**Palm Parkies:** Free, family-friendly outdoor concerts, this week featuring Boogie Boy  
**AUG 2 19.30 at CC Wevelgem, Acaciastraat 1**  
[www.ccwevelgem.be](http://www.ccwevelgem.be)

EXHIBITION

Storm Thorgerson

Does this album cover from Pink Floyd's *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* make you want to be there? Here's your chance! Storm Thorgerson, the British artist and mastermind behind this and a number of other classic 1960s album covers, has joined hands with travel bag company Eastpak for a very unique event. Just as 150 beds were set up across Devon's Saunton Sands beach back in 1987, so, too, will 150 beds appear on the beach of Ostend on Monday, 6 August. One-hundred-and-fifty lucky winners will spend the night there, and surely not without a number of curious on-lookers. Plus, Ostend's Fort Napoleon is currently running an exhibition on Thorgerson and his legendary collection of extraordinary album covers, including those for Pink Floyd as well as Led Zeppelin, Peter Dinklage, Genesis and more. **RB**



Until 1 September | Fort Napoleon, Vuurtorenweg, Ostend

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

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

**Vlamigrant:** Exhibition based on the migration of Flemings all over the world, from the 16th century to present day  
**Until SEP 28 at Atlas, Carnotstraat 110**  
[www.atlas-antwerpen.be](http://www.atlas-antwerpen.be)

Ghent

**Destroy/Design:** Avant-garde design creations by contemporary artists, from the Collection Frac Nord-Pas De Calais in Duinkerken  
**Until OCT 21 at Design Museum, Jan Breydelstraat 5**  
[www.designmuseumgent.be](http://www.designmuseumgent.be)

CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Robyn Boyle

De Filosoof  
Marktstraat 64, Maldegem

The little border town of Maldegem in East Flanders is full of surprises. First, it's home to the Stoomcentrum, or Steam Centre, which houses the largest collection of steam locomotives in Flanders. Located inside the former NMBS railway station, the historic steam train depot invites visitors to relive a time when trips to Bruges were taken aboard carriages with wooden benches, pulled by steam locomotives. A tourist train takes passengers on an original part of the track through the lush green landscape of Meetjesland. Naturally, you'll get thirsty after such a trip and wander into the centre of town looking refreshment. Which brings me to the second surprise: by far the best café in Maldegem is De Filosoof (The Philosopher). It's been around since 1996, when couple Ingrid and Filip started up what they thought would be a good place for people to come and have a chat. The concept worked, I find out on an average Sunday afternoon. Both the pavement terrace and the bar are filled with people of all ages, including a few kids who have taken a particular liking to my canine companion. The place is classic brown pub, not too fancy and with just the right lighting, a few candles and appropriate rock/folk/blues playing in the background. Predominately a beer café, the list reads like a book on Belgian beer styles. I am delighted to see Affligem Patersvat on the



menu – a hoppy blonde beer brewed only once a year – and order one straight away. My friend goes for a peculiar beer only brewers and true connoisseurs tend to appreciate: Rodenbach Grand Cru. Aged for two years in oak barrels, the red-brown ale takes on a complex, intense sweet-sour character that's definitely an acquired taste. After these, we split a large bottle of Oud Beersel Oude Geuze and the perfect food pairing for the occasion: a mixed plate of cheese and salami with celery salt and mustard.

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



## BITE

Robyn Boyle

## Keizershof ★★★☆

Hungry visitors to Ghent often arrive at the restaurant-ringed Vrijdagmarkt and feel overwhelmed with choice. But those in the know head to Keizershof for a sure bet. It's consistently good and manages to be cosy in spite of its large size and unceasing popularity. A Mr and Mrs Van Reeth opened the brasserie in 1979, before handing it down to their sons and current owners, Lino and Ward. The family business is booming, it would seem. Our party of five has a birthday to celebrate, so they've reserved a table for us on one of the three indoor levels (there's also seating on a front as well as a back terrace). Feeling immediately festive at our big round wooden table under dim lighting, we start off with a chilled bottle of cava. It goes quickly, and we're able to put in our orders: two times *Gentse stoverij* (Ghent-style beef stew) and three times steak and fries. Other choices include spaghetti, elaborate salads, baked sole, *americain*, shrimp croquettes and more.

The service is like a well-oiled machine and not once do we need to get our server's attention. She has enlisted the help of two more servers for the simultaneous delivery of the dishes, which makes for quite a good impression, not

to mention five piping hot meals.

The first round of reactions comes in praise of the stew. The chunks of beef are perfectly soft and falling apart in the dark beer-infused, full-flavour sauce. It's made with Ghent Tierentyn mustard for just the right amount of kick. A side salad, some crisp fries and homemade mayo are all it takes to round off this dish for our happy stew-eaters.

The steaks on my friends' plates are just as thick and juicy as mine. The outside has been seared shut in melted butter, leaving the inside incredibly soft and pinkish-red. On top is a sprinkling of chunky herbs, sea salt and black pepper. Mine comes with a rich cream-and-mushroom *archiduc* sauce; my friends enjoy theirs with a lovely fresh tarragon béarnaise. We also have light side salads and heaps of fries, albeit not the freshest fries I've eaten.

Fully satisfied but not yet ready to leave, we order a round of beers: pils and Orval. The bill comes to €140; very reasonable considering €40 of it was for drinks.

► [www.keizershof.net](http://www.keizershof.net)



📍 Vrijdagmarkt 47, Ghent;  
09.223.44.46

🕒 Tue-Sat, 12.00-14.30  
& 18.00-23.30

€ Mains: €10-25

📖 One of the better brasseries in Flanders, specialising in steak, stew and other classic dishes

Philip Ebels

## TALKING DUTCH



If you're reading this, it means you're not driving on a motorway heading south, towards *de zon, de zee en het strand* - the sun, the sea and the beach. Or so I hope. (As much as it would flatter me, reading and driving really isn't a good idea - unless you're stuck in one of Belgium's famous *files* - traffic jams.)

Perhaps you've already arrived at your holiday destination and are taking it easy, sipping away on a piña colada. Perhaps you haven't left yet. In any case, for most of us *het is zomervakantie*, the summer holidays are here.

Holidays are called holidays, of course, because they are - or used to be - holy days (even though I fail to see what is so particularly holy about the entire month of August). But in Dutch, they are not called *heilige dagen* - the literal translation of holy days - but

*vakantie*, vacation.

As an expat, one of the perks of going on holiday is that, for a little while at least, you escape the constant confrontation with the language of your adopted country. Unless you choose to spend the summer on *de Vlaamse kust*, the Flemish coast, you won't have much use for Dutch when ordering, say, another round of tapas.

But the Flemish are everywhere, and chances are you will run into a couple of prime specimens while waiting in line at the ice cream parlour. In which case, a little vacation vocabulary may come in handy.

There was a time when people didn't wince at the prospect of driving two days and nights in a row in order to reach their campsite of choice. But these days, when flying to Marbella is cheaper than taking the train to Knokke, most people

don't drive any further than the nearest *vliegveld* (or *luchthaven*), airport, to proceed their journey by *vliegtuig*, airplane.

At arrival, many take a *taxi* and check into a *hotel* or *bed and breakfast* (is Dutch even a different language?). If they're really lucky, they'll be able to jump right in *het zwembad*, the swimming pool, and start *zonnebaden*, sun tanning. Many will want to *uit eten gaan*, go out to dinner. They will be lured in by friendly *obers*, waiters, standing at the door and asking people where they're from to strike up a conversation. They may get a couple of *drankjes*, drinks, and, after dessert, ask for *de rekening*, the bill.

Whatever you do, I wish you *een fijne vakantie*, a good vacation!

[talkingdutch@hotmail.com](mailto:talkingdutch@hotmail.com)

## The last word...

## Last judgement

"Even communion wafers taste better."

Flemish chocolate guru Dominique Persoone gives his opinion on beachside Dame Blanche offerings

## Tight spot

"Hello, I'm stuck under a train at a crossing in Schaarbeek."

Signalman Paul Van den Bosch calls the emergency services after his car was hit by a train in the training yard in Schaarbeek. He escaped unhurt

## Man about town

"I especially wanted for it to be a modern suit. Most politicians go around like little grey mice."

Flemish designer Guy-David Lambrechts has designed a striking new three-piece suit for N-VA chairman and Antwerp mayoral candidate Bart De Wever

## Perspective

"My parents were murdered. I can take a dirty toilet in my stride."

Jocelyn Umutesi, a Rwandan refugee, works as a toilet attendant in Blankenberghe

NEXT WEEK  
IN FLANDERS TODAY

## Cover story

We've been hearing more and more about it: food waste on farms and grocery stores. Some Flemish agencies are now launching programmes to help supermarkets put that food to use for people who need it. In Antwerp, meanwhile, a dumpster diving workshop will train people how to find their own food effectively and safely.

## Business

Flemish entrepreneur Frank van Rycke has just published his first book, and it might surprise you to know that, rather than full of get-rich-quick schemes, it's about how to step back and get perspective on what you already have. We talk to the author who has worked behind the scenes in the banking industry and is now a successful business coach.

## Arts

Koen van Mechelen never fails to raise an eyebrow. The artist who cross-bed national chickens to develop the ultimate Cosmopolitan Chicken and whose CosmoGolem has travelled the world, collecting children's dreams and wishes, is staging *Hotel de Immigrantes* in Hasselt this summer. Part of Manifesta 9, *Hotel* brought international artists to the city and forced them to live like illegals, creating installations around their experiences. Don't miss our interview with the Flemish artist.