

Feed the world

Flemish software experts are helping US farmers stay afloat



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Party on

It's carnival time in Flanders – for the next two months

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Cocoa tops

Leonidas: 100 years of affordable chocs



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Off Egypt's beaten path

Leuven scientists uncover the ancient secrets of a neglected region in the land of pharaohs

Andy Furniere

In between the touristic attractions of Luxor and Cairo, pioneering scientists from the University of Leuven are slowly opening Egypt's overlooked treasure chests. Recently, the Egyptologists rewrote a whole library of history books by bringing to light essential information on the enigmatic Queen Nefertiti.

The Queen Nefertiti revelation is not the Leuven team's first discovery that speaks to the imagination, and it will not be the last – although the political situation in the country causes some uncertainty for the future. Professor Harco Willems and PhD student Athena Van der Perre of the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) surprised the whole room of Egyptologists – and later the rest of the archaeological

world – at the prestigious Neues Museum in Berlin a few weeks ago. They had discovered an administrative inscription of only a few words that proves that Nefertiti remained on the ancient Egyptian scene longer than previously thought. The finding brings to an end a whole era of speculation around the fate of this notorious figure (see p3).

The discovery was made in limestone quarries, close to the archaeological site of Dayr al-Barsha, which gives its name to the international and interdisciplinary research project of the Egyptology department at KU Leuven. In the isolated area of Middle Egypt, this necropolis – a city for the dead, made up of tombs – has been a touristic attraction since the 17th century and attracted archaeologists until the beginning of the 20th century.

But it proved to be less complicated to uncover media-

friendly artefacts further south, near Luxor. In the Valley of the Kings and in the north near Cairo, for instance, including the pyramids of Giza. While archaeology teams were working side-by-side there, Middle Egypt – including Dayr al-Barsha – remained largely neglected.

In the late 1980s, however, Dutch Egyptologist Willems – then lecturing at the University of Leiden – travelled to the area to follow in the footsteps of the American archaeologist George Reisner, with his diary as a guide. Almost a century before, Reisner had dug up several ground-breaking sites with graves, but he never published his work.

Willems' idea was to publish the records of Reisner linked to his own contemporary examination of the site. Unfortunately, he had to stop his research after a few years because of political turmoil in the area.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Jan Briers

Jan Briers last week took the oath to become the new governor of the province of East Flanders, a position he called “the most honourable assignment you can be given in Flanders”. Most people, it’s probably safe to say, would have to think hard to remember who their governor is, and few will have much idea of what he or she does. But Briers’ name promises to stick in the mind. He came into office describing himself as the “musical governor”; for a time it had seemed as if he was to be the victim of a game of political musical chairs. In the five provinces of Flanders, the governors’ seats were divided between liberals (East Flanders), socialists (Flemish Brabant and Limburg) and Christian-democrats (West Flanders and Antwerp). Until, that is, East Flanders’ governor, André Denys, reached retirement age this month and a new division between parties was agreed, with N-VA to nominate Denys’ successor. N-VA, the party of the biggest electoral gains in the 2010 election as well as last October’s municipal election, called for the job to go to an independent. They nominated Briers, who is not a politician (most governors are appointed as a reward for political services rendered) but the son of, and

successor to, the man who started and ran the Festival of Flanders. The idea was approved by the Flemish government, on the recommendation of internal affairs minister Geert Bourgeois, who also happens to be from the N-VA. The nomination then had to go to the federal government to be rubber-stamped. There it met with the opposition of Alexander De Croo, vice-premier and Flemish liberal, whose family also happens to be deeply rooted in East Flanders politics. Briers was accused of being a neophyte and a closet supporter of N-VA. It took Kris Peeters to smooth over the dispute, by promising a new procedure for appointing governors in Flanders – next time round. Barring disasters, the next time will probably be to find Briers’ replacement: At 59 he is the oldest of the current governors in Flanders. At the ceremony to swear him in, Briers showed no hard feelings – the uproar had made him “even more enthusiastic”. And he stuck to his apolitical guns. “I’m certainly not going to become a member of any of the parties,” he said. “I have some sympathy for all of them. I can see good things in each party, but as an official I’d rather not list those good things for you.”

News in brief

The Bruges prosecutor is reported to be considering a **large-scale DNA investigation in the Netherlands** to find out the identity of the accomplice thought to have taken part in the murder of Stijn Saelens in January last year in West Flanders. DNA evidence had shown one of the killers was Dutchman Ron Van Bommel, who died three months after Saelens was shot at his home in Wingene. As Van Bommel was terminally ill at the time, investigators believe he must have had help to shoot Saelens and dispose of the body.

Ghent is the **smartest city in Belgium**, according to the technology federation Agoria. The federation studied the government agreements issued by 15 city councils, to determine who paid the most attention to questions such as e-government, communications, waste policy, energy and smart buildings. Ghent led the field, just ahead of Mechelen and Genk.

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio also includes fisheries, has held talks with his French counterpart over a **conflict between French and Flemish fishing boats** in the English Channel. Last week two French boats clashed with a Flemish and a Dutch boat, in which nets were cut. Meanwhile, French protesters blocked access to the port of Boulogne for foreign fishermen. “We understand the difficult situation the fishermen are in, but the rules are there to be respected,” Peeters said. “I am happy that my French colleague is prepared to work together to find a reasonable solution in the interest of all fishermen.”

American beer website RateBeer.com has again voted Westvleteren 12, the Trappist beer brewed in the West Flanders abbey of the same name, **the best beer in the world**. Ten Belgian beers figured among the website’s top 50, which was dominated by beers from the US.

Antwerp’s alderman for port affairs, Marc Van Peel, this week accompanied provincial governor Cathy Berx and representatives of **port businesses on a trip to India**, including a visit to Mumbai. The mission was to convince Indian companies of Antwerp’s importance as a gateway to European markets. The city has had a permanent representative in Mumbai since 2006, and this year Prince Filip will open an exhibition of 17th-century art from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp during a royal visit to India.

Kris Peeters joined India’s foreign minister, Salman Khurshid, in Antwerp last week for the **inauguration of a bust commemorating the Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi**. It replaces the statue of Gandhi that used to stand in Albert park but was stolen in 2010. The new statue is on the grounds of the provincial administration next to the park. Khurshid spoke of Antwerp’s large Indian community, as well as the city’s “great love and respect for Gandhi”.

Brussels public transport authority MIVB will **increase the frequency of a number of bus and tram lines** in the evenings and at weekends to cope with the increasing numbers of passengers, CEO Brieuc de Meeüs said. The authority is working towards a target of 400 million trips by 2016. “To avoid becoming the victims of our own success will require major investment in the coming years,” he said.

Belgium’s chocolate makers have called on the government to lobby the EU for **restrictions on the use of the term “Belgian chocolate”**. Guy Gallet, secretary-general of the confectionery industry federation Choprabisco, said producers all over the world were using the prestigious appellation while their products had no connection with Belgium, and called for the name to be protected.

Brussels mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels last week reached an **agreement with the two federations representing taxi drivers** in the capital, following a protest that blocked traffic on the inner ring for several hours. The drivers have agreed to a new code of conduct, in return for more than 100 new places at taxi ranks, better controls on unlicensed cabs at South station, and further talks on taxi lanes on major roads and permission to pick up passengers away from ranks – which though common is illegal.

Angry **commuters stopped a train from leaving the station** at Sint-Genesius-Rode in Flemish Brabant last week, in protest at the severe overcrowding caused when the train showed up with only two carriages instead of the usual eight. Passengers blocked the doors and would not allow the train to leave for 21 minutes. An NMBS spokesman said the overcrowding was caused by technical problems.

Flanders Investment & Trade is hosting a **seminar on business with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka** on 20 February, in preparation for a trade mission to the two countries in May. The seminar will be attended by a Sri Lankan delegation.

► www.flanderstrade.be

Work began last week in the Brussels commune of Molenbeek on the **demolition of two houses previously owned by Andras Pandý**, the Hungarian pastor convicted in 2002 of the murder of six family members and sentenced to life imprisonment. The bodies were believed to have been dissolved in acid and flushed down the drain, while some body parts were dumped near the Anderlecht slaughterhouse. “The people of Molenbeek should not have to live with such dark memories,” said public works alderman Jan Gypers.

Alan Hope

FLANDERS TODAY

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OFFSIDE

Not just a pretty face

In *Zone Stad* on VTM she played Detective Inspector Fien Bosvoorde; in last year’s international co-production *The Spiral (photo)* she was Roos Dubois, investigating the disappearance of six major works of art from European museums. Now actress Lien Van de Kelder has a new job, as an advisor to a federal minister. But it’s not an acting role this time: Van de Kelder has joined the staff of economy minister Johan Vande Lanotte to tackle the question of intellectual property for real. “While I was studying law in Leuven I was always interested in this field,” she explains. “Later I did a two-year specialisation. This sort of job was always something I might have expected to go into, and it’s perfectly suited to my degree and training.”

Not only is she a lawyer, she’s also been acting on TV, in films and on stage since the age of nine, when she was in *Annie* in a production for the Royal Youth Theatre in Antwerp. There followed numerous appearances in musicals before her big breakthrough in 2002, in the soap *Thuis* on VRT-TV1, now known as Eén. “Thanks to my other professional occupation as an actor, I have practical experience of copyright and similar matters. It’ll be extremely interesting to combine those two worlds.” The job will occupy her three days a week, leaving the way open for her to continue acting or presenting TV programmes like *Hoera Cultuur*, a cultural magazine on Canvas. “I’ll still be on the screen,” she says. “There’s no problem combining the two jobs. And other projects will



soon be added to the agenda.” And a career in politics is not on the horizon. “I have a specific and detailed mission, and my only concern is to carry that out properly. I’m not in a position to be elected.”

► <http://lienvandekelder.blogspot.be>

Off Egypt’s beaten path

Ritual objects and funerary artefacts open a window on the practices of the ancient Egyptians

► continued from page 1

Starting from scratch

But this setback meant only a delay for Willems, who went on to establish the Dayr al-Barsha project in 2002 with KU Leuven. “Older and wiser, I now saw the big picture,” he says. The team at Leuven did not confine itself to the necropolis of Dayr al-Barsha but set off with the momentous task of mapping a territory around it of around 800 square kilometres, which used to be the province of the Hare in Ancient Egypt. “Ninety-five percent of the area was still unknown territory,” declares Willems.

“In the first years, we spent most of our time building up our infrastructure since we had to start almost from scratch,” the professor continues. In 2007, the team first attracted media attention – from, among others, *National Geographic* – after excavating the tomb of a provincial official called Henu. In the monument around 4,000 years old they found the intact resting place of Henu, which contained statues of himself and of his servants for the afterlife.

“There were statuettes of women brewing beer and pounding cereal for making bread, which they believed would come alive in the tomb,” explains Willems. “In this way, the people wanted to make sure the soul of the respected official would forever have plenty to drink and eat.”

This religious custom was already known by scholars, but it was unique to find objects of such quality so well preserved. “You can even distinguish the dirt that the ancient artists painted on the hands and feet of the statuettes,” to make them more realistic as labourers, adds Willems.

Funerary rites exposed

Equally extraordinary was the discovery last spring of the burial of



© photos: Courtesy Dayr al-Barsha project

the provincial governor Ahanakht I (approximately 2040 BC). Several grave-robbers had visited the burial shaft and caused extensive damage, leading Reisner to conclude in 1915 that nothing of value was left. But the KU Leuven team dug deeper to find a large number of alabaster and copper objects still in their original position. What drew their attention in particular were remarkable ritual objects, until then only known from ancient depictions, providing rare information on the specifics of the

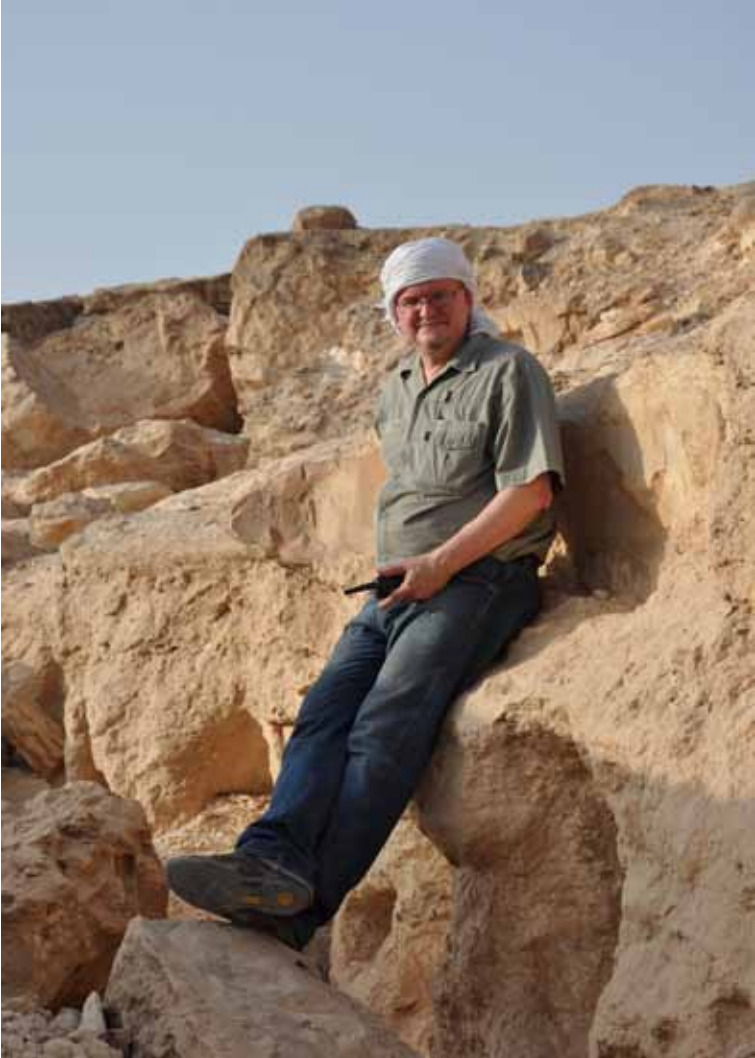
funerary rituals. “For example, we found a sieve that we know was used during ordination ceremonies for priests,” says Willems. “We can now ascertain for the first time that similar purifying rituals were carried out underground in the burial chamber, and we even know the order in which they were performed.”

Future potential is enormous

Away from the cemetery grounds, the KU Leuven team also concentrated on the limestone quarries in the area, where the inscription about Nefertiti was found. “But the potential of the quarries is far larger than this single discovery,” says Willems. “These barely legible markings can teach us a lot about the construction of the palaces, temples and other buildings in the surrounding cities – such as the former capital Amarna – built with the stones from these quarries.”

Another ancient capital that Willems wants to bring alive again is nearby Hermopolis, and he hopes to virtually reconstruct on maps the road network that connected all the different sites.

This pioneering work is attracting the interest of researchers from several international universities, including the University of Cambridge in the UK. The KU Leuven team is receiving financial support from the Research Foundation Flanders, the Belgian



Clockwise from top left: Researchers Marleen De Meyer (left) and Athena Van der Perre copy text found on the ceiling at one of the quarries; Dutch professor Harco Willems leads the KU Leuven team on the Dayr al-Barsha project; findings in the tomb of an ancient Egyptian official indicate that servants would keep him fed and watered for eternity

Federal Science Policy Office, the European Commission and KU Leuven’s Special Research Fund. Notwithstanding the support and

explains. “Up to now, we’ve had the full support of officials, who supervise our work but also help us because they realise the scientific

“There were statuettes of women brewing beer and pounding cereal, which they believed would come alive in the tomb”

the results, the current volatile political situation in the country could complicate the work, but professor Willems is optimistic. “Actually, the Egyptian officials have been more lenient since the revolution because they are less afraid to be reprimanded,” he

and touristic potential. Still, nobody of course knows what tomorrow will bring.” In other words, the science of the past also depends on events in the present.

► www.dayralbarsha.com

Rumours put to rest

But PhD student Van der Perre discovered – based on the study of inscriptions in a limestone quarry near Amarna, the capital at the time of Akhenaten – that Nefertiti was still referred to as the wife of the king in the 16th year of the pharaoh’s rule.

“The wild theories about intrigues can now be discarded; Nefertiti simply remained the wife of the pharaoh,” says professor Willems. However, the mystery surrounding the queen is not solved completely. “There are strong indications that Nefertiti then underwent a name change indicating a position as a ruler, after the 16th year of Akhenaten’s reign or after his death,” explains Willems. “This suggests that she reigned for a number of years as a queen by herself, or alongside Tutankhamen, until he was old enough to ascend to the

throne alone. Either way, we have to rewrite the history of this eventful period that inspires academics and artists around the world.” AF



The well-preserved bust of Queen Nefertiti was discovered by a German archaeological team in December of 1912

© National Museums in Berlin / photo: Sandra Steiß

Limburg plan aims to create 10,000 jobs

Education, investment and innovation are keys to recovery

Alan Hope

Limburg province is capable of attracting up to 10,000 new jobs within five years to make up for the job losses caused by Ford Genk's closure, according to the group set up to formulate a strategic action plan for the region's economy. Last week the group, led by banker Herman Daems, presented its proposals for government action to revive the province.

The priority is to bring negotiations to a successful conclusion with foreign investors who, Daems said, are on the brink of deciding whether to set up in Limburg. If that can be done, 2,000 to 2,500 jobs could result within 18 months. The Ford factory is due to close at the end of next year.



The strategic plan for Limburg aims to counter the thousands of job losses caused by the closure of Ford Genk

In the longer term, the report sets out what it calls the Limburg hexagon – six actions to be taken by the federal and Flemish governments to bring in jobs and counter the disastrous effects of the Ford Genk closure. Economists have estimated the closure could cost

up to 11,000 jobs, including workers at Ford and their suppliers, as well as others who will be hit by the loss of purchasing power caused by mass redundancies.

"Within five years we predict 10,000 jobs, the same number as will be lost by the closure of Ford Genk," Daems said. The Limburg economy, he explained, is trailing behind the rest of Flanders in areas including employment, training and exports. "The important thing is to invest in education, training and innovation." The six corners of the hexagon are: creation of sustainable jobs; stronger innovation; improved communications; broader education and training; more targeted

enterprise; and increased exports. "For the reduced welfare of Limburg to be turned around, a real effort has to be made to improve productivity growth," the report says. "Productivity growth does not mean working harder; it means more innovative products and services with higher added value, which can be sold on the international market."

Among the actions proposed are the building of a prison and the arrival of Ikea Hasselt. Work is also required on transport links, including raising bridges over the Albert canal, the entry into service of two railway lines, widening the E313 and a connection to the E40 in Sint-Truiden.

Ministers pay tribute to "Flemish giant" Raveel

Culture minister Joke Schauvliege and minister-president Kris Peeters last week paid tribute to a man described as "a Flemish giant": painter Roger Raveel, who has died aged 91.

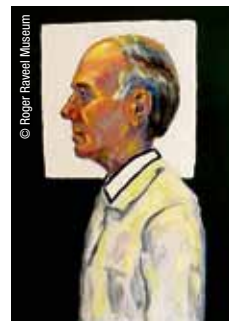
Peeters expressed his "deepest condolences" to Raveel's family and friends. "He was a great painter, graphic artist and sculptor, relentlessly innovative and contemporary. The almost unbearable tension of his work

gave expression to the complexity of life and earned him considerable admiration. He will live on in his works of art and in the Roger Raveel Museum, which pays testimony to one of our greatest artists ever."

Schauvliege said: "He was a Flemish giant, an international icon of the arts whose 'New Vision' portrayed daily objects in an original and unusual way. Although most of his work was inspired

by the Leie and Machelen, the appeal of his art was universal. He was a warm person who talked enthusiastically about art and commitment with gentleness and humility. His passion for art was like a raging fire that produced unbridled energy."

► www.flanderstoday.eu/content/face-flanders-55



Self-portrait by Roger Raveel

New money for schools "not enough"

The government of Flanders last week announced it would pay an extra €39 million to increase school capacity in Flanders. Of that, €20 million goes to Antwerp, with Ghent and Brussels each receiving €6 million.

Political opponents and school representatives argued the money was not enough, and education minister Pascal Smet agreed, saying the government was "inching forward carefully with the very scarce resources available in these difficult budgetary times".

Antwerp had asked for €50.9 million to cope with a shortage of places for 3,400 primary

school children; Ghent is short of 1,600 places and asked for €24 million. Altogether, community education network GO, one of Flanders' three school networks, had estimated its needs at €89 million, more than double the amount available for the three networks together.

Capacity is not the only problem, according to GO director Raymonda Verdyck. Teachers and equipment have to be paid for, and the dilapidated state of some schools is advanced. GO had estimated a bill of €2 billion for urgent renovations alone, Verdyck said.

Governments unite to tackle homophobia

The federal, Flemish and Brussels governments last week met to launch an inter-federal plan against homophobia and transphobia. The plan calls for research into violence against gays, lesbians and the transgendered; new legislation including an extension of the existing law to cover the transgendered; prevention, including better training for police officers and emergency services; awareness campaigns in schools and the workplace; better help for victims; and a more efficient system of prosecution.

"If we don't understand what the motives of the offenders are, it makes it difficult to combat the problem effectively," said equal opportunities minister Pascal Smet, who took part in the meeting with prime minister Elio Di Rupo, justice minister Annemie

Turtelboom and interior minister Joëlle Milquet, and Brussels secretary for equal opportunities Bruno De Lille. On 10 February, a new law comes into force doubling the maximum sentences for homophobic, sexist or racist attacks. For sentences of more than five years, another five years is added, and a 20-year sentence – for manslaughter, for example – is increased to 30 years. Fines will also be doubled, up to a maximum €3,000.

"The plan is an excellent first step, which shows the governments are taking this problem seriously," said Fran Bambust of LGBT organisation cavariva. "But a plan by itself is not enough: The proposals have to be translated into action."

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€23.8 million

approved by the Flemish government for new investment in braking systems and smart traffic signals for the Antwerp pre-metro network, to increase capacity and cut travelling times

21st

place for Belgium in the world rankings for press freedom, according to Reporters without Borders – a drop of one place on last year. First place went to Finland

30.8%

of Flemish people polled by VTM news were in favour of King Albert continuing to reign rather than handing over to Prince Filip. 52% favoured an end to the monarchy

1,285km

of traffic jams on 3 February last year, an all-time record, according to motoring organisation Touring. Last year was worse than 2011, but not as bad as 2010

47%

of Dutch-speaking male recruits to the army and navy dropped out during training between 2007 and 2011, according to figures from defence minister Pieter De Crem

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Cultural wars

So much for Sven Nys' ambition to work in the Antwerp public services. Variations on this joke circulated widely this weekend, after Nys won the world cyclo-cross championships in Louisville, Kentucky. As the world champion, Nys will be sporting a rainbow jersey all year. His victory coincided with yet another controversy surrounding Bart De Wever, who, as new Antwerp mayor, said in an interview that wearing rainbow T-shirts – a gay symbol – in public city functions will not be allowed. What more do you need to coin a joke?

To De Wever, the ban on rainbow T-shirts fits in perfectly with an earlier ban on religious and ideological symbols. But to many people, mostly on the left, this was just another demonstration of the intolerance they attribute to De Wever. The archaic term "obedience" he used – to which gay people "adhere" – reinforced this feeling.

Certain cultural circles feel that the mayor targets them incessantly. They threw a fit when De Wever called a proposal to name the De Coninckplein Herman De Coninckplein, after a popular Antwerp poet, "the most idiotic idea ever". They hit the roof when De Wever lashed out at contemporary rap music. And they jumped to conclusions when an N-VA counsellor remarked that Antwerp could well do without a city poet. And every single time, social media supported the indignation of the so-called "culturos", including a premature Facebook page dedicated to "saving the Antwerp city poet".

De Wever often complains about the strong reactions he incites. He likes to provoke, though, knowing that his sharp wit will win many a debate for him. Also, his voters could not care less about these issues, be it gay exuberance, rap music or poetry. Polemics like these will never harm De Wever directly. In a way, the culturos and De Wever are each other's perfect adversaries. Each new provocation is an opportunity for the left to expose the mayor's narrow-mindedness, a sharp contrast with its own liberal ideas on culture and diversity. To De Wever, they are an opportunity to expose the ivory towers these people live in and to profile himself as a man of reason and of the people. Although both the culturos and De Wever are rather depressed by these discussions, objectively they both profit.

An end to these cultural wars should not be expected soon, though no one will deny they are a waste of energy. On both sides.

€4 million fund to attract tech students

Peeters aims to bridge gap between schools and business

Alan Hope

Minister-president Kris Peeters last week announced a budget of €4 million for projects aimed at bridging the gap between education and business. Speaking after a meeting with the director of 15 Flemish technical schools in Kortrijk, Peeters said he welcomed the efforts the schools were making to develop contacts with municipalities, youth organisations, adult education and the employment agency VDAB: "We have to ensure that our young people get every possible chance to excel. We need technicians and scientists,

because we cannot create the factory of the future if we don't have the right people."

Four bridging projects are already operating, with a budget of €1.4 million. The additional €4 million will go to projects that are part of the STEM action plan, aimed at attracting more students, especially girls, into studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics – disciplines industry is sorely in need of (*Business, last week*) as the number of students fails to keep up with the demands of business.

"The development and growth of our industrial companies is under threat because of the shortage of trained technical and scientific personnel like chemical engineers or workers in the food or metals industries," Peeters said. "This call for projects will give the educational establishments and business organisations the means they need to put the Flemish STEM policy into practice."

Also relating to the "factory of the future" and the government's New Industrial Policy, Peeters last week visited the DSP Valley in Leuven – a network of companies set up to

stimulate innovation and enterprise in the high-tech sector. Over the past 15 years, the network has seen the creation of numerous spin-off companies and closer cooperation between businesses and education.

"DSP Valley fits in perfectly with the Flemish government's New Industrial Policy," Peeters said. "What DSP Valley here in Leuven is doing, putting the idea of the factory of the future into practice, is what we'd like to see happening all over Flanders. Our economy should look forward to being washed over by a tidal wave of innovation over the coming years."

Brussels light rail network delayed

The Brussels regional express rail network (GEN) will not be completed until 2025, more than a decade after it was due to be ready, according to reports last week from inside the rail authority NMBS, where it forms part of the long-term investment plan currently being discussed. The planned network consists of nine lines into and through Brussels, from Zottegem in the west to Leuven in the east, and from Dendermonde and Mechelen to Nivelles and Villers-la-Ville in Wallonia, providing faster, more frequent rail connections using lightweight trains (*pictured*). Work started in 2006 and the network was due to be completed



by last year, but it has been plagued by delays, including legal challenges. A test project with five lines ended in December. One of the main problems will be the North-South rail axis in Brussels, through which the GEN will pass. That 3.8km connection, most of it a tunnel, dates

back to 1952, and now carries 1,200 trains a day, or 96 an hour at peak times. That number is expected to grow to 137 by 2030, but the tunnel is at saturation point. Brussels region mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels said she was "disappointed" by the latest delay.

Unemployed cost more in Belgium

An unemployed person costs the Belgian economy €33,443 a year, more than in any neighbouring country, according to a survey released last week by the European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI).

The survey looked at the costs of unemployment in six countries – Belgium, France (€28,737), Germany (€25,550), Spain (€19,991), Sweden (€26,905) and the UK (€18,008). The main portion of the cost is not the size of unemployment and income support benefits, but the loss of revenue to the public purse. Belgium's benefits are second-highest among the six countries, but

as the average gross wage is highest, the loss of revenue in taxation, at an average of 28.9%, is also highest.

EFSI represents federations and businesses in the personal and household services sector, and estimates that government interventions to support the sector could help create 5.5 million jobs. "It is time for governments to recognise that the cost of an unemployed person is higher than the potential loss of revenue induced by schemes supporting jobs creation in the sector," said EFSI director Aurélie Decker.

► <http://tinyurl.com/EFSlreport>

Mortgage interest tax relief will continue

Anyone who currently receives mortgage interest tax relief will continue to receive it after the administration passes from the federal to the regional government next year, the government has pledged. Last week, minister-president Kris Peeters, housing minister Freya Van den Bossche and budget minister Philippe Muyters gave an assurance that the system would continue in Flanders, despite advice from the government's own housing council that it should be scrapped. "The Flemish government will not go back on promises it has made," said Van den Bossche. "There is no need for people to be concerned." The council's advice, the ministers argued, was in no way binding on the government. The bonus is

worth about €1,200 a year to each owner-occupier in tax relief. It remains to be seen how the government will tackle the question of new mortgages after the handover.

In its advice, the housing council said the cost of the scheme was expected to more than double, from €1.2 billion in 2010 to €2.9 billion by 2024, and become impossible for the government to afford in its current form. At the same time, the tax relief pushes house prices up and discriminates against tenants, who receive nothing, the advice said. The council recommends winding down the system over 10 to 15 years, with transitional measures to ease the blow for those with existing mortgages.

Belgacom boss apologises for 4G outburst

Belgacom CEO Didier Bellens has apologised for comments reported last week in which he criticised the Brussels regional government for holding back the introduction of the high-speed 4G mobile data network in the capital.

Belgacom rolled out 4G – which offers internet speeds up to 10 times faster than 3G but is only available on certain high-end devices – in Hasselt, Ghent, Leuven and Antwerp in November last year. The network is delayed in the capital because of tighter limits on radiation from phone masts. To meet those limits while providing coverage, operators have to install more masts, which takes time and permission.

"The capital of Europe runs the risk of being the only place in Europe without 4G," Bellens told a group of reporters at a reception, claiming that the government's restrictions risked forcing businesses to leave the capital. "It's high time the political authorities recognised the link between the development of a country, the creation of jobs and the role telecommunications has to play."

Guy Vanhengel, Brussels minister for

finance, said he "understood Bellens' anger". Vanhengel's party, Open VLD, abstained in the vote in the Brussels parliament that brought in radiation limits in 2007. "We warned there would be problems with 3G coverage and that 4G wouldn't work at all. Didier Bellens may have used strong language, but he's also voicing the opinion of the other operators." Bellens' apology came after he was called in to explain himself by the federal minister for government enterprises, Olivier Labille. "I made it clear that his comments were damaging to the image of the company and the country," Labille said.



THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air

► Brussels Airlines

National carrier Brussels Airlines is launching a five-flights-a-week service to Washington DC from 18 June. According to the carrier, passengers arriving in the city at 20.00 will be able to take connecting flights to other US destinations thanks to a partnership agreement with United Airlines.

Banks ► KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution has reimbursed €8.3 billion in loans borrowed from the European Central Bank in 2011 to alleviate the liquidity crisis in the European financial markets. Part of the funds had helped in re-financing KBC Bank Ireland.

Fast food

► McDonald's

The US fast food group is investing €20 million to renovate some of its 65 local outlets and plans to open three new stores.

Payment services

► Ogone

The Brussels-based payment processing and services company has been acquired by the French payment solutions developer Ingenico for €360 million. Ogone, with activities in 70 countries, is a world leader in securitisation of electronic transfers.

Pharmaceuticals

► Galapagos

The Mechelen-based bio-tech company will receive €2.5 million in subsidies from the government of Flanders to develop research in medication for inflammatory bowel disease.

Retail

► Marks & Spencer

British retailer Marks & Spencer is expected to open a store in Brussels in the soon-to-be-built Prowinko shopping complex on Gulden Vlieslaan, which will open by 2015. The company, which has created a subsidiary in Brussels, is said to be looking at another site on the Meir in Antwerp.

Tourism ► Hotels

The number of tourists staying in Brussels hotels increased by 1.2% last year, although the sector's total turnover dipped 1.3%, reflecting pressure on room rates, according to the Brussels Hotels Association. The forecast for 2013 is a further increase in visitors of 1.6%, thanks to the development of city trip programmes.

Experts in their field

A Flemish software specialist is helping US livestock farmers keep their feed costs down

Senne Starckx

One-tenth of every gallon of fuel with which Americans fill up their cars is bio-based and comes from crops harvested in the US. As a consequence, the prices of these crops (like corn) have exploded in recent years – leaving livestock farmers in real trouble. Today, thanks to Flemish software, these farmers can once again buy their feed at reasonable prices.

Over the past five years, small bio-ethanol plants have shot up in the big farm states of the US. Due to a federal law that states that 10% of all fuel in the country has to be bio-based, the bio-ethanol sector is booming. For corn farmers, this economic twist is a gift from God: Alongside the demand, prices have risen considerably.

But for other American farmers, such those in the livestock business, it's been a disaster. Already living on the edge of profitability for years, they have now seen themselves confronted with huge bills for feed for their cows, pigs and other animals.

Luckily for these farmers, not everything from the corn kernel is used in the production process of bio ethanol. Rather, the material used to make the ethanol is removed from the kernel and put into fermentation. The leftovers, called dry distiller grains, are not used. They are just waste – that is, as far as the bio-ethanol producers are concerned.

Making use of leftovers

So why not feed this leftover product to animals? It's a logical question, but one that's not easy to answer. First, every bio-ethanol plant across the US works differently – they use different constraints for the stripping process, resulting in dry distiller grains with different properties.

Second, the outcome of the process varies heavily according to the original corn. Corn from a different field, or harvested in a different week of the season, produces leftovers with a different balance of proteins and fats. So when it comes to the nutritional value of the leftovers, there's an enormous variety.

For a couple of years, an American firm called Nutriquest has been giving livestock farmers a helping hand with a service that collects data from nearly every ethanol plant in the US. Their people then take weekly samples of the dry distiller grains and analyse it in their labs. All this yields a lot of information that the livestock feed industry and individual farmers can use to find their way – preferably the cheapest way – in the mish-mash of the feed market. But how does Nutriquest translate all this data into understandable, clear and concrete values?

They call East Flanders

The US company asked the Flemish company Adifo, based in Maldegem, East Flanders, for help. For the past 30 years, Adifo has been a pioneer in the development of software that translates large amounts of data into usable values – in this case, a combination of nutritional and economic values. A combination of two of Adifo's standard products, Bestmix Feed Formulation and Bestmix Lims, do the job.

"Lims automatically imports, validates and transforms values from bio-ethanol plants into floating averages that feed companies and livestock farmers can use," says Peter De Letter, a consultant at Adifo. "Bestmix Feed will then retrieve the relative value of each of the bio-ethanol by-products."



Adifo's software means livestock farmers needn't lose out when the price of feed balloons

So how does it work? "Imagine you're a farmer in the Midwest, and you have pigs, chickens or cows on your farm," explains De Letter. "You put the information about your animals into the program, with every constraint you like. For

example: You have 555 cows and 323 pigs, but 53 are still piglets and need adapted nutrition for the next two weeks. The Bestmix least-cost algorithm then looks for the 'cheapest match', based on your precise information, with the available feed on the market, from the leftovers at bio-ethanol plants in the area."

The program also calculates the actual nutritional value of the feed that you need, "so instead of paying \$800 per ton, you'll only have to pay \$230," De Letter says. "This is an actual example of how big the savings on feed can be, thanks to our computer program."

Moreover, the Bestmix software evaluates the market value of each amount of dry distiller grains, resulting in an appreciation

price, "so the farmers know how much every amount is worth," he continues. "And the producers benefit from our software, too. They get regular updated reports on their plant values and appreciation prices for each ton of the dry distiller grains they produce, all thanks to Adifo's expertise and a custom-built data warehouse."

Although it is reshaping the entire American feed market, Adifo is a relatively small company, with only 74 people working in Maldegem. Besides the US story, Adifo has similar projects in China, Russia, South Africa, Brazil, Canada and across Europe and is launching a cloud solution called Formulation as a Service.

► www.adifo.be



Antwerp student wins H&M Design Award

A final-year student at the Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp has won



Minju Kim beat 18 other fashion students from across Europe to win the H&M Design Award

this year's H&M Design award. Besides a €50,000 prize, 26-year-old Minju Kim will be able to show her creations during Stockholm Fashion Week, and some of her designs will end up in selected H&M stores this autumn.

This is the second Design Award issued by H&M, the Swedish clothing chain, with the aim of stimulating and supporting fashion students across Europe. Final-year students from 19 schools in eight countries were chosen to design collections, and eight finalists (one from each country) were flown to Stockholm to present their collections to the H&M jury in Stockholm. The jury included the Scottish-born top designer Jonathan Saunders, New York-based fashion blogger-cum-photographer Hanneli Mustaparta

and H&M's head of design, Ann-Sofie Johansson.

The jury picked Kim as the winner, calling her show "amazing, full of joy and creativity in combination with a strong sense of design and craftsmanship". Kim, who is from South Korea, called her collection "Dear My Friend", taking her inspiration from the Japanese manga cartoonist Junji Ito. As a result, the designs feature furry, puffy sleeves, cheerful colours, platform shoes and helmet-like hats.

It's not clear yet which of Kim's designs will end up in stores – or if customers will recognise them. "The collection will get a more commercial touch," admits Matthieu Colpaert of H&M Belgium.

Kim is working with H&M on adapting the designs for the retail market. "There will be at least five pieces!" she says excitedly from Stockholm. "It is very interesting to collaborate with the H&M design team to see how we can translate the collection. I can learn a lot from this." Every piece sold will be available in the store's usual size range.

"I still can't believe I won the H&M Design Award," says Kim. "I'll get to show my creations during Stockholm Fashion Week and experience what it's like to have my own show." After graduating, Kim plans a few internships at renowned fashion houses, before starting her own label. **Katrien Lindemans**

► <http://designaward2013.hm.com>



From Minju Kim's winning collection

Asleep on the job

As pilots protest against longer working hours, a VUB researcher looks at fatigue and job safety

Alan Hope

A tired pilot is a dangerous pilot, and new rules on the number of hours airline pilots may fly are putting the safety of passengers at risk, according to flight crews. Last month, members of the European Cockpit Association (ECA), which represents flight crews across Europe, held a "Walk out for safety" demonstration at various airports, including Brussels National. The ECA wanted to inform passengers of the risk of proposed new rules which it says will increase the number of hours a pilot may fly from 10 to 12.

The rules come from the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), working on a brief from the European Commission. "For years now, aircrews have been waiting for safe rules to counter the dangers of crew fatigue on flight operations," said Nico Voorbach, president of the ECA.

Surveys have indicated, he says, "that pilots and cabin crew are already struggling with high levels of fatigue, nodding off at the controls of aircraft. Nonetheless, EASA chose to disregard scientific recommendations and put forward a proposal that accepts high levels of aircrew fatigue."

This fatigue, says Philip von Schöppenthau, ECA secretary-general, "impairs the judgement and ability of air crews to react quickly – with potentially disastrous consequences, as demonstrated by recent accidents. We cannot wait for another accident before the EU wakes up and realises its rules are insufficient."

News emerged last week that a co-pilot on a flight from Amsterdam to Crete with the Dutch low-cost airline Transavia is being investigated after he fell asleep in



Pilots present a petition in favour of passenger safety over profit at the European Commission in Brussels last month

the cockpit. In that case, there was no accident.

Flying while fatigued

Nathalie Pattyn is a psychologist and physician who teaches biological psychology at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and human performance at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels. Her specialism is the effect of fatigue on people in high-stress environments – from air traffic controllers to researchers in the Antarctic to military personnel in combat zones. She has trained in disaster medicine and served as an emergency doctor in Afghanistan.

"I think regulations should always target the worst-case scenario, to be on the safe side," she says, in response to the pilots' demonstration.

But the question is not simply one of setting the number of hours a crew may work. "The most deadly crash

in aviation was the Tenerife crash of 1977 where two Boeings, one from KLM and one from Pan Am, flew into each other. One of the factors in the accident analysis – and there was a ton of it – was that the KLM crew was very eager to take off because otherwise they would have reached their limit of working time. And once that's reached, you keep planes on the ground, you make passengers unhappy, and you cost the company money."

The way hours regulations work, she explains, means pilots may take off at only minutes under the limit, adding the flight duration to the number of hours already worked. "The big issue here – and pilots realise this very well – is that they are the ones who will be blamed if anything goes wrong. And they are also the ones who are under pressure by airlines to push those

limitations for the sake of economic interests."

"Risk shift"

The dangers of flying while fatigued will be familiar to motorists who have ever driven when tired: Aside from the possibility of nodding off, we overestimate our own skills and underestimate the risks. "You don't correctly identify incoming information," says Pattyn. "You have what is called a 'risk shift' in decision-making, and people under pressure are willing to take even more risks. You see a decrease in what we call executive control, meaning the way we can switch between tasks, suppress irrelevant information and direct your attention resources towards relevant information; these are all crucial in decision-making in times of emergency."

Interestingly, people can function very well when they've been sleep-deprived in situations with no consequences, "but they won't be able to react optimally in emergencies," explains Pattyn. "And this is of course when the problems happen."

Those with high-stress jobs, she continues, are not always willing "to acknowledge that they're not performing optimally. The mainstream idea is to 'man up', to toughen up and do the job. That's also why we train pilots – and they're retrained and retrained – to acknowledge the importance of human factors. And to understand that they have sensors and meters and gauges for all the systems in their aircraft, but the only indicator of how the human operator is working is personal perception. We have to be vigilant and acknowledge the signals we're getting and not try to rationalise them away."

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Doctors shouldn't prescribe antibiotics to patients who have had coughing complaints for a while because **the medicines do more harm than good**. That is the conclusion of a study by Grace, a European research network combating resistance against antibiotics, co-ordinated by the University of Antwerp. In total, 2,000 adults with lower respiratory complaints participated in the study. On average, patients who received antibiotics remained ill for as long as those given a placebo. But antibiotics can cause diarrhoea, rashes or nausea and extreme consumption leads to resistance against the medicine.

Professor Freya Blekman of the Free University of Brussels (VUB) was awarded the **prestigious CMS LPC Fellowship 2013** by the American Fermilab. Like its European counterpart Cern, Fermilab specialises in high-energy physics, which examines elementary particles that make up the universe. The fellowship encourages co-operation with international scientists. She also receives an investment of about €42,000. Blekman works at the university's Interuniversity Institute for High Energies and she co-ordinates the Beyond-Two-Generations research group, which unites about 30 universities.

The European Research Council has awarded **€10 million to the research of four Flemish scientists**. The researchers, who each receive an Advanced Grant worth €2.5 million, are chemist Piet Herdewijn of KU Leuven, engineer Paul Heremans of imec, engineer Johan Schoukens of VUB and Greet Van den Berghe of the intensive care medicine department at University Hospital Leuven.

The mild local climate could be responsible for a **lack of stress among the country's cows**, according to research carried out by the universities of Ghent and Leuven and the Flemish agricultural research institute Ilvo. In other climates, stress from extreme heat or cold can cause problems for animal welfare and productivity.

A study by the Social Economic Council of Flanders indicates that 18% of Flemish teachers have been **victims of harassment** by both colleagues and students. Only 84 teachers approached Limits, the contact point for undesirable behaviour at schools. Flemish education magazine *Klasse* and children's TV channel Ketnet are calling on schools to break the culture of silence around bullying this week, the official Flemish week against bullying. **AF**

Q&A

Ann Webers of the agency for quality assurance in education and training (Akov) is leading the development of a new database that brings together educational qualifications and training experience

What service does this new database provide?

We bring together the diplomas, certificates and other documents that prove educational qualifications and training experience. These used to be spread over different databases belonging to educational institutions, the Flemish agency for entrepreneurial training (Syntra) and the Flemish employment and training agency (VDAB). Now, they can be consulted digitally on our central database, the Leer- en ErvaringsbewijzenDatabank (LED).

Who can use the database and why?

It reduces the administrative burden for ordinary citizens, employers and the government. People don't have to take a whole file of papers to a job interview,



employers are sure all documents are authentic, and the government can directly request information on education competences. This makes registration at the VDAB, for instance, very simple. The

database is also an ideal tool for governmental studies – for example, to get an overview of the education level of the population. In the near future, the diploma requirements and wages of teachers will be determined on the basis of the information in the LED database.

Did you take privacy issues into account?

Throughout the development, we collaborated with the Flemish privacy commission. Employers, schools and training centres can only examine the data via people's electronic identity cards. Government departments can have direct access to the database after applying for permission from the privacy commission. For the moment, only Akov and the VDAB have this consent. As a citizen, you

can always check if the information is correct and contact us if a mistake has been made. You cannot adjust the certificates yourself, but you can add explanations about your competences and work experience in a separate category.

You are still adding documents, is that correct?

By the end of the year, we hope to have added the diplomas acquired in adult education, recognised foreign qualifications and the secondary school diploma obtained via the exam commission. If we look further, the next challenge will be to integrate all the specific training provided by the private business sectors and specialised training in schools. **Interview by Andy Furniere**

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Join the party

Barrel-speakers, fools and Dirty Jennies will be celebrating carnival from now until April all over Flanders

Andy Furniere

This weekend, the official carnival season kicks off, and with it the classic festivities in Aalst. For five years, carnival has been an official part of Flanders' cultural heritage, and the folklore of Aalst even made it on to Unesco's World Heritage list in 2010. These traditions are protected by the umbrella organisation FEN-Vlaanderen, which strives to conserve such customs as *tonpraten*, or barrel-speaking. But we'll get back to that.

From 10 February to 1 April, you can celebrate carnival in a different Flemish town every weekend. The proverbial starting shot is always fired on the Sunday before the Christian Lent begins, 40 days before Easter.

The main attraction on Carnival Sunday is the famous *stoet*, or parade, in Aalst, where splendid floats mock local and global events. The *Voil Jeannetten*, or "Dirty Jennies", (men dressed as women who act, shall

we say, rather bawdily) take over the town during the concluding festivities on Tuesday. Almost two months later, on Easter Monday, the last Flemish carnival parades march through city centres.

About 500 carnival associations are part of FEN-Vlaanderen, the Flemish umbrella organisation that itself is part of the Federation of European Jesters. For more than 40 years, FEN-Vlaanderen has been co-operating with counterparts in Wallonia, the Netherlands and Germany and its members regularly don their colourful costumes to meet, exchange ideas and plan for the future.

But the main role of FEN-Vlaanderen is assisting the associations of Flanders in every stage of carnival preparations. The organisation mediates with the government, if possible, helps with practical issues and protects the cultural value of carnival. "Carnival should be a big party to forget all your worries, but it's also part of our heritage, with old traditions that you have to respect as an association," says FEN-Vlaanderen chair Jean-Jos Lecoque. To hand over the carnival traditions to the next generations, FEN-Vlaanderen also provides lesson materials for schools.

Drunken brass bands

The traditions include a date in the official season (not, for example, in the summer) and proper costumes. But to make sure the entertainment is adapted to the particular atmosphere, FEN-Vlaanderen organises an "artist evening". During the last weekend of September, typical carnival artists can showcase their acts to associations from all over the region, who can then book them.

Among these artists are *Zatte*



Aalst hosts the granddaddy of all carnival festivities in Flanders



Renowned *tonprater* Roger Schepers

Harmoniën (literally, "drunken brass bands"), named after the tradition of playing in one bar after another during carnival. The singing is mostly done by traditional *schlager* singers and the dancing by so-called *Dansmariekes*. You could call these latter groups of women the cheerleaders of carnival, marching while dancing in their frivolous dresses.

The origin of the *Dansmariekes* lies

in the mocking of the, ahem, kind of girls who tried to seduce military officers in the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. The concept of carnival princes is similarly based on the pompous reputation of military officers.

On their soapbox

The most remarkable carnival artists, however, are the *tonpraters*, or barrel-speakers, who mostly come

from Limburg. Just like medieval fools, they dress in clownish costumes and entertain the audience with funny speeches that at the same time contain a kernel of truth. Often, they impersonate prominent village characters like teachers, priests or mayors.

But, as their name suggests, the lectern of *tonpraters* consists of a wooden barrel in which they stand during their speech of exactly 11 minutes. Eleven, or the "fool's number", is a magical number in carnival activities: It's also, for example, a *Raad van Elf* for Council of Eleven that plans the local festivities. *Tonpraten* may sound like pure entertainment, but it's not easy to amuse a crowd for so long while standing in a barrel. To make sure the artists have enough expertise to properly honour this tradition, the educational association Buutteonderwijs Limburg trains candidates in a series of 10 lessons. For 15 years, FEN-Vlaanderen has been supporting the conservation of this folklore, including by organising a try-out for a full house of *carnivalisten* at the end of November.

The case of the princes

It's normally the notorious parade of satirical floats roasting politicians and other prominent causes controversy at Aalst, but this year the turbulent election of the carnival prince has already made headlines. The carnival prince symbolically becomes mayor for three days by receiving the key to the city and leads the festivities. He is usually chosen by the organising Council of Eleven, but in certain cities – such as Aalst – candidates have to wage a campaign and convince the juries with a show during an election evening.

On 14 January, *Het Laatste Nieuws* reported that a supporter of losing candidate Steven Van Wesemael cut the brakes in winner Peter Van Nuffel's campaign bus. The driver discovered the "sabotage" just before he was about to depart with 40 passengers on board. However, an investigation showed only that the pipe for the coolant had burst, which could not have been manipulated from outside the bus. Notwithstanding this evidence, the chairman of the winner's carnival association insisted that the bus had been sabotaged and must have been repaired in the meantime. Lecoque, who has been an active part of carnival for 30 years, feels the mentality has changed over time. "We strive towards a professional organisation, but carnival remains an occasion to shake off all stress; the kind of tension we saw in Aalst is counterproductive for the typically relaxed carnival atmosphere. The participants sometimes take these elections too serious nowadays."



FEN-Vlaanderen chairman Jean-Jos Lecoque

THE CARNIVAL CALENDAR

The carnival in **Knokke-Heist** on the coast starts on 10 February with a mass to remember fishermen who have drowned. In the afternoon, the giant puppets Pier and Wanne walk in the parade, which also includes floats. The Monday afterwards is *Sprotjesdag*, when the cafes offer free *sprot* (sprit), and ends with the Ball of the Mermaid.

The masked football game between the teams of *Vissters* (fishermen) and *Plakkers* (plasterers), which takes place on the Tuesday, was first played in 1928. The Fishermen play in red outfits and with a fake nose, while the Plasterers wear green and have fake moustaches. In the evening, illuminated floats again ride through the centre and a doll of the carnival prince is burned. The weekend concludes with plastic balls and *babelutten* sweets being thrown to the audience.

► www.carnavalheist.com

The oldest carnival parade – dating back to 1892 – is in **Herenthout**, Antwerp province, for two Sundays: 10 and 17 February. The *Peer Stoet* procession originates from a theatre tradition. Every 50 metres, the groups come to a halt to give a personal performance for the audience. Don't expect innovative floats with political satire here – many floats are on a cart pulled by a tractor. This is a jubilee year: The parade is in its 121st year, with 121 the square of the carnival number, 11. The jubilee is celebrated with an exhibition and the publication of a comic book on the *Peer Stoet*.

► www.karnaval.darolite.be

The second-largest carnival parade with floats in Flanders takes place in **Halle**, Flemish Brabant, on 10 March (pictured). Just as in Aalst, the Halattraction carnival is brightened up by the carnival characters named *gilles* – men dressed in traditional red-and-white suits who play music and throw oranges into the crowds. As the carnival in Halle is strongly linked to the

Catholic religion, the *gilles* on Sunday also light candles in the basilica and Sint-Rochus church to pray for a good end to the festivities.

► www.carnavalhalle.be



► www.fenvlaanderen.be

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Hot chocolate

It's 100 years since Leonidas Kestekides began making chocolates in Ghent

Michelle Whitemore

From humble beginnings, chocolatier Leonidas has come a long way in the past century, from Greece to Brussels via New York and Ghent. One of Belgium's best-known brands, the company has made it big keeping an eye on value

Leonidas George Kestekides was a Greek-born chocolatier in New York in the early 20th century. As part of the Greek-American delegation to the 1910 World Fair in Brussels, Leonidas presented his range of chocolate, patisserie, ice cream and sorbets to the fair's 13 million visitors. The bronze medal he won there marked the beginning of the world-famous brand bearing his name, known for high-quality chocolates at affordable prices.

He returned for the 1913 International Exhibition in Ghent, where he then won a gold medal, a commemorative diploma and – crucially – professional recognition. He set his eyes on local woman Joanna Teerlinck and married her, never to return to the US.

Soon after, he opened his first tearoom under the Leonidas name in Ghent, followed by shops in Brussels and Blankenberge, marking an adventure that continues a century later.

Eventually, several family members joined the couple in Ghent, including Leonidas' nephew, Basilio Kestekides, who immediately took to the chocolate business and opened his own workshop in Brussels. In the early 1930s, Basilio took over the running of the company, and the headquarters moved to central Brussels. Basilio was the one who chose the effigy of the Greek King of Sparta as the brand's logo and introduced the revolutionary "sash window" concept: From his rented room on Anspachlaan, he displayed his chocolates on the windowsill for passers-by to see, meaning they had only to reach out to buy their favourite confectionery. It was a runaway success.

Keeping it in the family

Basilio died in 1970 and his brother Ioannis, also known as Jean, took over, with the help of their youngest brother, Alexandre. A doctor with a background in chemistry, Alexandre helped Basilio create new pralines after Leonidas' death in 1948. Alexandre himself died in 1999 after having created his final work, the Alexandre le Grand praline, a dark chocolate shell filled with caramel cream. In 1985, Ioannis was succeeded by his daughter Maria; in 1992, she was joined by her cousin Vassiliki who became chair of the board of directors in 2003. Dimitrios, Ioannis' son, is president of the board of directors. In 2007, the company launched Leonidas Chocolates & Café, where customers can enjoy chocolates



over a coffee, tea or one of Leonidas' signature drinks: the Manon Blanc (white chocolate with a shot of espresso and foamed milk), the Leonidas Original (chocolate melted in hot milk) and the Manon Frappé (cold milk with white chocolate ice cream and caramelised almonds).

"The company's success is thanks to it being a family business," says managing director Robert Torck. "There is a spirit of generosity that is still very tangible today. Four of Leonidas' descendants sit on the board of directors and monitor strategic decisions to ensure that the company ethos of the founder continues."

Claude Sénèque, a chocolatier with Leonidas for 40 years, is a pivotal member of the team behind this successful business. His expertise was in bakeries and pastry shops, but in 1973, a friend working at Leonidas offered him a job, and he remains at the company to this day. "Leonidas is a wonderful story in the world of chocolate," he says. "I have been lucky enough to follow the evolution from small family business to a company that now exports worldwide, without sacrificing the craftsmanship that goes into the chocolate."

Sénèque says the secret of their global success is a careful balance of "high quality and affordable prices. Leonidas has always remained faithful to the founder's original concept".

Collection 100

To mark its centenary, Leonidas this month unveiled Collection Number 100, five limited-edition tastes available until the end of the year. The collection includes the Sumatra, a dark chocolate coating topped with a caramelised pecan; the Egina, a pistachio with truffle-textured butter cream; the Amanda, milk chocolate with a mix of pure Gianduja, chocolate paste with ground hazelnuts and praline with a hint of vanilla; the Mahina, a crisp shell with hazelnut and butter cream flavoured with vanilla; and the Lima, Peruvian chocolate ganache with a dark chocolate shell.

Fresh ingredients are worked according to the same unchanging recipes – hazelnuts from Turkey, almonds from Italy and cherries from the Périgord region of south-west France.



From top left: The famous Leonidas, who moved to Flanders and opened his first shop in Ghent in the early part of the 20th century; Basilio's "sash-window" shopfront on Anspachlaan in 1940s Brussels; Leonidas' tearoom in Blankenberge, circa 1925

Leonidas' head office is in the Brussels commune of Anderlecht, with just over 400 people on its production site and in their self-run franchises. There are more than 350 shops in Flanders and Brussels, with a presence in more than 50

other countries including France, the UK, Italy, Australia, Japan and the US.

"We have decided to embrace the new century by driving forward development worldwide," says Torck. "We want to position

Leonidas as one of the great world leaders in chocolate without losing the 'accessible to all' spirit, which has been a driving force over the last hundred years."

► www.leonidas.com

SWEETS FOR YOUR SWEET

It was Belgian confectioner Jean Neuhaus who invented the Belgian praline as we know it today: a bite-size morsel of chocolate with a creamy centre inside a soft shell and sold in little gift boxes, patented under the name *ballotin*, or small box. Neuhaus pralines are still made today in Vlezenbeek, Flemish Brabant. And every chocolatier, of course, has its own versions.

Will you be giving your Valentine a special *ballotin* this year? It's certainly a good year to choose Leonidas, which is celebrating its centenary with new tastes and packaging (*pictured*).

The Napolitain 100 Years: a creamy chocolate, filled with a layer of hazelnut praline in a chocolate square
Palet 100 Years: the traditional pure milk chocolate praline
Palet 100 Years São Tomé: a spicy version of a traditional recipe of 72% cocoa ganache coated with a thin shell of bitter dark chocolate

Of course, you can still get traditional heart-shaped chocolates in bright red packaging for the big day, too. And they're no slouch when it comes to flavours either: white chocolate with grapefruit filling, dark chocolate with lemon filling and milk chocolate with a vanilla centre.





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ING 

For children, and for you

The Krokusfestival brings quirky international companies to Hasselt

Lisa Bradshaw

Hasselt's Krokusfestival, named after the school holiday kids look forward to every February, is for the first time this year receiving structural subsidies from the government of Flanders. Rightfully so: The performance festival has expanded over its 25-plus years from a small provincial theatre festival for children to a week-long international festival with a unique and ambitious programme that appeals to all ages.

About a decade ago, the festival altered its programme to bring a wider range of performance to Limburg. "It was very difficult at that time, for instance, to see any foreign performances for young audience in Flanders," explains festival director Gerhard Verfaillie. "We also wanted to explore contemporary dance for a young audience. All the companies were doing hip-hop and urban for that age group, but there was absolutely nothing in contemporary dance – which is strange because of all the great contemporary choreographers that we have in Flanders."

So you'll find opening the festival *O Snap*, an energetic performance by Netherlands-based choreographer Erik Kaiel, together with Dutch companies Het Lab Utrecht and Tanzhaus. Though you'll find all the trappings of, indeed, hip-hop, you'll also see the delicate balance of risky movements you might expect from Wim Vandekeybus. "It's amazing what they do," says Verfaillie, who highly recommends this performance. "It's a tough kind of look-at-me attitude, but they also have to work together with their bodies."

O Snap is for those aged 12 and over,



You don't need to be a kid to have fun with the interactive installation *In the Woods*

but *En nog eens* (And Another) is for anyone who's reached (or surpassed) the distinguished age of two. By the Danish troupe Aaben Dans, it's all about discovering your own body through movement and the joy of moving with light and music.

Language matters

Dance also circumvents that typical problem of language in performance, whether it's for adults or children. One of the reasons Krokusfestival took so long to open up the borders to international groups is because of language barriers. "That's one

of the difficulties, of course, living in a small language area," admits Verfaillie. "It's often that I see a wonderful performance at a festival abroad, but it's in French or Spanish, and you can't present them to three-year-olds."

But companies and culture houses are taking more initiatives all the time to provide subtitles and to create productions that are monologue-free. For one performance last year, a Danish company worked with a Flemish actress in advance, and she translated the dialogue live on stage.

But you'll find plenty of dialogue-free performances and some with very little dialogue, particularly those that use multimedia, such as *'T is mijn smaak* (It's My Taste) by Ghent company Kopergieterij together with Het Lab Utrecht. Three characters create a landscape of refrigerators where people become chickens and vice-versa.

Language should also not be a problem for *.h.g.*, as long as you understand English, Dutch, French, German, Italian or Spanish. You wear headphones as you wander along in a just-this-side-of-spooky fairy-tale-themed installation. For those aged nine and over, this is a must-do of this year's festival.

In terms of language, anything marked as *dans* (dance) or *beeldend theater* (visual theatre) is safe. The programme also lists age levels for each performance; some of them are really only appropriate for older children.

But don't assume that if you don't have kids, you shouldn't go to this festival. "We programme performances with an exclamation mark after them, rather than a period," smiles Verfaillie. "There should be some amazement in it. Sure, it should be fun, but it should be a little bit more than fun. It should have an artistic point of view that stirs the emotions somewhat." That is largely the description of adult theatre, as well. "We try not to call it 'children's performances'," emphasises Verfaillie. "There should be something in it for children and for me. I'm 50. The performance should affect both me and the kid next to me."

► www.krokusfestival.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Annemarie Estor has won the **Herman De Coninck Prize for the best poetry collection** of 2012. *De oksels van de bok* (roughly: The Underarms of the Goat) is a series of mythical poems that follows the romance between a woman and a satyr. The 39-year-old Antwerp-based poet (pictured) "has shown what sensual language can do," said the jury. "She has done in 33 poems what another writer would need a lifetime to achieve." Two years ago, Estor won the De Coninck Prize for the best debut collection. This year, that honour went to Michaël Vandebril for his *Het vertrek van Maeterlinck* (The Departure of Maeterlinck), and the Public Prize for best poem went to David Troch for his poem "Gezel" (Companion).

► www.tinyurl.com/hdcprjrs



Cinema museum and archive Cinematek has released the two final DVDs of the four-DVD set of **films by Henri Storck**, one of Flanders' very first filmmakers. *Boerensymfonie* (Farmers' Symphony) is both a meditative study of the cycle of nature and its effect on all living things and a document of life in 1940s pastoral Brabant. *Art & Cinema* is a collection of short films on a variety of Belgian artists. Storck shot newsreels, documentaries and short fictions from the 1930s to the 1980s and is particularly known for his work in Ostend, his hometown.

► www.cinematek.be

The **Bozar Shop** at the popular arts venue in Brussels closed suddenly on 30 January and will not re-open. The shop, which specialised in art books, exhibition catalogues, CDs and DVDs, had been having financial problems for several months "largely due to developments within the distribution sector and the current economic context," according to a press statement. The shop opened in 2007, a co-operation between Bozar, Base Design and the Spanish publisher Actar.

Bruges' Concertgebouw and Interparking are teaming up for the project **Music for Car Parks**, a competition to compose soundscapes for car parks across Flanders. The music must, according to a statement "provide an added value not offered by the ubiquitous and hackneyed muzak". The title of the project is a take-off on Brian Eno's *Music for Airports*, which will be performed by Bang on the Can All-Stars in the Concertgebouw in May.

► www.musicforcarparks.com

Cut the crap

The Youth Film Festival celebrates 25 years of bringing better family films to Flanders

Lisa Bradshaw

The Krokus holiday is typically stuffed with things to do with the kids who are out of school for a week (didn't they *just* have Christmas vacation?), but you'll hardly do better than either the Krokusfestival (*above*) or the Youth Film Festival. It's the 25th anniversary of this fest that brings the best of European cinema for the under-20s to both Bruges and Antwerp.

For its jubilee, the festival will reach into its archives and show some of its highlights from the last 25 years, in addition to the regular programme of films in competition, films for the very little (if it's their first time in a cinema, they will receive a "cinema diploma") and the beautifully titled Cut the Crap section, films for teenagers.

The festival began in 1989 as a



A boy escapes the pain of losing his mother through punk rock in *Sons of Norway*

way to get quality film for all ages into Belgium, a sort of antidote to Disney and other simplistic kids' movies. So films from across Europe are brought in and dubbing is discouraged. Instead, live voiceovers are done (in Dutch) during screenings of films for the littler kids.

In that category, I recommended the *Verloren schat* (Lost Treasure) double feature, which includes

the stop-motion films *The Secret of the Ice Flower* (Denmark) and *L'Histoire du chapeau à plume de geai* (The History of Geai's Feather Hat). In the former, all hell breaks loose when an old circus owner shares a very special secret with his grandkids, and in the latter, a king sends his three sons on a mission to find his beloved lost hat.

Films for older kids, meanwhile, are subtitled in Dutch. Those in competition run the gamut from social drama to sugary war-time patriotism to the saving of cuddly animals. One of the best is German director Evgeny Ruman's *Igor and the Cranes' Journey*, in which a pre-adolescent boy must leave his ornithologist father and home in Eastern Europe to live in Israel with his mother. Another good bet is *Tony 10* by Dutch director Mischa

Kamp, in which a boy devises several means of bringing his loving parents back on speaking terms after his father gets an unexpected job in politics.

Cut the Crap, meanwhile, has plenty to appeal to the over-12s, and you won't go wrong with *Jitters*, an Icelandic film that made it out of Iceland, which is rare enough. It's all about teenage social ills, as sensitive Gabriel grapples with his feelings for another boy, while his friends spend a summer of average teenage hedonism.

The Youth Film Festival also offers workshops, screenings inside tents in squares across both cities and streamed movies for kids who have limited mobility so they can enjoy movies in their own homes.

► www.jeudefilmfestival.be

A global movement to end violence against women

One Billion Rising

Angela Chambers

Cities across Belgium will unite with 190 other countries on Valentine's Day to stand against violence against women. The action One Billion Rising was created by Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues*, which is traditionally performed in February across the globe to call attention to women's rights.

According to the United Nations, one in three women – or one billion – will be raped or beaten in her lifetime. This statistic inspired the worldwide action, which will find women and men dancing in city centres to show their communities it's time to change this unnerving reality.

"I think we hear a lot of stories about women being raped or beaten abroad, and those are awful stories, but in Belgium, there are injustices toward women locally, and we need to have an open discussion about it," says Karolien Coussemment, organiser of One Billion Rising Ghent.

Ensler launched One Billion Rising (OBR) for the 15th anniversary of V-Day, a global campaign to end abuse against women, which coincides with Valentine's Day. Since 1998, the V-Day movement has raised some €66 million

for anti-violence programmes and education. Ensler spoke at the European Parliament in Brussels last week. "May this global wind galvanise and support the efforts of these dedicated MEPs who have been pressing on all fronts for a new mindset and an end to rape, battery, female genital mutilation, trafficking, incest and all forms of violence," she said.

Multiple groups are hosting free OBR events on 14 February in Brussels and across Flanders – all open to the public.

Brussels • Muntplein • 17.30

The European Women's Lobby and other NGOs host this event, featuring a flash mob, followed by free-style dancing. Those who want to participate in the flash mob can learn the moves from a video posted on the "One Billion Rising Brussels Europe" Facebook page. Following this, a second group, Hollaback! Brussels, will join together at 18.30 on Beursplein. They will form a circle to share ideas about how to end violence before dancing. The group also will have a short "chalk walk" where women will reclaim the point on a street where they were harassed. Hollaback! is an international organisation promoting



the end of harassment on the street. "When you want to cite violence against women, you have to cite the little violence, and that's street

violence," says Hollaback! Brussels co-founder Angelika Hild.

Brussels activities will conclude with an after-party hosted by the @seven international community where OBR participants can continue dancing from 19.00 until the early hours at the Mirano Continental.

Antwerp • Groenplaats • 11.00

An Thys, a psychotherapist organising OBR Antwerp, says she's seen several women dealing with abuse. "I can confirm that the women in Belgium keep it from their families and friends," says Thys. "We live in a culture where we don't talk about these things." Professional dancers will help motivate Antwerp participants.

Ghent • Shopping Centre Gent Zuid • 16.30

A flash mob will commence OBR Ghent; a link to the dance moves is on the Facebook page. Anyone wishing to have extra help can attend a practice session at 16.00 on 8 February at Basic-Fit on Korenmarkt. An after-party follows the main event on 14 February with DJs and live performances at 20.00 at JH Den Kelder.

14 February | Across Brussels and Flanders | www.tinyurl.com/obrflanders

CONCERT

Lucinda Williams

After an absence of six years, Nashville country-rocker Lucinda Williams returns to Brussels. This time around, she's accompanied only by guitarist and banjo-plucker Doug Pettibone. The duo will be performing an intimate set of songs from Williams' 30-plus-year career. Indeed, hers was anything but an overnight success. The Louisiana native spent the early years of her career floating through Texas and California before finally settling in Nashville. Her first clutch of albums, recorded during these vagabond years, hardly made an impression on the market but earned Williams a solid reputation among fellow artists. She would eventually be covered by the likes of Tom Petty, Mary Chapin Carpenter and Emmylou Harris. The public at large only discovered her in 1998, when her album *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road* won a Grammy. Vindicated at last, Williams has continued to record and tour over the past decade. **Georgio Valentino**



7 June, 20.00 | Ancienne Belgique, Brussels

www.abconcerts.be

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Sean Noonan's Brewed By Noon: Drummer Sean Noonan mixes jazz-punk with West African folk music

FEB 9 22.00 at Trix, Noordersingel 28-30

www.trixonline.be

Brussels

Calan: Traditional music from Wales

FEB 7 20.30 at Wolubilis, Paul-Henri Spaakplein 1

www.wolubilis.be

FAMILY

Raad Eens, hoeveel ik van je hou

Valentine's Day is often a romantic affair between mum and dad, but this year Capitole Gent offers a matinee event for the whole family. *Raad Eens, hoeveel ik van je hou* is the Flemish stage adaptation of the beloved British children's book *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram. This tale of two rabbits was first published some 20 years ago and has since been translated into dozens of languages and sold millions of copies. It's a universal story: Big Nutbrown Hare and Little Nutbrown Hare wax poetic about their affection for one another, expressing themselves in ever more grandiose metaphors. "I love you right up to the moon" is answered with: "I love you right up to the moon... and back." The stage version sets the protagonists' poetry to music. Capitole Gent's February children's programme also includes the *Thomas the Tank Engine Theatre Tour*. **GV**



14 February, 15.00 | Capitole, Ghent | www.capitolegent.be

MORE FAMILY EVENTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Anima: Brussels' International Animation Film Festival is a multi-faceted event featuring hundreds of films as well as exhibitions, master classes, children's workshops, lectures, many international guests, concerts and more

FEB 8-17 at Flagey, Heilig-Kruisplein 4

www.animafestival.be

Kortrijk

Spinrag 2013: Kids' festival featuring a broad range of original performances, films, workshops and parties

FEB 8-17 across Kortrijk

www.spinrag.be

VALENTINE’S DAY

Liefde Aan Zee

Ostend is love. Marvin Gaye concurs; he wrote “Sexual Healing” there. So it’s no surprise that the people of Ostend are stretching Valentine’s Day across the entire month of February. Liefde Aan Zee features dozens of events, concerts, exhibitions, theatre, poetry and gastronomy all across the city. The waterfront brasserie Histoires d’O hosts an Aphrodisiac Weekend beginning on Valentine’s Day, which is this year strategically situated on a Thursday. Couples are treated to dinners prepared around Eros-enhancing ingredients such as oysters, avocado and chocolate. The festival is also an opportunity to discover De Grote Post, the brand new cultural centre that has been making waves since it opened in December. Its Liefde Aan Zee offerings include a tribute to the late Flemish writer Hugo Claus, entitled Saint Amour (10 February), as well as concerts by gonzo big band Flat Earth Society (16 February) and local musicians Maudlin (15 February) among many others. **gv**



Until 28 February | Across Ostend

► www.liefdeaanzee.be

MORE VALENTINE’S
THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Saint Amour: This 20th edition of the popular literary festival focuses on the work of Flemish writer Hugo Claus, with readings by various poets and novelists, including Yannick Dangre, Marcel Möring, Erwin Mortier, Anne Vegter, Christophe Vekeman and Maartje Wortel (in Dutch)
Until FEB 24 across Flanders
► www.begeerte.be

Bruges

Photography for Valentine: Exhibition shop featuring 50 photographs by 15 photographers, with signed limited editions for sale, mounted or framed
Until FEB 16 at 44 Gallery
► www.44gallery.com

Ghent

Sarah Dee & Co: Flemish singer Sarah D’Hondt performs her kitschiest repertoire of love songs on the occasion of Valentine’s Day
FEB 14 22.00 at Charlatan, Vlasmarkt 6
► www.charlatan.be

FESTIVAL

Istanbul Ekspres

The city formerly known as Constantinople is a cultural laboratory where East meets West, where the secular meets the religious and where the conventional meets the contemporary. Ghent’s Istanbul Ekspres festival was conceived four years ago to showcase the unique forms emerging from these encounters. Two venues, Vooruit and De Centrale, are hosting music, film, food and visual arts. Artists on the bill retain a distinctly Turkish identity while incorporating international influences. Nev sets the tone in the festival’s opening concert; the singer-guitarist fuses Euro-American pop-rock with traditional instruments like the oud and darbuka. On the film front, De Centrale screens the documentary *Romanistanbul*, which follows a group of Roma musicians struggling to make a living in the city. The screening is followed by a live performance in the same genre. Gastronomes will be delighted to discover delicious Turkish cuisine. **gv**



7-16 February | Vooruit and De Centrale, Ghent

► www.vooruit.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Zwitwart + Wor[l]d: Multidisciplinary arts festival aimed at building bridges between African and other cultures through music, dance, installations, readings and more
FEB 8-9 at Zinnema, Veeveydestraat 24
► www.zinnema.be

Private Investigations: A mix of performances, concerts, workshops and installations celebrating the beauty of second-hand and recycled objects
Until FEB 22 at Beursschouwburg, A Ortsstraat 20
► www.beursschouwburg.be

Flagey 75: The radio broadcasting building turned cultural centre turns 75 this year, and Radio 1 is marking the anniversary by playing audio clips from the archive, every weekday morning (in Dutch)
Until MAY 10 6.00-9.00 on Radio 1
► www.flagey.be/nl/deochtend

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

Deep in house

8 February Bazaar, Brussels

If you’re into house, you’ll love the Deep in House parties. Their tag line reads “see you on the dance floor”, and their mission is to bring underground DJs from all over Europe to Brussels. This Friday night, Deep in House teams up with the house music ensemble appropriately named Ensemble, and the place to be is Bazaar, a club in the Marollen. You’ll meet the international line-up spread over two floors. Ground floor: French house producer/DJ Steaw, Dutch DJ Sjeef Wanders, Brussels house DJ Thys & Twist and finally, to finish off the evening (well, morning), the Brussels-based Kafim. Make your way upstairs to catch New York’s Black Jazz Consortium. Later that night, Elektriker will make his appearance as well as Gratts and Kong, the Ensemble resident DJs. They’re also in charge of the house section on music website 22tracks.com, so it promises to be a great night. Tickets are a mere €5 before midnight, €10 after.

Burlesque Follies

Mid-February is all about Valentine’s Day. Yes, it’s cheesy and lovey dovey, but there are a couple of good nights out for the occasion, too. Join the Burlesque Follies shows in Leuven (8 February), Ghent (14 February), Brussels (15 February) and Zottegem (21 February) for a night of teasing and pleasing. Burlesque showgirls Miss Ann Throphy and Lolly Wish will perform a naughty choreography, while Anna Bogen will demonstrate the art of belly dancing. Ladies will be treated to a performance by crooner Georges Bangeable with his sultry look. To release some steam after the show, DJ Blanche will spin retro dance music all night long. There’s no dress code for the event, but should you feel like dressing up in corsets, fishnet stockings or a red suede smoking jacket, Burlesque Follies is certainly the right time and place. Tickets are €14-€15 in advance.

► neoretroagency.com



BITE

Robyn Boyle

't Vertier ★★★☆

I would probably never be driving to Meldert on a Friday evening if it weren't for my foodie friend with a penchant for locating the most obscure places to eat and drink across rural Flanders. Thanks to her, I find myself standing on this snow-covered village square, gazing at its quietly striking gothic church and surrounding cemetery. A district of Aalst, Meldert's only restaurant is also its only sign of life, and it's aglow and inviting on this freezing night.

Owners Monica and Steven welcome me with a smile as I pick out a table for two. The place has a local cafe feel to it, with a lovely encaustic tiled floor and wooden tables and chairs. The atmosphere is relaxed, and even more so when a young boy takes my beer order. (It's okay, he's the owners' son).

As soon as my Witkap Stimulo arrives, so does my dining companion. And she's thirsty for a local brew: an Affligem dubbel from the abbey down the road. On the menu are snacks to go with your drink, like cheese and salami; quick bites, like *croques* and pancakes; and full-scale meals like steak and scampi. They also have an extra menu that changes with

the seasons. On this January day, it includes venison, wild duck and boar stew.

I don't have to think twice about my order when I see pork cheeks in Affligem sauce. My companion plumps for the ribs, as she's had them here before and still hasn't stopped going on about it. We receive a unique snack while we

wait: fresh North Sea shrimp. We have fun catching up as we peel and devour the juicy little morsels. When it's time for another drink, we go for one more Affligem and an Orval. These pair very well, it turns out, with our mains. The ribs are just as messy, well-seasoned and tender as my friend remembers. They come with a sweet-sour

barbecue sauce, oven-baked potato wedges and a crisp salad. My dish of pork cheeks (an oft-overlooked cut which, when prepared properly, can be incredibly moist) is melt-away delicious in a flavourful dark beer sauce with tender carrots and mushrooms. It comes in a little cast-iron pot, from which I refill

my plate a few times (and still end up having some to take home). The accompanying pile of puree is silky and buttery. A sprinkling of crunchy spring onion adds the finishing touch.

We're full, but not too full for dessert. It's hard to resist when one of my favourite desserts is on the menu. The *moelleux* is warm and gooey, chocolate oozing out of the middle. It comes with a scoop of golden vanilla ice cream and tuft of whipped cream. This dessert, together with a perfectly pulled coffee and a mere €60 bill, is a nice way to round off the evening.

► www.tvertier.be



📍 Dorp 1, Meldert (Aalst);
0476.51.00.28

🕒 Thurs-Fri 11.00-22.00;
Sat 14.00-22.00;
Sun 10.00-22.00

€ Mains: €10-€15

👤 Friendly, family-run
restaurant with a nostalgic
feel and hearty Flemish fare

TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

Flipkens and Nys showcase Flemish resilience

One month into 2013 and two people have already marked themselves down as classic cases of hardy Flemish spirit. In tennis, Kirsten Flipkens upended assumptions about her also-ran status by displaying remarkable staying power in the Australian Open last month, while cyclo-cross icon Sven Nys notched up his umpteenth bauble when he won the World Championships in Louisville, Kentucky.

First Flipkens. Her achievements, which would otherwise be widely celebrated in Flanders and beyond, have been unduly ignored as fans latched on to the successes of Kim Clijsters and Yanina Wickmayer. Yet Clijsters has retired, and Wickmayer has failed to reproduce the form that led her to the US Open semi-final in 2009 at just 19. Flipkens, now 27, has bided her time, and in Melbourne last month she proved she has much more in the tank than anyone imagined.

While her fourth-round defeat to an imperious Maria Sharapova may not seem much on paper, it came after a terrifying year. Just nine months ago, Flipkens stepped off a flight from Thailand and felt like her calves "were about to explode". Blood clots were discovered in her legs and she



Sven Nys celebrates as he crosses the line in the cyclo-cross World Championships in Kentucky

was told she was lucky to be alive. "I was out for two months and since then I always have to inject myself with blood thinners if I'm flying for longer than three hours, and I have to wear compression socks and everything," she said.

Flipkens' ranking plummeted to 262 in June due to her eight-week break to overcome the blood clots, and the fall prompted the Belgian Tennis Federation to take away her funding. But she has gone from strength to strength since returning, winning her first WTA title in Quebec last year, and now, ranked number 32, she is in the best form of her life.

As for Nys, already a legend

in cyclo-cross, he secured his second world championship title this weekend in brutally cold and muddy conditions in Louisville, Kentucky. But for all Nys' iconic status, the greatest prize in the sport – the rainbow-striped world champion's jersey – has long remained elusive.

The 37-year-old had won just a single world championship, in Sankt Wendel, Germany, in 2005. On Saturday, nearly a decade later, his second was also the first elite men's championship title awarded outside Europe. Nys is once again on top of the world, and carving his name deeper into the annals of cyclo-cross.

The last word...

Internet overboard

"Sorry."

Telenet suffered an outage affecting half of Flanders last weekend, and is offering subscribers a free movie to compensate them

Footing the bill

"The words 'cost efficiency' clearly aren't in the justice system's dictionary." Gert Cockx of the police union NSPV joined in objections to the €50,000 cost of a visit by Marc Dutroux to Brussels for a hearing normally held in prison

Counting crows

"Counting birds is ideal for getting rid of stress. It's as if you escape the rat race by looking outside for a while."

Philosopher Jan Desmet was one of hundreds of Flemings who took part in last weekend's mass bird-count organised by Natuurpunt

Good night and good luck

"After the news I just went home. That was it, after 24 years. It could have been done differently."

News anchor Lynn Wessenbeek and VTM have gone their separate ways after 24 years

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

What do a new type of nursing bra and Belgium's first frozen yoghurt brand have in common? Both came about thanks to a new breed of entrepreneurs known as business angels, and they're transforming Flanders' business landscape with their know-how and contacts. The number of start-ups receiving funding from "angel investors" grew by 10% in Flanders last year – we meet the people behind a few of these success stories and examine their economic and social impact

Arts

Following on from our literature focus last month, we again turn our attention to all things written, this time taking a look at Antwerp's aspirations as a literary city. For a year, back in 2004, it held the title of World Book Capital, but now it's hoping to go one better and be granted the permanent honour of Unesco City of Literature. Michael Vandebril of the organisation Antwerp Boekenstad fills us in on progress, plus we list upcoming literary events not to be missed

Science

There's a new gold rush going on, but it's got nothing to do with mining, or with precious rare earth metals. The new gold is called graphene, and thanks to its composition (pure carbon), it's as cheap as plastic. But it's the mind-boggling range of possible applications that are making mouths water. Find out more next week