

## Crazy like a fox

The unlikely laundrette-cum-bar-cum-hair salon wins entrepreneur TV show's top prize



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## Quality counts

Unizo launches Flanders' first quality label for handmade goods to improve consumer confidence



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## The Ozarks

Death, duets and writing film scores are central to the work of Piet Goddaer (aka Ozark Henry)

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# Valley full of life

The river Maas sheds its polluted past to provide fertile grounds for the Maas Valley River Park

Andy Furniere

In the east of Flanders, the river Maas forms the border with the Netherlands for 46 kilometres. It's now also the backbone of the RivierPark Maasvallei, a 2,500-hectare nature park co-created and maintained by Flemish and Dutch organisations that cleaned up the region after decades of mismanagement and pollution.

On a tour of the RivierPark Maasvallei (Maas Valley River Park), project leader Lambert Schoenmaekers points out how the area has been redeveloped in the last five years. Negotiations with farmers and gravel companies have already led to a park of 650 hectares in Flanders, and the goal

is to return an area of about 1,100 hectares on this side of the border to nature.

Schoenmaekers works for the RivierPark's co-ordinating non-profit Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland (RLKM). Trained guides – called Maas Explorers – can lead you around the wild river banks of the Grensmaas (Border Maas) and show you the old villages with their castles in the Maas valley.

"In the past, farmers expanded their fields until they reached the river, pushing out the wild species of fauna and flora," says Schoenmaekers. "The fertilisers and pesticides also polluted the water."

Gravel companies also did not consider the consequences for the environment in the places where they dug up gravel for

cement production. Part of the financing for RivierPark now comes from the contributions made by gravel companies to a "restructuring fund" that goes towards returning gravel pits to the natural state. RLKM sets up dialogues with all actors in the process to balance different interests, with visible results.

### Returning wildlife

Birds are flocking to the sites and animals such as beavers are again being seen in the region. "Just like fish, they benefit from the improved water quality," explains Schoenmaekers. Water quality has gotten a further boost with the opening of a water purification plant at Liège. "In the future, we hope to welcome back otters, who could be ideal mascots for our eco-friendly



## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

## Piet Vanthemsche

© Michiel Hendrickx/Wikimedia Commons



Piet Vanthemsche has been re-elected president of the farmers' union Boerenbond, after an electoral process that takes an entire year because the organisation builds its management from the ground up. No sooner was his re-election announced than he entered into a collision course with the Flemish government and minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio includes agriculture and rural affairs.

The dispute concerns the government's plans for the development of the port of Antwerp on the left bank of the Scheldt. According to Boerenbond, this will mean the loss of all or much of the holdings of 250 farming families. The organisation said it felt "betrayed" by the government. Baron Piet Vanthemsche – he was ennobled by the king last summer – was born in Kortrijk in 1955 and studied as a veterinary surgeon in Ghent, practising for six years in Tielt, West Flanders, before taking a job as a civil servant. In 1997, he was appointed chief of staff to federal agriculture minister Karel Pinxten. In 2006, he became director-general of the federal food safety agency as well as administrator-general of the

federal agency for medicines and health products. The following year he became deputy to Noel Devisch, chairman of Boerenbond, moving into the top job a year later.

His bulldog looks won't have done him any harm in negotiations, but he is also extremely well-educated and politically skilful. His industry, though, is in decline, with fewer and fewer farmers in Flanders every year, earning less and less money. In the latest negotiations for the reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, Boerenbond and Peeters worked together on the issue of tailoring reforms to the needs of individual countries or regions. Then along came the Antwerp harbour issue.

In addition to the confrontation over the seizure of land from Left Bank farmers, Vanthemsche set out a number of other policy priorities for the next five years. They include tackling the problem of the instability and unpredictability of agricultural incomes, he told the professional magazine *Boer & Tuinder* (Farmer and Grower), as well as defending the "right to farm" for agricultural entrepreneurs, attracting young people to the industry and establishing the place of his union in the modern social and political landscape.

## News in brief

Brussels' justice palace and a police barracks in Etterbeek were last week **on heightened security alert** after it was reported that the brother of terror suspect Hakim Benladghem, shot dead by police in a pursuit two weeks ago, may be heading to Brussels intent on revenge against police or magistrates.

A proposed mink farm in Bocholt has been **refused planning permission** by Limburg province, after negative reactions from local authorities, the province's environment committee and the government of Flanders. Animal rights organisation Gaia welcomed the ruling on the farm, which would have housed 42,000 mink on what is now a chicken farm. Gaia repeated a call for a ban on fur farming in Belgium.

Only 5.79% of residents with language facilities in *de rand*, the Flemish municipalities located in the periphery of Brussels, make use of the right to have **official documents provided in French**, according to minister Philippe Muyters speaking in the Flemish parliament. He was reporting on the response to the annual property tax form for 2012, of which only 1,529 people asked for the French-language version – down from 6.95% in 2011. Some of the municipalities in *de rand* have as many as 80% French-speaking residents.

One-time Flemish environment minister Vera Dua has been named the **new president of Bond Beter Leefmilieu**, an environmental action group led for the past nine years by Hans Bruynickx and made up of 140 organisations. Dua, who was from 2003 to 2007 the first female president of Groen, left politics in 2011 to work on sustainable development issues.

A 4.5-metre statue of a **soldier of the Black Watch regiment** will be unveiled next spring near Ypres, West

Flanders, *The Scotsman* newspaper revealed. It will commemorate the action at the end of the First Battle of Ypres, which stopped German troops reaching the coast. The regiment lost 8,000 soldiers in the First World War and saw 20,000 wounded.

The city of Ghent **will not clean up the litter and dumped waste** in Koker Park in the Brugsepoort area until at least the end of June in order to "confront park users with the problem of dumping, remind them of their responsibilities and involve them in finding a solution to the problem," said environment alderwoman Tine Heyse. During the period, special attention will be paid to any vermin problems that may arise, and bins will be emptied as normal.

Knitting supplies shop Het Wollen Bolleke in Antwerp has won the Golden Smile award for the **friendliest shop** in the city by a unanimous decision of the jury. The shop was one of 45 nominees in the annual contest organised by the city council.

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

Blankenberge is **replacing its signposts for lost children** with seven watchtowers for lifeguards, city alderman Björn Prasse announced. The towers, costing a total of €241,000, will provide a 360-degree view of beach and sea and be equipped with LCD screens to allow photos of missing children to be displayed. "We've known for a long time that lost children and parents head for the lifeguard stations, not the signposts," Prasse said.

Antwerp last week saw the **opening of the Keizersbastion**, a 30-metre stretch of city wall dating from the 16th century and restored at a cost of €1.6 million from the government of Flanders. The remains of the wall, part of the city's defences, were first

uncovered in 2003. The site will be open to the public on Heritage Day (21 April), and thereafter by appointment for group visits.

► [www.apen.be/keizersbastion](http://www.apen.be/keizersbastion)

The Flemish Nature and Woodland agency (ANB) is studying the possibilities of **suitable living habitats for beavers**, environmental minister Joke Schauvliege told the Flemish parliament. There are an estimated 50 beaver families in the region – about 200 animals – whose nest-building and associated flooding has concerned local farmers. ANB is working with water management companies to find suitable sites for the beavers, Schauvliege said.

People in need of regular care at home will in future receive financial help automatically **without the need to submit new requests**, health minister Jo Vandeurzen announced last week. Automatic payments of €130 a month begin in June; the new system will ensure that no one misses out on the benefit.

Flemish heritage minister Geert Bourgeois has approved a grant of nearly €500,000 for the third phase of restoration **work on the cathedral of Sint-Rombouts** in Mechelen, which will tackle the lower gables and stained-glass windows. The building was listed as a monument in 1938, and restoration was started in 1985.

Heathland areas in Antwerp and Limburg provinces were last week placed under **orange alert for fire danger**. The recent dry weather, together with a strong northerly wind, has dried out vegetation, increasing the risk that any fire will quickly spread. Two years ago, 600 hectares of heath and woodland near Kalmthout were destroyed by a fire, Flanders' biggest natural disaster ever.

## FLANDERS TODAY

Flanders Today, a free weekly English-language newspaper, is an initiative of the Flemish Region and is financially supported by the Flemish authorities.



The logo and the name Flanders Today belong to the Flemish Region (Benelux Beeldmerk nr 815.088). The editorial team of Flanders Today has full editorial autonomy regarding the content of the newspaper and is responsible for all content, as stipulated in the agreement between Corelio Publishing and the Flemish authorities.

**EDITOR** Lisa Bradshaw

**DEPUTY EDITOR** Sally Tipper

**NEWS EDITOR** Alan Hope

**AGENDA** Robyn Boyle, Georgio Valentino

**ART DIRECTOR** Paul Van Dooren

**PREPRESS** Corelio AdPro

**CONTRIBUTORS** Daan Bauwens, Rebecca

Benoot, Robyn Boyle, Leo Cendrowicz,

Angela Chambers, Sabine Clappaert, Katy

Desmond, Andy Furniere, Diana Goodwin,

Toon Lambrechts, Katrien Lindemans, Marc

Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Tom Peeters,

Senne Starckx, Linda Thompson, Georgio

Valentino, Christophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton

**GENERAL MANAGER** Hans De Loore

**PUBLISHER** Corelio Publishing NV

**EDITORIAL ADDRESS**

Gossetlaan 30 - 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

tel 02 373 99 09 - fax 02 375 98 22

[editorial@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:editorial@flanderstoday.eu)

**FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS**

[subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu)

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

**ADVERTISING**

Evelyne Fregonese

02 373 83 57

[advertising@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:advertising@flanderstoday.eu)

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Hans De Loore

## OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

## We'll meet again

He was five years old when his photo was taken by some passing British soldiers. Last week one of them, now living in New Zealand, tracked him down from the other side of the world.

René Stroobant still lives in Diksmuide, West Flanders, where the photo (*right*) was taken in 1945 with a couple of British squaddies on the march to Berlin. "The liberation was a fantastic time," he told the VRT. "As a small boy I would stand on the bridge watching how the English moved inland from the coast, bringing tonnes of material with them."

The troops were billeted in the local St Aloysius college, which also served as a hospital. Injured soldiers repaired uniforms, and one of them made a small one



for the child. The photo shows Stroobant, whom they knew only as René, with Bob Bamber and another soldier, Jim Wright. The regiment went on its way, and that was the end of the story.

Until now. Bamber, 89, got to wondering what had become of the boy in the photo. He called the New Zealand TV programme *Missing Links* for help.

In the interim, Stroobant has made something of a name for himself, as a socialist trade union representative at the bankrupt Boelwerf shipyard on the Scheldt, and later as an alderman in Diksmuide.

The TV crew, thanks to readers of the website [ediksmuide.be](http://ediksmuide.be), found Stroobant and put him in touch with Bamber. "He's too old to come to Belgium," Stroobant told *Het Nieuwsblad*, "but I will soon have a meeting with his granddaughter, who will come to Sint-Niklaas. It seems her grandfather has a message for me."



# Valley full of life

## Viewing towers, bird hides and eco-friendly boats are part of the plans for the Maas Valley

► continued from page 1

reputation.”

Perhaps less appreciated by the general public – but vital to the eco-system – are the insects that have returned. They populate an increasingly varied landscape of flowers, plants and trees.

Responsible for safeguarding this newly rebuilt biodiversity are nature organisations such as Natuurpunt and Limburgs Landschap. They, for example, have brought Galloway cattle and Konik horses to the terrain, which help to preserve the landscape by grazing and spreading seeds. Waterways management company De Scheepvaart maintains the riverbank, with special care for the herbs growing there. The RivierPark Maasvallei is developed with the subsidies and knowledge of Flemish government departments and European projects.

### Rare in Europe

Flood protection is a major issue for the Maas valley, as this part of the Maas river is extremely unpredictable, quickly increasing in volume with rain, which makes it also unfit for shipping traffic. The wild characteristics of the Border Maas are unique in the Low Countries and rare in Europe.

Until recently, the principal strategy was to put the river in tight channels by building high dikes. But this approach proved to be counterproductive, actually leading to an increased risk of flooding. “Compare the Maas to a dog who was constantly kept on a very short leash,” says Schoenmaekers. “The river didn’t have the room to manoeuvre when necessary, leading to disasters.”

In the winters of 1993 and 1995, heavy rainfall caused floods that put several Maas valley villages under water. Since then, a mentality change has gradually been transforming the water management system into a method of building *with* nature instead of building *in* nature.

De Scheepvaart, based in Hasselt, is lowering the tight summer dikes,



Water fowl exist side-by-side with grazing horses and cows (top); returning the land to nature has brought hikers, bikers and swimmers back to the valley

providing the river with plenty of space to occupy in humid winter conditions. “High water” conditions are also to the benefit of the grounds next to the river, where the water enriches the biodiversity. The winter dikes further away prevent the water from reaching residential areas. “While floods in the past occurred

about every 50 years, the goal is to limit the risk to once in 250 years,” says Schoenmaekers.

### What’s in it for you

Currently, the team at RivierPark Maasvallei is working hard to address the needs of visitors while preserving the wild character of

nature. There is a large network of walking and cycle routes, with several picnic spots along the way. A viewing tower is being planned, while bird watchers will be able to spot different species from a bird hide. There will be special facilities for fishing, and tourists can board quiet, eco-friendly electric boats or

kayaks to roam the water.

Visitors will soon be able to book themed tours, under the guidance of the trained MaasVerkenners or Maas Explorers. “They will serve as rangers in the park,” says Schoenmaekers. In the future, there will also be digital tours available on tablets and smartphones.

### Reviving the villages

RivierPark combines ecological improvement with restoring the cultural heritage of the villages in the Maas valley. The valley has a rich history as an important commercial centre until shipping traffic on this part of the river became prohibited in the 19th century.

Maaseik was the area’s most important trading village in the middle ages, gaining considerable cultural prestige thanks to the influential master painters Hubert and Jan van Eyck, born in the city in the 14th century. A statue on the market square honours these famous sons of Maaseik.

Five authentic medieval villages serve as “entrance gates” (see sidebar) to the RivierPark and to eight castle domains. The cultural hotspots are often situated at river branches that used to be part of the main river, until it altered its course after a flood.

One of the best features of the RivierPark is the ferry service, which allows you to quickly hop over the river to villages in the Netherlands, such as the “white village” of Thorn. Close by is also the Hoge Kempen National Park, the largest nature reserve in Flanders.

If you want to explore the RivierPark Maasvallei, it’s best to first visit the Maascentrum De Wissen in Dilsen-Stokkem, which also houses an exhibition on how the river Maas has shaped the history of the region.

On 25 August, RivierPark Maasvallei hosts its official launch event for the public, with concerts, sports and cultural activities.

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

## THIS WAY IN

In the course of the centuries, a string of small villages developed alongside the Maas river, of which five now serve as ideal “entrance gates” to the RivierPark Maasvallei. The route connecting the villages via the dikes is about 35 kilometres long.

**1 Kessenich** is the most north-eastern village of Flanders. Because of the unpredictable character of the river Maas and the need for protection against looting Vikings, the area was ruled from a mountain castle – around which the village grew. Today, Kessenich no longer borders the Maas, which has changed its course. Kessenich is however the ideal spot to discover the diverse nature reserve Vijverbroek.

**2 Aldeneik** is of Frankish origin, like almost all Maas villages, more specifically through the establishment of a monastery by the saints Harlindis and Relindis. According to legend, these sisters wrote the Gospel Book known as the Codex Eyckensis, still preserved in Maaseik. The cultural history of Aldeneik is further interlaced with legends of witches and miracles.

From Aldeneik, you can walk into the recreation area Heerenlaakplas, which came into being through gravel extraction. The area of the popular pilgrimage site Heppeneert is also surrounded by walking trails.

**3 Stokkem** was for centuries the dominant centre of basket weaving. An exhibition at the Maascentrum De Wissen brings this traditional craft back to life. The village surrounds you in the atmosphere of the early 20th century via its remarkable facades, cobblestones, lampposts and fishermen’s houses. An exceptional site is the town church, which is situated in the midst of a row of houses.

The wild environment of Negenoord-Kerkeweerd is an ideal walking area, while the nature area Bichterweert is the place to be for bird watchers.

**4 Leut’s** highlight is the castle domain Vilain XIII, with its spacious English park. The castle has a moat, and you can visit the ruins of an ice house, where ice was once stored throughout the year. The Maas dike leads you to the varied landscape of Maesbempder Greend, with extraordinarily rich herb beds.

**5 Oud-Rekem** was awarded the title of most beautiful village of Flanders in 2008 by Tourism Flanders, thanks to its authentic village centre. Central to it is the Groenplaats and Sint-Pieters Church. From here, winding streets take you to picturesque historical buildings. The castle of d’Aspremont-Lynden is a monument in the Renaissance style of the Maas region.



Pretty Oud-Rekem is one of the gateways to the RivierPark Maasvallei

Outside the lovely village lies Hochterbampd, the most southern nature area in the RivierPark Maasvallei. It’s a rare spot along the Border Maas where a forest has grown.

► [www.rtkm.be/nl/maasvallei](http://www.rtkm.be/nl/maasvallei)



# Peeters visits Malawi and Botswana

## Flemish government provides €25 million for agricultural development

Alan Hope

Development and diamonds were on the agenda of Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters during a week-long visit last week to southern Africa. The first port of call was Malawi, where Peeters was met by president Joyce Banda, who visited Brussels last October at Peeters' invitation. Peeters signed a memorandum of understanding between the governments of Flanders and Malawi, including a pledge for funding worth €25 million in support of Malawi's agriculture over the next five years. "We believe that president Joyce Banda is making the right decisions, and we have agreed that this money should be used in agriculture, which is the top priority area in our agreement," Peeters told

the country's *Daily Times*.

Peeters also opened the Lisasadzi Centre for Agricultural Training in Kasungu, renovated with financial support from the Flemish government. He also took part in a seminar on the implementation and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, organised by the UN Commissioner for human rights with aid from the Flemish and Norwegian governments. Following his visit to Malawi, Peeters went on to Botswana for talks with president Ian Khama and senior ministers. Contacts between the two governments centre around the diamond trade: whereas Antwerp is the world's major trading centre, Botswana is the leading producer of rough diamonds.



Kris Peeters opens the Lisasadzi Centre in Kasungu, together with Malawi's agricultural minister Peter Mwanza (centre)

## Smet produces more cash for schools

The government of Flanders has announced an unexpected injection of €46.4 million for schools in 2013. The news was announced to the Flemish parliament last week by education minister Pascal Smet. The total is divided in two: half for new capacity and half for existing waiting lists. Of the €23.2 million for capacity, Antwerp receives €9.3 million, Vilvoorde and Mechelen €5 million each, Roeselare €2.8 million and Ghent €1.1 million. The

additional funds bring the total in 2013 for new capacity to €62.3 million.

"With this extra money ... we will be able to keep the promises we made," said Smet. "Not only will we be able to solve the most pressing problems of capacity, we will also be able to make progress with regular school construction."

In the opposition, Groen's Elisabeth Meuleman said that the money the government had managed to

"scrape together" was not enough to tackle the structural problems education faces, including the lack of decent new school buildings. Brussels alone needs 30 new Dutch-language schools at an estimated cost of €1.5 billion.

The government also approved €2.9 million last week for more crèche places. The money includes €2 million for 192 new places in the subsidised sector and €900,000 for an estimated 205 places in the

private sector that will be open to people with low incomes. An additional €500,000 is set aside for integrating children with special care needs into facilities. "Everyone is welcome in pre-school, including children with special needs," said welfare minister Jo Vandeuren said. "Just like every other child, they want to play with their friends and discover new things."

## Kind & Gezin will track baby weight

The Flemish family organisation Kind & Gezin is launching a programme in the autumn aimed at tracking overweight babies and toddlers. The organisation, which handles post-natal care in Flanders, will begin measuring the ratio of a baby's length (height) to weight from birth. The organisation aims to detect problems with weight earlier, in the hope of preventing health problems in later life such as diabetes and heart disease. Meanwhile, researchers at the University of Ghent are looking for 300 children between seven and 13 to take part in a study on eating habits within the family. Like the Kind & Gezin programme, the research is aimed at tackling the growing trend of obesity among children. The teenage years are crucial in the formation of food preferences that last into adult life, explained researcher Isabelle Sioen. "However it is not yet clear how this process works exactly and what role education and social experiences, at school and elsewhere, might play."

Volunteers can call 0471 99 44 75 or email ifamily\_forces@ugent.be.



## Families miss out on education allowance

Thousands of families will have to go without education allowance for their children this year, after their applications were sent in too late. The Flemish ombudsman Bart Weekers called on the government to pay out to even those who were late. Parents have complained that the deadline was changed from the end to the beginning of June. Almost 3,000 families missed the deadline.

The government pays out education allowances in fixed sums of €87 a year for pre-school children; between €98 and €147 a year for children in primary school; a minimum of €650 for secondary school students, rising to as much as €2,929 for students in boarding schools; and widely varying sums for students in higher education. The allowances depend on the incomes of parents and guardians. Education minister Pascal Smet rejected calls for the late applicants to be paid, pointing out that the changes to the deadline were widely publicised and that parents who delayed in applying were contacted with a warning. From 2013-2014, in any case, the allowance will be paid automatically to families that received one the previous year.

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

## Bert is back

Few people can imagine what it is like to be Bart De Wever, Flanders' most popular politician, but one man can: Bert Anciaux, who once was in the same position.

Until the turn of the century, both politicians belonged to the same party, the Volksunie. Anciaux's personal popularity made this relatively small party a success, but, combined with his progressive ideas, it also meant the end of it. N-VA, De Wever's party, started off as the "anti-Anciaux" party, while Anciaux himself created Spirit, which later became part of the socialist SPA.

In the 1990s, Anciaux was a unique politician, not so much because of his views, but rather because of the way he expressed them. He introduced emotion into politics. He never shied away from outright indignation, or even tears.

Many abhorred this – to some he will always be known as "the crier" – but many others saw in him a huggable teddy bear, a celebrity more than a politician. To this day, the public knows his wife – "ons (our) Damienne" – and every one of his four children by name. And Anciaux himself is one of those rare politicians who is known by his first name only.

Behind the scenes, "Bert" was as shrewd as any other politician. As minister for culture in the Flemish government, he had a knack for finding new funds, especially after the Volksunie split up and all parties set their eyes on him. In the end, he opted for the socialists, to the disappointment of associates such as Vincent Van Quickenborne, who moved on to Open VLD.

As this eventful era ended, so did Anciaux's popularity. In 2009, he failed to get elected to the European Parliament. In Brussels, his home town, the French-speaking socialists refused him as a candidate because of his nationalist background. Anciaux, so it seemed, was over and done with.

Last week, though, Bert, a senator by now, was back. This time, popularity is not what he seeks. On the contrary, Bert Anciaux now pleads for a more humane treatment of "internees" (detainees with a mental illness), hardly a topic that will win him many hearts. Popularity he now leaves to Bart De Wever (who is sometimes called "Bert 2.0"). Indeed, in spite of all their differences, Bert and Bart have a lot in common, not least the fact that they are both driven by emotion.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€60,000

cost of transporting documents by military aircraft to the king while he was on holiday in 2012. Transport costs and security for the monarch's 140 days of vacation amounted to €182,000

5

eggs being brooded by a pair of peregrine falcons nesting in the towers of the St Michael and St Gudule cathedral in Brussels. The eggs, surveyed by webcam, are expected to hatch this week.

€104.81

average price for a night in a Brussels hotel, lower than the average of €130.80, according to a Survey of 19 major European cities by accountants PwC. Paris headed the list at €267.11

394,981

second-hand cars bought in 2011 in Flanders, according to figures from environment minister Joke Schauvliege – an increase of 12% on the previous year

101

hours a year lost in delays by anyone who lives 30 minutes from Brussels and commutes daily at peak hours, according to a survey by GPS manufacturers TomTom.

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



# Don't fear the dentist

New Gentle Dental centre offers treatment under general anaesthetic to phobics

Alan Hope

**A**dental treatment designed to help dental phobics could provide the answer for expats unhappy with the lack of treatments under general anaesthetic (GA) in Flanders. That's according to Andreas Kaiser of the Gentle Dental Office, a Swiss-based company with clinics in Germany, France, the UK and elsewhere, and now Brussels.

The treatment is called Three Appointment Therapy and was developed by Dr Michael Leu (pictured with patient), based on an accidental finding. "He was working on the treatment of severely handicapped patients, and he found that when he omitted local anaesthetics, patients suffered less from pain and swelling, even if he had to carry out extensive treatments," Kaiser explains. "The reason was because he was only using GA, which was the only way to work with disabled patients. As he started seeing more and more patients, he refined the therapy to what is now the Three Appointment Therapy."

In 1997 Leu set up the German Association for Dental Phobia, a condition that affects between 10 and 16% of people. Of course everyone, to some extent, experiences anxiety or even fear at the prospect of a dental appointment. But dental phobia is on another level.

"The phobic reaction is what distinguishes someone who's simply afraid of the dentist from someone

© Courtesy Gentle Dental



who has a dental phobia," Kaiser says. "That reaction cannot be controlled: sweating, trembling, nausea at the mere thought of the dentist. The dental phobic could never actually enter a dental clinic. Someone who's afraid, even quite severely, might still be able to go to the dentist, but the phobic could never do so."

## Rate your phobia

The consequences can be serious: Poor dental care can lead to oral and nutritional problems, and the resulting damage to teeth can be a cause of social and economic

difficulties in the long run. But how do you find out if you're phobic, and not just scared of the dentist to a "normal" degree?

"We have a questionnaire on our website, the internationally recognised Hierarchical Anxiety Questionnaire, which anyone can fill out," Kaiser says. "If your score on that test exceeds 38 points, you are suffering from dental phobia. Some of our patients with an extreme dental phobia show 50 to 55 points, which is the absolute maximum."

The treatment consists of three appointments: the first to determine a treatment plan; the second

during which the entire treatment is carried out in one go under GA; and a third for the placement of permanent prostheses if required. The use of GA is no longer common in Belgium, Kaiser explains, because of the way procedures used to be carried out.

"In the past, many dentists carried out procedures under GA by themselves. The dentist put the patient under GA, then went ahead with the treatment. There was no way to monitor the patient properly, and this is why many accidents happened. We always have an anaesthetist on-site as well as an

assistant – so two people for the GA alone – and then we have a dentist and dental assistant. So that's four people exclusively for one patient. If these precautions are taken, it is absolutely safe to treat a patient under GA."

## Cost-benefit

The availability of GA treatment is welcome news to German and Swiss expats, Kaiser says, who are more accustomed to the procedure and may not want to travel home to find it. And it may be safe, but surely it has to be more expensive?

"It depends," says Kaiser. "What we offer is dental treatment all in one, so the patient doesn't need to visit the office multiple times as they might have to otherwise. Our treatment might cost upwards of €7,000 to €10,000 for dental replacement. The anaesthesia alone costs about €1,000 to €2,500. Of course you don't have those costs if you're not being treated under GA." However, the fact that the entire course of treatment is finished within the space of three appointments brings savings of its own, he argues, not least in the time spent away from work. "We have more and more patients who are not phobic - business people, athletes and so on - who cannot take too much time off work. Well, they come to us and they get the same treatment as dental phobics."

► [www.gentledentaloffice.com](http://www.gentledentaloffice.com)

# Clean victory

Ghent's laundrette-cum-bar-cum-hair salon takes home Topstarters award

Daan Bauwens

**I**n nine episodes broadcast over the past six months, the één series *Topstarters* followed the daily life of young Flemish entrepreneurs after the launch of their first start-up. The show was at the same time a serious competition where three of Flanders' most successful managers judged the starters' managerial skills and each week decided who would stay and who had to go.

In the thrilling last episode, a jury of 200 entrepreneurs decided that Dries Henau and Yuri Vandenbogaerde, the couple that started Ghent's revolutionary Wasbar, would take home the top prize of €25,000. Wasbar – a place where you can do your laundry while having a beer with friends at the same time they're having their hair done – was chosen over Minne Warmenbol, a 28-year-old from Antwerp making multifunctional

furniture designed to stimulate children's creativity.

"It's impossible to say why the jury chose us over Minne," says Henau, "but our potential for growth, the fact that our model is easily exportable to other countries, these are our main assets." Given that they only opened Wasbar in October, the endorsement by a jury of experienced entrepreneurs means a lot to them.

"Our concept was brand new," says Henau, "and when we told friends what we were planning to do, lots of them told us we were half crazy, that it was never going to work. But we went with it. This is a beautiful confirmation that we were right about it from the start and that it was not just a crazy idea."

Meanwhile, Wasbar is taking off, in Flanders and internationally. While a second Wasbar is about to open in Antwerp, the concept



Ghent entrepreneurs Dries Henau(left) and Yuri Vandenbogaerde toast Wasbar's win

is becoming known all around the world. "It's alive," says Henau. "We've been featured numerous times on international blogs and design and architecture websites all around the world. Lots of people have heard about us, and some of them are now reaching out to us. Today we are meeting with someone who wants to open a Wasbar in Geneva. There are requests from London and Utrecht, even from Sao Paolo."

With the €25,000 prize, Henau and Vandenbogaerde want to recruit a full-time employee. "We decided that the day after winning the prize," Henau says. "It gives us the opportunity to invest time in our own growth. When you're working behind the bar every day, there's no time left for that."

► [www.wasbar.com](http://www.wasbar.com)



THE WEEK  
IN BUSINESS

## Autos ▶ Tesla

Tesla, the American manufacturer of electric cars, is to open a showroom in Belgium within the coming year, probably in Brussels. A Belgian subsidiary, Tesla Motors Belgium, was recently set up in Wavre in Wallonia.

## Hotels

## ▶ CTF Development

Investment company CTF Development, owned by the Cheng family from Hong Kong, has taken over five hotels from Brussels-based BRE/Europe Belgium Hotel Holding for an undisclosed sum. The hotels – Mercure Brussels Center Louise, Alliance Hotel Brussels Airport, Alliance Hotel Brussels Expo, Mercure Leuven Center and Mercure Liège Centre – will be renovated and re-opened as Pentahotels.

## Logistics

## ▶ Port of Antwerp

The Port of Antwerp will develop closer co-operation with the province of Sao Paulo, the port announced following talks last week in Brazil as part of a federal economic mission. Sao Paulo includes two of the country's major ports, Santos and Sao Sebastiao, while Antwerp is market leader on the South America-Europe route.

## Media ▶ Yelo TV

One month after its launch, 380,000 users have signed up to the Yelo TV app from Telenet, the company said. The app for smartphone, tablet and computer allows users to watch live and recorded programmes on other "second screen" devices. On 18 April a TV-based app will roll out to 41 municipalities in Flanders.

▶ [www.telenet.be/yelotv/gemeentes](http://www.telenet.be/yelotv/gemeentes)

## Retail ▶ Club

The books and stationery retail chain is to cut 53 jobs from its workforce of 314 as part of a new restructuring package, Marc Huybrechts, CEO of parent company Distriplus, has confirmed. However the job losses could be less serious if unions agree to be flexible during talks, he said. Club closed branches in Anderlecht, Aalst and Roeselare in recent months and may be eyeing another five smaller stores for closure, *Trends* magazine reported.

## Transport ▶ Infrabel

Rail infrastructure authority Infrabel invested €1.2 billion last year in the rail network, the company reported. Almost half – €513 million – went towards extending capacity on a new Schaarbeek-Mechelen line, the Diabolo connection to Brussels Airport and the Regional Express network around the capital.

# Hundreds of local names in Offshore Leaks

## Antwerp diamond dealers "among most prominent" users of tax havens

Alan Hope

The Belgian tax authorities will investigate the cases of any nationals named in the so-called Offshore Leaks – a major journalistic investigation of leaked files dealing with offshore companies and tax havens. Last week an international consortium of 86 magazines and newspapers, including Belgium's *Le Soir*, revealed some of the names of approximately 130,000 wealthy individuals and companies accused of using offshore corporations to avoid up to €25 trillion in tax in their 170 respective countries.

No specific names were revealed by *Le Soir* journalist Alain Lallemand, but there were "hundreds" of Belgians involved, he said. He has been in touch with some of those whose names appear in the documents, and they have admitted involvement. "I think Antwerp diamond traders are among the most prominent names," on the list, he said.

Belgium has a shield law protecting journalists' sources, so the Offshore documents are only being handed over to authorities voluntarily.



Much of the data from the Offshore Leaks came from accounts in the tax havens of the Caribbean

According to Kristof Spagnoli of the law office Eubelius, the fact that the data have been manipulated by the journalists handling the documents could make them useless if it came to a prosecution.

### No place to hide

John Crombez, the secretary of state in charge of combatting fraud, said he was pleased at the investigation, as it showed that tax evaders had fewer and fewer places left to hide.

If the newspaper decides not to pass details on to the authorities, he said, the special investigations unit would begin its own enquiry.

The Offshore data came to light when a computer hard drive was anonymously delivered to a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. That member split the 2.5 million pages of documentation among the organisation's worldwide members in an investigation that has lasted more than a year.

Federal opposition party Groen seized the opportunity to criticise the government's policy of offering tax amnesty to those who declare and pay taxes on funds previously kept in offshore accounts, without prosecution. The latest of these amnesty periods expires in 2014. The system, Groen member Meyrem Almaci said, is "counter-productive and fundamentally unfair for the ordinary people who ... pay their taxes. More inspectors able to apply tougher sanctions could raise millions for the country."

## Unizo launches quality label for handmade goods

A new quality label for handmade goods in the crafts industries was launched last week by Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed. The Handmade in Belgium (HIB) label was awarded to five small businesses, one from each province.

The five initial HIB ambassadors are bicycle manufacturer Achielle from Pittem, West Flanders; bespoke tailor Aravinda Rodenburg from Ghent, who spends an average of 52 hours making one suit by hand; Atelier Deville in Rotselaar, Flemish Brabant, which makes hand-crafted bags and accessories; Rondou butcher's in Leuven; and Atelier Schrauwen, woodworkers from Loenhout, Antwerp province.

"These days consumers can't always be sure of what they're buying," commented Unizo director-general Karel Van Eetvelt. "Consumers are more than ever on the lookout for original products and want some guarantee of authenticity – and that's what they'll find with the crafts entrepreneurs under the HIB label."



## Brussels road congestion "untenable"

The current mobility situation in and around Brussels is "untenable", according to the Halle-Vilvoorde branch of Voka. The organisation was reacting to news that GPS manufacturers TomTom had named the capital as the worst place in Belgium for traffic delays. Despite records showing that the situation gets worse year after year, Voka said, policymakers have failed to act. The planned extension of the Brussels Ring is "essential" to solving the problem, Voka said – although the plan is hotly contested.

"It's high time the environmental impact report on the northern Ring was completed, and the Flemish government made the budget available for the changes needed and for the realisation of the Brabantnet tram network," said Paul Hegge, director-

general of Voka Halle-Vilvoorde.

Flemish transport minister Hilde Crevits is due in the next few weeks to announce a decision on the possible broadening of the Ring in the north of Brussels to as many as 17 lanes in places, which, according to Greenpeace, would increase carbon dioxide emissions by 10%. The plans are also opposed by the Brussels-Capital Region.

The Brabantnet tram network would consist of four new lines linking the capital with Heist-op-den-Berg, Ninove, Boom, Tervuren, Grimbergen, Vilvoorde and Zaventem.

"The solution lies in a sustainable combination of all modes of transport," Hegge said. "There is also a need for better public transport, cycle lanes into Brussels and an effective regional express network."

## Seven years' worth of parking fines illegal

The federal government could be facing a bill for millions of euros, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court last week declaring parking fines levied between 2003 and 2010 illegal.

In 2003, a law came into force granting municipalities the power to hand out fines in zones where the blue parking disc is applicable. According to Michel Maus, professor of financial law at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), the granting of that power might have been the responsibility of the regional rather than the federal government. In 2010, the regions introduced a measure to correct the error, but it was not retroactive: Therefore all fines between the first measure and the second were imposed illegally.

The bill could run into the millions, Maus told *De Standaard*. "Anyone who wants to get his money back will have to sue. The question is whether many people will be prepared to go to court over €12.50 or €20."

## The high-speed trains are now arriving...

Following the catastrophic introduction and withdrawal of the Fyra high-speed rail link between Amsterdam and Paris, two new services have announced their intention to move in on the same line.

Dutch travel accessories company Travelteq plans to introduce Travelteq Express in 2015, which will run five high-speed services a day each way between Amsterdam and Paris, with stops in Schiphol, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Brussels. The service will compete with Thalys, currently the only service to use the high-speed line.

"There's enough room on the line for our extra trains," commented Travelteq's Maarten van den Biggelaar. The company will lease rolling stock and pay a fee for use of the line but is convinced it can still offer a competitive price.

Meanwhile, Arriva, a subsidiary of the German rail authority Deutsche Bahn, plans to introduce an Amsterdam-Brussels service "as soon as possible", director Anne Hettinga said. Arriva currently operates train and bus services in several countries, including the UK and the Netherlands.





# Everyone’s a scientist

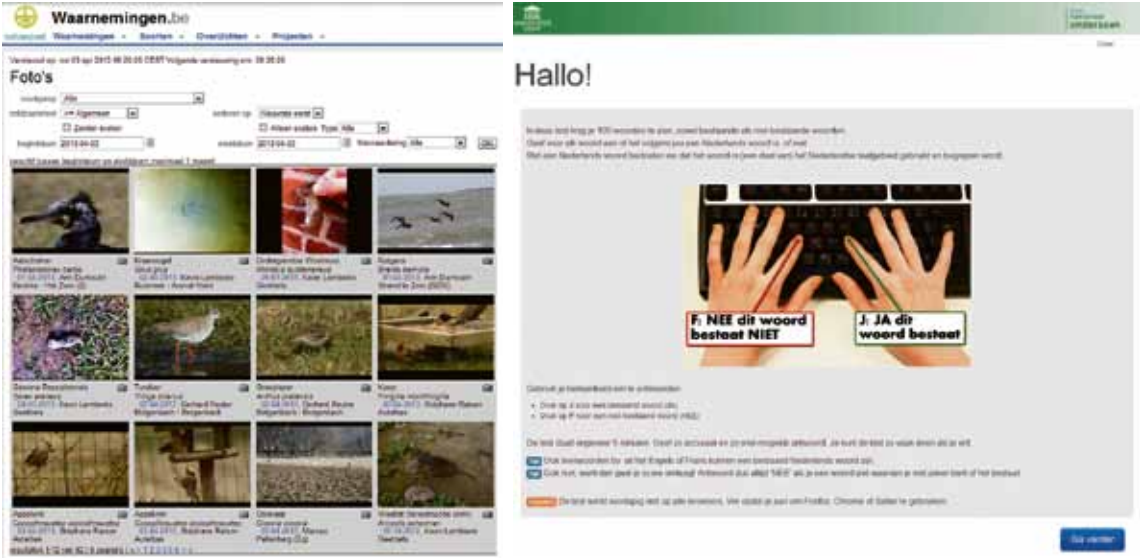
Public participation via the internet is shining new light on research in Flanders

Toon Lambrechts

Is science something nerdy and boring, only practised by specialists producing research that nobody else will ever understand? No way. These days, thanks in large part to the internet, science can be fun, like a game in which everyone can participate. If you have five minutes spare, take a look at the Woordentest, or Words Test, a language game designed by researchers at Ghent University. The concept is simple: You’re shown word after word and asked whether it’s a real Dutch word or not. If you’re not happy with your score, just play again. There are 75,000 test words available. The test is more than a game; it’s a study set up by language researchers from UGent and the Dutch public broadcasters VPRO and NTR. The aim is to find out how many words are known in Flanders and the Netherlands and whether there are differences between the regions. Previously such a study would have been quite a task: telephone surveys, collecting questionnaires, entering data ... Through an online game, a lot of potential research subjects can be reached with very little effort. After all, we’ve all wasted our time with silly online games at some point.

**A growing discipline**

The Woordentest is just one example of a trend called “citizen science”. The name covers a diverse set of projects through which the public is invited to participate in scientific research. Often participants work on the collection or analysis of data, and they sometimes take part in more conceptual tasks.



Woordentest and Waarnemingen are all using citizen power to advance scientific research

Most of the time, research is given a playful twist. Citizen science is still in its infancy in the Flemish universities. There are a handful of other projects aside from the Woordentest, for example in the fields of geology, seismology and astronomy, but usually they remain limited to data collection. There are more possibilities, however, as proven by examples like Britain’s Galaxy Zoo, in which visitors to the website are invited to help with the classification of images from space telescopes. Galaxy Zoo got a lot of press when one of their volunteers, Dutch teacher Hanny van Arkel, discovered a new nebula that was then named after her: Hanny’s Object.

**Competitive streak**

There’s also Foldit, a kind of 3D-puzzle

game developed by the University of Washington in the US. The puzzles represent protein structures, which can take an enormous range of shapes. The aim of all the puzzling is to discover the optimal form of a certain structure. As proteins are essentially what build us, the possibilities of new structures can be quite exciting. For example, one of the proteins that has been constructed recently could play an important role in the treatment of HIV. Foldit brings together all the necessary elements for a successful citizen science project: Scientific knowledge is not required, it is offered to the public as a challenge and, most importantly, it has a competitive element to it. Universities and research institutions are not the only ones counting on the public for a helping hand. In Flanders,

the website [www.waarnemingen.be](http://www.waarnemingen.be) is a popular example. Nature enthusiasts can post the types of animals they have seen. This body of data provides a lot of information on biodiversity in Flanders, including invasive species and the effects of climate change. The possibilities of the internet are bringing science and the public closer together. Of course not every research project is suitable for public participation. But for scientists, the points of view of the public can be very interesting, and for the public, an insight into how research is done can be very enlightening. And you can fill up some down time online without feeling guilty by gaming for the good of the world.

► <http://woordentest.ugent.be>  
[www.waarnemingen.be](http://www.waarnemingen.be)

## KUL launches scholarship for West African women

To provide young women in the West African region with the education necessary for a decision-making position in their countries, the University of Leuven (KUL) has joined forces with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee. The

Leymah Gbowee Scholarship Fund for Leadership for African Women finances Bachelor degrees in the home region of qualified women, followed by a Master’s programme at KU Leuven. The Gbowee Peace Foundation

Africa will pre-select programme participants from conflict-ridden areas in West Africa such as Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone. “If you empower a girl, you empower a whole community,” said Gbowee at the inauguration of the fund. A

Liberian peace activist, Gbowee led the women’s movement that helped to end the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003 and has since devoted herself to the social reconstruction of Liberia. **Andy Furniere**

## Q&A

Christophe De Mey is a taxidermist at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels

**How did you become a taxidermist?**

I studied biology and found a job at the museum as a technical assistant: My job was to put animals in large jars with formaldehyde. A couple of years ago, the museum was closed for the renovation of the dinosaur hall. During that time, Godelieve De Wulf, the museum’s taxidermist, asked me to help her reorganise the collection of stuffed animals – by cleaning and restoring the artefacts. I learned the job from her. Now she’s retired, and I succeeded her as the museum’s taxidermist.

**Do you have many colleagues in Belgium?**

Fewer than 20. Until she retired, Godelieve and I were the only



two professional taxidermists in Belgium. Of course, there are some amateurs who make hunting trophies from the animals they’ve shot. But because of animal protection legislation, these

practices are rapidly disappearing. There’s no official education to become a taxidermist in Belgium; we learn it from each other.

**Where do the museum’s stuffed animals come from?**

The museum has a large historical collection, which also consists of animals that were shot in the wild in the past. These days, we receive dead animals from the zoos in Belgium, mainly from Antwerp, and from private donors who found them dead on the road. After they’ve died, they are transported to Brussels in big freezers.

**Do you have a preference for certain animals?**

Birds are my speciality. It’s real

precision work. Compared with mammals, you have to work more carefully because the skin can rip very easily. A pigeon, for example, is a very difficult animal to stuff.

**Has your profession evolved? Do you use modern techniques?**

I myself like the old method of using straw, iron wire and flax to fill up the animal’s skin. Many taxidermists these days leave the intestines inside the dead animal. They just strip off the skin and put it on a so-called “body”, a plastic moulding that you can order from specialised companies. But these “bodies” are quite expensive. That’s another reason why I prefer the traditional method. **Interview by Senne Starckx**

## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Brussels’ Royal Museum of Natural Sciences is **reassembling the 3.5-million-year-old skeleton** of an extinct predecessor of the bowhead whale, also known as the Greenland whale. The fossilised bones were found at a construction site at the Deurganck dock in the port of Antwerp. The lower jawbones are three metres long, and palaeontologists from the museum estimate that the whale must have been about 10m long.

The Research Foundation Flanders has extended its **bilateral research co-operation with the Canadian province of Quebec**. For four years, Flemish research groups have been collaborating with Canadian colleagues on climate change, organic chemistry and molecular genetics. The signing of the renewed agreement – attended by minister-president Kris Peeters in Montreal – ensures that the projects that have been initiated can be completed.

There are four official candidates for the upcoming **rector election at the University of Leuven (KUL)**. Professors Tine Daelmans, Bart De Moor, Karen Maex and Rik Torfs have announced their candidacy to succeed of rector Mark Waer. All KUL academic and non-academic personnel, plus student representatives, may vote. The first ballot will be held on 13 May, with a maximum of three ballots. Torfs, who recently left politics, will have to perform better than in 2006, when he couldn’t secure the votes of the student representatives and narrowly lost in the final round against Marc Vervenne.

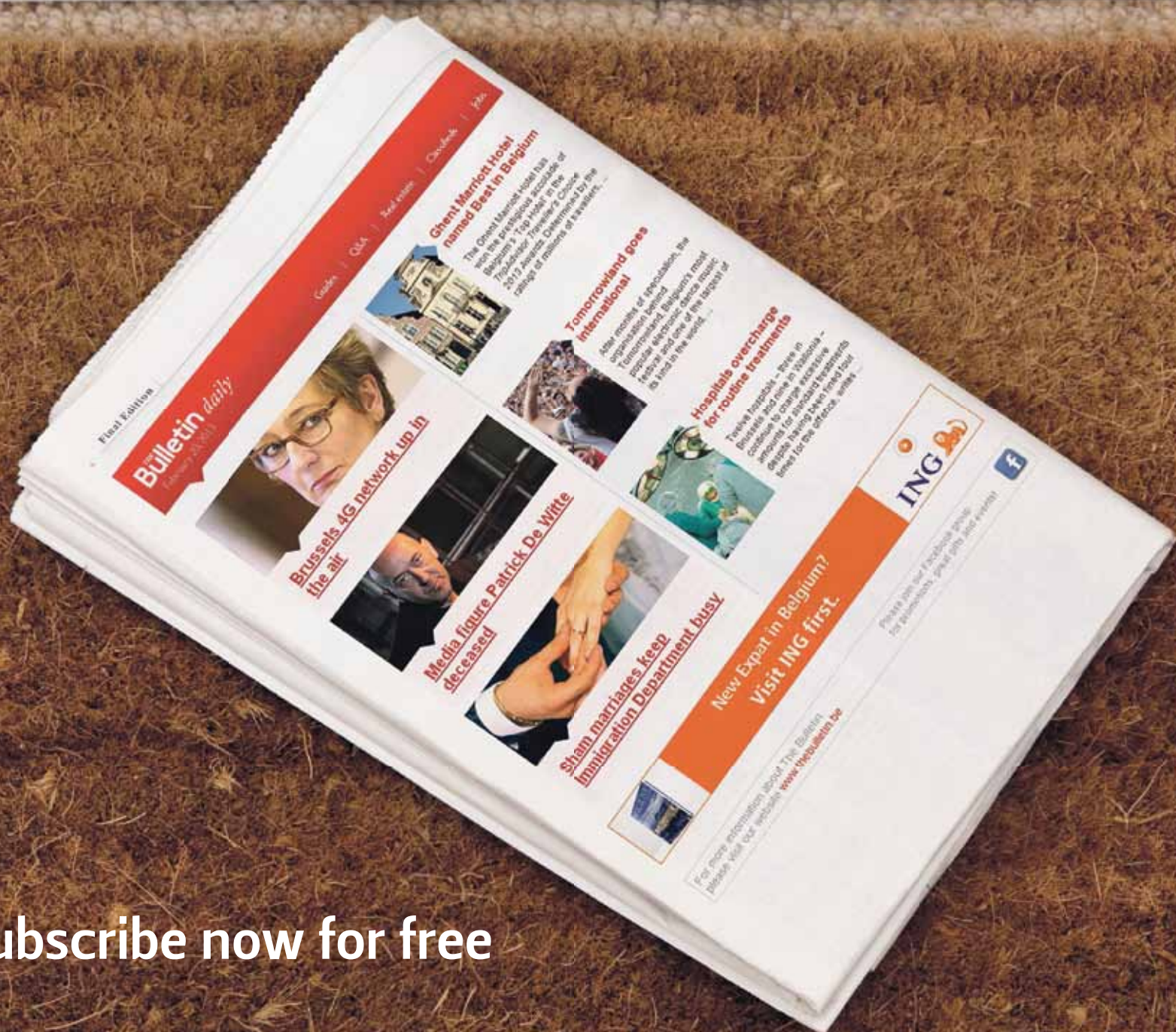
An international consortium including scientists from the University of Leuven (KUL) and the Flemish Institute of Biotechnology (VIB) has identified more than 80 regions in our DNA that **increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer**. The group compared the DNA of 200,000 people and identified 49 single mutations for breast cancer, 26 for prostate cancer and nine for ovarian cancer. VIB’s Diether Lambrechts said: “Understanding why some people have a greater risk than others is very important. It opens up perspectives to reduce their risks or to attack the disease at the earliest stage.”

Robert Voorhamme, former alderman of education of the city of Antwerp, has been **appointed president of the Antwerp University Association**. Starting on 1 October, Voorhamme will succeed Alain Verschoren. The association is the umbrella organisation of the University of Antwerp and several secondary schools in the city, including the Antwerp Maritime Academy. **Senne Starckx**



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# All creatures cute and cruel

## Baby animals introduce children to the laws of the jungle at the Natural Sciences Museum

Senne Starckx

Kids can meet their animal peers in a new exhibition at Brussels' Museum of Natural Sciences. Most of the baby animals on show are, as you might imagine, cuddly and cute. But there's also the ugly duckling and the mother hamster who eats her own offspring. Entering the exhibition hall, you get the feeling you've stepped into a daycare centre. Kids are everywhere: playing with weird foam toys, obsessively tapping on touch screens and squeezing themselves inside and around structures you'd expect to find in a playground. It's the museum world turned upside-down.

"For once, these kids don't have to be quiet so their parents can enjoy a peaceful visit to the museum," explains Yannick Siebens, the museum's press officer. "Now it's the parents who have to adapt, reading out loud information labels, explaining to their kids what kind of animal they are stroking, or even carrying giant toad eggs on their backs."

*Baby Animals* is aimed at children aged three to eight, who follow a learn-and-do track that takes in 75 species. Some of them look exactly like a miniature version of their parents, while others don't look like the adults at all.

The best example of the former is the baby chameleon, which looks just like a shrunk adult chameleon, or the baby giraffe, which already has a long neck. The second group is represented by toads, which start their life as tadpoles, and by butterflies, which undergo a total transformation of their inner and outer body.

### Growing pains

The main theme of this exhibition holds for any newborn creature on this planet, including the young visitors: I was born, and I have to learn to be independent. The exhibition track ends when the



A frog's life: Recreate the daily tribulations of the father toad, who's responsible for carrying the eggs



Children are encouraged to touch the real, stuffed baby animals

animals can fend for themselves as young grown-ups.

The baby animals are in fact real, many of them stuffed especially for this exhibition. "These animals come from our collection or from the Museum of Natural History in Toulouse, our partner institution," says Siebens. "They were shot in the wild many years ago – when this was still allowed – or they died in a zoo."

Visitors are encouraged to touch all the animals, to discover how weird the fur of a baby polar bear feels or how leathery the skin of a baby elephant. The exhibition is packed full of interactivity: Children crawl like snails inside a tube and experience how different types of soil makes it easier or harder to progress. Or they try to make the

softest nest possible out of a range of foam and plastic elements. Or they load their dad's back with eggs – in a toad's household the males are responsible for carrying and hatching the eggs.

### Decisions, decisions

On several screens, children can learn what it means when their peers from the animal kingdom make a mistake. Sea turtles, for example, live underwater, but the females lay their eggs on the beach. When they come out, the baby turtles rush across the sand to the sea – an easy target for seabirds hovering above. By touching buttons, children can choose the sudden-death scenario (crawl to the sea) or the intelligent and safe option (dig a tunnel). If they choose incorrectly, they witness one

of the basic laws of nature: Most baby animals don't reach adulthood. To pinpoint that fundamental truth, *Baby Animals* also shows a film of a hamster that eats her own offspring, because she's unable to feed them all. Many parents might find that inappropriate, "but the children don't seem to mind," says Siebens. They also don't mind that not every baby animal is cute or has a fluffy coat. "Obviously, children feel at

ease with cute animals, but they also appreciate baby or adult animals that are not the prettiest nor the friendliest," says Siebens. "It's all about fascination. A large crocodile trying to pull a baby elephant into the water, foxes capturing birds, a mother hamster eating her babies ... It's definitely not just about being cute: A young peregrine falcon or a naked gorilla baby are not the prettiest animals."

## UNTIL MARCH 2014

### Museum of Natural Sciences

Vautierstraat 29, Brussels

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

## STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

Alan Hope

### Mattentaart from Geraardsbergen

Everything on the list of recognised *streekproducten*, or Flemish regional products, has some history attached, but not many have attracted the attention of the highest instances of Europe, from the Austrian empire to the EU. But such is the *mattentaart* from Geraardsbergen in East Flanders. Geraardsbergen can date its city status back to the 11th century, and its long history often revolves around food. When Walter IV of Enghien held the city under siege in 1381, the inhabitants chucked food over the walls to mock the enemy by showing that they had plenty (they nevertheless were defeated and the city sacked).

Fast forward 500 years to 2009, when Guido De Padt, a native of the city and then government minister, caused uproar by drinking, as is the tradition on the day that marks the siege, a

chalice containing live fish. "I've been doing it now for more than 20 years, and I see no reason why I shouldn't go on doing it," an unapologetic De Padt told VRT news. But we digress.

The word *matten* or *matton* dates back to the 13th century and refers to the curds produced when raw milk is cooked, mixed with buttermilk and allowed to split. So in fact it's a very young cheese, like the Italian ricotta. Traditionally, the whey was then fed to the animals and the *matten* chopped up and mixed with egg yolks and sugar. That, inside a puff-pastry case, is all that the *mattentaart* requires.

The pastry is buttery, and the curds slightly sour; the best versions are sweetened, but not by much. They are rather rich and made fairly large – eight to 10 centimetres around and four to five high. In my view, that's slightly too



much; it's not the most exciting pastry in the world, local anecdotes aside.

The cakes crop up in the 17th century, in the records of the Hospital of Our Lady in Geraardsbergen. The city's bakers were concerned that their standards were being

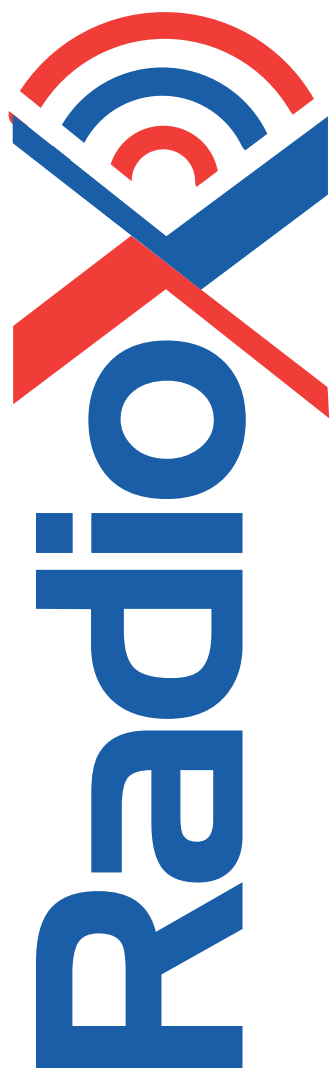
undermined by inferior products from elsewhere and drew up a set of quality criteria, which were given the force of law in 1752 by the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa herself.

The Flemish recognition, meanwhile, was given the force of law after the European Commission in 2006 awarded the cake Protected Geographical Indication, which means that, despite every bakery in the region serving up its own version, only those made in Geraardsbergen (and the neighbouring municipality of Lierde) can call them *mattentaart*. (Though most bakeries flout this law.)

The honour of this delicacy is defended by the Brotherhood of the Geraardsbergen Mattentaart, created in 1978.

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





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# Old is new again

Two film festivals merge to make Mooov and have put down roots in cities across Flanders

Lisa Bradshaw

It's a blessed event: The marriage between Opendoek Film Festival in Turnhout and Cinema Novo in Bruges has resulted in little world film festivals sprouting up across the region. This year you'll find their programme of cinema from five continents in seven Flemish cities, including Sint-Niklaas, Lier and Genk.

It's in keeping with the mission and philosophy of Mooov, which is that world cinema should be accessible to everyone, not just those living in the art cities. "We don't want to be a festival that is like a marketing mechanism for a city," says Mooov director Marc Boonen. "We're located in four provinces now, but not in the cities that have their own festivals. Next year we will also be present in Flemish Brabant."

In order to share work and precious resources, the two world film festivals merged, and this year sees the first edition under the new name. An odd-looking name, one must admit.

"There are three 'o's because the word 'move' has three meanings for us," explains Boonen. The first refers to the sound of the word in "movies". The second is for the movement of filmmakers, "who come here from across the world with their work. They are, in a way, moving society".

The third is for you and me. "Films move us to think about them and about the world," says Boonen. So all three parties – the directors, the movies and the audience – are incorporated into the title.

## Comrade Kim

A majority of the films at Mooov this year come from the Middle East and Asia, the first intentionally and the other because of the current situation in cinema. Uprisings and the deposing of leaders in the Arab world have not only sparked creativity among filmmakers, they have stirred up interest in the outside world about the environments that bred these mass revolts. "Sometimes



Don't miss at Mooov: *Traumland*, Flemish director Daniel Lambo's new mid-length film about an unlikely friendship (top); Dutch-Turkish musician Karsu Dönmez; *Pietà*, Venice's Golden Lion winner

feature films tell us more than we can see in newspapers," says Boonen. "They tell the stories behind the big events, about the people who live there."

In terms of the far east, less of its cinema is getting released in Belgium lately. "Latin America is more in right now, maybe because the narrative is more like we're used to seeing in Europe," notes Boonen. "Asian films might be seen as too slow or existentialist."

*Comrade Kim Goes Flying* is certainly an antidote for all that. An unlikely alliance

between a British, Flemish and North Korean filmmaker, it's a romantic comedy about a plucky young mine worker (Han Jong-Sim) who goes to the capital Pyongyang to seek her fortune in a (state-sponsored) acrobatic troupe. Not a lot of films come out of North Korea, which strictly controls the industry, releasing thinly veiled propaganda mostly within its own borders. *Comrade Kim*, though, is winning even the hardest critics' hearts as a kind of nostalgic throwback to former decades of cinema when simple,

decent characters got ahead through naive determination and natural charm. You call it propaganda, we call it old Hollywood.

South Korea, in contrast, is the darling of the art house circuit, producing much excellent, probing cinema over the last several years. Among the offerings at Mooov is *Pietà* by Kim Ki-duk (*Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter ... and Spring*), a disturbing study of the manipulation of a long-absent mother by her son, a thuggish loan collector. *Pietà* won the Golden Lion at Venice this year.

Along the Arab Spring theme, meanwhile, is *Wadjda*, which carries the distinction of being the first film from Saudi Arabia made by a woman. And Haifaa Al-Mansour is making the most of the message in the story about a 10-year-old girl (Waad Mohammed) who defies authority at every turn. Also recommended are Afghan director Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*, in which a woman releases her secrets and frustrations only to her comatose husband, and *Qasir*, a collection of short films from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

Although a Flemish film might seem off the mark for a world film festival, Daniel Lambo's mid-length *Traumland* finds friendship developing between an Antwerp man (Iwein Segers) and the Congolese immigrant (Claude Musungayi) he catches stowing away on his boat.

Mooov also includes a documentary series with introductions by filmmakers or other experts, concerts by Dutch-Turkish singer Karsu Dönmez and cafes at the two main festival sites.

## 17-28 APRIL

Across Flanders

► [www.mooov.be](http://www.mooov.be)

# Lessons in the dark

An association in Bruges is making film critics of Flanders' children

Nicholas Hirst

With the teaching of humanities subjects at schools generally stuck in the dusty world of literature and poetry, how can children learn to appreciate cinema, that seventh art that has come to dominate modern culture? That's the question the perceptive directors of Bruges' art house Lumière Cinema asked themselves in 2000. In response, they set up an organisation to educate schoolchildren about the art of cinema and about the world using the medium of film.

Lessen in het donker – or Lessons in the Dark – now reaches an average of 75,000 Flemish students each year, showing a mix of Belgian and world cinema, documentaries and shorts. These ensure kids can explore foreign cultures and discover important historical events, see the world's greatest stories and meet its best actors.

But, explains Tine Van Dycke, a programmer and co-ordinator since the early days of the association, it first and foremost aims to teach kids about "how a director has gone about making a film and editing it, so they learn to watch films in an active and critical way". In a world full of rose-tinted Hollywood movies, this can be no bad thing.

Many teachers recognise the need to introduce film studies into their curriculums, says Van Dycke. But a teacher who has been teaching Dutch language and literature will often not have the knowledge to teach pupils about cinema, or even have access to a place to show a film.

## A time, a place

Lessen in het donker set out to resolve this dilemma. It has developed relationships with 55 locations across Flanders, from Antwerp to Lokeren and from



*Offline* is one of the films chosen for the Lessen in het donker curriculum this year

Haacht to Brussels, where schools can book screenings during school hours. In parallel, it makes a varied selection of new and not-so-new films available to teachers, with comprehensive ready-made lessons: "Lessons during school hours in the dark," as the association puts it.

"We try to explain how the film was

made and why the director chose to do it that way," Van Dycke explains. "Why, for example, did he choose that actor for that role?"

Lessen in het donker has recently finished choosing its films for the coming academic year. As usual, these are balanced across genres and cater for all age groups. Oscar-

winner *Argo*, set in revolutionary Iran, will feature, as will *The Angel's Share*, a "soft" Ken Loach film, *The Silence*, a German thriller, various animated films and the wacky *Moonrise Kingdom*. Flemish films chosen for this year include Peter Monsaert's *Offline* and Vincent Bal's road movie *Nono, het Zigzagkind* (*Nono, the Zig Zag Kid*).

Lessen in het donker aims to introduce children and young teens to films they wouldn't likely otherwise see, says Van Dycke. If you fill a cinema with 200 students, many of them may not enjoy the film, she admits. But a few will remember it for the rest of their lives.

The Flemish authorities would seem to agree, since among all the cultural cuts taking place over the last year, Lessen in het donker was one that saw its government funding increase.

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



# BOZAR FESTIVAL!

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# Death and the singer

## Ozark Henry's latest album opens up a new road with an old collaborator

Christophe Verbiest

Ozark Henry is the stage name of Kortrijk-born Piet Goddaer, who broke through to an international audience in 2001 with his third album, *Birthmarks*, a collection of pop songs streaked with classical music and electronics. The classical influence was less present on his next albums, though still palpable. His sixth and latest album, *Stay Gold*, is first and foremost a collection of affectionate pop tunes.

The most remarkable difference between *Stay Gold* and Ozark Henry's previous outings is the presence of second singer Amaryllis Uitterlinden. In the past, Goddaer has regularly added an extra voice to his songs. This time around, it's different. "Some of the new songs gravitated towards duets. For that I didn't just need a good singer, but someone whose voice fits with mine. Compare it with a film: It's not enough to have two great actors; there needs to be chemistry between them."

Enter Uitterlinden, who Goddaer has known for years. An earlier collaboration, more than a decade ago, for the soundtrack of the television series *Sedes & Belli* never saw the light of day, for non-musical reasons. Uitterlinden has become a member of his band, too, as a singer and keyboard player. "She'll also sing the older songs, some of which I had to adapt," Goddaer explains. The new songs he sings with Uitterlinden are not duets in the classical sense of the word, where you have two people clearly dialoguing with each other. "Some of the songs I can sing on my own, too," Goddaer says. "But because of the second voice, other elements in the lyrics are stressed." He points to "If You Leave" as an example. "Is it a dialogue between two people, are they communicating with each other, or is the second voice a far-off echo of the first? This multitude of possible interpretations really interests me. They're pop songs: You always try to give the personal



feelings you incorporate in a song a universal appeal."

### Life goes on

Ozark Henry named a song after the final words of Ludwig van Beethoven: "*Plaudite, amici, comedia finita est*" ("Applaud, my friends, the comedy is over"), typically the conclusion of a *commedia dell'arte* performance. "You can't sing about an intense way of living without referring to what characterises life the most: death. That's why it is always present on my albums, though it's not necessarily presented as a dark thing. I think 'Plaudite Amici Comedia Finita Est' is one of the lighter songs of the album, even if it's about people who die too young."

Goddaer stresses that the song is not about Beethoven, and that "Death and the Maiden" is not an explicit reference to Franz Schubert's "Der Tod und das Mädchen". "Death and the Maiden is a classical motif that pops up in different art forms," he explains, adding that he just wanted to write a song about "how every one of us faces death as a maiden, since we don't know what death means."

No other Flemish pop musician is

as intensively engaged in writing soundtracks as Goddaer. The most recent was for *Le monde nous appartient* (*The World Belongs to Us*) by Brussels director Stephan Streker. "It's rewarding to do because it pushes me in a direction I otherwise wouldn't go in. It forces me to follow someone else's reasoning, which is enriching. Especially with Streker, who's imbued with cinema." No longer being asked to work on such collaborations would be a great loss: "I'd compare it with not reading books any more. Because it nourishes me as a human being, it influences the music of Ozark Henry: My songs, both the lyrics and the music, are the result of how my life evolves."

### Incurable romantic

Goddaer has a reputation for being a control freak, so it's surprising to see he also thrives in a collaborative role. Before responding to the latter, he questions the former. "I often get called a control freak, but am I really? I find it normal that I play every instrument myself on *Stay Gold*, an album I recorded and produced myself in my home studio. Not for the sake of doing everything myself, but because I want to express my



vision. Returning to your question: No, it's not difficult. When writing a soundtrack, I always ask myself what the film needs. Consequently, some of the music doesn't work out of the context of the film, and therefore will never be released."

Let's go back to the new album. "We are incurable romantics", Goddaer sings in the song of the same title. How about him? "I'm a bit of a romantic, yes, seeking goals that I know are unobtainable. Or being really disappointed by what is merely a detail: My mind tells me it's not important, but that doesn't diminish the feeling of disillusion in my heart."

*Stay Gold* and the song "Stay Gold Ponyboy, Stay Gold" are named after a quote from *The Outsiders*, the novel by SE Hinton, turned into a film by Francis Ford Coppola, in which a dying Johnny Cade, one of the main characters, advises his best friend Ponyboy Curtis to "stay gold." Goddaer explains: "Not that I especially wanted to honour *The Outsiders*, it just fitted the album. 'Stay gold' is another way of saying: Stay true to yourself."

## 17 APRIL

Vooruit  
Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent

## 21 APRIL

Ancienne Belgique  
Anspachlaan 110, Brussels

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

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The film *The Broken Circle Breakdown* has been awarded **Best Screenplay of 2012** by the Flemish Screenwriters Guild. Carl Joos worked with director Felix Van Groeningen on the script, which was based on the stage play by Ghent theatre group Compagnie Cecilia. "It was hard labour," said Joos, on the announcement of the prize. "We searched in every direction for a structure and a tone to restrain the emotional tornado of the play."

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

Bart Moeyaert has won the Boekenleeuw, or Book Lion, for the **Best Book for Children or Youth**. His book *Wie klopt daar?* (Who's That Knocking?), for those aged nine and over, is a quirky take on the traditional Sinterklaas story. This is the sixth time Moeyaert has won the Boekenleeuw; he also won last year for *De melkweg* (The Milky Way). Tom Schamp, meanwhile, won the Boekenpauw for Best Illustrations for his work on *Het leukst abc ter wereld* (The Most Fun ABCs in the World).

► [www.boek.be](http://www.boek.be)

The famous **Café Métropole** on De Brouckèreplein in Brussels will shut its doors for good on 30 April. The owners said that the Hotel Métropole, which owns the property, refuses to extend the rental contract and has not said what their plans are for the space. The business has been in the space since 1889, and the building is now a protected monument.

The Flanders Audiovisual Fund has won the Flemish Community's annual **Culture Prize for Management**. The organisation, established in 2007 to promote and support Flemish film, won for its finesse in building bridges between the audio-visual sector and the government.

► [www.vaf.be](http://www.vaf.be)

With the completion of the new painting storage room, the first part of the **renovation plan at Antwerp's Fine Arts Museum** has finished on schedule, the museum announced last week. The state-of-the-art repository was constructed to exacting temperature, particle and humidity specifications for the storage of paintings, either borrowed for temporary exhibitions or from the museum's vast permanent collection, much of which is in storage at any given time. Renovations of the landmark building continue until 2017.

► [www.kmska.be](http://www.kmska.be)

## MUSIC REVIEWS

### Bent Van Looy

Round the Bend • EMI

Since Ghent's Das Pop are taking a sabbatical after 2011's *The Game*, front man Bent Van Looy had time to record a solo outing. He teamed up with American Jason Falkner, who was in Jellyfish and has collaborated with Beck and Air. For two months, the two locked themselves in a studio in Los Angeles, and the result is a dozen songs that serve as the harbinger of a belated spring. Somewhere between the young David Bowie, Fleetwood Mac, The Beach Boys and Billy Joel, Paris-



based Van Looy carves his space: sunny pop songs with a slightly melancholy feel. *Round the Bend* shows that if Das Pop ever

implode – hopefully not, of course – Van Looy won't have to fear for his future in music.

### Liesa Van der Aa

Troops Live @ La Chapelle Studios • Music Mania

A year after her amazing debut, *Troops*, Liesa Van der Aa has re-recorded eight of the 10 songs from that album. Laziness? Absolutely not, as *Troops Live @ La Chapelle Studios* proves. Whereas the Antwerp-based musician and singer took her time to record that first album,

and mostly played it herself, this second one was put on tape in one day, with the help of her band (Ephraim Cielen, Arne Leurentop and Pieter-Jan De Smet aka Beuzak) and a choir. Sometimes they rock the roof of La Chapelle Studios ("Our Place"), at other moments the sibylline chorists lend the songs an uncanny touch ("Birds in Berlin", "Troops"). But in the end, it's Van der Aa the singer who impresses the most. The album is only available on vinyl and digitally.

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



Treats from the east

# Balkan Trafik

Christophe Verbiest

For the seventh time Bozar in Brussels is organising Balkan Trafik, a cultural bonanza that zooms in on – naturally – the Balkans. The focus lies on music, but there's also room for film, debates, workshops and food and wine tastings. On Saturday, Goran Bregović is the headliner. The Bosnian composer rose to international fame a quarter of a century ago, thanks to his soundtracks for the films of Emir Kusturica (*Time of the Gypsies*, *Underground*). It meant a shift in his work, since he had been the driving force behind the Yugoslavian rock group Bijelo Dugme. With the soundtracks, his compositions became increasingly infused with a variety of motifs of the folk music of the former Yugoslavia. At Balkan Trafik he presents *Champagne for Gypsies*, a tribute to the Romani. Top of the bill on Friday is Fanfare Ciocarlia. From its inception in 1996 in a north-eastern Romanian village, this brass band immediately became highly popular among fans of Balkan music and has been a stalwart of world

music festivals around the globe. They sing both in Romanian and Romani and pair festive wedding music with wistful funeral tunes, though you can expect them, at Balkan Trafik, to mostly play the former. Aka Moon, Belgium's most adventurous jazz ensemble, transform themselves, with the help of Belgian and Bulgarian musicians, into Aka Balkan Moon. Given that they've done similar and artistically successful metamorphoses in the past, their two shows on Friday might be the highlights of the festival. **Films, food and more** The Balkans, of course, also include Greece, and Vinylio give a contemporary twist to rebetiko, the music that is to Greece what flamenco is to Spain. If you're more inclined towards Turkey, you won't want to miss the Taksim Trio, blending traditional Turkish music with jazzy improv. Bulgarian Romani accordionist Martin Lubenov teams up with Transylvanian



Bosnian composer Goran Bregović headlines this year's Balkan Trafik festival

sax player Nicolas Simion for an intimate duo concert. Lubenov also features in the documentary *Jazzta Prasta*, named after the band he formed during his 10-year stay in Austria. Balkan Trafik opens with another documentary: *Balkan Melodie*, about Marcel and Catherine Cellier, who paved the way for the international success of different eastern European music groups when the Iron Curtain was still dividing Europe. The last day of the festival is reserved for a set of fiction films: the Turkish black comedy thriller *Beyond the Hill* (not to be confused with last year's Romanian film *Beyond the Hills*), the Romanian absurd comedy *Everybody in Our Family* and the Serbian post-war drama *Circle*. Add some debates – about the future of the Balkans or the “balkanisation” of the EU – belly dancing workshops, splendid spicy food and even a barbecue, and you get a varied festival that aims at your brain, heart and stomach.

17-21 April | Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels | [www.balkantrafik.com](http://www.balkantrafik.com)

## VISUAL ARTS

### Colours and Shapes

Photographer Maarten Strack Van Schijndel has been engaged for years by the National Botanical Gardens to document its resident flora. But be warned: this isn't your grandfather's plant photography. Van Schijndel gets up close and personal, revealing structures that are usually invisible to the naked eye. Otherwise familiar plants and flowers take on an alien aspect when their most microscopic details are exposed on giant prints. Van Schijndel discovered this brave new world when he undertook a study of over 1,000 bean seeds. “It was a revelation,” he says. “I was awed by their diversity, their deep black and bright red hues, their shapes and textures as well as their sizes.” The work is beautiful, if slightly uncanny. Behold the hidden beauty of the plant world with all its bizarre shapes and surprising colours. **Georgio Valentino**



6 April-20 October | National Botanic Garden, Meise  
[www.plantentuinmeise.be](http://www.plantentuinmeise.be)

## MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

**Antwerp**

**Couture in Colour:** The story of the Abraham company and European couture, art and luxury throughout the 20th century, featuring silk and prints from the Abraham archive and couture silhouettes by Dior, Givenchy, Yves Saint Laurent and Balenciaga  
**Until AUG 11 at MoMu, Nationalestraat 28**  
[www.momu.be](http://www.momu.be)

**Ghent**

**Kate Kenney:** Oil paintings by the British artist inspired by the landscapes of North Yorkshire  
**APR 13-27 14.00-19.00 at York Galleries, Tennisbaanstraat 72**  
[www.katekenney.co.uk](http://www.katekenney.co.uk)

## SPECIAL EVENT

### Tulip Day

Although tulipomania is thought of as a specifically Dutch craze, the Flemish were in fact the first to trade in tulips. Antwerp merchants were importing the flower decades before Amsterdam caught on and, although our neighbours to the north would later take all the credit, tulips remained an important industry in Flanders until the mid-20th century. The Year of the Tulip celebrations last year helped revive interest in the period, especially in Antwerp's Berendrecht-Zandvliet-Lillo area. Indeed, the district now hosts an annual Tulpenpluk (Tulip Pick) event, attracting young and old to carefully cultivated beds where 160,000 tulips lay ripe for the picking. The big cull is accompanied by family-friendly festivities, including a barbecue, games, guided nature walks, a tulip train, live music, DJs and dancing gnomes. Arts and crafts workshops are also held on-site to help you turn your plucked tulip into a work of floral art. **GV**



14 April, 10.00 | Tulpenwei, Berendrecht (Antwerp)

## MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

**Across West Flanders**

**Weekend of the volkscafé:** Celebration of authentic Flemish cafes, with open doors in some 45 cafes selected for their old-fashioned, timeless character  
**APR 12-14 in Alveringem, Heuvelland, Poperinge, Vleteren, Diksmuide, Veurne and Wervik**  
[www.toerismewesthoek.be/weekendvanhetvolkscafe](http://www.toerismewesthoek.be/weekendvanhetvolkscafe)

**Groot-Bijgaarden**

**Floralia:** 10th edition of the spring flower exhibition at a magnificent castle park and greenhouses, featuring 400 tulip varieties, narcissi, daffodils and more  
**Until MAY 5 at the castle of Groot-Bijgaarden, I Van Beverenstraat 5**  
[www.floralia-brussels.be](http://www.floralia-brussels.be)



## PERFORMANCE

### Café Theatre

Brussels' American Theatre Company (ATC) has been sponsoring Anglophone drama for more than 40 years through biannual stage productions and the annual Café Theatre mini-festival. Put on with the support of Boston University in Brussels, Café Theatre engages an international community of talent, not just performers but also technicians, stylists and craftspeople. The three-part evening includes a little bit of everything: theatre, music and comedy. Each night begins with dinner, then a staging of Matthew Snoding's *Ted, Rose*. The one-act play (*pictured*) is set in the aftermath of a married couple's anniversary party and explores the secrets people can keep even after a decade of intimacy. Snoding is no stranger to the ATC; he won the club's Playwriting Competition last year. When the curtain drops on Ted and Rose, the Brussels Singers take the stage for a musical programme. Finally, the last leg of this performance triathlon is improv comedy. **GV**



17-20 April | La Maison Blanche, Brussels

► [www.atc.theatreinbrussels.com](http://www.atc.theatreinbrussels.com)

## MORE PERFORMANCES THIS WEEK

### Ghent

**Schwalbe speelt vals (Schwalbe cheats):** Fervent, raw theatre in which actors expose the dark side of human nature by playing a physical game (in Dutch)

**APR 18-19 20.30 at CAMPO nieuwpoort, Nieuwpoort 31**

► [www.campo.nu](http://www.campo.nu)

**Platonov:** Chekhov's first large-scale drama, the story of a disillusioned provincial schoolmaster, directed by Luk Perceval (in Dutch)

**Until MAY 4 20.00 at NTGent Schouwburg, Sint-Baafsplein 17**

► [www.ntgent.be/productie/platonov](http://www.ntgent.be/productie/platonov)

### Hasselt

**Drumming:** One of Flemish choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's most fascinating works, a dazzling dance set to a powerful score for percussion by the American minimalist Steve Reich

**APR 12 20.00 at Cultuurcentrum Hasselt, Kunstlaan 5**

► [www.ccha.be](http://www.ccha.be)

## FESTIVAL

### Courtisane Festival

Ghent's Courtisane Festival has been showcasing film, video and media art since 2002. The programme incorporates works in diverse styles, genres and languages, from past and present. The only criterion is that the works must be contemporary in outlook. They must be intimate, experimental or politically engaged. This year's two artists-in-focus are examples of Courtisane-calibre art. German documentary filmmaker Marcel Ophuls draws on his own Second World War experience to explore political injustice all over Europe. American filmmaker Leslie Thornton predicts a technological dystopia in her long-running serial *Peggy and Fred in Hell*, whose final instalment premieres at Courtisane. The festival also hosts a tribute programme dedicated to the late Japanese artist Stom Sogo, who pioneered a dense and frenetic style of digital manipulation. There are dozens of screenings, spread out over five days. It's clearly too much for one cinema, so Courtisane screens at three locations around Ghent: Sphinx Cinema, KASKcinema and Paddenhoek. **GV**



17-21 April | Across Ghent | ► [www.courtisane.be](http://www.courtisane.be)

## MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

### Brussels

**BIFFF:** Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival, featuring more than 100 films from the fantasy, sci-fi and horror genres

**Until 13 APR at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23**

► [www.biff.org](http://www.biff.org)

**Hopla:** Free circus arts festival for the whole family with acts from across the world in the open air and under the big top, plus countless workshops and activities

**APR 11-14 across Brussels**

► [www.hopla-cirk.be](http://www.hopla-cirk.be)

### Ghent

**Rewind Fest:** New Age festival with 15 bands, including Red Zebra and The Neon Judgement, and an after-party featuring DJ Patrick Codenys of Front 242

**APR 12-13 18.30-5.00 at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23**

► [www.new-wave-classix.be](http://www.new-wave-classix.be)

## CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Andy Furniere

### Hoochie Coochie!

Handboogstraat 20, Kortrijk

Although located on the bank of the Leie river in Kortrijk, near the two medieval Broel Towers, Hoochie Coochie! exudes a Brussels vibe. The lamps above the prominent bar are, for instance, shaped like the bowler hats often featured in the works of René Magritte – an icon of Brussels. And both café owners have a personal link with the capital: West Fleming Alexander Deneckere once owned a bar in Brussels, and Melissa Giardina was raised in the city.

The owners also want to share their love for culture, in all its many forms. You won't find beer advertisements on the walls, but paintings and photographs created by the owners themselves. If you've finished with the newspaper, you can choose a good book from one of the shelves placed around the café. The original character the former carriage house has been preserved, but that somewhat sober setting is

made cosy with old-fashioned lampshades, vases and a *sansevieria* plant (otherwise known as *vrouwentongen*). "The bar had to feel like our second living room," explains Giardina. On the first floor of the building, a former showroom, guests can also visit temporary exhibitions. As the name suggests, the background music is often blues. Hoochie Coochie refers to the sensual African American dance of legend, brought into popular culture by Muddy Waters' "Hoochie Coochie Man". The owners have named their homemade rum drinks after Muddy Waters, and "the name is also a wink to the water in the river Leie," smiles Giardina.

Apart from a variety of rum cocktails, there's an extensive beer and wine list. When the weather is nice, you can toast yourselves – or the blues – on the terrace next to the river.

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





BITE

Robyn Boyle

Het Gouden Hoofd ★★☆☆

If a former slaughterhouse doesn't sound like a good place to have lunch, you haven't yet been to Het Gouden Hoofd (The Golden Head). The restaurant has already long been known among *Gentenaars*, but it's never been more popular since moving to its new location at the old Dyna-Meat depot earlier this year.

Those who aren't scared off by the rather dingy exterior will be rewarded once reaching the inside. The owners did a brilliant job of renovating the vast space, letting in a lot of natural light and incorporating some of the existing industrial elements into the design. Overall they got the result they were going for: The bright and airy dining area has a homey, nostalgic feel to it, thanks to vintage café tables and chairs and parquet flooring, while the rawer industrial area with its brick and metal invites you to have a pint at the bar. The menu is equally minimalist, especially at lunchtime when your options are limited to a few suggestions scribbled on the chalkboard. In the evening, the menu is more varied and includes classic Flemish dishes from grandma's kitchen, like farmer's pâté with red onion confit and pork's cheeks in Gulden Draak beer. Word has it their weekend brunch is excellent, when you can order a hamburger, omelette and quiche all in one sitting. Our party of five is here for lunch, and the suggestion menu lists cauliflower soup,



followed by ham and leek rolls with cheese sauce (or without ham and with mushrooms for vegetarians) and parsnip puree. There's a choice of two desserts: hazelnut butter cake or chocolate walnut tart. We take four orders of the daily menu and one order of spaghetti bolognese, the only alternative. The cauliflower soup comes in a large ceramic bowl at the centre of the table with a big ladle to serve yourself. The soup is rich and creamy and tastes lightly curried. Even our spaghetti

eater can't resist a few slurps. Between courses, I enjoy dabbling in the beer menu, which should be applauded for its omission of the usual Leffe and Stella, opting instead for character beers like Sparta Pils, Rodenbach and Omer. The mains are delivered to our table in a quick and friendly manner. The ham and leek rolls are covered in a most delicious cheese sauce that's gone slightly golden brown and bubbly under the oven grill. While leek offers

a sweet variation on this classic *witloof* dish, I still prefer it made with *witloof*. The parsnip puree has a nice smooth texture and buttery flavour. When it comes time for coffee and dessert, we take one of each. Both pieces of cake are scrumptious and disappear in no time. But it's the chocolate-walnut tart that is the hands-down favourite for its thick, chewy, brownie-like quality and nutty flavour. Some tart red berries and a dusting of powdered sugar complete the dish. We pay €20 each, which is astoundingly inexpensive for this level of quality food and service.

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

- 📍 Slachthuisstraat 96, Ghent; 0487.20.65.01
- 🕒 Mon-Fri 12.00-14.00 & 17.30-22.00; Sat 11.00-15.00 & 17.30-22.00; Sun 11.00-15.00
- 💶 Mains: €10-€15
- 📖 Pleasant Ghent eatery serving up simple, Flemish fare in a unique setting

TALKING DUTCH

Philip Ebels

What's your word count?

So it turns out I know a lot of Dutch words. Which, as the writer of a column on the Dutch language, is *handig*, practical or handy. I know 84%, to be precise, of all "*woorden [die] in (een deel van) het Nederlandse taalgebied gebruikt en begrepen worden*", words that in (part of) the Dutch language area are used and understood. Or so says Ghent University, which, with partners in the Netherlands, has created an online vocabulary test to find an answer to the question: "*Welke woorden kennen we op dit moment?*" Which words

do we know at this moment? The test tries to trick the taker into believing that existing words don't exist and that non-existent words do. I knew, for example, that *meewerken* means to co-operate, and that *oecunigst* means nothing. But what I didn't know is that *bedillen* does actually mean something – namely to criticise or to belittle. The scientists in charge of the project, Marc Brysbaert and Emmanuel Keuleers, say they aim to map the knowledge of the Dutch vocabulary. "A dictionary is a list of all the words that exist,

but it doesn't say anything about which are actually being used," Keuleers said. "After this research we will know: In 2013, people in the Netherlands and Flanders knew these words." And that, says Brysbaert, can come in handy when learning Dutch as a second language. "It will allow us to determine the words you should learn when studying Dutch: Learn those that most people know." So forget *bedillen* – I'm sure I'm not the only one who didn't know it existed – and remember *meewerken*. But the project goes further than to determine what people know. It also wants to know who knows what. "*Hebben Nederlanders een grotere woordenschat dan Vlamingen?*" it asks. Do the Dutch have a bigger vocabulary than the Flemish? (Note the conjunction of *woorden*, words, and *schat*, treasure.) Or is it the other way around? We will know after the summer, when the results are expected to come in. In the meantime, I strongly suggest you take the test. It's a fun way to find out how much you know. And to compete with your Dutch-language classmates. Or, for that matter, with the editor of this newspaper, who according to social media didn't know that *viseren* is a word – to aim – but still scored a very respectable 64%. As always, I'd be happy to hear about how you did and about the words that made you laugh or cry.

► <http://woordentest.ugent.be>  
[talkingdutch@hotmail.com](mailto:talkingdutch@hotmail.com)



The last word...

Family first

"Jejoen could die here any minute, and so could I." Dimitri Bontinck left home in Antwerp to look for his 18-year-old son, who went to fight in Syria

Legal aid

"The ultimate dream of ministers and members of parliament is to have a law passed bearing their name. Unfortunately, no-one is quite as driven to scrap old laws." Open VLD fraction leader Patrick Dewael plans a website for members of the public to propose laws for repeal

A leg up

"I could have gone on much longer, but the second half had to get started." Eleven-year-old Tristan Deconinck was forced to cut short a display of keeple-up during the match between KV Kortrijk and AA Gent after keeping the ball in the air 950 times

Public affairs

"It'll be a sort of sex education for young people, all about feelings, relationships and sex." Flemish celebrity Goedeke Liekens is making a TV series for Britain's Channel 4

NEXT WEEK  
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

The energy regulator accidentally makes personal data of solar panel owners viewable, the NMBS does the same with customer information, and even the country's defence department goofed, releasing private data temporarily. How do these mistakes happen and what can Flanders' organisations and agencies do to avoid them in future?

Science

Although the local environmental organisation Natuurpunt uses residents to spot birds for its annual aviary biodiversity report, some animals are harder to spot. We visit the Flemish company INBO, which develops detection systems for hard-to-see creatures, like eels, and for vegetation in remote areas

Tourism

City museums are dusting off their worn-out images and becoming rather fashionable, especially with the relatively new STAM in Ghent and MAS in Antwerp. Now Ostend's city museum has re-opened after extensive renovations, to reveal the past of the city and of its building's famous inhabitant, Louis-Marie, Belgium's very first queen