

The plan revealed

N-VA unveils its ultimate plan for turning Belgium into a confederacy

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All aboard the Smaakboot

Week van de Smaak returns with a dining barge and hundreds of food events across Flanders

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Rock, paper, scissors

Arne Quinze talks about his iconic public works and why art doesn't need to be pretty

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Same old spying

New book by Flemish reporter Kristof Clerix pegs Brussels as a hot spot for spying

Alan Hope

Flemish investigative journalist Kristof Clerix follows up his 2006 book *Vrij spel*, on the activities of foreign spies operating in Belgium, with *Spionage: Doelwit Brussel*, which proves that the world's second-oldest profession is alive and well in the capital.

The US National Security Agency (NSA) is spying on the offices of foreign allied government delegations to the EU and NATO. The Polish secret service springs into action to acquire control over the Bruges-based College of Europe, seeing it as an excellent source of potential recruits. The East German Stasi has established secret connections with the Sint-Anna castle in Ouderghem and the Abbey of Averbode. And a KGB spy is operating a network of dead-

letter drops around Brussels to carry out the relatively new practice of economic espionage.

The first of these spying manoeuvres is ripped from the headlines of today's papers. The rest are older cases that show that spying is nothing new to Belgium, as described in the various case studies of *Spionage: Doelwit Brussel* (Espionage: Target Brussels), a new book by journalist Kristof Clerix. The research for the book took the 35-year-old to the former Soviet bloc – Prague, Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia and Warsaw – to dig into their newly opened state archives.

Spionage is essentially historical, but Clerix's day job is investigative reporter for *MO** magazine. So when *Flanders Today* met him at the magazine's tiny offices in the Hallepoort neighbourhood in Brussels, it seemed instructive

to also discuss the vanishing art of investigative journalism. Most new young journalists probably imagine the job will involve some investigative reporting, but in reality most don't end up there. Clerix looks younger than he is and like the perfect cast for boy reporter Tintin. He's been with *MO** for 10 years.

Clerix's career started, he says, "with a story about Iranians on hunger strike in a Brussels church who said they had been put under pressure by the Iranian secret service. This story, which, by the way, nobody ever managed to prove, was the starting point for my investigations. I started talking to their lawyers, to the Iranian embassy, to the Belgian police. I remember my first phone call to Belgian state security; their position was: 'We don't speak to journalists.'"

Since then, through networking and going to conferences

Nobel Peace Prize winners visit Flanders Fields

Three dignitaries attend international Science for Peace symposium

Alan Hope

Three Nobel Peace Prize laureates took part in a visit to the Westhoek area of West Flanders last Sunday, on the eve of their participation in an International Symposium on Science for Peace.

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters accompanied Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee, who won jointly in 2011 with Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Yemeni politician Tawakkol Karman for their work on women's rights; Betty Williams from Northern Ireland, who won in 1976 with Mairead Corrigan Maguire for her campaigning for peace in the province; and former South African president Frederik Willem De Klerk, who shared the 1993 prize with Nelson Mandela for their work in terminating the apartheid regime.

The party visited the Tyne Cot Commonwealth cemetery in

Zonnebeke, followed by the In Flanders Fields museum in Ypres, before attending the Last Post at the nearby Menin Gate, a nightly ceremony held to commemorate the fallen.

"The destructive power of war made a deep impression on me during our visit to Tyne Cot and In Flanders Fields," De Klerk said. "We must not allow ourselves to forget this history; it is essential to the advance of peace."

"My impressions of this visit will stay with me always," said Williams. "As a mother and a grandmother, I realise those who lie buried here are all mothers' sons. It hurts like hell to realise this."

The guests will take part today in an international peace symposium, one of the first events in the Flemish government's commemoration of the 1914-18 centenary.

"In less than one year, it will be exactly 100 years since the Great



Pictured, second from left: activist Betty Williams from Northern Ireland, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters; former South African president Frederik Willem De Klerk; International Criminal Court judge Christine Van den Wyngaert and Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee

War caused such untold suffering for millions, here in Flanders and in many other countries in Europe and in the world," said Peeters

during yesterday's visit. "The Flemish government has made the centenary remembrance a priority. The scars of war are still visible in

Flanders' Fields; the war-time past is still palpable. With this visit today, I, together with our Nobel winners, wish to send a universal message of peace into the world."

The theme of the symposium was "The role of Science in Trauma Treatment and the Transformation of Societies". Policymakers and scientific experts joined the Nobel winners to examine how science can contribute to the recognition and addressing of traumas inflicted by war and conflict, as well as by natural disasters.

The symposium, organised by the Flemish government's foreign affairs department, was also attended by Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, representing another Nobel winner, the European Union, which won in 2012. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1984 winner) sent a video message.

► www.peacesymposium.be

Allowances threatened for pupils who leave school early for holidays

Pascal Smet is examining the level of absences from school at the beginning of the annual autumn vacation, which started last weekend. The Flemish education minister wants to determine how many parents took their children out of school early in order to get a head-start on travel plans.

Schools noted last Friday that the phenomenon of "sick" students on the last day before the holiday continued, despite Smet's promise at the end of the last school year to crack down on the educational allowances provided to parents of primary and secondary school students. According to media reports, the departures hall at Brussels Airport was crowded with families with children, leaving on holiday early while classes continued.

Some were armed with medical certificates for the absentee children, despite an appeal by the professional association of general practitioners for doctors not to issue medical certificates to allow families to depart early on holiday.

Since the first day of school on 1 September, every absence of primary and secondary school students has been registered in the so-called DISCIMUS system of the education department; prior to that, schools maintained their own register of absences. Smet intends to use the data from the system to impose sanctions: a child who is absent 10 half days will be automatically assigned a counsellor from the government's centre for pupil support; those absent 30 half days for reasons other than genuine illness risk losing the allowance. **AH**



Antwerp University bomb hoax was "religiously inspired"

A bomb threat that led to the evacuation of staff and students from the University of Antwerp on Monday was "religiously inspired" and may have been sent by the same group of Muslims responsible for threatening videos posted to the internet, the Antwerp prosecutor's office said. The language used in the warning, which was sent by mail to three members of the university staff, was similar to the rhetoric of the videos, investigators said, including claiming a bomb attack in the name of a "Muslim brotherhood"

and promising "death to all unbelievers in Belgium".

Police carried out a sweep of the 13 university buildings on Monday, but no suspect device was found. The evacuation of the university has "a serious cost," according to rector Alain Verschoren. "In fact, the calculation of the cost is itself an impossible task." Among the damages: €2,000 worth of food that had to be thrown away in restaurants and cafeterias as buildings stood empty all day. **AH**

Antwerp bans end-of-year fireworks

The city of Antwerp has banned the possession and use of fireworks in public places over the next three months. In normal circumstances, setting off fireworks and firecrackers, as well as lighting fires, are banned in public places at all times. The new Antwerp regulation goes further, banning the visible possession and display of fireworks of any sort. Also outlawed is the exhibiting or selling of fireworks, regardless of whether they are to be used legally or taken out of

Antwerp.

The city said its intention with the measure was to improve safety during the end-of-year period, as well as to respond to the many complaints received at the end of last year. The law means that no private fireworks can be used on New Year's Eve, unless authorisation is obtained in writing by application to the council six weeks in advance. The traditional public display of fireworks over the Scheldt will go ahead at midnight as usual. **AH**

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

36th

place for Belgium in the World Bank ranking of countries where it's good to do business – four places down on last year's ranking. The list was headed by Singapore, Hong Kong and New Zealand

10

storm days in Belgium in October, a result described by the Royal Meteorological Institute as "very abnormal". Temperatures were abnormally high at 12.8 degrees on average

€3 million

approved by the government of Flanders for consortia of businesses and knowledge centres to draw up "road maps" to help businesses bring innovative products to market

7,800

passengers used the Brussels waterbus this summer, travelling on the canal between Vilvoorde and the port of Brussels. The service will resume in May next year

€4.5 million

invested by Flemish welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen in personal assistance budgets, which allow people with a handicap to pay for personal and household help

WEEK IN BRIEF

From next April, visitors to Flanders’ public libraries will be able to **borrow e-books for three weeks** at a cost of €5 for three books, culture minister Joke Schauvliege announced. Nearly 180 local authorities have already joined the scheme, and the organisers have a list of 300 titles. The books are free to read within the library and can be downloaded via a special app.

The province of Antwerp has agreed to continue support **for free buses on New Year’s Eve** for one more year, going back on a decision earlier this year to withdraw them. Last year 99,000 people used the service, which covered 60 of the province’s districts and municipalities. The service this year will cost the province €30,000.

The mandatory inspection of motor vehicles will in future look not only at the state of the vehicle but also determine if there is a **valid insurance document on board**. The change comes in an attempt to tackle the growing number of uninsured cars on the road, according to the sector organisation GOCA. Vehicles without insurance documents will fail the inspection and details passed to the mobility ministry for further action.

A member of the Walloon parliament **accused of murdering his wife**, Véronique Piroton, in a hotel in Ostend at the weekend is being held in custody after an autopsy showed that she was the victim of an attack. Bernard Wesphael maintains she committed suicide after the couple had a fight. According to Article 59 of the Constitution, an elected representative can only be arrested if caught in the act of committing a crime. Therefore, the Walloon parliament has to approve the lifting of Wesphael’s parliamentary

immunity. The Bruges prosecutor’s office will argue that he was caught in the act.

The Belgian fur producers’ association Beffa has described as “absurd” a protest that took place at the weekend in Wervik, West Flanders, **against the arrival of a new mink farm**. The protest attracted 1,500 opponents to the scheme, which would involve 107,000 minks being reared every year for their fur. While politicians and animal rights organisation Gaia called for a ban on fur farms, a spokesperson for Beffa said the farm was “an ordinary agricultural business in a sector that provides more than 200 jobs.”

Council workers in Bruges this week began **dismantling the pavilion by Japanese architect** Toyo Ito on the Burg square. The pavilion was erected in 2002, when Bruges was European City of Culture, and was intended to remain for two years. The structure has become dilapidated, and the city wants to improve it and set it up elsewhere, though a location has not yet been selected.

The Flanders-born Archbishop Gabriel, the first non-Russian prelate to lead the Eastern Orthodox parishes in western Europe, **has died at the age of 67**, the church announced. Born Guy De Vylder in Lokeren in 1946, he became archbishop in 2003, adopting the name of the archangel Gabriel and residing in Maastricht. His responsibilities covered parishes across Belgium and all the way from Norway to Spain. He resigned early this year for health reasons, having been diagnosed with cancer in 2011.

A suspected member of the outlawed **Basque separatist organisation ETA** arrested in Ghent in October may not be handed over to the Spanish authorities, a court has

ruled. Maria Natividad Juaregui Espina, known as Pepona, is accused of involvement in a number of terrorist attacks and has been on the run since 1979. A lower court had approved her extradition, but that was overturned on appeal. The woman will remain in custody while a possible appeal to the Cassation Court goes ahead.

The country’s only **french fry vending machine**, installed two months ago outside a Delhaize store in the Brussels district of Molenbeek, has been removed. According to the manager of the supermarket, many customers came in the first few days out of curiosity, but in the end the machine sold only one or two portions a day. The company that owns the machine, BreakTime Solutions, denied that the machine wasn’t making a profit and said that an improved model would be introduced in May.

A **hoax bomb alert** that led to the evacuation of the Kinepolis cinema in Leuven was the work of a young woman suffering an attack of romantic sorrow, police said. The 20-year-old made the call after spotting her ex-boyfriend holding hands with another woman in the cinema. Police also cleared streets around the cinema; the caller will be presented with the bill and may also face criminal charges.

Police in Dendermonde have arrested four men of Italian origin thought to be responsible for a **series of attacks on jewel transports**, including one in Ghent in 2011 that netted stones worth €900,000. The head of the Naples gang worked from an office in the diamond district in Antwerp, from where he directed operations across Belgium, as well as recruiting new members. In one robbery, in Temse last year, a courier was assaulted. Other thefts took place in Sint-Niklaas, Antwerp and Beernem.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



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Eva Brems

“I just don’t enjoy it anymore.” With that announcement, Eva Brems said goodbye to politics last week. Many lament the decision because, regardless of party issues, Brems, like the recently departed senator Marleen Timmermans, is exactly the sort of person you want to bring what she has to offer to the political sphere. She’s a world authority in her academic field, but down to earth enough to take part in the TV quiz *De slimste mens*; she’s informed, committed and idealistic, as well as culturally active. But she won’t be standing for re-election in May. “I’ve chosen to return full-time to the academic world,” she said. “I can’t see committing myself to four more years.” Brems was born in Leuven in 1969, the daughter of a university lecturer. She studied law in Namur and in Leuven, followed by a Master’s from Harvard, returning to Leuven for her doctorate on human rights. Since then she has taught

in Leuven and Maastricht, before joining the faculty of the university of Ghent in 2000, where she specialises in human rights, gender and Islam and the law. She’s been a director of Vormen, the Flemish organisation for human rights education, as well as chair of Amnesty Vlaanderen, and active in the Human Rights League and Lawyers without Borders. She was elected to parliament for Groen in 2010, as well as winning a seat on the city council of Leuven and the provincial council for Flemish Brabant – although she declined to take up those seats. In the short time she’s been in parliament, she’s won the respect of many, regardless of party. According to Groen fraction leader Stefaan Van Hecke, that was because of her “sharp analysis and clear point of view”. “Four years is a long time,” she told Radio 1 this week. “I’ve learned a great deal. This period has been very enriching. Everyone ought to do it.”

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Portrait of the shooter

The authorities said they have obtained an artist’s impression of a man accused of a shooting incident in the centre of Brussels, close to the Grote Markt, in which another man was injured. The Superintendent has taken statements from both men. All right, the incident took place in 1873, but it’s come back into the news this week because the Royal Library in Brussels announced that it has acquired a hitherto unknown drawing of the French poet Paul Verlaine. In one of the most famous incidents of his admittedly incident-laden life, Verlaine shot his lover Arthur Rimbaud, an even more famous French poet, in the hotel A la ville de Courtrai in the Brouwersstraat. According to statements made to the Superintendent of Brussels after the shooting, Verlaine travelled

from London a week earlier to settle his divorce. Rimbaud arrived later with Verlaine’s mother, and they stayed at the hotel. When the 18-year-old Rimbaud told Verlaine he was heading back to Paris, Verlaine lost whatever marbles a 19th-century French poet may be expected to have, bought a pistol and came back to shoot Rimbaud – in the wrist. Verlaine was sentenced to two years in prison, serving 15 months. (It was also the end of the relationship.) The portrait (*photo*) by the anarchist Jehan Rictus is thought to have been drawn in 1895. Verlaine is old and worn out, bald and whiskery, syphilitic and diabetic at 51 years. He died the following year of congestion of the lungs. “This acquisition is an exceptional enrichment for the library,” commented manuscript



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conservator Bernard Bousmanne. The public will have to wait two years to see it: It will be shown in 2015 as part of an exhibition in Mons (where Verlaine was imprisoned) as part of their City of Culture events.

FLANDERS TODAY



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EDITOR Lisa Bradshaw
DEPUTY EDITOR Sally Tipper
NEWS EDITOR Alan Hope
SUB EDITOR Linda Thompson
SOCIAL EDITOR Robyn Boyle
AGENDA Robyn Boyle, Georgio Valentino
ART DIRECTOR Paul Van Dooren
PREPRESS Corelio AdPro
CONTRIBUTORS Daan Bauwens, Rebecca Benoot, Derek Blyth, Leo Cendrowicz, Sabine Clappaert, Katy Desmond, Andy Furniere, Diana Goodwin, Toon Lambrechts, Katrien Lindemans, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Tom Peeters, Senne Starckx, 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

SUBSCRIPTIONS
subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu
or order online at www.flanderstoday.eu

ADVERTISING
02 373 83 24
advertising@flanderstoday.eu

VERANTWOORDELIJKE UITGEVER
Hans De Loore

5TH COLUMN

Anja Otte

All or nothing

A few years ago, almost all Flemish parties were in favour of confederalism. What this buzzword stood for though, no one really knew. Confederalism was a vague idea, generally meaning one step further in the devolution process.

Confederalism has become more controversial since. Open VLD has explicitly dropped the term from its party programme and it is now exclusively associated with the Flemish nationalist N-VA.

Bart De Wever's party has long been accused of remaining vague about this confederalism. Some even believe that it is separatism by another name, but that the N-VA won't admit to it so as not to scare off voters. Last week, though, the N-VA provided clarity about just what confederalism means to it.

Rather than Belgium as a federal state, with three regions and three communities, N-VA believes in two confederate states, Flanders and Wallonia. In N-VA's vision, Brussels loses many of its competences as a region and its inhabitants get the choice to join either of the two states. Belgium thus remains an empty shell, responsible for matters such as defence, security and asylum only.

N-VA can no longer be accused of obscuring its mission now, but clarity also has some disadvantages. For one thing, all the other parties know what they are up against.

The reactions to N-VA's plans were downright negative. First to react were the French speakers, but they have never been fond of the Flemish nationalists. Next were the Brussels politicians. You cannot ask the people of Brussels to choose between their mother and father, Brussels minister Guy Vanhengel (Open VLD) said.

Finally, politicians from the Flemish parties Open VLD and CD&V – who once embraced confederalism themselves – reacted. Flemish MP Eric Van Rompuy calls the N-VA plans “unadulterated separatism”. De Wever acts as Belgium's gravedigger rather than a future prime minister, he said. Open VLD's Patrick Dewael too dislikes the plans, as he sees plenty of similarities between the two parties' plans when it comes to the economy.

The bottom line is that no one wants a repeat of the 2010 federal negotiations, which dragged on for over a year due to discussions like these.

It looks like N-VA is playing all or nothing. The party hopes it cannot be left aside, with more than 30% of the vote. It counts on the electorate, then, knowing that it cannot count on future coalition partners.

Scheldt Quays wins green prize

Antwerp's Scheldekaaien awarded government prize for green development

Derek Blyth

The government of Flanders has awarded the prize for outstanding green urban development to Antwerp's Scheldekaaien, or Scheldt Quays project. The Scheldekaaien, an ambitious 20-year-programme of urban renewal along the city's waterfront, was chosen out of nine Groen in de Stad (GidS) initiatives to promote green, liveable space in cities.

The jury singled out the Scheldekaaien as a “carefully considered and bold combination of ecology and recreation.” The prize includes a subsidy of €250,000. The Scheldekaaien development involves the redesign of a former industrial zone along the Scheldt quayside and the creation of the new 15-hectare Droogdokken park. The jury admired several components of the project, including the creation of a natural river bank along the Scheldt waterfront with mud flats and tidal marshes.

The also jury praised the Antwerp project for its combination of ecological and recreational functions, which provides a unique way to connect with the river and its particular vegetation

“A carefully considered and bold combination of ecology and recreation

and wildlife. The park has given the city an important new green lung and a new public space for recreation, public events and open-air activities, the jury said. The GidS competition was launched



by Joke Schauvliege, Flemish minister for the environment and culture. It forms part of the Flanders in Action plan, which has set the target of developing Flanders as a green and dynamic urban region by 2020. “We cannot realise our ambition ... on our own,” Schauvliege said. “It is for that reason that we are stimulating and supporting all the organisations involved in the development of urban green spaces.”

Four smaller projects also won subsidies of €50,000 each: the Winge Valley in Rotselaar (Flemish Brabant), the Sint-Anna Park in Maldegem (East Flanders), the Sint-Walburga Park in Veurne (West Flanders) and the town centre of Vorselaar (Antwerp province). The Scheldekaaien project will now be the Flemish candidate for next year's international LivCom Award for management of local environments.

N-VA announces confederalist plan

Last week the Flemish nationalist party N-VA announced over two days its proposals to be discussed at its party congress in January, which would go on to be the party's platform for the May elections. The first day saw the party put forward its ideas for a restructuring of the country's tax system. Party president Bart De Wever, also the mayor of Antwerp, said that he wants to cut the average tax rate to 40%, following the election.

The planned cut would bring down the tax rate for the average worker from about 50%, one of the highest rates in the world. At the same time, the party said it would freeze government expenditure until at least 2016.

The document outlining proposed new legislation was put to the party members for discussion early last week. “We have to make a break with rising taxation, mounting debts and expanding government,” said De Wever. “The answer to that is called confederalism.”

De Wever explained that his model of confederalism would make taxation the responsibility of the regions,



“We have to make a break with rising taxation”: Bart De Wever during one of two N-VA press conferences last week

the income tax rate to 40%. The 50% band would not be entirely scrapped – people on extremely high incomes would still pay this rate. The N-VA would also abolish automatic wage indexing and introduce instead wage agreements for each sector settled every two years.

Under De Wever's plan, the company tax rate would be cut from 40% to 27% – the average rate in Western

limited.

As soon as the plan was announced, economics professor André Decoster of the University of Leuven ran the figures through a programme called Mefisto that calculates the impact of proposed fiscal measures. He concluded that the N-VA plan would cost Flanders €812 million in its initial phase, rising to €1.15 billion in the long term.

Decoster also pointed out that the proposed measures would have an uneven effect on the rich and the poor. The average family would be €40 better off each month in the beginning and gain €58 every month in the longer term. But the richest 10% of the population would gain €106 every month in the beginning and €200 in the longer term, whereas the poorest 10% would stand to gain just €1 monthly.

N-VA's proposals were swiftly condemned as impossible by political parties, unions and academics. The plan for Brussels came in for particularly fierce

criticism from both Flemish and French-speaking parties. The Flemish socialist party SPA said that it was a “slap in the face for the people of Brussels” while the Flemish liberal Guy Vanhengel, who sits in the Brussels Parliament, said it was “unworkable.”

In an interview on Radio 1 programme *Vandaag*, Vanhengel said that the N-VA was forcing Brussels citizens to choose between their mother and their father and that “the people of Brussels don't want to choose.” He added that the plans would affect the rights of Brussels residents. “The people of Brussels will become stateless,” he said. “The two large entities, Flanders and Wallonia, will run Brussels, and the citizens of Brussels will become second-class citizens who have to go begging to Antwerp or Namur.”

Federal interior minister Joelle Milquet said that the N-VA plan for Brussels was “totally unacceptable” and that “it didn't merit long articles in the press, in the light of its totally excessive and provocative character.” She added that the plan would threaten the country's political stability.

Flemish political analyst Carl Devos described the plans as “very clear and very ambitious”, but he raised doubts about whether the party, even if it emerged from the 2014 elections with 40% of the votes, would find any partners to implement any of the proposals. Devos also questioned whether the EU member states would allow Belgium to be represented by Flemish and Walloon minister-presidents. “This would be a nightmare scenario for Spain, France and Great Britain,” he added. **DB**

“This would be a nightmare scenario for Spain, France and Great Britain

although the federal government would still remain responsible for collecting VAT and customs duties, so that these funds could be used to reduce the national debt.

Flanders would immediately assume responsibility for collecting income tax under this plan and would lower

Europe, according to the N-VA. The party would also limit the payment of full unemployment benefit to two years; the unemployed would then be paid from social security funds. The retirement age would remain fixed at 65, but measures allowing early retirement would be drastically

Same old spying

Reporter delves into Soviet archives and Brussels world of espionage

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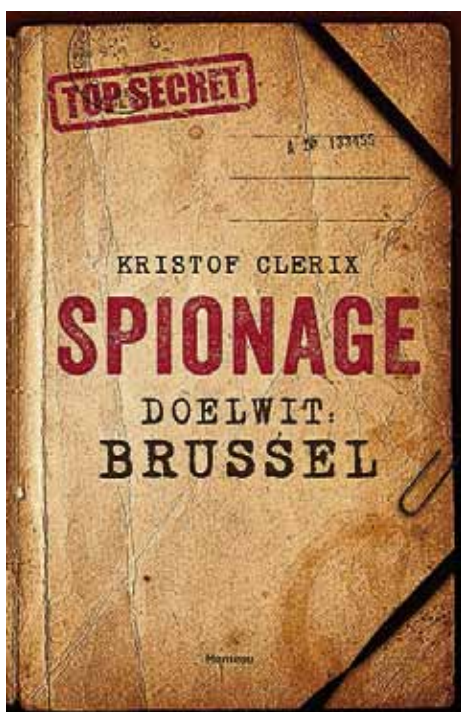
on terrorism and economic espionage, he's built quite a list of contacts. "People also start following what you're doing, and when they see that you're serious about it, you build up a kind of trusting relationship."

The view of many readers these days is that the media are full of too much celebrity reporting and too much opinion masquerading as facts. With online reporting needing to be so immediate to keep up with the rest of the media, there's hardly time to check facts or even make a few phone calls.

Quality reporting

"I've been active in the VVOJ, the Flemish-Dutch organisation for investigative journalists," says Clerix. "We compile a yearbook with the best investigative stories of the year, and if you compare Flanders to the Netherlands, Flanders lags behind every year. Another indication is the annual conference where the percentage is usually 15-20% Flemish and 80-85% Dutch."

Still, he says, there is a lot of quality investigative reporting going on in Flanders. "There are journalists who really put a lot of effort into doing good investigations. You have the TV programme *Panorama*, which broke the story about the treatment of a man who ended up dying in a police cell, when he actually needed psychological help. They've



Also, Clerix points out that more journalists in Flanders are discovering the breadth of WOB, the Flemish law on freedom of government information, and are demanding inspection reports on, for instance, schools and hospitals. The law stipulates that



© Filip Claessens

Kristof Clerix's search for spies took him to Prague, Berlin, Budapest and Warsaw

“People are actually making online profiles of themselves and presenting them to secret services on a silver platter

done several good things.”

Clerix names Lars Bové of *De Tijd* as another excellent source of investigative journalism. “He writes about intelligence, security and fraud on a daily basis. He and I were lucky enough to become new members of the ICIJ, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, which was involved in the Offshore Leaks story. This shows that day-to-day reporting can also be investigative and bring new scandals to light. Another example is Georges Timmerman of the news site *Apache.be*, who used to be a journalist for *De Morgen*. He's doing very interesting stuff, also going to archives and travelling around the world to follow stories. These are just a few names.”

In researching the book, Clerix was able to take advantage of the archives of former Communist countries that became available after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Ironically, the former “bad guys” are now in many ways more transparent than our allies.

Access to the unlocked archives is, Clerix says, “a huge opportunity, but it only tells one side of the story. It's not really true that nothing has opened in the West so far. There are very interesting developments in the United States with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which can be used in several ways – to get your hands on former CIA documents, for instance.

“The National Security Archive, which is a kind of NGO of George Washington University, has been submitting FOIA requests for 25 years, so they've built up a huge database of formerly secret documents. That's another entry point.”

any government policy document can be requested by any member of the public and must, with certain limited exceptions, be delivered within 15 days. If not, an appeal can be submitted to a special body that will then investigate and issue a ruling within 30 days. The decisions are published online.

“The Belgian state security archives are not open,” notes Clerix, “but I must say I'm happy that I've been able to convince our own two secret services – that's state security and military intelligence – to have a look for me in their archives. When I came back from Eastern Europe with stories and documents, I wanted to double-check with the people referenced in the documents, but also with the Belgian counter-espionage guys.”

They didn't give the journalist personal access to their thousands of documents, “but they did check for themselves and then got back to me with what they'd found. These Belgian archives are not open, but there is a kind of openness within the secret services around very concrete topics.”

According to the headlines that have been dominating the news – Wikileaks, Edward Snowden, Obama snooping on Angela Merkel – espionage is as rampant today as it was at the height of the Cold War. Sometimes it involved huge government agencies, but sometimes it happens the old-fashioned way – through individual informants.

“The classical ways are fourfold,” explains Clerix. “Through money, or by playing on the person's ego – maybe he's not satisfied in his job because he feels he's not valued. Or by compromising the person; maybe he has a secret mistress or something. And then

the last one is ideology, such as during the Cold War, when someone had sympathy for communist ideals. These are the four classical ways of recruiting spies, and they're still exactly the same today.”

Human intelligence is still operating in Brussels, he says, in the streets, in restaurants and in cafés. “Spies cover as diplomats,

“The four classical ways of recruiting spies are still exactly the same today

businesspeople, journalists or lobbyists and meet with people who have access to information – politicians, people who work for NGOs, local journalists and so on. This is classic espionage. It worked in the past, and

it's still being used today. It works. It's called the second-oldest profession in the world.”

But in the age of information, hasn't espionage seen some significant changes? “The IT revolution has changed our lives completely,” Clerix replies. “In fact, the end of the Cold War was more or less when IT started to become a part of our everyday lives. And this is a very useful tool for secret services.”

There's a chapter in his book about the Stasi trying to recruit a Belgian student, “and it took four to five years to profile this person – who are his friends, how much does he earn, which movies does he like, etc. Today, all the secret service has to do is look up what you yourself have made public. People are actually making profiles of themselves and presenting them to secret services on a silver platter. I think this is a problem, but from the point of view of the intelligence services, it's a wonderful development.”

Spionage: Doelwit Brussel by Kristof Clerix is published in Dutch by Manteau

► www.targetbrussels.be

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air travel
► BMI Regional

British airline BMI Regional is to stop flights between Antwerp and Manchester from 29 November, a year after the route was reopened. The route is served twice a day but numbers have fallen sharply since the start of last year, when an average of 2,500 passengers flew the route every month.

Baggage ► Swissport

Baggage handler Swissport has lost its contract to service Brussels Airlines freight, it was announced. The airline, which will work with WFS from next year, said the decision was not linked to the lengthy strike by Swissport employees earlier this year. Swissport retains the contract for passenger baggage.

Brewing
► Belgian Brewers

The Belgian Brewers federation has joined organisations representing the food services industry to call on the government to lower excise duties on beer. The measure is aimed at helping stimulate the sale of beer, which is in decline at home. The federations also want the government to examine the impact of a possible reduction in VAT.

Chemicals
► Tessenderlo

Talks between management and unions at Tessenderlo Chemie in Ham, Limburg province, have been put off for an indeterminate time while strike action continues. Unions are protesting at restructuring plans that put 170 of the plant's 506 jobs at risk. Talks will resume when the union suspends its action, a spokesperson said.

Telecoms
► Belgacom

Internet service providers Belgacom, Telenet and Voo have expressed satisfaction at the intervention by the finance ministry in a legal case brought against the companies by authors' rights organisation Sabam. Sabam was trying to claim a levy to compensate the owners of music and films that customers can download from the internet. The ministry has asked Sabam to drop the case, on pain of a penalty of €100,000 a day.

Wind power
► Electrawinds

Paul Desender is the new chairman of wind energy provider Electrawinds, replacing Jo Cornu, who leaves to become CEO of the rail authority NMBS. Desender's brother Luc is CEO of the company.

Sanoma sells Belgian titles

The company wants to concentrate on Finnish and Dutch markets

Alan Hope

The Finnish media company Sanoma has announced it is seeking a buyer for its Belgian magazines, to allow the company to concentrate on Finnish and Dutch markets. Sanoma's portfolio includes magazines such as *Marie Claire*, *Libelle*, *Vitaya*, *Story* and *Flair*, specialist websites and a 33% share in De Vijver Media, which owns TV production house Woestijnvis, TV channels VIER and VIJF and *Humo* magazine.

According to Aimé Van Hecke, CEO of Sanoma Media België (SMB), the decision will not lead directly to job losses. "All options are open," she said. Those range from individual sell-offs and joint ventures to a complete sell-out of the local properties. Job



losses could follow, depending on the disposal of individual titles. In the Netherlands, where Sanoma is also undergoing restructuring, anywhere from

500 to 1,600 job losses are being predicted. De Vijver is also one-third owned by Corelio, which publishes *Flanders Today*, and by partners Wouter Vandenhaute and Erik Watté.

Unions are asking for job security from Sanoma and from any future buyers. The unions are working on the principle that the holding will be split up – the most likely scenario given the diversity of properties. The magazine division seems likely to be sold to more than one buyer.

Corelio CEO Luc Missorten said last week that the company would wait and see. "Our opinion will be formed on the basis of the proposals that are put on the table," he said, asked if Corelio would consider increasing its stake in De Vijver.

Toerisme Vlaanderen expects an increase in visitor figures

The region's tourist agency expects figures for foreign travellers coming to Flanders and Brussels last week during the autumn school holiday to be 10% more than last year. The organisation expects incoming figures, which still had to be calculated as *Flanders Today* went to press, to total 670,000 travellers, made up of 307,000 Belgians and the rest from abroad.

About one in three of those from abroad usually come from France, with the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in second and third place. A large part of the increase comes from Germany, as this year's autumn vacation coincides in Flanders and some German regions. The estimates are the result of a new modelling system developed for Toerisme Vlaanderen earlier this year. The figures only count overnight stays – so day-trippers to the coast, the capital or the art cities, for instance, are not included. Overnight guests are expected to have spent €75 last week, the organisation said. AH



Sixty-seven kilos of cocaine found in port of Zeebrugge

Police and customs officers in Zeebrugge discovered a shipment of 67 kilograms of cocaine on a ship carrying fruit juice and pulp from Brazil. The drugs, which should have been carried on to Ghent, have a street value of about €3 million.

The ship, flying under the flag of Liberia, was inspected immediately on arrival in Zeebrugge, suggesting customs were acting on intelligence. The drugs were found in several cabins and the forward bow. Three men of Chilean nationality were arrested and are in custody in Bruges. Last month a truck driver handed in 1.7kg of cocaine he discovered in his truck to police in Zeebrugge. The driver was travelling from Rotterdam with a load of banana pulp. AH

Flemish universities sign new contracts in Brazil

Education minister Pascal Smet has come back from Brazil with a series of new agreements signed with Brazilian university authorities. Smet travelled to Brazil with a delegation of Flemish university leaders on a week-long mission to promote student exchange schemes and the development of innovative research programmes. Smet noted that this was the first time that all the Flemish universities had taken part in a joint mission. He added that this had produced positive results. "We not only

have a deal to co-operate with university research organisations but also for exchanges in adult education," he said. The governor of the Brazilian federal district of Brasilia is due travel to Flanders on 8 November on a reciprocal visit.

Smet also made the surprise announcement that he plans to move to Brazil when he leaves politics in 2018. "My ambition is to work hard for the next five years and then move to Brazil with my partner to realise our dream: to open a B&B." Derek Blyth



Flemish education minister Pascal Smet visits the Mane Garrincha football stadium in Brasilia, Brazil

Brussels Airlines scores badly in climate ratings

Brussels Airlines has been rated 121 of 188 international airlines for its climate-friendliness. The ratings were published last week by the German climate-protection group Atmosfair and are based on airlines' carbon dioxide emissions, or carbon footprint. For years now, Atmosfair points out, car drivers have been able to inform themselves about the carbon performance of cars, while airline passengers could not.

The research produced some unexpected results. Top of the class is Tunisair Express, which has a fleet of only four planes and which operates only to Tunisia, Italy, Malta and Libya. Their small size, however, acts in their favour as airlines are rated on overall performance, not by individual routes. Also performing well are charter airlines, like TUIFly and Condor, which are able to operate at



almost full capacity at times when routes are most popular, thus increasing their fuel efficiency; a plane full of passengers is more efficient than one with empty seats. Charter airlines also do without first class and business class, which means they can fit more seats into each plane.

Brussels Airlines achieves a higher ranking in separate categories: number 111 for medium-haul flights, and number 89 for long-haul flights more than 3,800 km. However, the number of airlines in that group is smaller. The company's overall ratings put it in efficiency class G – the lowest. No airline made it into class A, though Belgium's neighbours fared far better: Air France at 21; Alitalia at 22; KLM at 28; Lufthansa at 67; British Airways at 83.

Low-cost airlines like Ryanair are not included in the rankings because of their special situation: By receiving subsidies, they offer low prices that create flights where otherwise there would be none. Rated apart, the low-cost airlines fall into the efficiency classes B, C and D, with Ryanair in class B. AH

Contact lens of the future

Flemish doctoral student could solve some of sight's biggest challenges

Alan Hope

TED talks aim to be entertaining, so little hard science is usually involved. It was a surprise, then, during last summer's TEDxGhent to suddenly be confronted by what seems like science fiction. In a gripping talk, Jelle De Smet described his dream for a smart contact lens.

De Smet is a doctoral student at Ghent University's Centre for Microsystems Technology. The lab is affiliated with imec, the multidisciplinary innovation centre based in Leuven that specialises in nanotechnology. In his lab in Ghent's sprawling Technology Park, he showed me the fruits of his labour.

"The idea of a smart contact lens fits in with the new trend of wearable technologies, like Google Glass – new hardware devices that allow you to interact more closely or access information in a new way," he says. Google Glass is a device with a lens that is worn on the head and has the ability to send messages, take photos and access other technologies just like a smartphone, hands free through voice commands.

"Although Google Glass is only in development, it's almost certainly



Jelle De Smet's "smart contact lens" takes Google Glass one step further

needed new technologies," explains De Smet. This is a lens with a dollar sign, and when you put it in your eye you can ... not see it, actually. That's the tricky part at this point. You can't see the image clearly because it's below the minimum focal length of the lens in your eye. We're working on that."

As well as the display, the lens has a solar cell for power, a battery for when sunlight is not available, a sensor, a controller chip and an antenna – all fitted into the form of

existing technologies into the lens in a way that can be manufactured on an industrial scale, "as well as testing for reliability and bio-compatibility to make sure nothing leaks out and nothing leaks in".

The road to the smart contact lens is like a chart of evolution: How a simple "organism" like the dollar sign grows into a wearable technology is a progress of small steps, rather than one epiphany. The next step on that road is an artificial iris, for people suffering from aniridia, a condition that can be congenital or the result of trauma. Iris implants already exist, but this one is adaptive: It reacts to light, opening and closing exactly as the iris in your eye does. The display for the artificial iris is a series of concentric lines that can be dark or light, allowing a chip to determine exactly how much light enters the eye, based on the reading of a solar cell, which acts as both sensor and power source.

"We only need three components, and those are likely to be organic components, made of organic polymers," says De Smet. "The big advantage is they're very cheap. They're not as high-performance, but you can actually use a 3D printer to print out this technology. It could also work as adaptable sunglass lenses. If it could be made cheaply enough, it could become a

consumer product."

Also already under development is an active multifocal lens for people with presbyopia, a condition in which the lens of the eye loses elasticity with age and becomes less able to focus over short distances. The active multifocal lens will be able to determine what the wearer is focusing on and adjust accordingly, making it just as easy to read a book as to go to the movies. It's exactly that sensing capability, however, that presents the greatest research challenge.

"I compare it to putting a man on the moon," De Smet says. "That was a highly ambitious target, and it needed a lot of research and resources and time. In the end, they managed it, but what is also important about that achievement is that, in the process, they developed a lot of spin-off technologies. They not only created the technology to put a man on the moon, but they developed smoke detectors, they developed Styrofoam and all kinds of sensors that came through to the mainstream market."

De Smet's goal is no less than that. "We want to keep working towards this contact lens display because it's an interesting idea, but, in the meantime, we want to create spin-off technologies that have a value of their own."

"It took a lot of work because we needed new technologies"

going to get here," continues De Smet. "Not everyone likes it, and it will depend on the situation how it will be used; but I believe this will become a normal, everyday device, especially in professional situations." De Smet's work will go further still, putting the technology of Google Glass right on your eyeball. The first prototype is a curved LCD display showing a dollar sign. It's a joke based on cartoon characters, just simple enough to test the principle. "It took a lot of work because we

a contact lens.

"We're talking about maybe 200 microns for the thickness of the whole lens," explains De Smet. "That's about one-fifth of a millimetre. A normal lens is 100 to 150 microns, while a human hair is 60 microns. So every component is likely to have a thickness of only about 10-14 microns, or about one-hundredth of a millimetre, one-quarter of the thickness of a human hair."

The big challenge for his team at the moment is to find a way to integrate

Research vessel Belgica will retire in four years

The oceanographic research vessel Belgica, owned by the Belgian Science Policy Office (Belspo), will monitor the quality of the North Sea for a further four years and will then be replaced. The ship has served as a floating laboratory for European universities and scientific institutes for 29 years and is normally out at sea Mondays through Fridays. But this year it has been docked for a total of four weeks because of technical problems. With considerable investments, the Belgica can be kept in a seaworthy state until the beginning of 2017, when the maintenance contract finishes. In 2009, a feasibility study commissioned by Belspo recommended replacing the Belgica rather than simply updating it. The Federal Council of Ministers recently approved a research project for the construction of a new vessel by 2017.

Until 1984, environmental monitoring of the North Sea was carried out by a Belgian navy ship,



which wasn't adequately equipped for the job. Today the Belgian navy provides the Belgica crew and also takes care of operations and moorage in Zeebrugge, the vessel's home port. The Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM), a department

of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, manages the ship and its scientific equipment.

Originally, the Belgica's oceanographic research tasks were limited – monitoring water quality, for example. But its expertise has greatly increased over the years. Since 2003, the Belgica has researched the conditions for the installation of wind farms and the extraction of sand from seabeds for building materials, while also investigating the effects of both operations. And the EU's Eurofleets project has enabled institutions from all over Europe to apply as members of the crew.

MUMM spokesperson Sigrid Maebe hopes that the new vessel will be larger, so that it can stay at sea longer. Among other technical requirement for the new ship, she mentions a silent motor, needed for seismic research projects. **Andy Furniere**

www.mumm.ac.be

WEEK IN INNOVATION

KUL team wins first Malou Malou Prize

A team at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) has received the Malou Malou Prize for research into the movement problems of Parkinson's patients. The prize, worth €100,000, is being awarded for the first time by the Malou Malou Fund, which is managed by the Brussels-based King Baudouin Foundation. The prize will be granted every two years for a scientific contribution that improves the quality of life for patients with a brain disorder. The winning Neuromotor Rehabilitation Research Group examines the mechanisms behind the so-called "freezing of gait" phenomenon, when patients are suddenly not able to take a step. The KU Leuven team will establish a rehabilitation approach.

Flemish partners develop new tuberculosis test

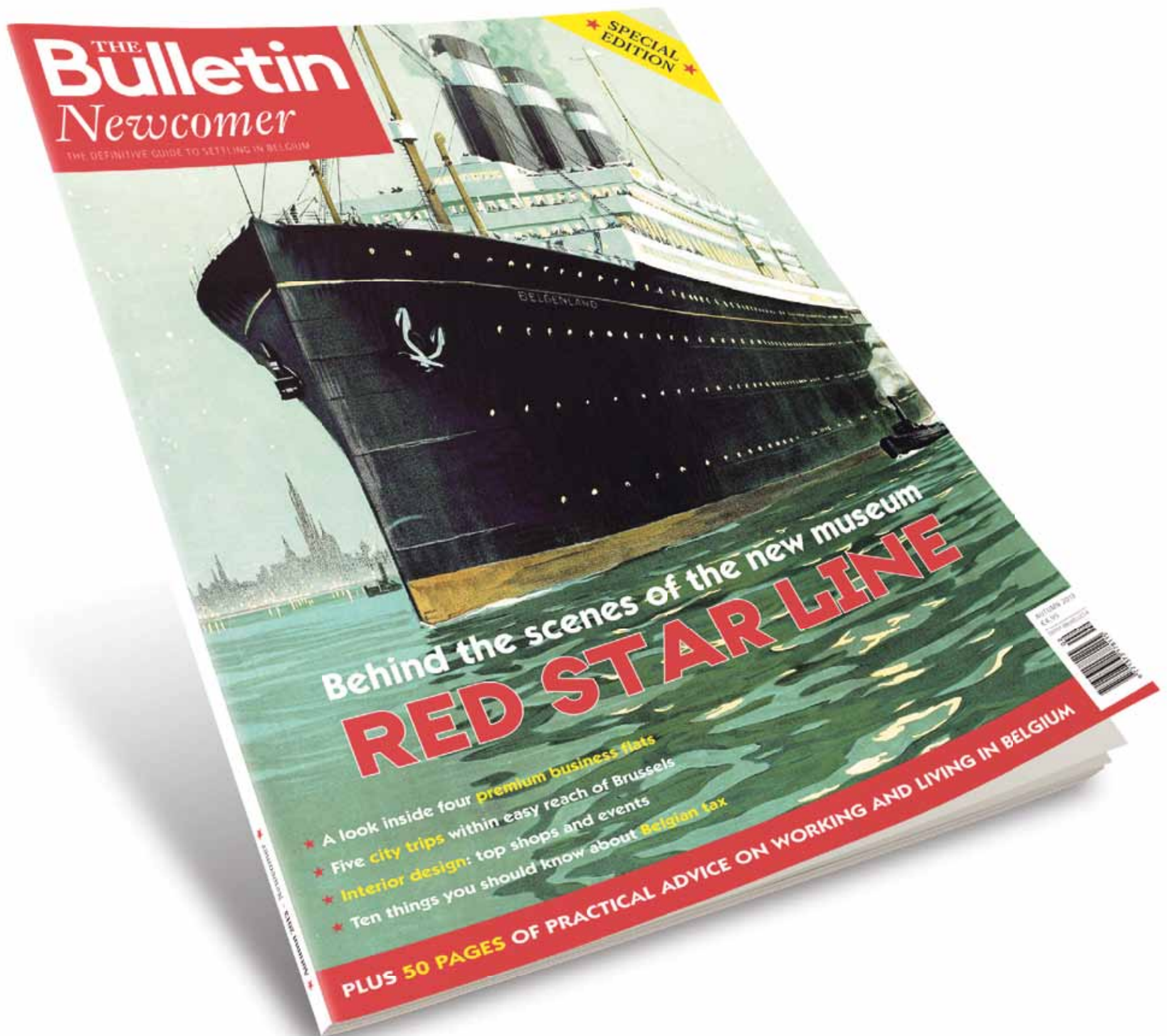
Ghent medical instrument developer Trinean, Ghent University and nanotech research centre imec from Leuven are three of the six partners in the international "Pocket" project. The consortium is developing an inexpensive, pocket-sized test to detect tuberculosis, meant particularly for use in developing countries. The project runs for three years and has received funding of €2.6 million from the European Union.

With the new test, mainly consisting of a silicon nitride chip and diagnostic antibodies, doctors can accurately detect tuberculosis in urine. Current tests are either costly or lack the required sensitivity.

Elia plans ambitious offshore grid

Energy grid manager Elia wants to construct the necessary infrastructure to transport the energy from offshore wind farms to land. Elia first plans to build two high-voltage substations in the North Sea. Four of the seven planned wind farms at the coast will be connected to these electrical junctions. This Belgian Offshore Grid (BOG) will be installed in 2016 and 2017, when the four wind farms become operational. By building a new high-voltage substation in Zeebrugge and a connection over 45 kilometres to Zomergem (dubbed "Stevin"), the energy produced at sea could be transported to the interior. There are, however, appeals against the Stevin project pending at the Council of State. **AF**

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Latin under threat

VUB budget cuts prompt debate about future of classical studies in Flanders

Andy Furniere

Impending budget cuts are threatening the future of Latin and classical studies at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). If VUB administrators stick to their guns, this will make Ghent University (UGent) and the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) the only Flemish institutions of higher education to offer Latin courses. And their enrolment numbers, too, have been dwindling.

In response, VUB professor Christian Laes, whose own contract at the university is at stake, started the online petition “Quo vadis? Free University of Brussels without Latin?”

“This is not just a protest against the ending of my own contract,” says Laes, also chairman of the umbrella group Classica Vlaanderen. “It is a call to preserve the attention for the roots of our Western civilisation.”

In the space of three weeks, 3,450 people signed the petition. Laes says that Classica Vlaanderen is preparing further actions. His main goal is to safeguard one Latin professorship at the university in the long term. He hopes that the petition and the media attention it has drawn will lead the VUB to reconsider its decision.

But according to VUB spokesperson Sicco Wittermans that is unlikely to happen. Wittermans says that the university decision is definitive



and that it will be confirmed by the Board of Directors later this month. He says that the budget cuts are unavoidable and that the VUB is focusing on improving its international appeal by, for example, its new academic language centre ACTo, which opened last month.

The Latin programme at the VUB has been eroding for some time. This year, Laes taught just seven students in the Master and third Bachelor year combined. Among them were a teacher and a musicologist who wanted extra training.

This summer, the university announced that the faculty of arts and philosophy would have to save

€250,000 over the next four years, and that two retiring professors in classical studies would not be replaced. But according to the plans made public a few weeks ago, there's more.

Laes' contract will also not be extended. This means that by October of 2015, the VUB will no longer offer courses – not even introductory ones – involving Latin or Ancient Greek. Most topics relating to classical culture will also be dropped from the curriculum.

According to Laes, who also teaches at the University of Antwerp, the advantages of classical studies are *legio*. “They are like a gateway

to discover the origins of, among others, our Western justice system and artistic culture,” he says, adding that Latin comprehension helps to learn other languages and improves learning methods and problem-solving skills.

UGent and KU Leuven also offer Latin studies, but the interest has also waned. In 2006-2007, 152 classical students were enrolled at KU Leuven, compared to 104 this year. At UGent, their numbers decreased from 112 to 100 over the same period. “This downward trend is not very significant when put into a long-term perspective,” responds Laes.

Meanwhile, the number of students taking Latin at the secondary-school level has remained steady at about 40,000 across Flanders. This is why some experts in fact foresee a shortage of Latin teachers as baby-boomer professors begin to retire over the next few years.

Laes also doesn't think that pushing science studies will lead to a decreased interest in Latin. “For example, research shows that students in Latin-Sciences tracks in secondary schools have very good graduation chances,” he says. “Science and Latin don't stand in opposition to one another; they are compatible.”

► www.classicavlaanderen.be

HoGent moving its nerve centre to heart of city

University College Ghent (HoGent) is getting ready to pack its bags and move its royal conservatory library, central administration staff and school headquarters to the very heart of Ghent.

By the end of 2014, those departments will be moved into the former National Bank building, erected in 1905 in a monumental, neoclassical style. Adjacent to it is the impressive-looking bank president's house. This concrete extension, added in the 1980s and a topic of controversy, was recently demolished in preparation for the HoGent move.

After the introduction of the euro across the EU in 2002, the administration of the National Bank



gradually decreased. The building soon became too large for the East Flemish branch, although a dozen National Bank employees would continue to work there until 2010.

Putting €3.5 million on the table during a public auction, HoGent bought the building in 2008. The building sports a surface area of

6,260 square metres and is located on the Bisdomplein, next to the castle of Geraard de Duivelsteen and a stone's throw from Sint-Baafs Cathedral.

The central administration of HoGent is currently situated just outside the city centre in leased buildings on the Kortrijksesteenweg. The Ghent architect firm Bilquin Serck Architecten will design the new headquarters.

The National Bank building includes a large ground-floor safe, which will be converted to house the valuable art library of the Royal Conservatory of Ghent. The school's central seat – where about 100 staff members will work – will be installed next

to the library. The building will also include space for an auditorium to host classes and events for up to 100 people.

The school's central administration staff will be housed on the first floor. For the upper floor, HoGent has plans for a glass expansion to accommodate a student restaurant, which may be opened to the general public in the evenings.

For the conservatory, HoGent's move to the Bisdomplein means a return to one of its historic former locations. Before the National Bank set up shop there, the conservatory of Ghent was housed in the Kulderschool between 1876 and 1897. **AF**

► www.tinyurl.com/pxl-music

Vlerick hosts event to help expat managers

The secret to creating a positive and successful work culture and cooking up a great recipe are in many ways the same, and success is found not only in the ingredients but also in how they're blended together.

Having the ability to get the most out of diverse personalities, skills and motivations is a careful balancing act at the best of times. Throw in a new country, with its cultural and linguistic differences, and that ambitious recipe for success can quickly turn to a disaster. This is

a dilemma that many expats face every day when navigating foreign customs at work.

Vlerick Business School, with locations in Ghent, Leuven and Brussels, is hosting a lecture to help expats overcome these obstacles as part of its annual series of expat events. On 22 November on the Brussels campus, the school's leading expert in reward management, Xavier Baeten, will give expats the lowdown on the value of rewarding employees.

“I will look at how a company can gain a competitive edge through different types of rewards,” says Baeten, stressing that businesses today have to focus on more than just financial incentives to motivate workers, especially in a time of economic crisis. “What can a

company offer its employees?” he asks.

Participants will also learn how organisations can develop reward programmes that will create a stronger work environment than simply offering traditional bonuses.

Andrew King

22 November

Vlerick Business School
Bolwerklaan 21, Brussels
► www.vlerick.com

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Problems for kids of foreign origin

From 2009 to 2012, research groups at the universities of Ghent, Leuven and Antwerp investigated the obstacles for and strategies of pupils with an immigration background. Researchers carried out a survey among 11,000 students from secondary schools in Ghent, Genk and Antwerp.

The results indicate that 67% of students of Moroccan and Turkish descent are convinced it's important to do well in school, but many of them feel stigmatised there. Interviews with teachers reveal that they see youngsters with Polish and Chinese roots as the “disciplined and ambitious minorities”.

The research was financed by the Agency for Innovation in Science and Technology (IWT).

► www.oprit14.be

PXL-Music rocks on for nine years

The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) has awarded a positive assessment to the unique Bachelor's degree in pop and rock music at the PXL University College in Hasselt, which can thus continue its work for at least nine more years. “We can keep on rocking until the summer of 2022,” declared the general director of PXL, Ben Lambrechts.

The permission of NVAO is based on the evaluation of the PXL-Music department by a visitation commission. The commission was satisfied with the clear profiling of the different graduation studies, from musician to music technician and music manager. Another positive aspect is that the education includes both the artistic and business side of the profession.

► www.tinyurl.com/pxl-music

Flanders to unify education system

Starting next week, a working group will consider the unification of the Flemish public education system. Luc Martens (CD&V), Robert Voorhamme (SPA), Gilbert Van Baelen (Open Vld) and Matthias Storme (N-VA) need to examine how to form one public network out of the current municipal, provincial and community education systems.

Flanders would then have only two remaining systems: the public network and the free education network, which mainly consists of Catholic schools. The next government will decide on the actual implementation, based on the committee's report. MP Boudewijn Bouckaert of opposition party LDD has condemned the idea, saying that the diversity of systems is an asset, not a disadvantage. **AF**

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Winter Market

Since 2010, the Winter Market in Sint-Lievens-Houtem, East Flanders, has been on Unesco's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The market dates back to the middle ages, when pilgrims would flock to the tomb of Saint Livinus, an Irish bishop who evangelised the region in the seventh century, on what is now his feast day (12 November). It is the last open-air cattle and horse market in Flanders, and there are also hundreds of market stalls, food and drink, a juried horse show and local specialties. The guest region this year is the Flemish Ardennes. *12 November, from 8.00, Marktpllein and other sites across Sint-Lievens-Houtem*

► www.tinyurl.com/jaarmarkt

Houwaart Wine Festival

Houwaartse Wijngaard is a non-profit organisation that's in the process of restoring an old vineyard and resurrecting wine-making in the Hageland, the picturesque region in Flemish Brabant and crossing into Limburg. See the vines, meet the winemakers and taste the goods from Houwaart and other growers. *9 November, 15.00-23.00, free*

► <http://houwaartsewijngaard.weebly.com>

Sweet Day in Tienen

The Brabant city of Tienen has long been the centre for Belgian sugar production from local beets. Every year, the city's tourism office organises a day-long programme to acquaint visitors with the sugar refining process, including a guided tour of the Tienen Sugar Refinery and a visit to the Sugar Museum. *9 November, 7€, registration required via the Streekshop, 016 80 57 38.*

► www.tienen.be

There are two big cyclo-cross races over the holiday weekend – one in East Flanders on Sunday and another in Antwerp on Monday.

Cyclo-cross Hamme-Zogge

The beginners race is at 10.00, and the Elite class starts at 15.15. *10 November, €10*

► www.cyclocrosshammezogge.be

Jaarmarktcross Niel

The beginners race starts at 10.00 and the Elite and Promising Men at 15.00. *11 November, €10*

► www.sport.be/cyclocrossclassics

Leading lights

Van de Velde label rewards design objects with both style and substance

Katrien Lindemans

Clever design is more than sleek-looking furniture or fancy kitchen tools. It's also about subtle details that make a difference in everyday life – such as the Edgar lighting range with an edge or the Chromosome intelligent lab furniture. Both recently received a Henry van de Velde label, an annual prize issued by Flemish design promotion institute Design Vlaanderen.

At first glance, the Edgar light box seems fairly straightforward. It comes in a round or square version, with white, black or gold details. "We gave the LED light box sloping edges, which creates a special effect if you place several of them in a row, like in a long hall or a restaurant," explains Simon de Smet of Made, the Antwerp-based design agency he founded with Timothy Macken. They created Edgar for lighting company Dark, based in Maldegem, East Flanders.

"As an agency we help brands with their identity," he continues. "Until recently, Dark's figurative and bright range of lighting didn't include a more discreet option, which made combining several of their lamps in the same room impossible. The new Edgar completes their collection, with a name that fits in well with some of their previous creations such as Gaston and Nestor." Receiving a Henry van de Velde Label came as a surprise to Made. "We're always responding to the needs of our clients – mainly functional items and quite often for the medical sector," de Smet says. "Every now and then we come up with something more aesthetically pleasing, and it's very interesting to see that those creations get picked up and approved so quickly by the public."

Not all the 17 products that made this



A lab table like scientists have never seen: The Chromosome, with its X

year's list of labels are design objects in the strictest sense. Technically, Chromosome is a table. But you won't find it in any furniture shop, as it was designed for Potteau, the Belgian market leader in lab infrastructure. "We're always looking for innovation, from the user's point of view," explains Steven Dehollander from Pili Pili, the creative agency from Kortrijk, who designed Chromosome.

"Lab researchers spend their entire day behind their desks, so we wanted to create a comfortable work space, adapted to all modern needs. We went for a clear digital interface, and all the necessary connections to water, gas and computers are available."

Besides being a very functional piece of furniture, Chromosome looks good, too. "The table has the shape of an X for stability, and in some of the early designs, Y appeared as well," says Dehollander. "Chromosome as a name was the obvious choice, a hint at the

world of biotechnology."

This is the second time Pili Pili has received a Henry van de Velde Label. In 2011, the agency designed Neo, a garden shredder for Eliet Machines in Otegem, West Flanders. "It's good to see that very different sectors get the attention of the van de Velde labels," Dehollander says. "For Pili Pili, these labels are a nice recognition, especially because we create products for markets that are rather unusual for design. Potteau is a traditional company, and it hadn't released a new lab table in at least 20 years. To see their latest addition almost instantly rewarded with a design label is a clear sign of appreciation."

We'll bring more Henry van de Velde design label winners your way next month. All Henry van de Velde Label-winning products will be display at De Loketten in Brussels early next year

► www.designvlaanderen.be

Snap up designer bargains at stock sales

The official winter sales season is still two months off, but you don't have to wait that long to get fashion by local designers. In Antwerp, the Contemporary Fashion Days (sales of overstock) take place from 6-10 November. In Brussels, it's all happening on 8 & 9 November.

AF Vandevorst, Dries Van Noten, Haider Ackermann, Ann Demeulemeester and Tim Van Steenberghe (photo) are just a few of the big Antwerp designers who will be clearing their stock. The sales are held at several locations in the city, but there's no need to bring your own map as Flanders Fashion Institute has created a downloadable one, plus a smartphone application to guide you through your shopping spree.

There's no getting lost in Brussels either, as the MAD sales, organised by Brussels Mode and Design centre, is on only one spot: Sint-Gorikshallen in the city centre. Go there for designer clothing by, among others, Carine Gilson, Just in Case, Le Fabuleux Marcel de Bruxelles,

Filles à Papa and Rue Blanche. KL



► www.ffi.be

► www.madbrussels.be

BITE

Konfijt

Music and food: a powerful marriage if there ever was one. Konfijt is a new festival that cleverly combines both, with a mix of talented young chefs and musicians to make it worth your while.

Despite its regal location at Boechout's Kasteel Fruithof in Antwerp province, Konfijt is leading the trend towards small-scale, more intimate festivals. The food and bands give it a local, welcoming feel, while film screenings (with a food theme, of course) and an arts and crafts market round it out. There will even be a beer and cheese pairing, the result of a perfect partnership between Duvel-Moortgat brewery and the cheesemonger Van Tricht.

Throughout the day Cathérine Vandoorne, the voice of Radio 2, will keep the cooking demos running smoothly, while comedian Philippe Geubels has the musical aspect covered. With their help, concerts and cooking demonstrations will take turns sharing the spotlight. Well-known chefs such as Wouter Keersmaekers of restaurant De Schone van Boskoop and Ken Verschuere (pictured) of De Tuinkamer

alternate with musical performances by the likes of Ghent's own blues and folk quintet King Dalton and the wonderfully warm-sounding Birds That Change Colour, a psych-folk group from Antwerp.

Two of the themes, craftsmanship and nostalgia, will be most apparent during the cooking demonstrations when a group of nine young Antwerp chefs create mouth-watering dishes using simple, often long-forgotten ingredients such as the Jerusalem artichoke and savoy cabbage. A ticket costs €35 and includes three dishes made by the chefs.

Chef Keersmaekers already gave a hint as to the style of food he would prepare at Konfijt, revealing his plan to "dig up old classics". "Our parents' generation was not wasteful," he said. "Their way of cooking was economic and efficient and tasty; we can learn a lot from them today." The other chefs will also take the opportunity during the festival to revive "old" dishes, and to recover a bit of the connection we seem to have lost with the food we eat.



Kasteel Fruithof

Fruithoflaan, Boechout

► www.konfijt.be

10 November
14.00-2.00

In the best possible taste

Week van de Smaak returns with a bursting programme of food and drink across Flanders

Alan Hope

Everybody to the table: Flanders' annual 10-day taste-fest offers a huge programme of events for food-lovers this month, with waterborne dinners, a barbecue competition, tastings, demonstrations and a chance to get hands-on in the kitchen, all under the banner of Water and Fire.

WEEK van de Smaak, like the waistlines of those who enjoy this annual food and drink event, continues to expand. The festival (its name means Week of Taste) began in Flanders in 2006 in order to put Flemish cuisine in the spotlight. Every year saw a guest country and a City of Taste – this year it's Brussels. Week van de Smaak takes place across the entire region, from Zeebrugge to Hasselt, and the name is a bit of a misnomer – it actually lasts 10 days.

This year there's no guest country; organisers have chosen a theme instead: Water and Fire, two elemental forces essential to any culinary activity. Water is represented by the Smaakboot, otherwise known as the Gentse Barge, a reconstruction of the sort of horse-drawn barge that plied the waterways between Ghent and Bruges from the 17th to the 19th century. The barge was a popular mode of transport among the rich, who could float safely out of the reach of footpads and brigands on the road; prominent passengers included Peter the Great and our own Leopold I.

As a result, the barge was known for its fine table, and that's a tradition that's being brought back this year. Every day the barge will travel from one Flemish city to another, with on board a top chef, a beer sommelier and a *witloof* grower, as well as 40 lucky diners who have won a place at the table in competitions run by the Week van de Smaak website and the event's media partners.

These lucky few will be treated to a three-course lunch that will always include *witloof* and a local beer. In the evening, the barge will moor in the next city, and the guests will be lodged overnight in a hotel. The next day the barge takes off again with a new chef and a new set of diners.

A culinary cruise across Flanders wouldn't be the same without beer, and the cast of top chefs is joined by two experts – Luc De Raedemaeker of the craft beer organisation BIERinhuus, and Sofie Van Rafelghem, reporter, brewer and founder of Vrouwen en Bier (Women and Beer). They'll be coaching the prize-winning diners on beers of the local area, including De Halve Maan (brewers of Brugse Zot), Huyghe (Delirium Tremens) and Bosteels (Tripel Karmeliet).

The chefs, meanwhile, are some of the most eminent names among the younger culinary stars. Among them is Kobe Desramaults of In De Wulf in Dranouter, West Flanders, one of the



Flanders' finest chefs on board the Smaakboot, ready to cook up something special for competition winners

Flemish Foodies and one of the most innovative chefs in the country. Others include David Martin of Brasserie La Paix in Brussels, who'll be overseeing the barbecue competition (see right); Tim Boury of Boury in Roeselare, West Flanders, who won his first Michelin star

“A culinary cruise across Flanders wouldn't be the same without beer

just a year after opening; Michael Vrijmoed, formerly sous-chef to Peter Goossens at Hof Van Cleve in Kruishoutem, East Flanders; and Lut De Clercq, who turned the canteen of Brussels music venue Ancienne Belgique into a foodie paradise for rock stars from across the world.

Brussels is this year's City of Taste,

and the Smaakboot will be moored there for two days, at the Beco dock in Molenbeek, just over the canal from IJzer metro station. Passengers who have travelled with the boat from Dendermonde will spend the night at the Meininger, the capital's first ever energy-passive hotel.

The chef there for the two days is David Martin, the Frenchman with the English name who, thanks to his Brasserie La Paix in Anderlecht, has turned out to be as much of a *ketje* as Toots Thielemans or indeed his well-fed namesake, Brussels mayor Freddy.

The boat remains in Brussels the next day, and the Week van de Smaak metamorphoses from the element of water to the element of fire, with Grill Kanal. That takes place in the abattoirs of Anderlecht, the last slaughterhouse still in the city centre. Ten teams representing various associations compete to see who can deliver Martin the best barbecued brochette, be it Greek or Turkish, Portuguese or Thai. Or, indeed, something authentically Brussels. The event is open to all, and the Timmermans brewery would like to buy you all a drink.

But Week van de Smaak is not

all rarefied gastronomy for the fortunate; there are hundreds of events taking place across Flanders. Here's a small selection of highlights from each province, but you can find the entire programme online, searchable by keyword, province or date.

Antwerp province

- Join a two-hour “virtual tour” of local craft brewers with members of the Buffalo Beer Club in Hoboken. It only costs €6.
- What wine goes with chocolate? It's a question that's puzzled wine-drinkers and chocolate-lovers forever. Perhaps Marc Van Seghbroeck has the answer; in any event, it'll be fun finding out. This one is €30, but consider the benefits.

Brussels

- The social restaurant 't Snijboontje in Molenbeek feeds those who need it every day, with a healthy and filling lunch for only €2.50. On 14 November, the regulars will exchange their usual table for a place in the kitchen, where the chef will supervise as they prepare soup, *waterzooi* (pictured left) and tart for a new wave of guests. That could be you for only €3.50.

East Flanders

- Get in on fair trade chocolate tasting in Mariakerke, in the restaurant of nature conservation agency Natuurpunt, with a talk by Nancy De Wispelaere of Oxfam. You'll pay €5.
- See an exhibition on the ultra-local brewing tradition in Aalst, where it seems every neighbourhood once had its own brewery. It's free at the city archive.

Flemish Brabant

- There's no such thing as Indian food – there are hundreds of different cuisines proper to the



Innovative Flemish chef Kobe Desramaults of In De Wulf

subcontinent, and nary a chicken tikka masala to be seen. Vegetarian food is very important in many areas and for many people, and just what that involves will be explained in a demonstration in Leuven's library.

- You don't know what you've got till it's gone, and *Dineren in het donker* (Dining in the Dark) will teach you just how important the sense of sight is to the eating experience, and what it's like to get by without. In Sint-Katherina-Lombeek, it's a full meal for €40.

Limburg

- Smoking may be banned in restaurants, but we'll make an exception for a special evening in the Red Cross centre in Lanaken, where the ancient Russian tradition of smoking meat and fish will be explained and demonstrated, with instructions on how to do your own smoking at home.
- At the weekly Monday market in Diepenbeek, the good ladies of the Catholic Rural Women's Association will dish out soup to all comers for only €1.50 a bowl, or €3 for a litre to take away and pretend you made it yourself.

West Flanders

- Rediscover the taste of “forgotten” varieties, like heirloom potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes, parsnips and betony – the big taste sensation of the moment. You pay just €8 for a two-hour voyage of discovery.
- For €45 there's a vast menu (including plaice, game, oysters, white chocolate dessert and drinks) with a lesson on the interaction in the kitchen of water and fire. It's in the hotel school of the Leilandscholen in Kortrijk, so it had better be good.

► www.weekvandesmaak.be



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“Art needs controversy”

Arne Quinze exhibition shows what happens when chaos springs from structure

Tom Peeters

Occasionally controversial, the work of Flemish visual artist Arne Quinze asks questions about social interaction. From his atelier in East Flanders, he explains how he needs order before he can give free reign to disorder.

There's a remarkable duality in the works of Arne Quinze, the visual artist known for his at times controversial large-scale city sculptures such as “The Sequence”, long in place over the street in front of the Flemish Parliament, and the giant orange constructions known as “Rock Strangers” on the waterfront in Ostend.

This duality is clearly visible wandering through *Chaos in Motion*, his new exhibition at At The Gallery in Antwerp. It becomes even more obvious when you see his workshop in Sint-Martens-Latem, near Ghent, where everything is so neat and tidy, that the 41-year-old's obsession with chaos in his latest works is rather twisted – and intriguing.

“I don't like oblique things,” he says. Yes, this is the same man who makes the most intricate installations with wooden sticks and metal wires going in all possible directions, the same artist who claims we have to leave our rectangular-structured lives behind. “I'm aware of that duality,” he says. “I'm telling everyone to move out of their boxes, step outside the four protective walls surrounding them. But myself, I need those walls. It's a never-ending internal struggle.” He tells us you will not be able to find the slightest piece of litter in his work environment. “Even at building sites, all our forklifts stand in a straight line at the end of the day. It's the absence of mess that gives me the freedom and the space to think chaotically. I can only permit the chaos if everything around me is orderly.”

Trying to explain this, he says his work is about human beings: “How they develop and grow, how they adapt and fail to adapt.” It's also the reason red and orange are

the most dominant colours in his sculptures, “being the most human colours because they are full of contradictions. Red stands for our blood, symbolising life and death. It stands for fire, warming you up or burning you. It's similarly attracting and repelling.”

Becoming an artist was for Quinze a return to his childhood fantasies. “As a young boy, I had this vivid fantasy about how the world would be: open and diverse. But since I started to travel – to America, to Russia, to China – I noticed my imagination was wrong.”

On his travels he began to take photos of apartment buildings, but they all looked the same. The quality of life may have varied, but everywhere you saw these four walls. “If you had to depict this world, you could as well show a square,”

he says. This major deception became the starting point for his career. He wanted people



From the solo exhibition *Chaos in Motion* in Antwerp



“Rock Strangers” has a love/hate relationship with the residents of Ostend

to think about this self-imposed limitation.

“I'm also a human being, so I need these walls that protect us ... But at the same time, I want to break out and focus on diversity, which is omnipresent in nature – but clearly missing in our urban landscapes.”

This is the basic idea behind his architectural interventions in our cities. His giant sculptures – like “Rock Strangers” and “The Sequence” as well as the

demolished “Cityscape” in Brussels – are erected to evoke a discussion.

“It always bothered me that only 1 to 2% of the population goes to the opera or a museum,” he says. “So from the 1980s, when I started as a graffiti artist, I have wanted to share this closed world of the arts with as many people as possible. Art is not about beauty but about confrontation. So I'm looking for ways to lower the threshold for the general audience to go to a ‘closed’ theatre or exhibition.”

As a result, his sculptures are innately controversial. Consider the apartment owner at Heldenplein in Ostend, where Quinze's “Rock Strangers” were erected. He was outraged at losing his seaside view, and the media coverage of his complaints was equally strong. “I was so happy,” says Quinze. “It gave my installation a place in the public space. All at once we became a political actor. That's as relevant as a sculpture about estrangement can be.”

The question, he says, became: “What do you do when you get up in the morning and you notice a strange object in your garden? This guy clearly rejected it because he can't live with estrangement. But his complaints encouraged thousands of others to come to see the sculpture.”

Quinze and his team have invaded many cities with these monumental sculptures. In urban China (they have an operating base in Shanghai), they know what to expect. “The same stereotypes return everywhere,” he explains. “But art needs controversy. Art that's not contested disappears quickly. James Ensor was barely accepted by the people of Ostend; now he's a hero. Monet was rejected by his contemporaries. Try buying one of his paintings today.”

“The Sequence”, his installation near the Flemish Parliament in Brussels, grabbed the attention of the media again recently. Questions were raised about the demolition of the construction worth €438,000, which is planned for next year.



Neat and tidy on the outside: Arne Quinze

But just like “Cityscape” in the Guldenpieslaan, it was meant to be temporary. In fact, this was an integral part of the installation – originally made of wood from controlled stock to be recycled in the building industry. “I hope that by taking it away, there will be an even bigger empty space than before. Often it's by taking things away that people start to really question their environment.”

And then he tells the story about a woman in her 70s who sent

“Often it's by taking things away that people really start to question their environment”

him a thank you note. “Thanks to ‘Cityscape’, she finally got to know her neighbour. I was the happiest man in the world. I really believe open-air art can be an antidote for the loss of social interaction in our cities.”

So Quinze's plea for cities as open-air museums is not surprising. “It will not only improve our social network, it can also stir up the economy. Look what Christo instigated in Central Park with ‘The Gates’, pumping an estimated \$254 million into New York's economy.”

While he waits for the moment our politicians see the potential of city installations, Quinze is busy travelling the world. The near future will see the rise of a dozen complex metal structures, up to 100 metres high, focusing on his recent preoccupation with chaos. *Chaos in Motion* offers an inside look at how Quinze's ideas start small, but eventually become enormous.

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

So Far So Good

Jos Swinnen

It's the absence of fashion that makes the work of the Brussels-born painter idiosyncratic and relevant. Look through his naive, understated images from the 1980s until now and discover an inner, almost philosophical stand. *Until 26 January, Wiels, Brussels*

► www.wiels.org

The Fluxus Wall

Jonas Mekas

In addition to the retrospective of the great American-Lithuanian avant-garde filmmaker (pictured) at Cinematek, this



exhibition mixes haunting street photography dating back to his arrival in post-war Brooklyn, a personal video diary and souvenirs from his pioneering

Fluxus friends. *Until 26 January, Bozar, Brussels*

► www.bozar.be

Black is the Drawing

Richard Serra

The dense, minimalistic drawings of the American artist, known for his large-scale metal sculptures, are non-referential in nature. Using a “non-colour” and referring to anything but themselves, they are for Serra the ultimate attempt to restructure our space. *Until 1 December, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp*

► www.axel-vervoordt.com

Until 30
December

Arne Quinze: Chaos in Motion At The Gallery

Leopoldstraat 57, Antwerp
► www.atthegallery.be

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTURE26,000 visit
Red Star Line

The Red Star Line Museum on Antwerp's waterfront has clocked 26,586 visitors since opening on 28 September. The museum recounts the history of the Red Star Line shipping company, which took emigrants from across Europe to the New World in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The museum's interactive approach, location in the company's former buildings and use of personal stories have struck a chord with visitors, who have come from as far as the US to learn about this important piece in the history of world immigration. "The success exceeds our wildest expectations," enthuses Philip Heylen, Antwerp's alderman of culture. "Our goal was 100,000 visitors in the first year, but with this tempo, the future looks fantastic!"

Anyone wanting to visit the museum this year should book ahead via the website as many days are already fully booked.

► www.redstarline.be

Belgium in Lonely
Planet Top 10

Belgium is number eight in the Lonely Planet guidebook's top 10 list of "2014's most unmissable destinations". Described as "Europe's underrated gem," it is noted for its picturesque cities – Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent – as well as food and drink, countryside, coast and culture. The forthcoming commemoration of the First World War is a major attraction, according to the travel guide. "From 2014, a huge influx of visitors is expected due to the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WWI – a festival of remembrance lasting until 2018 – which may change preconceptions," the guide says. The list is headed by Brazil, followed by Antarctica, Scotland, Sweden, Malawi, Mexico, the Seychelles, Belgium, Macedonia and Malaysia.

Van Leeuwen wins
AKO Literature Prize

Joke van Leeuwen has won this year's AKO Literature Prize for Dutch-language prose. The Dutch author is a long-time resident of Antwerp and once served as its City Poet. Van Leeuwen, 61, won the €50,000 prize for her historical novel *Feest van het begin* (Celebration at the Beginning), about the experiences of two cloistered women at the start of the French Revolution.

Van Leeuwen writes poetry, prose and children's literature and is also an illustrator. She was the only author living in Flanders nominated for the award this year.

► www.jokevanleeuwen.com

Of daydreams and lonely peas

Export/Import children's theatre fest transcends language barriers

Marie Dumont

Two men are en route to somewhere. Where they're going or where they've come from is never revealed, nor do we really care. What matters is their journey, their antics as they tumble about, paint on each other's bodies, sing a 1960s folk tune or sit angling side by side, gazing at some imaginary river.

Zwaluw zang (A Swallow Song) is a new two-man show by Flemish director and choreographer Joke Lauryns and Theater Stap, a Turnhout-based troupe made up of mentally disabled actors. Starring Flemish dancer Kwint Manshoven and a young man with Down's syndrome, Jason Van Laere, who oozes talent and energy, it premiered last February at Hasselt's Krokusfestival. It appears set to become one of the highlights of this weekend's Export/Import festival, an ambitious children's theatre fest organised by the Brussels venue Bronks.

Echoes of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* resonate in this moving tale from the edge. For Lauryns, though, the main influence was the recent novel *Dit zijn de namen* (These Are the Names), a modern reworking by award-winning Dutch writer Tommy Wieringa of



Flemish choreographer Joke Lauryns' *Zwaluw zang* is a highlight of Export/Import

the Exodus parable.

"It's about a group of refugees who travel for more than a year to some unspecified destination," Lauryns says. "Their journey is internalised; it's a quest for something better, a metaphor for life." How do the children's audiences respond to such a symbolically charged and very grown-up theme? "They take the show for what it is – the story of two men on the road, who discover their own weaknesses along the way. Their connection with Jason is very strong."

As unorthodox as it might seem, *Zwaluw zang* is typical fare for Export/Import, just in its second edition but asking a lot from its artists and viewers from the get-go. Steering clear of life's big issues or talking down to its young audiences was never on the cards. Underlying that approach is an

assumption that children can take almost any story as long as it's told in a simple enough language and style.

This year's programme is full of soft gems that speak little but aim high. *H2O*, by Germany's Helios Theater, offers a poetic exploration of water in all its forms. Anna Heuninck's *Kassa 9* peeps into the daydreams of a supermarket cashier, while *Gerrrrrrrda*, by Brussels-based theatre company Endewolf, fills us in on the peregrinations of a lonely pea.

And the good news is that neither you nor your children need to be fluent in Dutch to join in the fun. A conscious effort is made to keep verbal exchanges to a minimum and to instead rely on the universal language of mime, music and movement. Export/Import, as its name suggests, sees itself as a two-way cultural ambassador – bringing international productions to Flanders, while taking the best of Flemish children's theatre to the rest of the world.

9-10 November

Bronks

Varkensmarkt 15-17, Brussels
► www.bronks.be

Italian for beginners

New Flemish film tells the story of immigrant pop singer Rocco Granata

Lisa Bradshaw

Marina, the new film by Flemish director Stijn Coninx (*Daens*, *Sister Smile*), is "based on the memories" of Rocco Granata, who was – if his memory is to be believed – dragged kicking and screaming from Calabria to Limburg province.

The son of an Italian mine worker went on to become a hugely successful singer and accordion player, with a string of pop hits in Italian. Granata's 1959 love song "Marina" reached number one in Belgium and charted across Europe and in the US.

Although the girl called Marina never really existed, Coninx decided to bring her to life to add a little romantic complexity to the already challenging youth of the accordion player. But *Marina*, which opens on 6 November, isn't really a love story. It's a story about a dogged struggle to succeed in the face of overwhelming discrimination.

Arriving in Limburg around the age of 10, Granata was thrust into school, not speaking the language, going home to a crowded community of ramshackle shelters and treated like a second-class citizen. Door after door was slammed in his face, but the young man persevered, becoming the kind of rags-to-riches story easily filmed by someone of Coninx's calibre.

And the director couldn't have come up with a more appropriate lead actor than Matteo Simoni. He plays the teenage Granata and is himself the great-grandson of an Italian mining immigrant.

Making the movie was for him an occasionally emotional experience. "In all my scenes where I have to deal with a Flemish person," he says,



Flemish actor Matteo Simoni had to learn Italian and to play the accordion for the role of Rocco Granata

"whether it was the police or the owner of a bar, it was a struggle, and I would actually get angry. I would think, what is the matter with you! How can you possibly feel that way? Rocco, for instance, couldn't get a permit to play music because he was an immigrant. Stijn kept telling me to play the role, to come at the character, from a place of disbelief."

Simoni's great-grandfather eventually quit the mines and started his own business selling ice cream from a bicycle. His son, Simoni's grandfather, took over the successful business. By the time Simoni was born, there was no more ice cream business and no more memories of being immigrants. "But I grew up in a bit of an Italian culture," he says. "My grandfather feels Italian, and he has that way about him."

Simoni, a founding member of the Antwerp theatre group FC Bergman, makes his film debut with *Marina*. The film is half in Italian and half in Dutch, and his character speaks a fair amount of both. Because Simoni didn't speak Italian, Coninx had his doubts about him.

Exhibiting some of the attitude Granata had to have to pursue his dreams, Simoni headed to Italy. In the town of Tropea in the country's southern-most region, he learned the Calabrian dialect that Granata speaks. "At first I didn't understand *anything*," he confides. "But little by little, it got better. The funny thing was, how I felt there, to be a loner or somebody new, was also what I had to do in the movie – but then the other way around."

That feeling, too, would get better. "I had this fantasy that, after a few months there, I would walk through the marketplace, and everyone would recognise me, and I would know them all. And that's exactly how it was!"

While in Tropea, Simoni studied the script for *Marina* and concentrated on perfecting his pronunciation of the lines. When it finally came time for his audition, he was terrified. But he pulled it off. "Stijn said, 'OK, I believe that you can play Rocco'. And then I went out for drinks." As for the real Rocco Granata, he is alive and well and contributed to the script as well as helped coach Simoni in not only speaking Italian but in speaking Dutch with an Italian accent. Simoni hoped that the 75-year-old would also teach him how to play the accordion, "but let's just say that he doesn't really have the patience to give lessons," Simoni says, smiling.

That didn't stop the actor, though, who found an accordion teacher and spent many long hours practising the instrument. He was determined that his playing be as authentic as his language: "I'm playing a real person, and I have a lot of responsibility to do it as accurately as possible."

Back to nature

Folkert de Jong: Amabilis insania

Until 6 April | Middelheim Museum, Antwerp

► www.middelheimmuseum.be

The Middelheim Museum in Antwerp is a unique concept where art and nature meet. It is an open air museum with sculptures – by artists such as Rodin, Henry Moore and Juan Munoz – presented in a tranquil green oasis just outside the city. In the 19th-century style garden that was added to the museum in 2012 now stands a half-open pavilion designed by Ghent architects Robbrecht and Daem called The House.

The House is the scene for award-winning Dutch sculptor and installation artist Folkert de Jong's latest solo show, *Amabilis*

Insania: The Pleasing Delusion, in which he explores the boundaries of the everyday and the sublime. "By giving meaning to ordinary household objects, I was trying to undermine the status of art," De Jong explained at the opening. "Once mass production was considered state-of-the-art; now it's just a symbol of our devaluating consumer culture." Eleven bronze sculptures, ranging from individuals from all layers of society to still lifes, create an exceptional and unexpected surprise, as the artist confronts us with timelessness and decay as well as art history and the current "anything goes" ideology.



Subtly referring to tradition, De Jong shows us the darker side of humanity, where almost everything has lost its meaning. His sculptures are multi-layered objects that seem indestructible but hide a certain fragility in their textures and colours, hinting at the beauty that lies beneath.

De Jong doesn't consider himself purely a sculptor or painter but rather as an artist in general, letting the subject determine his *modus operandi*. *Amabilis Insania* is an intimate exhibition, hidden in an unusually beautiful location that makes us ponder the origin of creation. Rebecca Benoot

VISUAL ARTS

Jules De Bruycker visits Frank Brangwyn

Until 12 January | Arentshuis, Bruges | ► www.museabrugge.be

While Ghent artist Jules De Bruycker (1870-1945) became one of the most important Flemish Symbolists, it was not without a good dose of outside influence. His paintings and drawings were clearly inspired by the works of his contemporaries, including Frank Brangwyn, a Bruges-born Brit he met while living in London during the Second World War. Repeatedly and profoundly inspired by Brangwyn's

etchings, De Bruycker created works with similar depth and strong light contrasts. Soon enough, De Bruycker's particular style of war prints brought him world fame, as did his remarkable depictions of intricate cathedrals and typical scenes of everyday, impoverished life in cities like Paris, Antwerp and Brussels. This unique exhibition brings together some 60 works by both artists. Robyn Boyle



SPECIAL EVENT

Leuven Climate Week

Until 17 November | Across Leuven

► www.leuvenseklimateweek.be

Climate neutral by 2030. That's the ambitious goal of Leuven, decided after the university city had its carbon footprint calculated and determined that it had a good chance at becoming an exemplary city. It set out three years ago to become one of the frontrunners in Europe, in line with cities such as Freiburg, Copenhagen and Stockholm. For this Climate Week, venues across Leuven are hosting a diverse range of events, including readings, film, theatre, music, literature, exhibitions, workshops, food and drink... This weekend, for example, take your kids to 30CC to see the song-and-dance routine *Water* by Esmé Bos and Bart Voet. Next week, stop by STUK to watch three short documentaries and hear KU Leuven



professor Antoon Vandeveldt speak about meat consumption in the modern world. Sign up to attend an Indian vegetarian cooking class at Tweebronnen, or take your outdated or otherwise worn-out belongings to the Repair Café for a second lease of life. RB

FOOD & DRINK

Weekend of Belgian Beers

8-10 November | CC Hasselt, Hasselt

► www.limburgse-biervrienden.be

This 20th edition of Hasselt's annual beer event promises to be extra comprehensive, featuring more than 100 lesser-known Belgian beers and several completely new brews making their debut. To give you the chance to discover as many different kinds as possible, the beers on tap come served in 15cl glasses, while bottled beers are given with two or three glasses to share with your mates. Beer fans come from every corner of the world for the event, partly because it's a great opportunity to sample a few rare beers that were created exclusively for export. So how about a sip of Toetèlèr Speculaas, Triest IPA or Vintage Rodenbach? RB



MARKET

Retro pop-up market #8

10 November, 12.00-18.00 | Panorama, Antwerp

► <http://antwerpretropopup.wordpress.com>

Every second Sunday of the month, webshop owners descend upon Antwerp to lay out their wares at this free pop-up market. Those with a weakness for vintage will get lost in racks of colourful clothing, retro design, 1950s-style fashion, heaps of handmade creations, eco-clothing, gadgets and toys, organic

products and more. From May to September, the market is located on the summery Badboot, but from November to April it moves to its cosy indoor location, where visitors can shop to the beat of a DJ spinning retro hits and rest their weary feet over a drink and a snack. RB



CONCERT

Antwerp

Gabriel Rios: The Antwerp stop along the Ghent-Puerto Rican singer-songwriter's theatre tour promises to reveal a never-before-seen side to Rios, who performs in minimalist style together with Ruben Samama on bass and Amber Docters van Leeuwen on cello.

8 November 20.15-22.30
at Arenbergshouwborg,
Arenbergstraat 28

► www.arenbergshouwborg.be

Brussels

Moon Ate the Dark: London-based electronica piano duo (she's Welsh, he's Canadian) bring their minimalist, emotional soundtracks to the capital.

10 November 17.30 at Ancienne
Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

► www.abconcerts.be

DANCE

Brussels

Vortex temporum: Rosas dancers and Ictus musicians come together in this contemporary piece by choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker based on music by the French composer Gérard Grisey

6-10 November 20.00 at
De Munt, Muntplein 6

► www.demunt.be

PERFORMANCE

Ghent

De ideale man (An Ideal Husband): NTGent and The Hague National Theatre present their version of the 1895 stage play by Oscar Wilde, which revolves around main character Lord Goring, an eternal bachelor who believes that "a man's life is of more value than a woman's" (in Dutch)

6 November to 21 December at
NTGent Schouwborg,
Sint-Baafsplein 17

► www.ntgent.be

FESTIVAL

Across Flanders

Sint-Maarten festivities: Just about every village across the region will be celebrating the feast day of Saint Martin (11 November, which coincides with the end of autumn), with diverse activities, including everything from parades and processions on horseback to bonfires, sing-songs and pancake parties

Until 11 November

► www.feestelijkvlaanderen.be

FAMILY

Genk

Dinos in Kattevennen: Kids ages four and up will love to explore this interactive exhibition, featuring life-like dinosaurs, fossils and skeletons and an archaeological site where they can do their own excavations.

Until 30 November at
Kattevennen, Planetariumweg 18

► www.cosmodrome.be

Talking Dutch

Our daily bread

Derek Blyth

We are fortunate to live in a country where bakeries still open every morning with shelves full of fresh bread and croissants. But we would be even more blessed if the local baker used sourdough instead of yeast. At least, that is the message that Stefan Capelle wants to get across. He is the managing director of Puratos, a Flemish food company based in Groot-Bijgaarden, just outside Brussels. More to the point, he is the founder of the world's first sourdough library. *Wij willen de diversiteit van zuurdesem zo veel mogelijk bewaren* – we want to preserve the diversity of sourdough as much as possible, he said in a recent interview with *De Morgen*. *Het is frustrerend te zien hoe smakeloos heel wat brood tegenwoordig is* – it is depressing to see how tasteless so much bread is today. Sourdough has been used to make bread rise since the ancient Egyptian period, Capelle explains, but most bakers stopped using it in the 19th century because it was much easier to use yeast. *Dat is zeer jammer, want met het verdwijnen van zuurdesem ging ook veel smaak in het brood verloren* – that is a real shame because, without sourdough, a great deal of the taste is lost. Not that we need to worry too much



here because the bakery chain Le Pain Quotidien sells big flat round loaves made with old-fashioned sourdough. Capelle is delighted with this development – *De toekomst van het brood ligt in zijn verleden* – the future of bread lies in the past. But Capelle wants to go one step further by creating a library of sourdough types. *Voor onze bibliotheek zijn we vooral geïnteresseerd in authentieke zuurdesems, die eeuwenlang van generatie op generatie zijn overgegaan, zodat ze een interessant verhaal te vertellen hebben* – For our library we are particularly interested in authentic varieties of sourdough, which have been passed down over the centuries from generation to generation; so

they have an interesting story to tell. Most of the samples in the library come from Italy, which is apparently where the best sourdough is made. *Het beste brood vind je in Puglia* – you find the best bread in Puglia. *De fermentatie met harde tarwebloem zorgt voor een intense smaak* – the fermentation with hard wheat flour results in an intense taste. Capelle hopes that bakers will go to the library, which is located in Sankt-Vith, Liège province, to discover new taste experiences and take them back to share with Flanders. *Dit wordt hier een magische plek voor bakkers* – this is going to become a magical place for bakers, he says. If he succeeds, your daily bread could soon taste the way it did back in ancient Egypt.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



Visit Flanders @VisitFlanders

'In Flanders fields the poppies grow; between the crosses, row on row...' Will you go to #Flanders to commemorate #WW1? <http://tinyurl.com/pzzm4gt>



FITLondon @FITLondon

#NYTimes highlights design from #Flanders – at home with Michaël Verheyden in #Genk. <http://nyti.ms/1gYcV0q>



Emma Thomson @emmasthompson

Nowhere does #Christmas better than #Flanders! @VisitFlanders <http://tinyurl.com/kjnt56u>



Visit Flanders @VisitFlanders

Meet Matthias Schoenaerts, #Flanders' very own Ryan Gosling. He'll be on the set with #RobertdeNiro in 2014



Anya Topolski

A Plea For More Female Faces of Flanders !!!!! I've started to get very frustrated that almost every time I open the paper to the second page I see a man's picture, not that these men aren't great but really are there no more female faces to promote...



Lisa Bradshaw

Anya, good point! And I think you'll be happy with next week's choice :-)



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Poll

An education conference has called for action to inspire kids aged eight to 11 to study maths and sciences. Is this a good idea?

a. Yes, these subjects are extremely important in the modern, technology-driven world

80%

b. No, all subjects should be treated equally so children can discover their own aptitudes

20%

On this question, readers are overwhelmingly in favour of pushing young people to study maths and science. What, even against their own wishes? It would seem so, since that was the other option – let them find their own way. Maybe because the world is more centred around science and

technology than ever before and most of us are walking around with one computer in our pocket and another in our briefcase that we feel more alienated from science than people in the past. Our children need to become more science-literate not only to make their way in the job market of the future but also

to spare them that feeling of being under the control of machines they don't understand. Whether the children will be up to it is another question. Scientists argue there is no such thing as a sciencey mind and an artsy mind – that anyone can do either. Well they would say that, wouldn't they?

Next week's question:

Flemish artist Arne Quinze says he's delighted when people protest against his works, like "Rock Strangers" along the seafront of Ostend (see p13). What's your view?

Log on to the *Flanders Today* website and vote at this link: www.flanderstoday.eu/art/arne-quinze-order-and-chaos

THE LAST WORD

Hairdon't

"Hairdressers are already going through hard times. You'd expect a minister to set a better example." Industry representative Jef De Bie after federal finance minister Koen Geens appeared sporting a wide swathe of shaved head, explaining his wife had slipped up while giving him a trim

Freddy for take-off

"I'm getting too old." Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans, 69, confirmed that he will step down on 16 December after 13 years in the job

Star struck

"Whether teasing on the hood of a truck in her American-flag bikini or breaking down into wrenching sobs, Ms Baetens never less than bristles with intensity, as if the tattoos that cover her skin are not just rendered in ink but filigreed with raw nerves." *The New York Times* discovers Veerle Baetens, star of *The Broken Circle Breakdown*

Sales platform

"This is a supplement to the usual food, drinks and newspaper offerings in the station. The diversity gives ... travellers with some time on their hands a chance to discover something unique." Paul Van Aelst of NMBS Holding, as Antwerp Central opens the doors of a number of pop-up shops



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