

Flanders Fields garden opens

Last weekend saw the opening of the Flanders Fields Memorial Garden in London

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The Ryanair effect

While airlines claim unfair competition, politicians complain about social dumping



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Drug diving

Heading across the border to get drugs cheaper with your EHIC card is illegal, says Riziv



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Clocking on

As the economic crisis continues, local business leaders are calling for a change in attitude

Sabine Clappaert

Significant changes in the business landscape require us to change the way we work, according to leaders in the region: It's time to give serious thought to happiness in the workplace.

This is the fifth year of the eurozone crisis, and that warrants a moment of reflection. Five years of doom-laden headlines, televised economic meltdowns and mass lay-offs have charted a course of destruction across European societies. And Flanders is no exception: The crisis has left our labour market battered. The figures are grim: In September, Flanders had 229,127 out of work – an increase of 8.8% on the same period last year.

For those who are working, the crisis has meant an increase in “invisible” job stress. “Doing more with less” has become the new business mantra, and most employees know that while they have a job today, it could be gone tomorrow. In times of evaporating security, most of us also face the reality of having to work until we are close to 70.

Not surprisingly, many employees feel over-stretched and worn out. In Belgium, one in four employees run the risk of burnout, according to research by IDEWE, which is responsible for workplace protection. In addition, it says, most businesses do not provide an appropriate level of attention to and investment in employees' mental health.

And yet, amid all this doom and gloom, there is cause for optimism. A group of business leaders is beginning to talk about the importance of being happy at work.

It's a trend that has been visible across Flemish media since the beginning of the year. In September, after one of her younger employees died of a heart attack, Saskia Van Uffelen, CEO of IT company Bull Belgium, wrote an opinion piece in Flemish daily *De Tijd* pleading for the respecting of boundaries, taking time out and recognising that we are fragile. “Being expected to work longer also demands a change in the way we work,” she says, “and at this pace, working until we are 70 is unrealistic.”

Colruyt Group COO Frans Colruyt, meanwhile, said in a recent interview with *De Morgen* that, since his 15-month sabbatical, he has been practising mindfulness and believes we should pay closer attention to our bodies.

Happy at work?

But why are these people standing up for a more humane approach to work in times of crisis, when, at first glance, business can least afford it? Enter the Happy Organizations community, founded last March as a Belgian network of more than 750 business leaders who believe in the importance of happiness at work and want to bring the topic into the open.

The BEhappyday event, organised by the Happy Organizations community, was founded by Jean-Paul Erhard, managing partner of HR network Peoplesphere, and Laurence Vanhee, former head of HR at the Federal Public Service Social Security (though she prefers to call herself Chief Happiness Officer) and Peoplesphere's HR Manager of the Year for 2012. It brings together companies that invest in the well-being of their employees and takes place on 20 March – designated International Happiness Day by the UN.

“I do not manage resources, because we are not resources. We are people,” Vanhee says. “I need fun and passion in my job, and I want to be happy at work. I want to be treated like an adult, have responsibility and freedom and be able to make my own decisions. Surely I'm no exception?”

It is exactly this message that BEhappyday is trying to take to the business community: If you want a happy, productive workforce, as a leader you need to facilitate the



Sea view

The Flemish Architecture Institute gives young architectural talent a voice on the future of the coast's landscape in the new exhibition Wisselland. The radical – yet possible – changes would redefine the way we think about coastal property and the look of land and sea

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Flanders Fields Garden opens

Kris Peeters speaks at the opening of the Flanders Fields Memorial Garden in London

Derek Blyth

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters was in London last weekend to attend the official inauguration of the Flanders Field Memorial Garden. The ceremony began on Friday with the arrival of the Belgian naval frigate Louise Marie carrying 70 sandbags filled with soil gathered from First World War military cemeteries in Belgium. The sandbags were transported on a military gun carriage across Tower Bridge and through the streets of central London on Saturday to their final destination near Wellington Barracks. The soil was then deposited in a the memorial garden, designed by Bruges landscape architect Piet Blanckaert, and intended,

according to the Flemish government, to serve as a "lasting memorial of hope, peace and international solidarity".

During the ceremony, Peeters said that the garden "symbolised the coming home of the sons of Great Britain who did not return from Flanders Fields".

The Flemish government is now in talks with Unesco to have the Western Front battlefields and war cemeteries recognised as a World Heritage Site. "The recognition of the entire Western Front as World Heritage would send a strong message that we will never forget what happened there almost 100 years ago," Peeters said.

Peeters also took the opportunity to announce that the government

was working with three Flemish musicians to create a new composition to mark the anniversary of the war. Scheduled for completion next summer, the work involves classical composer Dirk Brossé, jazz pianist Jef Neve and pop singer Frederik Sioen. "It will be a unique commission bringing together three different genres," Peeters said.

Further, the government is engaged in talks to create memorial gardens similar to the one in London in France, New Zealand, Canada and Germany.

► <http://memorial2014.duo.be>



Kris Peeters addresses the crowds gathered for the opening of the Flanders Fields Memorial Garden in London this weekend

Food banks running short of provisions

Flanders' food banks have issued an urgent appeal for donations, as some locations are now having to turn people away because of a shortage of provisions. Moeders voor Moeders (MvM) in Antwerp, the organisation best known for its work with foundlings, is at this point only catering to those referred to its food bank by an official agency such as the social aid office OCMW, VTM news reports. The charity, which collects donated food from area bakers, supermarkets and producers, normally hands out some 400 food parcels a week. "We get all sorts of people coming here, including those you might not expect," said Monique Verdickt, chair of MvM

and this year's Antwerpenaar of the Year. "People just like me and the other volunteers."

Aside from those picking up food parcels every week, there are 6,000 families in the city on a list, waiting for supplies to be available. "Now that it's winter-time, fresh vegetables are less readily available," said Jan Strijbos, a volunteer at the food bank. "So we have to give out canned goods. Luckily, we have a stock, but whether it will be enough to get through the winter is another question. If people have cans at home, they're welcome to drop them by."

Earlier this week, a new campaign began, organised



by the Belgian Federation of Food Banks and Carrefour supermarkets. Shoppers can pay for food vouchers in Carrefour stores. Carrefour then supplies the related products – goods such as pasta, tuna and canned vegetables – directly to the food banks, without requiring customers to buy the food and deliver it themselves. **Alan Hope**

► www.voedselbanken.be

Holocaust museum marks first anniversary

Since opening on 1 December 2012, the Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre on the Holocaust and Human Rights in Mechelen, commonly referred to as the Dossin Barracks, has attracted 102,000 visitors, more than the 65,000 expected at the outset, said conservator Herman Van Goethem.

The museum is located on the former army barracks where Jews and others were deported from Belgium to the death camps. To commemorate the museum's first anniversary, about 70 relatives of those who were deported from the site took part in a ceremony of remembrance last weekend, which included the addition of 148 additional portraits of victims to the portrait wall in the museum.

"We have photos now of about 19,000 of the 25,834 people deported," said

spokesperson Sara Verhaert. "Often it's children who are missing."

Joseph Loewenstein, a relative of Dossin deportees, addressed the commemoration event last Sunday. "This site is the guarantor of our story, the memory of the past, and the conscience of tomorrow." Loewenstein also called the museum an important education tool for young people and "a weapon with which to fight anti-Semitism and xenophobia".

In the first year, about 6% of visitor came from abroad, and about half of all visitors were students from Belgian schools. The success with schools, said professor Van Goethem, met with the museum's ambition to be "first and foremost a pedagogical project. Hence the link between the Holocaust and human rights." **AH**

Senate committee passes euthanasia for minors

A proposal to extend the right to euthanasia to minors passed by a vote of 26 to 8 last week in the Senate committee on justice and social affairs. The measure received broad cross-party support, although CD&V and its French-speaking counterpart cdh voted against, together with Vlaams Belang.

The approval of the Senate committees means the law is likely to be approved by the Senate in its

plenary session in the middle of next month, which would make Belgium the second country in the world – following the Netherlands – to allow euthanasia for minors.

The new amendment would extend the right to euthanasia to those under the age of 18 considered fit to make the decision and who are undergoing intolerable and irreversible physical suffering due to an incurable condition, arising

as a result of an accident or illness. In principle, the extension is only partial; the euthanasia law for adults has already been used in cases of mental suffering and in cases where the person's condition was not terminal.

In cases where the minor is not considered fit to make the decision alone, the advice of a child psychiatrist or psychologist is required. In all cases, parents or legal

guardians must approve the minor's request.

The final text of the bill resisted several attempts to amend. CD&V tried to impose a minimum age of 15 years; Ecolo wanted to remove the need for parental consent; Vlaams Belang tried to introduce a right to palliative care. CD&V criticised the text of the measure, describing it as "messy", particularly regarding the question of fitness to decide.

The committee also voted on a measure to extend euthanasia rights to those suffering from dementia, which did not pass.

The right to euthanasia has existed in Belgium since 2002, when the country became the second in the world to adopt it, following the Netherlands. In the first full year after the adoption of the law, there were 235 cases. Last year the number had gone up to more than 1,500. **AH**

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€1.8 million

financing approved by Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege for five culture houses: Sportimonium in Zemst, Kopergieterij and Jeugdbond voor Natuur in Ghent, De Werf in Aalst and Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle

€50

for every child in Mechelen between the ages of five and 15, mayor Bart Somers announced. The payment comes in the form of a gift voucher for cultural, sporting or youth movement costs, delivered on the child's birthday

€70.6 million

contributed by the Tomorrowland summer techno festival in Boom to the Flemish economy. The figure includes equipment rental, temporary jobs and €20 million spent by foreign visitors

62

people have donated their bodies to medical science at the University of Ghent so far this year, continuing an upward trend. Donations at Antwerp University have tripled in the last five years

2,777

hours per year worked by the self-employed, compared to 1,434 hours by employees, an average of 15 hours a week or 59% more, according to figures from Unizo

WEEK IN BRIEF

The British investment group Hilco, seen as a potential rescuer of the **bankrupt Free Record Shop** (FRS) chain, has been given until the end of December to operate the stores, administrators said, to allow the group to get to know the business before deciding whether or not to go ahead with a takeover. Hilco will take over the stock and can also deliver new stock of its own to the 68 stores in Belgium. Meanwhile, FRS stores have refused to honour gift vouchers bought before the chain went bankrupt. The stores remain open for purchases by other means.

Delhaize has open the country’s **first drive-in supermarket** in Zaventem’s Sterrebeekstraat. Customers of the new Wink supermarket order online, and the shopping is ready to be picked up two hours later. Prices will be in line with “an ordinary supermarket,” according to a spokesperson, and the service is free, unlike a similar project launched last week by Carrefour in Oudergem and Evere, where a fee of €4.50 is charged for all transactions under €150. Delhaize plans to have 10 more outlets open within three years.

The University of Ghent has established the **Marleen Temmerman Fund**, in honour of the former senator and professor of gynaecology who now heads the Department of Reproductive Health and Research at the World Health Organisation. The fund will support the work of the university’s International Centre for Reproductive Health, which Temmerman helped establish in 1994. Temmerman herself earmarked three initial projects for the new fund: post-natal care in Kenya, Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Malawi; internships for African researchers; and research on sexual violence in Kenya.

Belgacom has engaged the services of international headhunters Russell Reynolds to find a **replacement for Didier Bellens**, the former CEO who

was let go earlier this month. Russell Reynolds is a US company with offices in most European capitals as well as India, the Far East and Australia. Belgacom is currently being run by CFO Ray Stewart.

Transport users’ group TreinTramBus (TTB) has called on the NMBS to **scrap the supplement paid by passengers** using the new Diabolo rail link to Brussels Airport. The supplement – €4.44 now and rising to €5 next year – has to be paid regardless of distance, which means passengers from nearby cities, like Leuven, Mechelen and Brussels, pay more for the supplement than for the basic ticket. According to TTB, the charge is being increased because of the disappointing number of Diabolo passengers. The link, a public-private partnership, cost €678 million to construct.

Clothing chain JBC, based in Houthalen, Limburg province, has been voted **best Belgian retail chain of the year** in an online poll organised by Q&A Research and Consultancy. Customers were able to fill in a questionnaire and gave JBC a vote of eight out of 10, compared to the average of 7.83. Some 260,000 people took part, rating retail outlets on criteria such as value for money, prices and special offers, as well as informed and customer-friendly personnel. JBC also won in the categories of children’s and men’s fashion.

About 30 police zones in Flanders have concrete plans to install **ANPR cameras for automatic number plate recognition**, mobility minister Hilde Crevits said. The cameras, which cost €50,000 each, are used mainly for speed control but can also be used to track suspect vehicles or determine if the car in question has paid insurance or road tax. The privacy commission has warned that not all potential uses are legal and accused police of “using a sledgehammer to crack a nut”.

The number of senior officers in the **federal police will be cut from 84 to 31**, with administrations slimmed down to allow more police on the street, under a reform plan agreed by the federal government last week. The number of executive officers of the rank of commissioner-general or director-general will be reduced, cutting the entire administrative cadre by 63%. The head of the force, Catherine De Bolle, will remain in operational charge, but will hand over certain organisational functions.

An Ostend student suspected of **trying to poison his teacher** by putting white spirit in his water bottle was held overnight and has been released while police investigate the incident. The substitution was noticed by another student, and the teacher did not drink the white spirit, which can be extremely dangerous if ingested. The student concerned denies involvement.

The Flemish housing ministry has made it **easier for people to qualify for rent subsidies**. In the past, those waiting for social housing were paid the subsidy after five years, but the waiting time has now been reduced to four years. The new measure is expected to help some 4,000 families pay for suitable housing in the private sector.

An increasing number of young people with **Turkish roots want to leave Flanders** and return to the native country of their parents, according to a study by sociologists at the University of Antwerp. The phenomenon is being seen especially among well-educated Turkish 20-somethings because of a persistent discrimination on the labour market. T he researchers warn of a “brain drain”. However, several interview subjects mentioned that the transition to living in Turkey was much more difficult than expected.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Viki Geunes

Earlier this month, he was in the news as the boss of the Benelux’s **Sommelier of the Year**. This month, he’s in the headlines on his own behalf. An appeal court in Antwerp has tossed out the conviction of Viki Geunes, chef of restaurant ’t Zilte, for interfering with a social inspection at his restaurant. Geunes was originally fined €75,900, of which 90% was suspended. The incident took place in 2011, when three inspectors visited ’t Zilte during a dinner rush to check staff papers. The inspectors said Geunes became arrogant and aggressive and refused to co-operate. According to the chef, one of the inspectors brought the inspection to an end and wrote a distorted version of events in his report. Geunes then refused to pay a settlement of €1,500, preferring to go to court. That led to the costly conviction that has now been overturned. The appeal court criticised the chef’s behaviour toward the inspectors but ruled that they had been able to check some members of staff, suggesting that Geunes’ intention was not to hamper the inspection. Geunes is unusual among local chefs in never having

attended one of the celebrated culinary schools that abound in Flanders. Born in Neerpelt, Limburg province, he studied industrial sciences but, after graduating, decided that was not for him and went into the restaurant business. That led to ’t Zilte, originally in Mol, where he earned first one, then two, Michelin stars. He also never worked for any of the star chefs who usually adorn the CVs of his colleagues. But he learned a lot from others, he said, along the way. “I saw how it could be and how it had to be,” he said in an interview for mastercooks.be. The restaurant, now perched atop the MAS museum in the port area of Antwerp, is closed at weekends and Monday lunchtime, to allow Geunes and his staff time off with their families. “I have a more motivated staff by closing at weekends,” he said. “People want to work in this business, but if they have a partner who isn’t in the business and has weekends free, it’s sometimes enough to make them give up. Also, I get to make time for my other passion – golf.”

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Oh, Christmas tree!

There was much fuss in Brussels two weeks ago with the arrival of the annual Christmas tree, chopped down in the High Fens in the Ardennes. Why? Because it was a real tree, unlike last year’s effort. Over the years, some municipal Christmas trees get into the news simply because they are so awful. It seems there is almost a competition to erect the worst Christmas tree in Flanders. Last year was a head-to-head contest between Brussels, where the electric tree looked like a gigantic apothecary’s sign, and Hasselt, where the tree looked like – and in fact was – a cone of blue-and-white dishes. This year London tried to muscle in, with a Christmas tree on the South Bank with fairy-lights powered by 1,000 Brussels sprouts connected to electrodes. A very Belgian



attempt, but much too interesting to succeed. This year In Eeklo, East Flanders, they did away with a real tree in the Markt and settled for a three-metre polar bear posing by the fountain

and a five-metre 3D virtual tree. The real trees, 30 of them, will be placed along the N9. However Offside’s tip for the outright winner this year goes to Krombeke, a sub-division of Poperinge in West Flanders, which has installed what must be the most pathetic, tragic Christmas tree ever, a random collection of branches strung up from a telephone pole (*pictured*). It gathered more than 400 Likes against it on a Facebook page (which has since been taken down – unlike the tree). “We had no other choice,” explained Paul Carbon, secretary of the local festivities committee. “Every year we try to get a tree for free, but that isn’t easy in such a small community. It didn’t work out this year, so we went looking for ourselves, and this is what we found.”

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
editorial@flanderstoday.eu

SUBSCRIPTIONS
tel 02 467 25 03
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

Competitiveness

The position in which CD&V and Open VLD find themselves is not easy. Both are part of a six party federal government, which has no majority in Flanders. As the federal government is led by a French-speaking socialist, it will never carry out CD&V and Open VLD's full economic programmes. This gives opposition party N-VA plenty of ammunition, in both economic and language discussions.

One of the symbols of CD&V and Open VLD's powerlessness was the agreement on competitiveness, which Flanders in particular demanded. The agreement to lower the costs of labour was long awaited – to the point that some believed it would never materialise.

As the discussions dragged on, Johan Vande Lanotte (SPA) came up with the idea of lowering the VAT on electricity. This would give families a break, as well as employers, since the index (which automatically links wages to the cost of living) would go up less quickly. The idea was ingenious to some, although many found it rather too creative. If the aim is to lower labour costs, why not just do that, rather than go about it indirectly?

CD&V especially did not warm to the idea. Finance minister Koen Geens called it "counter intuitive," vice prime minister Pieter De Crem pronounced a downright veto. Some weeks later, he toned down his opposition to a statement in French: *pas de loi, pas de TVA*: lowering the cost of labour should be embedded in a law, before any VAT can be lowered. CD&V insisted on a law as a long-term warranty, since no one knows what will happen after the 2014 elections. In the end, the agreement included the law CD&V demanded, lowering labour costs by €450 million, as well as the lower VAT.

The federal government cannot now be accused of immobility. Some observers even believe it to be more decisive than the government of Flanders. The perception, however, is different, as public opinion, spurred on by N-VA, judges the agreement to be too-little, too-late. Also, De Crem is perceived to have made a volte face on his original veto, while Open VLD finds it hard to explain why labour costs were not cut more.

Yes, the position in which CD&V and Open VLD find themselves is not easy. The third Flemish coalition partner, SPA, meanwhile is not to be envied either: The Flemish socialists are accused of remaining invisible.

India trip leads to contracts

Among deals closed are three new distribution centres in West Flanders

Derek Blyth

Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters was in India last week as part of a Belgian trade delegation led by Princess Astrid. He spent three days in the country, with visits to the capital, New Delhi, and the economic capital Mumbai.

The main focus was on trade links, but Peeters will also took the opportunity to talk to politicians about plans to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War across Flanders.

The Flemish region generated €7.8 billion in trade with India in 2012, but the minister-president is keen to develop further economic ties with the emerging economy, particularly in the areas of distribution, urban development and research and development.

Peeters had barely touched down in India when news of the first handshake was announced – a deal between Zeebrugge and the Indian harbour group Adani Ports to co-operate in various areas such as the India Natie digital shipping database. Another deal was signed with ATS Logistics for a €20 million petrochemical logistics centre near Geel. Peeters also continued talks on a major project to build two bridges in Mumbai.



Pictured from left: Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, Princess Astrid and federal minister of foreign affairs Didier Reynders in Mumbai

A further three agreements were signed with Indian firms to construct European distribution centres in Flanders. The car parts manufacturer IM Gears and the truck parts manufacturer Autotech both confirmed that they would set up distribution centres in Bruges, close to Zeebrugge port.

The food producer Zenobia Agro announced that it would open a European distribution centre in Mechelen. "These three agreements represent an investment of more than €2 million and will generate at

least 23 new jobs," Peeters said.

The deals signed in India confirm the importance of Zeebrugge as a distribution centre for auto parts. "The investments are further evidence of the position of Zeebrugge as a leading global automotive hub for Asian exporters," said port CEO Joachim Coens.

Three Indian companies, meanwhile, will use membrane technology patented by the Mol-based Flemish Institute for Technical Research (VITO). VITO is a world leader in cleantech: industrial technologies

or methods that can contribute to a cleaner environment. India is one of the world's biggest producers of biomass.

Praj, one of India's largest producers of bio-ethanol, will use VITO's patented membrane technology to make its biorefineries more sustainable. Indian Oil will co-operate with VITO on a profitable way to transform carbon dioxide to valuable molecules for the chemical industry.

Finally, the Tamil Nadu Water Investment Company, an owner of water treatment facilities in the southern region Tamil Nadu, will apply the membrane technology in its installations to reach a "zero discharge" status – where wastewater is no longer drained but re-used.

On the cultural side, Peeters attended the opening of a new exhibition in Mumbai titled *Masterpieces from Antwerp*, which features 17th-century paintings lent by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp.

Nearly 140 business leaders representing 71 Flemish companies travelled to India on the trade mission. Flemish firms dominate Belgium's trade relations with India, with 98% of Belgian exports to India generated by Flanders.

Questions over use of sewer tax

A tax paid by every household in Flanders for the maintenance and renovation of the sewer network was used by municipalities for its intended purpose, the Association of Flemish Towns and Municipalities (VVSG) has said. The association was responding to a report from the Flemish Environment Agency (VMM) that claimed the money was actually siphoned into the municipalities' general budgets.

Introduced in 2005, the sewer tax consists of a payment of €110 extra every year on a household's water bill. The money is intended as an investment in the 40,000 kilometre sewer network. Repairs to the network were noted as the top priority for the funds, with the rest as available going to essential maintenance first, improvements next.

The sewers are managed by InterRio and other "inter-communal" societies, made up of representatives of the municipalities. Almost 200 municipalities have handed their sewer responsibilities over to the inter-communals, which in turn have



© Impezzini/Wikimedia Commons

to pay an annual fee.

According to the VMM, some €260 million – about one euro in six – was used by the inter-communals to pay off the 192 Flemish municipalities instead of being used for sewers. In addition, another €112 million is still sitting in budgetary reserves. Judging by existing arrangements, VMM reports, another €78 million can be expected to be diverted in the same way in the coming years.

The VVSG denies that funds are being diverted. However, the organisation said, the tax alone is not enough to allow municipalities to carry out the work needed; the association has called on the government of Flanders to make up a deficit of €356 million.

Alan Hope

Flanders provides aid for water management

Flanders' environment minister Joke Schauvliege has approved a €922,000 aid budget to help developing countries tackle climate change, improve water management and increase biodiversity. The aid will support eight projects as well as contribute to the United Nations Development Programme's work on climate change.

The eight projects all encourage better water management in countries increasingly affected by drought – Burkina Faso, Congo, Ghana, Haiti, Niger and Uganda. "We have been working for many years now to provide clean water for six million people in developing countries," said the minister. **DB**

Crevits considers artificial sandbanks to protect coast

Flanders' minister of public works has told a conference on super storms that three artificial sandbanks might be built to protect the Flemish coastline between Zeebrugge and the Dutch border. The last of the sandbanks would extend into Dutch coastal waters off the town of Cadzand.

Hilde Crevits was speaking at the international SuperStorm conference, held last week on the pier in Blankenberge. The minister argued that sandbanks would not help to protect the coastline between the French border and Zeebrugge, but a chain of three proposed sandbanks could defend the coast to the east of Zeebrugge. She also talked about extending the port of Zeebrugge to provide an additional barrier.

The idea of constructing artificial islands is included in the Coastal Defence Plan. The city of Antwerp has also drawn up a plan to protect the city from flooding in the event of a super storm. **DB**

► www.superstormen.be

€12 million for urban renewal projects

Flemish minister for cities, Freya Van den Bossche, has approved a €12 million grant for urban renewal projects in four Flemish cities. The projects were selected by a jury from seven schemes submitted by cities across Flanders.

The aim of the annual grant is to support architectural and environmental projects that improve the quality of life for a neighbourhood as well creating housing and alleviating the effects of poverty.

The projects include the IJzerlaan development in Antwerp, where a new residential quarter will be constructed with links to the docklands, and the Oosteroever project in Ostend, where a new



residential district is being created on the east side of the harbour (pictured). The jury also selected the Tondelier project in Ghent, where a sustainable residential quarter is to be built in the Rabot neighbourhood, and the Thor Park development in Genk, where a disused coal mine will be turned into a business park and university research centre. **DB**

Clocking on

An increase in “invisible” job stress has hit employees in Flanders

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productivity and happiness of your employees. Or as Vanhee's professional theory states: Freedom + Responsibility = Happiness + Performance.

In her new book, *Happy HR*, Vanhee argues that the old way of doing business – in which companies measured the effectiveness of employees according to their physical presence during a required time – has become counter-productive both in the changing realities of the 21st century, which will bring together four generations on the work floor and see significant talent shortages, and during times of crisis, when companies are expected to do more with less.

In the book, she explores new approaches in HR, arguing for policies based on freedom, responsibility, performance and happiness. “If we want our organisations to thrive in the coming decades, we need to start treating our employees like capable adults, who, given the opportunity, can contribute to our organisations in ways we never explored or encouraged with our old business models. We also need to find ways of working that appeal to the entrepreneurial, ‘always-connected’ mindset of the younger generations.” Henri Van de Kraats, managing director of contact centre provider IMABenelux and part of the Happy

“We are not needed at the front to command, but in the middle, cheering on, making sure we get there, as a team

Organizations community, agrees. “We’ve reached the end of a certain logic,” he says. “It’s time to realise that something fundamental needs to change in the way we work.”

For too long, leaders have set sky-high targets, he says, turned up the pressure and managed people in a top-down “command and control” manner. Seldom did managers stop to ask workers how they were feeling. But times are changing. Eventually, organisations that think they can become successful by squeezing everything out of their people will become unattractive to prospective employees and will lose the race for talent.

Bull Belgium's Van Uffelen is leading the charge for a change in workplace



Laurence Vanhee (centre) with her book, *Happy HR*, on the importance of a healthy and happy workforce

attitudes. “The old way of doing business doesn’t work for younger generations,” she says. “In 2020, seven people will leave the Belgian labour market for every three who enter. This means that 40% of today’s workforce will disappear. It will create a huge shortage of talent. It also raises a very important question: What do leaders and companies need to change to ensure people want to work for them?”

Research strongly supports the need for companies to change to a new way of working, which is more independent of place and time and focused on output rather than physical presence. It also stresses the need for employers to make workplace mental health a priority issue. It is not simply the right thing to do; it also makes a company more competitive and profitable. “Being ready for the war for talent is

a process of strategic change, not a matter of a trendy new coat of paint and a funky open-plan layout,” Van Uffelen says.

At ALD Automotive Belgium, a leader in the financing and management of vehicle fleets, they also got the message. “Our entire brand is built around employee and customer happiness,” explains general manager Miel Horsten. “A company’s most important stakeholders are

its employees. If you have happy employees, you create happy clients, which in turn lead to happy shareholders. It’s that simple.”

For Horsten, making sure employees are happy goes much further than installing a new canteen or allowing people to work from home a few days a week.

“Changing the way you do business starts at the top and should permeate every aspect of the way in which the organisation functions,” he says. “For us, it meant taking the hierarchy out of our organisation, changing the way in which we manage to reflect the culture we want to create, decreasing the time we spend in meetings by 80%, setting an example as leaders, giving our people freedom and accountability to take on projects beyond their roles if they so wished. Ultimately, my aim is to inspire trust and create a culture that accepts risk-taking (and therefore also failure) and rewards engagement, creativity and innovation.”

But all these leaders admit that adapting their organisations to this new world of work isn’t easy. “It’s a learning curve, also for us as leaders,” admits Horsten. “We still have a long way to go and a lot to learn.”

The people factor

Van de Kraats agrees: “As leaders, we must stop wanting to fill up the room and learn to exhibit less ego. We must learn to trust people and allow them to solve problems without constantly looking over their shoulder. Leaders who continue to cling to a domineering leadership style will create a paralysed, tense culture. And that’s anything but beneficial to innovation or growth.”

Taking that message to others in the business community isn’t always easy, especially in difficult economic times, they all admit. But when it comes to how they ensure their business stays at the top of its game, they all agree: No factor is more critical right now than their people. “One of our biggest responsibilities as CEO is making sure we protect our people, and thus our organisation, from becoming over-stretched,” says Van Uffelen. “We need to develop business models that facilitate the new world of work; we must remove obstacles, and we must inspire people to be the best they can be. It will only benefit our organisations.”

It’s a huge task, and one that demands a different kind of leadership, notes Horsten. “As leaders, we need to be able to be introspective, to realise that we don’t have all the answers – and that we’re not expected to, either. We are not needed at the front to command, but in the middle, cheering on, making sure we get there, as a team.”

“Just as importantly,” adds Van Uffelen, “we need to learn to switch off our laptops, put away our PDAs and go home on time.”

► www.happinessday.be



WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Amusement parks

► Koezio

The French leisure park developer, affiliated to the French Decathlon sport store chain, is seeking to open an indoor "adventure park" in Brussels within three years.

Brewing ► AB InBev

Leuven-based AB InBev, the world's largest beer group, is in negotiations to buy back the Korean Oriental Brewery it sold in 2009 for \$1.8 billion (€1.3 billion) to satisfy competition authorities in the wake of its successful acquisition of the US Anheuser-Busch beer group.

Cable TV ► Telenet

The Mechelen-based cable and telecommunications group has made an offer to buy Brutele, one of the leading cable operators in Brussels.

Holdings

► Bois Sauvage

Brussels-based Compagnie du Bois Sauvage, a holding company quoted on the Brussels stock market, has been handed an €8.5 million fine to settle insider trading charges connected to the sale of 2.6 million shares of Fortis Bank hours before the financial institution sought rescue from the government in 2008. If convicted, CBS could incur a €30 million fine.

Pharmaceuticals

► Arseus

The pharmaceuticals group, based in Waregem, West Flanders, is selling its French dental products distribution activities to Paris-based MS Distribution.

Retail

► Victoria's Secret

Lingerie chain Victoria's Secret is opening two outlets inside Brussels Airport this month, their first stores in the country.

Shipping ► Exmar

The Antwerp-based gas-transport company is launching a Master Limited Partnership on Wall Street in early 2014 to finance the acquisition of five LNG gas tankers

Steel wire ► Bekaert

The steel wire producer, based in Zwevegem, West Flanders, has made an offer to buy the Italian Pirelli's steel wire division for €200 million. The move would strengthen Bekaert's leadership in a product extensively used to make tyres.

Ryanair to expand to Brussels

Low-cost carrier goes up against Brussels Airlines with new routes

Alan Hope

The low-cost airline Ryanair will begin flights from Brussels Airport in February, with 10 new destinations, the company announced last week. Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary said the move would create 1,500 jobs. The 10 destinations are Alicante, Malaga, Barcelona, Valencia, Palma, Ibiza, Lisbon, Porto, Rome and Venice, most of which are also served by Brussels Airlines. Ryanair has a target of 1.5 million passengers a year on the routes, which add up to 196 flights a week.

Flights from Brussels will be more expensive than the airline's existing routes from Charleroi, O'Leary said. "But our prices will only be half as high as those of Brussels Airlines. And if they bring their prices down, so will we." He also stressed the importance of the company's record in on-time flights and promised reserved seating on the business flights.

Despite a statement from Brussels Airport that Ryanair does not have any slots at present, the airline's website is already allowing bookings from Zaventem to Rome for 2014. For a flight in April, for example, Ryanair is offering prices between €48.99 and €69.99 outbound and €48.99 to return.



© Adrian Pingstone / Wikimedia Commons

Brussels Airlines spokesperson Geert Sciote said: "Ryanair has been our competitor for 12 years. Now for the first time we will be competing on a level playing field. Ryanair is now coming to an airport where they have no advantage. They will pay an airport tax of €26 at Zaventem, instead of the €3 charged at Charleroi."

However, Brussels Airlines chair Etienne Davignon, a former EU commissioner, said the move would bring the two airlines into direct competition for the first time and pointed out that the playing field was only partially level, accusing the Irish company of what is known

as "social dumping".

"Brussels Airlines pays social security in Belgium, while Ryanair pays in Ireland, even though the pilots and cabin crew have Belgian nationality," he said, describing the problem of social dumping as "a worrying discrepancy which the government will one day be forced to tackle".

Social dumping refers to a situation where contractors from other EU member states make use of the EU's guarantee of freedom of movement to put people to work in one country – such as Belgium – but continue to pay social security contributions in the land of origin. EU rules allow

this for the first two years working abroad, and the practice offers an advantage to any country where contributions are cheaper than they are in Belgium.

Some employers pay no contributions at all, which gives them an even greater competitive advantage over Belgian companies. That makes the difference in salary costs – already high in Belgium – even greater. The problem is difficult to detect, as home countries often do not co-operate with investigations.

According to the federal government, the EU needs to take action, but the EU has voiced concern over measures that the government has taken. The government recently agreed to introduce stricter checks on suspected dumpers, with specialised teams of investigators using data-mining techniques to track down offenders.

From the point of view of Europe, Belgium is setting aside EU rules, and the European Commission has asked for details of the scheme and for the government to defend its actions. According to secretary of state for fighting fraud John Crombez, the EU is "sabotaging" the government's efforts to tackle the problem.

Protesting taxi drivers block centre of Brussels

Traffic in Brussels was severely disrupted last week as 250 taxi drivers blocked roads in protest at the introduction of a digital taximeter imposed by the Brussels-Capital Region. The main action took place on the inner ring road, where protesters blocked streets and tunnels.

About 150 taxis tried to gather outside the offices of Brussels minister-president Rudi Vervoort but were dispersed by police. About 50 others assembled at South Station. Elsewhere, trams were prevented from moving between the stops Louiza and Kruidtuin, while buses on the same stretch of road were disrupted.

Drivers trying to enter the central part of the city were subject to long delays as taxi pickets controlled the traffic flow, even in the presence of police. The Leopold II tunnel from the Basiliek



© Yves Herman / REUTERS

to Rogier was closed completely, and the action extended as far as the Reyers tunnel in Schaarbeek. One driver was detained for administrative reasons but released, according to Constantin

Tsatsakis, chair of the Brussels Taxi Association. The drivers are complaining that they were not adequately consulted on the decision to introduce digital meters, which automatically record details of journeys. The meters are meant to combat fraud – carrying passengers off-meter, for example, and pocketing the undeclared income, or charging customers too much. Drivers are also protesting at the €3,000 price of the meters. The city pays one-third of the cost and has lowered taxes for drivers by €350 a year.

The Brussels government says the meters are essential to the modernisation of the taxi fleet. "They improve the service provided to the client and limit the administrative work required from drivers and taxi companies," it said in a statement. **AH**

VDAB looks for construction engineers in Greece

Representatives of the Flemish public employment agency VDAB were in Greece last week, taking part with seven local employers in a jobs fair in Athens and Thessaloniki. The businesses are looking for about 40 engineers to take up unfilled vacancies in Flanders.

"This is the first time we've gone looking for candidates in Greece," said Gert De Buck, in charge of international recruitment for VDAB. "Two years ago we did something similar in Spain and Portugal."

Flanders has a chronic shortage of skilled candidates for the technical, scientific and engineering fields. "If

we can't fill vacancies with Flemish workers, we go looking in Brussels and Wallonia," De Buck explained. "If that doesn't work, we have to look outside our borders."

The employers involved in the Greece mission are looking mainly for construction engineers, which are difficult to find, explained De Buck, because graduates of technical schools are not only low in numbers but also in the level of their training. "It's going to take a while before there will ever be enough Flemish candidates," he said. "Our priority remains encouraging as many young people as possible to enter technical training." **AH**

TV channels join forces to launch Stieve app

The mobile TV service Stieve, developed by a consortium of 10 Flemish broadcasters, will be available for download on 6 December. The app, costing €9.99 a month, offers live TV broadcasts and the ability to watch some programmes up to one week later. The app will be available for smartphones and tablets using iOS or Android. A test project began in February for 10,000 users, with programmes available for up to 36 hours after broadcast.

Programmes produced by the broadcasters themselves will be available to watch up to seven days later, but imported programmes will not be available for review after



© VRT

broadcast because of intellectual property laws. The cost of an American film to broadcasters, for example, usually covers only one screening.

Stieve is a joint venture by the public channels Eén, Canvas/Ketnet and OP12, with VMMA (VTM, 2BE, Vitaya, Kzoom and Jim) and SBS (Vier and Vijf). **AH**

Border crossing

Flemish illegally using European health card to buy cheaper drugs up north

Daan Bauwens

The most prescribed antidepressant in Flanders, Ciprasil, is 15 times cheaper in the Netherlands. And Losec, a heartburn drug, is 17 times cheaper. Paracetamol sells for just €1 and can be bought in most supermarkets. The icing on the cake? Flemings can buy the bulk of their drugs in the Netherlands for free. The only thing they have to do is flash their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) at the counter. It's just kind of illegal.

This is how it works. In Belgium and the Netherlands, residents pay *remgeld*, a small out-of-pocket contribution for medical services and drugs, usually a fraction of the real end price. Health insurers (the mutualities) cover the remainder. But the typical co-pay sums asked in Belgium and the Netherlands differ, with some drugs in the Netherlands requiring no co-pay at all.

This is where the EHIC comes in, as it allows cardholders to buy drugs at the tariffs of whatever European member state they are in. With the Dutch border just a short drive away, cunning Flemings can this way get their drugs for free. The caveat: The bill is sent to Flemish mutualities, and law-abiding fellow citizens end up paying the price.

“It's an insane amount, which suggests improper use of the insurance card

The National Illness and Disability Insurance Institute (Riziv) recently found that Belgians used their EHIC abroad for €2.4 million worth of drugs in the 2010-2012 period. The institute also discovered that 40 people, most of them Flemings living close to the Dutch border, individually bought at least €5,000 worth of drugs in just three years' time.

“That is an insane amount, which strongly



suggests improper use of the health insurance card,” says Christian Horemans, international affairs expert at the National Union of Independent Health Insurers (MLOZ). “We had never expected the problem to be this big.”

Despite the free movement of goods and services within the borders of the EU, Horemans says, this is fraud. “It puts a burden on our national social security,” he explains, adding that the card was only meant to cover unforeseen medical expenses during stays abroad. He cites examples like skiing accidents or patients continuing treatment of a chronic disease while away from home. “It is against the law to use the card for a planned displacement with the sole purpose of acquiring drugs.”

Because no data are collected on which specific drugs were bought, it has proven impossible to penalise the cross-border shoppers. Instead, the insurers' union contacted the big spenders. Flemings suspected of misusing the European card were informed that, from now on, they are to abide with the law. That means paying full price for the drugs in Dutch pharmacies and submitting the receipt to their own health

insurer, who will subsequently reimburse the money minus the Belgian co-pay.

The worst offenders were also told that penalties might follow in the future. “For the patients spending less than €5,000, we don't really know what to do. It might be possible they really needed the medication.”

According to Riziv, cross-border shopping for drugs is not a new problem. It was Flemish pharmacies “along the border that first sounded the alarm in 2007 because of unfair competition,” explains Chris Segart, international relations advisor at Riziv. “After meetings with our Dutch colleagues, measures were taken and the amount of money to be paid to the Netherlands decreased.”

In 2012, Flemish pharmacies again cried foul. They were seeing record numbers of patients with split prescriptions, one for Belgium and one for the Netherlands. “This spring, we started a new and more extensive research project,” says Segart, “and indeed, there seemed to be a problem.”

The Flemish and Dutch unions again met a few months ago and agreed on new measures to battle misuse of the European card. AGIS, the Dutch insurer for foreigners temporarily staying in the Netherlands, is now checking which drugs Belgians bought at pharmacies suspected of bending the rules. In 2014, these pharmacies will be supervised more strictly.

But not everyone is convinced that the Dutch will live up to their promises. “It all depends on their goodwill,” Horemans says. Adding that Dutch insurers have nothing to gain by addressing the problem, he says: “It is mainly our problem.”

The Riziv, on the other hand, is trusting its Dutch partners and is pointing to the European legislation that affirms the Belgian law on use of the EHIC. “The Netherlands has a duty to observe the European rules,” Segart says. He also points to a new European Network, where member states can report fraudulent practices. “At this moment, we are having informal meetings with colleagues across the border to resolve the matter,” he says. “But if nothing comes from this, we will file a formal complaint within this network.”

IceCube detector catches elusive neutrinos from outer space

In the ice beneath the South Pole, a giant particle detector has captured 28 neutrinos that originated on the other side of the universe. Among the international team that built and operates the IceCube detector are physicists, engineers and computer scientists from the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and the University of Ghent (UGent).

Thanks to the massive Antarctic ice sheet, the IceCube detector, which consists of a dense network of more than 1,500 light sensors, was able to capture a handful of some of the most intangible subatomic particles in space. Neutrinos have such little mass that they have never been accurately measured, and they barely interact with matter; they literally fly through everything at almost the speed of light.

But once every billion or trillion times a neutrino passes through, it collides with an ice atom, which produces a blue light flash. Because



it's impossible to predict the exact location where the neutrino will smash into an atom, a transparent material is used across which the light can extend up to one kilometre. This gives the light sensors the best chance of “seeing” the neutrino.

The South Pole is the only place on Earth that holds such large

quantities of clear, pure and stable ice. The immense pressure of the Antarctic ice sheet forces out air bubbles, making the deep ice ultra-transparent. And covering one cubic kilometre of ice, the detector is actually built as an ice cube. It has a one square-kilometre area and runs one kilometre deep, with the top of

the detector array buried in the ice at a 1,500-metre depth.

The IceCube is built to detect high-energy neutrinos, which originate outside of our solar system. Since it was put into operation in 2010, the detector has caught 28 neutrinos, each of which carries information about distant and powerful phenomena, like pulsars, black holes, supernovas and even the Big Bang – precisely because neutrinos don't interact with matter.

That's why *Science*, one of the world's leading scientific journals, published the first results of the IceCube experiment on its cover last week. “These neutrinos provide us with a new window on the universe,” says Dirk Ryckbosch, physicist at UGent. “Until now, all our information came from sources of light. By studying these neutrinos, we can access direct information from outside our solar system.”

Senne Starckx

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Cities form Smart Energy network

Eight Flemish cities are co-operating to lower their CO2 emissions by at least 20% by 2020. Ghent, Antwerp, Mechelen, Leuven, Ostend, Hasselt, Genk and Kortrijk have created a network in which they will exchange ideas to make their urban areas more climate friendly. The Flemish Smart Energy Cities network is co-ordinated by the Flemish Institute of Technology (VITO) in Mol and EnergyVille, the Genk-based energy research centre for green cities. Each city will get extensive coaching on the projects it plans to realise, mostly in the field of smart energy distribution and local environment. Ghent wants to study what consequences a distribution system – for hot water, for example – would have for air quality and the city's overall greenhouse emissions. In Ostend, VITO and Energy Ville will assist the future urban development project Oosteroever, which will identify the best strategy to realise the coastal city's climate and energy ambitions. **ss**

Geopunt compiles geographical info

Citizens, companies and government departments now have easy access to all available geographical data on Flanders and Brussels via Geopunt.be. The online application was presented during a meeting of the Flemish Geographical Information Agency in Ghent last week. On the site you can find aerial photos from the past 20 years and topographical maps from the 18th century. With the info, experts could analyse the historical evolution of soil use and citizens could check how their own plots looked in the past. Over the next year, more data and apps will be added.

Andy Furniere

► www.geopunt.be

Platform supports audio-visual talent

The government of Flanders has invested €750,000 in a new audio-visual department of the Mediacademy, a platform that provides assistance and training opportunities to media professionals. Until now, it only catered to the printed press. The new department will be managed by mediarte.be, the social fund that includes all radio and TV stations plus production companies. The stations and companies, just like individual employees and freelancers, can turn to the platform to request training. The Mediacademy policy is based on an analysis of the needs of the sector, carried out by the research centre iMinds-Smit of the Free University of Brussels (VUB). **AF**



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Ethical entrepreneurs

Network introduces social entrepreneurship concept to business students

Koen Mortelmans

Business schools in Belgium would do well to focus more on teaching students to create social value and less on, well, business. That's what the Positive Entrepreneurs Network says. And the organisation just kicked off its campaign to help business schools better their ways.

This week, the Belgian network of social entrepreneurs organised its first-ever Inspiration Day at the Solvay Brussels School. Similar events will follow in Liège and Ghent over the next few months. With a special focus on final-year business students and a programme that includes conferences, panel discussions and workshops, the organisers want to promote social entrepreneurship in Belgium.

"We want to connect the key stakeholders in social entrepreneurship and give them the opportunity to share their vision and opinions," explains Vincent De Coninck, the network's co-ordinator.



eco-construction, environmentally friendly technologies and ethical financing. It relies on contributions from its members – most of which are small- and mid-sized businesses – and subsidies from the Brussels government.

The Positive Entrepreneurs Network

world, we seek to demonstrate that social entrepreneurship has a potential for growth and innovation," De Coninck says.

But what exactly is a "social entrepreneur"? Essentially, it's a start-up that tries to create and sustain certain social values. They operate across different kinds of organisations, commercial ventures, non-profits and hybrid concerns. While the term is relatively new, the concept isn't. "A well-known contemporary social entrepreneur, Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, was awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize," says De Coninck.

Just like traditional entrepreneurs can create and transform entire industries, social entrepreneurs can act as change agents for society, explains De Coninck. They seize overlooked opportunities to improve systems, to invent and spread new approaches and to advance

sustainable solutions that create social value. Social entrepreneurs aim to generate social value rather than just ever-bigger profits.

"We felt that this aspect of entrepreneurship was rather marginal in the business schools' courses," says De Coninck. "So we sought ways to inform future business people about the possibilities to start their own business according to their own principles and ideals."

During the workshops, seasoned social entrepreneurs will tell students about the challenges they experienced, the difficulties they tackled and the social impact they hoped to have. The entrepreneurs will also explain how they managed to combine social impact with sustainable businesses. And business schools will be business schools. "Of course, they will also talk about the figures," says De Coninck.

Antwerpenaar Bart Weetjens, founder of the Tanzania-based Apopo, which trains and develops rats to detect landmines, is among the social entrepreneurs participating in the workshops. The conference panel participants include Marek Hudson, business ethics professor at the Free University of Brussels (ULB), and Serge Raicher, co-founder of the European Venture Philanthropy Association.

The Inspiration Days website is only in English for the time being. De Coninck says they will soon launch Dutch and French versions. The March event in Ghent will be largely in Dutch.

"This aspect of entrepreneurship was rather marginal in the courses"

The Positive Entrepreneurs Network was launched in 2010 by the non-profit organisation Poseco, the centre of action for a positive economy. Representing 100 companies across the country and across different sectors, it focuses on themes like responsible tourism, fair trade,

is partnering with business schools Solvay, HEC Liège and the University of Ghent for Inspiration Days. Every school will host 12 interactive workshops with social entrepreneurs and what the organisers call "key actors in positive economy".

"By building bridges between entrepreneurs and the academic

Breakthrough in diabetes treatment at UHasselt

Two years ago, sports scientists learned something new. Young athletes who fasted before exercising burned more fatty acids in their muscle cells than those who ate before getting active. Together with this increased breakdown of "muscle fats", their metabolism also became much more sensitive to insulin.

For healthy athletes, the findings didn't change much. But for diabetics, the result could spell a breakthrough in treatment of their disease.

"Patients with Type 2 diabetes very often have an accumulation of muscle fats," says Dominique Hansen, a rehabilitation physician at Reval, the Rehabilitation Research Centre of the University of Hasselt. "Because this heaping up of fats leads to increased insulin sensitivity, it can be seen as a major cause of the disease."

Hansen has just started a research project to test his hypothesis: Does physical training on an empty stomach automatically lead to a major improvement in blood sugar control compared to exercise on a full stomach? If the hypothesis is confirmed, Type 2 diabetes patients would be able to directly act on the cause of their disease, instead of just influencing the symptoms.

Hansen's project recently received a €20,000 grant from the King Baudouin Foundation. Once every three years, the foundation grants an award to a clinical trial or research project focusing on cancer or diabetes. This year, Princess Astrid awarded the Reval project the Yvonne and Jacques François-de

Meurs Fund on 14 November – World Diabetes Day. Over the next few months, Hansen will closely monitor a group of diabetes patients who will complete physical training every day – some on an empty stomach, others on a full stomach. In the process, Hansen also wants to study which fundamental mechanism underlies this possible breakthrough in diabetes treatment. "We'll look for the molecular mechanisms in their muscles that lie at the bottom of the improved blood sugar control as a result of training," he explains.

With poor eating habits – just think of our love of sugar- and fat-based products – and not enough physical activity, Type 2 diabetes is spreading like an epidemic across Flanders. At the moment, 8% of people living in Flanders are diabetic.

"Many people don't even know that they suffer from Type 2 diabetes"

But, according to Hansen, the real figure is much higher. "Many people don't know – yet – that they suffer from Type 2 diabetes," he says. The



Dr Dominique Hansen (left) shows Princess Astrid the tests involved in his research project

International Diabetes Federation has estimated that the number of diabetics will climb to almost 23% across Europe by 2030.

Today diabetes is a largely controllable disease. Frightening needle injections directly into the vein have been replaced by patient-friendly and pain-free "insulin delivery systems" – some involving no needles at all. A number of patients even get by with orally administered insulin.

But when not properly treated, diabetes carries serious consequences. "Type 2 diabetes increases the risk of blindness, cardiovascular diseases, kidney failure, nerve damage and – in the worst cases – amputation of the lower limbs," says Hansen. "That's why we see, even today, a lower life expectancy in diabetics of between six and eight years." **Senne Starckx**

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Changing streams can be beneficial

A University of Leuven study shows that it's better for pupils in Flemish education to change study streams if results are poor than to remain in the same stream. Education in Flanders is known as a "waterfall system"; children choose one of a number of study streams, some more demanding than others. If they don't pass, they receive a B-certificate and can repeat the year in the same stream or at another level. More than 10% of pupils in the second and fourth year of secondary school receive a B-certificate. The study by Carl Lamote, a researcher in educational sciences, shows that changing can be a challenge, but students rebound quickly as they perform better. For pupils repeating the year in the same stream it is the other way around. The research was based on the performance of 6,411 pupils from 90 Flemish schools over nine years.

Flemish teachers at top of world ranking

Flanders ranks third in the world for the quality of its maths teaching in primary and secondary schools, according to a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The region is close on the heels of leaders Japan and Finland. The news came as a surprise to the education sector, as recent studies by Ghent and Leuven universities had labelled Flemish teacher training "inadequate" and "worrisome". Dirk Van Damme, head of the OECD's Innovation and Measuring Division and a professor of educational sciences at Ghent University, points out that the study was limited to the level of teaching of maths. "Where teachers fail is in the general level of pedagogy," he said. "That wasn't measured in the study."

Schools go digital on My Education

Flemish primary and secondary schools have access to the new website Mijn Onderwijs (My Education), a central hub where schools can consult electronic documents. The Flemish education ministry sends schools many paper documents a year, which don't always reach the right people. Notifications via the platform should be more efficient. The site includes figures on student and staff numbers, student characteristics and demographic statistics; reports will be added on certifications and the in- and out-flow of pupils in schools. Later, higher and adult education will also have access. The goal is to provide a login to the entire education field, including students and parents.

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Winter in Antwerp

The annual holiday fair in Antwerp starts off with an evening of street theatre, live music, circus acts and fire performers. Most activities take place on the Grote Markt, Groenplaats, Handschoenmarkt, Suikerrui and Steenplein. At 22.00 the festivities conclude with fireworks show on Steenplein. 7 December, 18.00-22.15, free

► www.tinyurl.com/winterantwerp

"The Night Watch" Tour

The night watchman awaits you at the Menin Gate with his halberd and torch, ready to take you on an evening walk through the darkened streets of Ypres. He leads you through hidden ways and byways, showing you both famous and little-known corners of the medieval city. Every Saturday until 22 February, 17.30, €2.50, registration required

► www.toerismeileper.be

Peña Argentina

In Argentina, a *peña* is an event where singers, dancers and folk groups perform, and revellers dance while enjoying traditional food and drink. The third edition of this festival in Antwerp province brings the cultural and culinary traditions of Argentina to Flanders, including *empanadas* (a filled dumpling), *lorco* (a stew of beans and squash) and Argentinian wine. 7 December, 19.00, Hangar 27, Edegem, €5

► www.tinyurl.com/pena-argentina

Archaeology Info Day

Interested in archaeology? Maybe you found something buried in the back garden and want to know more about it? The province of Flemish Brabant hosts a free symposium with a special emphasis on Roman remains in the region. The morning programme is dedicated to talks by local archaeologists, while the afternoon is given over to workshops. 7 December, 10.00-16.00, Elewijt Centre, Zemst, free, registration required

► www.tinyurl.com/archeo-info

Retro Pop-up Market

The Badboot on the Scheldt in Antwerp is the setting for a monthly shopping event featuring vintage fashions, handicrafts, home decor, jewellery and eco-friendly gifts. On 8 December, there will be a Christmas market with extra holiday ambiance, a DJ spinning retro tunes, plus food and drink. Second Sunday of the month, 12.00-19.00, Badboot, Oostkaai, free

► www.badboot.be

Cool kitchens

Van de Velde labels single out practical and stylish plates and pans

Katrien Lindemans

From the casserole that cooked our meal to the plate we eat it from, we like our kitchenware to look good. Over the last few years, designers have tried their best to make our tools look anything but plain, from minimal and sleek to rustic and even humorous. This year's list of Henry van de Velde labels also features two kitchen-related designs: a set of stackable pots by Jeff Stubbe for Beka and tableware by Roel Vandebeek for Serax.

While some claim you make the best dishes in old pots and pans, kitchen supply shops are packed with new designs and inventions. One of those is Nest, a series of stackable pots designed by Bruges' Stubbe for cookware brand Beka, based in Oostrozebeke, West Flanders. "Beka wanted to create something new and gave me *carte blanche*," Stubbe explains. "I decided to tackle a common issue in the kitchen: the lack of storage.

I know that stackable pots and pans aren't new, but the available range reminded me a bit of camping cookware. That's why I designed a line of high-quality stainless steel pots with or without a glass lid." Stubbe had noticed that people are paying

more attention to the tools they use in the kitchen. "The many cookery shows on television have definitely played a part in this trend," he says. "And this allows cookware companies to serve something new every now and then. But it's not all about how it looks; we're developing new materials and non-stick coatings as well. We'll be launching a new range soon, made of 100% ceramic material."

With the Nest collection, Stubbe received his first Henry van de Velde label – the annual design award given out by Design Vlaanderen. "As a student in product development, this was my dream," he says. "I never thought I



circle. A little black dot on the creamy white china gives the tableware its distinctive look. "No matter how you arrange them on the table, it will always look like they're looking or talking," Vandebeek says.

"You can set the table in

such a way it looks really obvious or go for a rather subtle approach and surprise your guests. The interaction of the user and products plays an important role."

Vandebeek recently took his creations to interior design fairs, where the collection received very promising reactions. "Facing Food is now available in shops; let's hope the customer reviews are equally enthusiastic," he says. "If all goes well, the collection will grow with other items such as salt and pepper shakers."

Winning a Henry van de Velde label should definitely draw some extra attention to his collection. "I rarely enter design competitions, but Henry van de Velde is one of the most important in Belgium and such a recognition in Flanders," he says. "The van de Velde label is an important trump card abroad as well."

View the winning designs at De Loketten, Brussels, from 22 January to 1 March.

► www.designvlaanderen.be

difference," Vandebeek explains. "I had to look for something new, something with an extra dimension, and came up with a series of plates that communicate with each other."

The Facing Food collection is a set of plates, mugs and bowls, all shaped like an imperfect

BITE

An apple for the teacher

Over the course of three days in February, at least 25 professional chefs who teach at Flanders' culinary schools will be turning up for classes of their own: how to train young chefs-to-be in cooking vegetarian food.

The project is the brainchild of the Ethical Vegetarian Alternative (EVA), a non-profit based in Ghent. It is part of Vegucation, a multi-country co-operation that combines vegetarian cuisine and vocational education and training, organised as part of the EU's lifelong learning programme. As well as EVA, Vegucation has partners in the Netherlands, Austria and Germany. It's also working with the royal technical academy Wemmel, where the classes in February will take place, and with Syntra West, which operates six training campuses in West Flanders.

Any vegetarian – and anyone who's ever gone out to eat with a vegetarian – will recognise the scenario: You ask if there are vegetarian options on the menu, and you're offered fish ("not meat"), chicken ("not really meat") or at best a cheese omelette (not especially unique). EVA's aim is to convince the next generation of chefs that vegetarian cuisine is not simply everyday cuisine with the meat left off the plate. "That



© Joris Swinnen/EVA

requires a different starting point, where you begin with the vegetable and work outwards," says Cielie Van Doren of EVA.

The industry is crying out for such an initiative, according to Raf Sonnevillie, director of the renowned hotel school Ter Duinen in Koksijde (alumni include three-star chefs Peter Goossens and Geert Van Hecke, and TV chefs Jeroen

Meus and Piet Huysentruyt). "The demand for vegetarian menus keeps getting bigger, and we have to do something to keep up with the trend. Too many chefs haven't a clue what to do when they get a vegetarian customer in their restaurant."

The lessons will be given by Peter Vandermeersch, who runs the vegetarian cookery school and catering service De Zonnekeuken in Assebroek, West Flanders; and Kevin Storms, chef at Avalon, the organic-veggie restaurant in Ghent.

Meanwhile, a team from Hotelschool Gent has won the final of the competition organised by EVA to find the best cooking of sustainable vegetarian cuisine by young people. The Chef of the Future competition jury was chaired by chef Philippe Van den Bulck, and the award was won by Kevin Renotte, Jeffrey De Cock and Matthias Gang, who will now serve an internship at the two-starred Chalet de la Forêt in Brussels.

"The winners were able to convince the jury of their skills with their creations. In particular, their dish on the theme of The Woods was a triumph," Van den Bulck said afterwards. "The level of the competition was so high that everyone taking part can look forward to a promising vegetarian future."

Alan Hope

The trauma of war

Exhibition shows war's effects through the decades in black-and-white and full colour

Denzil Walton

A double exhibition focuses on the physical and mental consequences of war, from the First World War to more recent conflicts. The Dr Guislain Museum in Ghent goes deep into psychological trauma; the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres looks at medical care at the front.

“I saw strong, sturdy men shaking with ague, mouthing like madmen, figures of dreadful terror, speechless and uncontrollable.” This is how Philip Gibbs, a journalist covering the First World War, described a condition that as early as December 1914 was leaving doctors on both sides in despair, wondering what was happening. Symptoms included fatigue, tremors, confusion, nightmares and impaired sight and hearing.

The soldiers themselves simply called it “shell shock”, and it was initially considered to be due solely to the effects of explosions from artillery shells and grenades. In an effort to better understand the condition and propose a treatment policy, the British Army appointed Charles S Myers, a medically trained psychologist, to accompany the British Expeditionary Force. Myers soon realised that many men suffered from shell shock without having been in the front lines. He pinpointed psychological trauma as its cause.

Myers’ work was not appreciated by the top brass, who regarded soldiers suffering from shell shock as cowards and malingerers. Many sufferers were charged with desertion or insubordination. Some were executed. Others committed suicide rather than return to the front line. Between 1914 and 1918, the British Army identified 80,000 men (2% of those who saw active service) as suffering from shell shock.

The double exhibition *War and Trauma* in Ghent and Ypres explores the perception and understanding of mental and physical suffering during and since the Great War. The half of the exhibition at the Dr Guislain Museum in Ghent is called *Soldiers and Psychiatrists 1914-2014* and portrays trauma through a combination of art and documentary material. Excerpts from books, patient registers and postcards give an impression of the spirit of the times. The



“Beslan II” by Dutch artist Ronald Ophuis, from a private collection

walls.

Some of the artists are fixated by guns, others by battlefields, and others on the bombardment of Baghdad. “We want to show the link between the history of psychiatry, war and art, and Broucke gives a perfect introduction to the subject with a display made especially for this exhibition,” explains Yoon Hee Lamot, scientific staff member at the museum.

Other artists include Achille Van Sassenbrouck, who lost an eye in 1915 and whose pictures reflect the resulting psychological trauma, and Rik Wouters, who in 1914 was called up to fight in Liège against the invading German force. “The horrific sight of all those young dead drove me mad,” he reported.

Also created especially for the exhibition is British artist Eleanor Crook’s group of sculptured soldiers called “And the band played on”. The soldiers come from various wars right up to Afghanistan, each of which has inflicted its particular type of injuries, which have been partially covered up with plastic surgery. The set-up as a military band shows the bond between the soldiers, but simultaneously ridicules the marching music that should encourage them.

The second part considers how the obliteration of mental illness even became an objective to strive for socially – an extraordinarily dark chapter in the history of psychiatry. It touches on how Nazism, as a totalitarian ideology supported by militarism, dealt with mental illness. On display are selected works by German artist George Grosz, who became a pacifist after serving on the front in 1914-15. His drawings show the misery of mutilated soldiers and civilians, but also depict war profiteers and generals in a caricatured way.

deportation in 1944, and lost family members in the concentration camps. His drawings in Indian ink reflect his traumatic experiences and memories.

The counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s brought the interest of groups such as war veterans to the fore. This had a dual effect. On one hand, traumatised soldiers were offered help and were allowed to express their experiences and feelings in groups. On the other hand, the veterans made sure that the general public was made aware of the traumatic consequences of war. This is the subject of the third part: How is war perceived at home? What is the role of reporters and photographers? How do artists depict the madness of war?

Entering this section of the exhibition, you cannot fail to be affected by “The Sacrifice”, a selection of 60 photographs taken by the American war photographer James Nachtwey. “In 2006 Nachtwey followed emergency doctors in Iraq and captured the whole treatment process: from evacuations by helicopter to the daily battle in medical centres,” explains Lamot. “The title refers not only to wounded and killed soldiers and civilians, but also to the time and energy doctors and nurses spend every day saving these people’s lives.”

Equally powerful is Robin Hammond’s photo documentary of various conflicts in Congo, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda. The Dane Jan Grarup provides disturbing photos of the Gulf War, the genocide in Rwanda and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict over 20 years.

“The fourth part focuses on the broadening of the concept of trauma and the realisation that the mental sufferings of victims of rape, domestic violence and incest are essentially the same as victims of war,” says Lamot. “In this respect, the anonymous English blogger Legofesto’s creations highlight the world’s injustices in a surprising way. Her use of colourful Lego blocks captures horrific scenes in a new light.”

The grim scenes of Ronald Ophuis – such as the five-metre-high painting “Srebrenica” – are yet another way in which the exhibition at the Dr Guislain Museum confronts us with the inhumanity and trauma of all aspects of conflict.

He continued this approach into the Nazi era, ended up on the Nazi blacklist and fled to America.

With his drawings about the Holocaust, Jim Kaliski submerges us in the lives of Brussels’ Jews, before, during and after the Second World War. Born in 1929 in Brussels, Kaliski suffered from anti-Jewish laws, bullying and discrimination, witnessed his father’s

**Until
30 June**

Museum Dr Guislain

Jozef Guislainstraat 43, Ghent

In Flanders Fields Museum

Lakenhallen, Grote Markt 34, Ypres

► www.oorlogentrauma.be

MEDICINE AT THE FRONT

At the beginning of the First World War, none of the combatants had a system in place to care for wounded soldiers and civilians. This was left largely to private initiatives and the heroic efforts of individuals. The exhibition *Soldiers and Ambulances 1914-1918* at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres focuses on medical care at the front. It describes the chaos of the first months of the war and the chronic shortages of basic medical supplies. It looks at the most common types of injuries and illnesses with which the physicians in the few field hospitals were confronted.

As the war progressed, medical care also developed, and organisation and relief improved. We learn about the creation of evacuation routes, the specialisation in



care and the development in medicine. A collection of diaries, letters, literature, photography and objects reinforces the sober fact that during this horrendous war, its physical and mental consequences were at the bottom of the military’s priority list.

“Some of the artists are fixated by guns, others by battlefields, and others on the bombardment of Baghdad

works of art show how people deal with war and trauma, at the time and afterwards. It is a fascinating and broad-ranging exhibition, divided into four parts.

The first part concentrates on the “knowing and forgetting” of shell shock. You step straight into the office of a psychiatrist, albeit a fictitious one – “Dr Hahneman” – created by the Flemish artist Koen Broucke. Hahneman’s special interest is the link between art and mental illness, and he collects work from different artists and displays them on his office

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Sea view

Young architects rethink Flanders' coastal landscape in new exhibition

Tom Peeters

The Berlin Wall. That's how architects sometimes refer to the strip of apartment buildings and other high-rise constructions on the Flemish coast. It seems like this concrete strip won't ever go away, forever dominating the 67-kilometre stretch of land that borders the North Sea.

But is this how it really has to be? The Flemish Architecture Institute (VAi) asked five young architectural firms to brainstorm how they would like Flanders' coastal landscape to look in 50 to 100 years from now. With every project offering a different take on the coast's architectural landscape and every project razing the "Berlin Wall", the results are fascinating.

Stefan Siffer, the VAI project leader for the resulting exhibition, isn't surprised. "Today's situation doesn't have to be representative for the one in 50 to 100 years' time," he says, waving about the climate reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "If you go back the same amount of years, you'll also notice a lot has changed since then."

Siffer considers our coastline to be one of the biggest challenges for architects and urban planners because it requires a constant balancing act between adapting and intervening.

Wisselland (Shifting Lands), the title of the new exhibition in the Knokke-Heist Culture Centre, refers to the intertidal landscapes that will rise when the idea of a straight coastline is abandoned. This kind of landscape requires Flanders



The CcASPAR project razes the coast's high-rise buildings for a network of dikes and open spaces

accomplishment lies in letting the architects have their say before their opinions are drowned out by project developers, policymakers and lobbyists.

"Isn't it sad that we can never enjoy our seaside landscape like nature intended it to be?" Frederic Vandoninck asks. This Antwerp architect is presenting his "Verrekt zicht" (Darned Sight) project at the exhibition, which offers a stark departure from residents' and project developers' obsession with sea views.

"A natural seaside landscape has

seaside architecture a quarter turn, so that the landscape can freely move between piers and evoke a more expansive view.

If you pause to consider the current coastline, such a project seems impossible to realise. "In our exercise, that line is already corroded by the sea," says Vandoninck. "Our coastal 'line' starts at the 15-metre altitude line, but this can vary in the hinterland." Scientists assume this is a safe zone, which won't be flooded and will be able to withstand the mega storms that occur every 100 to 200 years.

All five architectural projects on view factor in that the sea level is bound to rise substantially because of climate change. But in addition to problems tied to the rise of sea-levels, the coastline is also being threatened by irregular rainfall, which can cause serious drainage problems since the hinterland is already silted up by allotments.

Vandoninck says that the utopian "Verrekt zicht" could serve as a wake-up call. "The way our coast looks is a consequence of how we buy and sell houses and how authorities here have always

encouraged private ownership," he says. "If you step away from that, you get a totally new dynamic."

He refers to "Diepzee" (Deep Sea), a project designed by the Ghent-based Maat Ontwerpers firm. "Diepzee" shifts the economic activity of a port to a new city to be built in the North Sea, in the process creating space for a more natural development at the shore.

"zip CITY" also champions more open space – not by conquering the sea, but by defragmenting the shifting lands. "We think it's important to stop cities from expanding," says Nick Ceulemans, the C in the Limburg-based CT Architects firm. "To avoid more traffic jams and particulates, we should live more compactly," he says.

A big open space designed for public and community use – like parks or markets – makes up the

heart of Ceulemans' future city. Structurally, his city differs from the walled cities of the middle ages because it doesn't look like a circle; it looks like a star. Distinguishing between communal (in the heart) and residential (points of the star), he builds his city from the inside out and, just like Vandoninck, at a safe distance from the current seawall.

"At first, this new city will look over the existing built environment, but in the long term hopefully the retrieved open space," Ceulemans says. He has reason to be optimistic. Land is much cheaper and space is still left further from the coast, which could help convince real estate developers. "In our example, they can keep doing their trademark property development – assigning prime, more pricey locations closer to the heart of the city. Locations further away from that heart would be accessible by public transport."

The ultimate decision to draw a sharp distinction between residential areas (the city) and nature (the rest) of course remains political. All architects participating in *Wisselland* realise this. "Our common goal is to give the landscape back its original destination," says Ceulemans. "But you can only do that by moving people. I do feel real estate developers are ready to take steps, but surely there will be a lot of resistance from landowners," he says. "We all know the Fleming is attached to his little front garden, even if it serves no particular purpose. But if authorities, guided by architects and urban planners, set a goal and a good framework in which to work, and afterwards let the developers do their job, maybe what looks utopian now will one day become reality."

By the way, anyone seen the Berlin Wall lately?

"The way our coast looks is a consequence of how we buy and sell houses"

to return some land to the sea, in return for a new coastal experience and perspective.

The exhibition shows how "shifting lands" can reconcile the land-sea fluctuations with the residential, recreational and economical needs of local communities. Its biggest

an ecosystem of mudflats, tidal marshes and dunes, which are in constant flux," Vandoninck says. In Flanders, these kinds of landscapes can only be found on the outskirts of the coast, in the national reserve Het Zwin or in De Panne. Vandoninck suggests we spin our

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MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Photographies 1976-2010

Jane Evelyn Atwood

After first taking portraits of Parisian prostitutes in the mid-1970s with no formal training whatsoever, this American photographer began taking her camera everywhere. She paid special attention to the margins of society, and her affecting images of the blind, refugees, amputated war victims and prisoners are all on view in this retrospective. *Until 12 January, Botanique, Brussels*



The work of Jane Evelyn Atwood at Botanique

► www.botanique.be

Amabilis insania: The Pleasing Delusion

Folkert de Jong

After participating in the *Long Live Sculpture!* Middelheim group exhibition in 2006, which ended up earning him a residency at the Antwerp museum, the Dutch artist is back with 11 new bronze sculptures, with both figures and still lifes. De Jong still models his work on synthetic materials first, but when later translated to metal, his images alienate and bring visitors face-to-face with their own mortality. *Until 6 April, Middelheim Museum, Antwerp*

► www.middelheimmuseum.be

Fred and the Cloud

Tom Schamp

After graduating from Sint-Lukas in Brussels and completing additional graphic arts training in Poland, this illustrator quickly developed a distinctive style, mainly using acrylic paint on cardboard. Best-known for his ingenious illustrations in children's books, he has amassed many prizes. The current exhibition at M Museum recounts the travels of Fred the dog and his friend the cloud, Wolk. *Until 16 February, M Museum, Leuven*

► www.mleuven.be

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTUREMuntpunt counts
100,000 visitors

Muntpunt, the new Flemish library and information centre in central Brussels, has attracted 100,000 visitors since opening in early September. About 9,000 people a week have visited, three times more than expected. The building on Muntplein comprises a five-storey library, study areas, meeting rooms and a cafe, and hosts activities and provides information on Dutch-language services in Brussels. Muntpunt replaced the old public library HOB, which attracted a maximum of 6,700 visitors a week. HOB, however, loaned more: about 15,000 items a week compared to Muntpunt's 7,800. "The gap between visitors and loans shows we are more than just a library," said Muntpunt director Ann Van Driessche. "Many visitors come not to borrow but to look for information, to attend the activities we organise or to meet others."

► www.muntpunt.be

€8.5m funding
for new films

Screen Flanders, the support agency for international film productions, has awarded a total of €8.5 million to 10 projects. Flanders will share production credits on these films, which will be shot completely or partially in the region. Each production is required to spend as much in the region as they receive. "With Screen Flanders, we bring more international productions to the region," said minister-president Kris Peeters. "In doing so, we offer more opportunities for the abundant talent we have in the audio-visual sector." Productions funded include *The Red Land* by Argentinian director Diego Martínez Vignatti.

Bernard Dewulf
wins Taalunie prize

Flemish poet and columnist Bernard Dewulf has won the Taalunie Playwright Prize for 2013. The prize is given by the Dutch/Flemish Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union) for the best Dutch-language theatre script of the past year. Dewulf's *Een lolita*, which premiered in autumn 2012 at NTGent, is about a woman reflecting on a sexual relationship she had with an man when she was 12. "Bernard Dewulf has given an entirely new meaning to this well-known theme and story," said the jury, "and he did so without using worn-out methods – quite the opposite, in fact". NTGent will perform *Een lolita* again next spring.

War through a lens

Museum's wartime archives reveal photos both intimate and shocking

Daan Bauwens

Dozens of previously unpublished photos from the In Flanders Fields Museum make up a new book that was put together with the expert guidance of Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren. The affecting images portray the innocence, boredom, despair and horror of life on the front line, captured by ordinary soldiers.

Ypres' In Flanders Fields Museum has an enormous archive of more than 25,000 shots taken during the First World War. A large part of this collection consists of well-known heroic press photos taken by journalists on embedded missions. But there's more to it. Gathered in more than 150 albums, pictures taken with personal cameras show us the more private and intimate faces of life during the war, devoid of militaristic visual language.

Under the guidance of museum co-ordinator Piet Chielens and Stephan Vanfleteren, one of Flanders' most celebrated contemporary photographers, a team of historians and publishers went inside the archive and returned with 175 telling snapshots. These previously unpublished pictures are now brought together in the commemorative book *The Great War 1914-18*.

"There must be three families a week offering us their old albums," Chielens says. "They don't know who will take care of them after their death. With us, the albums are safe. This is priceless material, of course, but what does that mean when it is left in an archive? That's when we thought: What if we unleash the eye of the professional contemporary photographer on this footage?"

Vanfleteren, the photographer in question, did not choose the pictures from the archive himself but took care of the book's final selection and thematic organisation. "I based the selection on what shocked me and what affected me most," he says. "At times I even smiled at what I saw. There are soldiers acting foolishly, depicting innocence and joy in the midst of horror."



According to Vanfleteren, more than anything else this must be the central theme of the book: "The war is not only about the trenches. There's a lot of posing going on at the front. Soldiers have time off, they go swimming, they have fun. There's the aspect of boredom, the endless hours of waiting, as beautifully depicted. Then there's machismo and manliness. But at the end we're bound to return to the madness, the consequences, the destruction, the numerous victims." Chielens adds:

"It's the figure of the small soldier, meaningless against the backdrop of unseen destruction." But the book goes one step further. "We don't only show the annihilation of people," says Vanfleteren, "there's the destruction of the surroundings as well. Nature is blown to bits, forests barely stand; that gives a true impression of how enormous the force of destruction was." Consequently, the pictures are thematically organised according to their affinity with the elements of

nature.

"Nature is hit, but at the same time nature takes over again; nature plays an important role in war," says Vanfleteren. "There's the mud and the earth of the trenches, mud roads, mud flowing around because of explosions and spread all over the front line, the disorder of soldiers buried in the mud. Water is, evidently, a central element in this war. The flooding of the Yzer river, not only as a means of defence but also its horrifying effects on thousands of soldiers on the other side."

"Then there's air. The First World War is the first war in which aerial photographs were taken. It was the war of the first air strikes. But it also refers to the air we breathe, the gas that was used during the gas attacks. Lastly, fire refers to fire power, to the explosions and blasts that disfigured our landscape for eternity."

Built around these themes, acting as frames for private shots, the book also highlights propaganda. Vanfleteren says, "Found in private albums as well, it's reportage pictures or pure propaganda, pasted by people in their albums between their personal shots." Chielens adds:

"We can see the contrast between pictures that tell an intimate story, the personal perspective and the tough images that show the war the way rulers have always wanted us to see it. That's needed as well; war cannot go without, it adds nuance."

For Vanfleteren the making of the book sometimes felt like a personal encounter with the past. "From a professional point of view," he says, "it's interesting to see how other photographers depict the war. But something else happens as well. I started noticing talent emerging. On some pictures taken by ordinary soldiers you can see the artistic eye being born. The picture is all of a sudden framed and there is a composition. These soldiers in war suddenly go beyond documenting, beyond the facts, and try to capture beauty in those moments. That is beautiful."

"I'm not an activist on the barricades, but I believe in the power of showing what I see. That is my task as a photographer. It was theirs as well."

PARADISE AT THE FRONT LINE

Heinrich Wandt is a German pacifist. He travels through Europe and writes as a journalist, but is forced into the German army in 1912, aged 22. Wandt flees, is caught and sent to the front line, but is called back for health reasons. In 1914 he becomes an army secretary in Ghent.

The city is fairly calm at the time and functions mostly as a place of retreat for frontline soldiers, a sick bay and a store. But among Germans Ghent is also known as "the front paradise", acting

as an open-air, large-scale army brothel. Wandt keeps a journal about the daily life of *Ghenteneers* and Germans during the war. In 1919 his account is published, in episodes, in a Berlin newspaper, and a year later published in full in Dutch. In one harsh, protracted complaint, Wandt accuses his superiors of greed, corruption, cruelty and debauchery.

After publication, Wandt is accused of more than 50 counts of slander, summoned and convicted. But after an international socialist

campaign, he is pardoned. For almost a century, his account had been gathering dust. But now, on the initiative of Flemish photographer Michiel Hendryckx, *Het Frontparadijs* has been republished (again in Dutch).

"A year ago, by chance, I was holding Wandt's book in my hands," Hendryckx says in the book's preface. "I was convinced from the start that this was a unique document. In testimonies of the Great War that focus on the front, there often is a tone of misplaced

grandeur and epic. Wandt is different. Without talking about the front and battles, he testifies about the gruesome essence of war. Dead sharp, he demonstrates how, nearing the end, all values fade and man falls back on his primary desires of greed, cruelty and selfishness."

The Great War 1914-18 (€35.50, text in Dutch, English and French) and *Het Frontparadijs* (€29.50) are both published by Hannibal Publishers.

► www.uitgeverijhannibal.be

'tis the season

The Christmas Oratorio

13 December, 20.00 | Sint-Michiël & Sint-Goedele Cathedral, Brussels

www.helicon.be

Christmas is around the corner, and an essential part of the season is the choral concert, of which there are many. A notable performance is about to take the stage in Brussels: JS Bach's *Weihnachts-Oratorium*, or *Christmas Oratorio*.

The performance is by the 50-strong Helicon chamber choir from Lier, under choirmaster Danny Van Hoof, who also sings soprano for this performance. Other soloists are Isabelle Everarts de Velp (alto), Jan Caals (tenor) and Romain Dayez (bass), and the conductor is the choir's director Geert Hendrix, who also teaches at the town's music academy. Helicon was formed in student circles in Leuven in the early 1980s and moved to Lier in 1987 when Hendrix took over. While Bach cantatas have been part of the choir's repertoire since the beginning,



Helicon has made something of a speciality out of performing contemporary works by composers such as Vic Nees and Hugo Distler.

Like all respectable choirs, they have turned their hand to the classics of the repertoire, Verdi's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Creation* and Brahms' *German Requiem* (which will be on the programme in February next year at the Jesuit church in Lier).

The *Christmas Oratorio* was composed by Bach in 1734 and was originally intended to be performed in six parts on different days of the season. It runs for almost three hours, telling the Nativity story from the birth of Jesus through to the adoration of the Magi on Epiphany. The music is largely made up of previous compositions, including three secular cantatas and one church cantata, now lost. The performance in the cathedral consists of cantatas 1, 2, 3 and 6. **Alan Hope**

CONCERT

Jacco Gardner

7 December, 20.00 | Muziekodroom, Hasselt

www.muziekodroom.be

Sixties-pop revivalist Jacco Gardner is a relative newcomer, having released his first single just last year. Since then, however, the enterprising young songwriter/producer/multi-instrumentalist and his band have played hundreds of concerts in his native Netherlands, across Europe and in the US. Gardner (*pictured*) also found the time to record a

debut album, *Cabinet of Curiosities*, earlier this year. His saccharine brand of psychedelia, all strings and flutes and harpsichords, owes less to Jimi Hendrix and more to the Beach Boys. Fellow Dutchmen (and women) Earth MKII open the show with their harder-edged psychedelic rock. **Georgio Valentino**



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Until 31 December | Cinematek & Bozar, Brussels

www.cinematek.be

Brussels' Cinematek has been celebrating its birthday since last month and plans to keep on until the end of the year. A long party, to be sure, but this is no ordinary anniversary; this year the well-loved film archive turns 75. There are screenings, of course, but much more besides: concerts, historical presentations and discussions about the future of film. December's highlights include the release of *75,000 Films*, a photographic catalogue of the organisation's extensive movie archive, and a screening of *Nanook of the North*, the very first feature-length documentary ever made (*pictured*). Robert Flaherty's 1922 exploration of Inuit life in the frozen Canadian wilds is accompanied on this special



occasion by a live soundtrack composed by contemporary Quebec pianist Gabriel Thibaudreau and performed by his nine-piece orchestra (featuring Inuit throat-singers). **GV**

PERFORMANCE

GET TICKETS NOW

Mike Tyson

3 April 2014, 20.00 | Koninklijk Circus, Brussels

www.cirque-royal.org

In the span of just a few years in the 1980s, Mike Tyson's reputation was made and unmade. At first the Brooklyn-born boxer stood for all that was good in sport - the young athlete who triumphed against all odds. By the end of the decade, his name was shorthand for unhinged violence and his story a cautionary tale about the dangerous cocktail of fame and ferocity that is professional boxing. Then he disappeared from view—until last year, when he teamed up with director Spike Lee to put on a controversial one-man show *Undisputed Truth*, which tells the "true story" of Tyson's time in the limelight. A Broadway run was followed by a US tour in 2013. Next year Tyson's sights are set on Europe. **GV**



SPECIAL EVENT

Winterpret

Until 5 January | Across downtown Brussels

www.winterpret.be

Brussels' new and improved Winterpret is now open for business. Every year the whimsical holiday village, which includes an internationally renowned Christmas market and loads of other attractions, claims a little bit more of the capital. In addition to the Grote Markt, Beurs, Sint-Katelijneplein and Vismarkt, Winterpret 2013

colonises the Muntplein with the new interactive installation Iceberg. This sprawling, immersive sound-and-light experience is brought to us by Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles. Other attractions include an ice rink, giant slide, merry-go-rounds and a 55-metre-high big wheel that offers spectacular views of the winter wonderland below. **GV**



Concert

Brussels

BJ Scott: The American singer may have spent decades in Brussels, but she hasn't forgotten her Alabama roots. This concert gives her (adopted) hometown audience a glimpse of next year's album *Swamp Cabaret*. **6 December 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110**

www.abconcerts.be

Malyka: The Belgo-Moroccan-Polish songstress and her seven-piece band blend sophisticated pop/rock with North African influences.

7 December 20.15 at Pianofabriek, Fortstraat 35

www.pianofabriek.be

Classical

Brussels

Int'l Charity Christmas Concert: The Irish in Europe Association hosts an evening of chamber music and Christmas carols, performed by Serbian violinist Dénes Dosztán and Hungarian organist Anikó Koroknai. **7 December 19.30 at Dominican Church, Renaissancelaan 40**

www.meetup.com/Irish-in-Europe

Performance

Antwerp

Carry Cowboy's Conference: Veteran Flemish TV actor Carry Goossens spins a yarn about the pitfalls of being a cowboy in Flanders. He also sings country-and-western songs with a live band. **6-8 December at Fakkelteater, Reyndersstraat 7**

www.fakkelteater.be

Els de Schepper: Feest: The funny lady of Flemish cabaret kicks off the tour of her new show, which celebrates her 25 years in show business. Embodying multiple characters, her trademark wit shows in segments where she hands out the Elsie awards (for her own career) and in her original show-tune inspired songs.

11-13 December at Lotto Arena, Schijnpoortweg 119

www.elsdeschepper.be

Market

Antwerp

Kerstmarkt op het kerkschip: Antwerp has a floating church, and this weekend is its annual Christmas market (after mass, of course).

8 December 12.00 at Kerkship Sint-Jozef, Houtdok 25

www.kerkship-antwerpen.be

Talking Dutch

Belgian solutions

Derek Blyth

“**B**elgian Solutions” sounds like it might be a logistics company based somewhere in East Flanders. But it turns out to be the title of a book by a German photographer called David Helbich, who moved to Brussels from Amsterdam in 2002. Helbich was astonished by the strange things he saw in Belgium. He created a Facebook page where he posted photographs of odd details of Belgian life that seem normal to citizens but absurd to foreigners. The page was so successful that he has now published a book with 300 photographs of absurdities. *Belgian Solutions* was widely reviewed in the local and international press. Some reviewers found it hard to figure out how to make sense of the pictures. *Om te lachen en soms ook te huilen* – sometimes they make you laugh and sometimes they make you cry, noted *Brussel Deze Week*. Mostly, they make you blink in disbelief. *Een trap die leidt naar een blinde muur* – a staircase that leads to a blank wall; *een slagboom die rust op een gebouw omdat er te weinig ruimte is om helemaal naar beneden te zakken* – a barrier that rests against a building because there isn’t enough space for it to descend fully; *verkeersborden die met plakband worden bijgewerkt tot de juiste situatie* – traffic signs that have been fixed with tape to make them read correctly. The reviewers in the Dutch press, while concluding that the project sprang from affection for Belgium, generally saw the book as evidence of the country’s incompetence. *De Belgische openbare ruimte staat vol met infrastructurele radsels en bouwkundige bloepers* – Belgian public space is full of infrastructural puzzles and building disasters, wrote *NRC Handelsblad*. *Een viaduct dat nooit werd afgebouwd* – a viaduct that was never completed. *Huizen zonder ramen* – houses without windows. *De gemiddelde Nederlander, op*


bezoek in België, schudt al snel meewarig zijn hoofd: “Wat maken ze er hier toch een puinhoop van” – the average Dutch person, on a visit to Belgium, will soon end up shaking his head in pity: “What a total shambles.” But Helbich turns out to be on the side of the Belgians. *De Nederlander heeft niet door dat de Belg juist trots is op de humor achter al die zogenaamde mislukkingen* – the Dutch person doesn’t realise that Belgians are actually proud of the humour inherent in these alleged disasters. Aha, said the *NRC Handelsblad* reporter. *Is dat niet een al te romantische omschrijving van slordigheid?* – Isn’t that just a naively romantic way of describing sloppiness? And then there was the health and safety issue. *Leiden die Belgische oplossingen ook tot ongelukken?* – don’t these Belgian solutions sometimes lead to accidents? Maybe they do. But it’s hard not to feel a degree of affection for a country that constructs staircases leading to nowhere and underground lines that are abandoned before they are opened. It’s never a dull moment.





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With the arrival of this soil in #London, we witness the symbolic homecoming of the sons of #Britain that did not return from #Flanders

 **In response to: Talking Dutch, Belgian Solutions**
Jo Jan Vandenheede: It is the country of Surrealism after all

 **In response to: Changing school streams can be beneficial**
Delta Cappa: This education system of “streams” seems like a very beneficial approach. It is comforting to know you at least have the opportunity to find the level that suits your academic needs... and hopefully becoming a better-adjusted individual, personally and scholastically!!

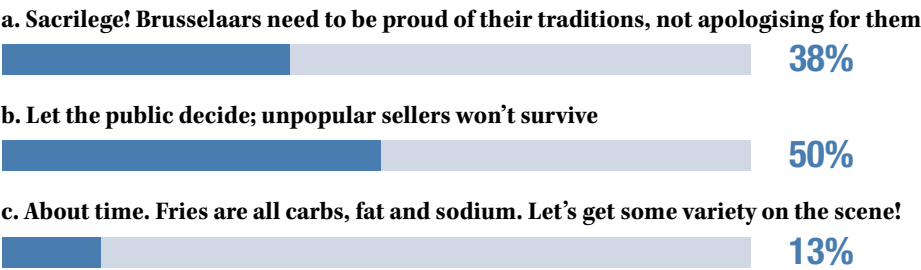
 **In response to: Up to 20% of classes can be taught in foreign language**
Sara Sels: In Flanders, the majority of the students manage very well in English. English is everywhere: music, television, the internet... But when it comes to German or French, students seem to find it very difficult to express themselves. That’s why I believe the decree is a great step forward.

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Poll

The city of Brussels wants to eliminate some of the run-down *frietkoten* and host more up-market food trucks. What do you think?



The surprising thing about this week’s poll results is not so much how few of you were willing to take to the barricades to defend the great Brussels *friet*, but how many – more than one in eight! – were happy to see an end to the greatest twice-fried delicacy ever known to humankind. Granted, having been about the capital a bit, we quite understand how readers might consider *some* of these chip shop shacks to be fit for the wrecking ball; the culinary map of Brussels shows that local *frietten* range from the sublime and beloved to the inedible and cockroach-laden. And indeed, we agree that some Thai noodles or chicken salad couldn’t hurt the capital’s food landscape. But do away with carbs, fat and sodium? Those are the good parts! Humans shall not live by carrot sticks alone, and if you’re going to be naughty, we can think of no better way than a giant cone of *frietten* and a dollop of sauce.

Next week’s question:
Ryanair has announced it will start flying from Brussels to 10 destinations in the new year. Government ministers and competing airlines are up in arms (see p6). What’s your view?
Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on the VOTE button on the homepage!

THE LAST WORD

On the move
“Thanks to Twitter, Facebook and SMS, the news of where our inspection teams are located can spread like wildfire.”
Police are switching to a strategy of smaller, more mobile alcohol test squads to better catch drunk-drivers unawares, according to one local operations director

Serial killers
“We have been made to realise that the human impact of this fiction series is greater than expected. We would like to apologise to those concerned for our error of judgement.”
TV broadcaster VTM has cancelled a drama series based on recent real-life criminal cases after the families of victims complained

Mass conversions
“What I want is for the buildings to be given a worthwhile secondary or alternative function if they are not being used for religious services. Since the numbers attending church are likely to go down even further, we’re afraid that churches will stand empty, and that’s something we absolutely want to avoid. Disuse goes hand in hand with decay.”
Flemish interior minister Geert Bourgeois reported the impending closure of a dozen churches in Flanders

Crying wolf
“The tips come from all over: from Limburg to West Flanders, and even from the centre of Brussels. Someone sent us a mail to say he had seen one walking under the VRT tower.”
Jan Loos of nature organisation Landschap on daily reports of wolf sightings, although the last wolf was seen in Flanders in 1840

