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Loss of an icon

Flanders' most famous art curator, Jan Hoet, dies at 77



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Hear me roar

The government of Flanders launches a new logo and communications concept



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Restricted area

Video artist Wim Catrysse ventures into landscapes most of us would never be able to see

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Kid Rock: Children in rehabilitation at Ghent's University Hospital take to the airwaves

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An act of love

Couples need to consider the long-term repercussions of part-time work, says new government campaign

Linda A Thompson

When Bianca Dardenne and her partner separated in 2004, she was a couple of months pregnant with their second child. Forced to make ends meet on €1,000 a month minus rent, debts and lawyer's fees, Dardenne at one point turned the heating down several degrees, began making her own washing powder and bread, and "learned to make something edible from nothing".

Before the split, Dardenne, who lives in Westerlo, Antwerp province, had been doing an internship at a transport company, from where she was let go when she was four months pregnant. Because she and her partner weren't married, she wasn't eligible for any kind of alimony. While Dardenne eventually came out the other side – she is now a coach for single mums and works as a freelance HR recruiter – she admits that maybe her priorities weren't entirely right at the time. "I didn't think about the consequences of not having a steady job," she says. "But I would no longer do that. I want a steady job and a full-time job – just in case." Several high-profile Flemish lawmakers have recently begun urging women to think long and hard about the consequences of their career choices before ill fate strikes and they find themselves in a situation such as Dardenne's.



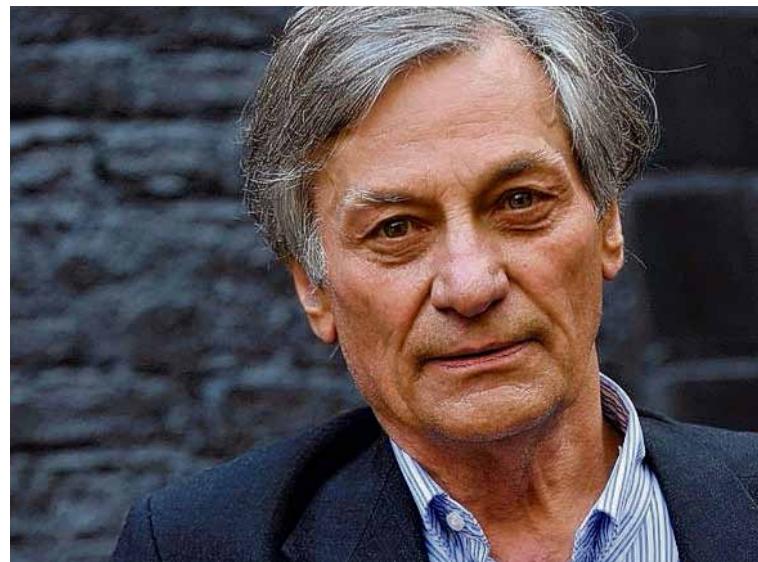
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Art curator Jan Hoet dies

Flanders' "pope of art" died last week in hospital in Ghent at the age of 77

Derek Blyth & Lisa Bradshaw

Flanders' most famous art curator, Jan Hoet, died last week in a Ghent hospital at the age of 77. Hoet (*pictured*) was a flamboyant and charismatic figure who shook up the local art world time and again. He became the director of Ghent's contemporary art museum in the 1970s and made headlines when, in the summer of 1986, he invited 51 artists to exhibit works in private homes in the city. He went on to successfully lead the move of the museum into its current landmark site at Citadelpark and give it its name, the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, or SMAK. He opened the new site in 1999 with a boxing match. Jan Hoet's greatest achievement,"



said Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege, was to "help tear down the walls of contemporary art".

Hoet was born in Leuven and studied art in Ghent but eventually decided that he wasn't a good enough painter to pursue it as a career. He continued his studies in art history and went on to devote his life to advising art organisations and staging major exhibitions.

Together with SMAK, which he led until 2003, Hoet also had an active international career, including curating Documenta IX in Kassel in 1992 and serving as the artistic director of the MARTa Herford contemporary art museum in Germany for five years.

Hoet, who is regularly referred to

in the Flemish press as the "pope of art", once told an interviewer: "I don't know what art is. The art itself has to tell us what it is, not me. I can only sell the ticket to the discovery tour."

Hoet had suffered from several health problems over the last couple of years, including kidney cancer and two heart attacks. "Today we have lost a man that was not only passionate about art but also told us about it in a most inimitable and compelling manner," said minister-president Kris Peeters. "He has inspired innumerable Flemings to take an interest in art."

There is a memorial book for the public to sign in SMAK until Friday. Hoet's funeral takes place on Wednesday, 5 March in Ghent's Sint-Paulus Church.

Broken Circle Breakdown wins César, misses Oscar

The *Broken Circle Breakdown* won the César last Friday for Best Foreign Feature – the first Flemish film to ever win the prize. The Césars are France's annual national awards, the highest film honour in the country. One of the film's leads, Johan Heldenbergh, was on hand to accept the award (*pictured*) in the absence of director Felix Van Groeningen, who was in LA preparing for the Academy Awards.

The film lost out, however, to the Italian favourite *La Grande bellezza* for the Best Foreign-Language Oscar on Sunday. "I was indeed a bit disappointed," said Van Groeningen after the ceremony. "But this whole experience has been great. ... *The Broken Circle Breakdown* has conquered the world, and maybe over the next few years we'll win an Oscar. ... I believe we will." Lisa Bradshaw



Champion Flemish athletes honoured in parliament

Flemish sports minister Philippe Muyters paid tribute to 10 athletes last week for their performance over the last year. The list included three of the seven Flemish athletes who had made up the Belgian squad at the Winter Olympics, as well as those who have won a medal at a European or world championship, including at junior level. Returning Olympians included bobsleigh team Elfje Willemsen and Hanna Mariën and speed skater Bart Swings. Also honoured were cyclocross racers Sven Nys, Kevin Pauwels, Wout Van Aert, Michael Vanthourenhout, Thijs

Aerts, Yannick Peeters and Jelle Schuermans. Swings, who came fourth in the 5,000m speed skating event and fifth in the 10,000m at Sochi, demonstrated, said Muyters, the success of his policy of encouraging sports talent.

Critics in the sports world say that the government has neglected the long-term work required to create a professional sports culture in winter events. Those athletes "have done great work," said Muyters, "but that doesn't mean we're about to invest now in indoor skating rinks or bobsleigh runs. ... The talent has to be there first." AH

Sierre bus crash families request further investigation

The lawyer for five of the families of children involved in the Sierre school bus crash in Switzerland has filed a motion calling for additional investigation into the case, almost two years to the day after the accident.

The requested investigation concerns a second mobile phone belonging to one of the drivers mentioned in the prosecutor's report, said lawyer Dirk Vanden Boer. "This line of investigation could possibly provide new evidence," he said.

On the evening of 13 March 2012, a school bus carrying children and staff from two Flemish schools – one located in Lommel, Limburg province, and the other in the Leuven district of Heverlee – collided with a wall in a tunnel in the Valais canton of Switzerland. The bus was returning from a skiing holiday. Six members of staff were killed, together with



Pupils attend the opening of the memorial to the victims of the Sierre bus crash in Heverlee last year

22 children and both bus drivers. The Swiss investigation of the crash failed to provide a clear cause but did rule out several hypotheses, such as the driver experiencing a heart attack or a deliberate act by the driver (alleged to be depressed). AH

First World War IJzer Museum reopens in Diksmuide

The IJzer Museum in Diksmuide, West Flanders, opened its doors at the weekend after being closed for several months for renovations. During the opening ceremony, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters presented the strategic programme for the museum's role in the commemoration of the First World War, beginning later this year.

The museum's role is special "because it is not a war museum but a peace museum – an anti-war museum," explained Paul De Belder, chair of the non-profit Aan de IJzer, which runs the museum.

Installed in the 22-storey IJzer Tower, the museum tells the story of the First World War

seen through the eyes of average citizens, whether in the trenches or in the battle zones around West Flanders. The site is now "more attractive and more customer-friendly," said tourism minister Geert Bourgeois, with a new car park and visitors' centre. "I am sure this site will become one of the major attractions of the commemoration of the First World War."

The renovation of the site cost €2 million, including contributions of €350,000 from the province of West Flanders and €772,000 from the government of Flanders. AH

► www.ijzertoren.org

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

250,000

people in Flanders live outside the reach of emergency medical teams led by a doctor or specialised nurse, according to the federal public health ministry. In eight heavily populated areas, teams fail to reach the patient in time in more than 10% of cases

53,000

calls made to the Flemish Cancer Telephone in its 30 years of existence. To mark its 30th anniversary, the line is changing its name to the Cancerline, which can be reached on 0800 35 445 as

100

people spent last weekend in prison voluntarily. Jail staff, lawyers and others were helping to test safety equipment and procedures at the new prison in Beveren, East Flanders, prior to its opening later this month

52%

of residents along the coast are over the age of 50, compared to 39% in the rest of the region. Coastal cities plan to construct "senior-friendly" apartments to cater to the greying population

426 million

hectolitres of beer sold worldwide in 2013 by Leuven-based AB InBev, the largest brewer in the world. That's 2% less than in 2012, though income was up 3.3% to €31.4 billion

WEEK IN BRIEF

This winter in Belgium was the second mildest since records began in 1833, the Royal Meteorological Institute (KMI) has announced. The temperature dropped below zero on only three days, an absolute record ahead of 1988-89, when there were 11 so-called "frost days". The average high of 6.3°C was classified as "abnormally high," compared to an average for the season of 3.6. The warmest winter on record was 2006-2007, which saw an average maximum temperature of 6.6°C.

KRC Genk, Belgium's last representative in European competition, tumbled out of the Europa League last week, after a 2-0 defeat to Russian side Anzhi Makhachkala in the second leg of their last-32 tie. The result marked an awkward start for Genk's new coach, Emilio Ferrera, who replaced Mario Been, fired just five days earlier.

The five major tram projects in Flanders announced recently have been heavily criticised by the Court of Auditors. The Hasselt-Maastricht line, a projects to the east of Antwerp and three lines around Ghent "too late, too limited and were researched with little objectivity," said the court. The decision by public transport authority De Lijn was based on an "insufficient foundation," while the projects "lack a clear analysis of the problems or the ends to be achieved".

The fire in a student apartment in Leuven at the end of January, which cost the lives of two exchange students from Ireland, was most likely caused by a cigarette, according to an expert assigned to the case by the city prosecutor. Eight students escaped the blaze, but 19-year-old Sara Gibadlo and 22-year-old Dace Zarina were trapped in an attic flat. The investigation continues.

Mexican authorities are doing next to nothing to investigate

the murder of Jan Sarens, the boss of the Sarens Group in Meise, Flemish Brabant, according to his three daughters. Sarens was found dead in Acapulco last year. According to the family, Mexican detectives refuse to inform the family of progress or to co-operate with federal prosecutors in Belgium. Still, the federal prosecutor's office remains optimistic. "We hope to be able to leave for Mexico later this month with an investigation team," a spokesperson said.

Brussels Airlines has signed a deal to be the exclusive airline used by the Belgian Football Union until mid-2016. The first flight will be the Airbus A330 to Sao Paulo on 10 June, which will bring the players, together with 150 lucky fans, to Brazil for World Cup. The deal also covers players returning from their clubs to Brussels, as well as the Red Flames women's side and the youth teams.

The environment minister for the Brussels region, Evelyne Huytebroeck, has asked the federal government to suspend its latest plan for Brussels Airport take-offs and landings, claiming the whole population of the region is now affected by noise nuisance. The government had announced that the number of people under flight paths would decrease from 465,000 to 65,000. "That is completely false," Huytebroeck said, basing her conclusions on radar images. "The plan does nothing but displace the nuisance."

Kelly Druyts took Belgium's sole medal at the UCI Track Cycling World Championships in Cali, Colombia last week, when she won the gold in the scratch race. Druyts, who came third at the 2012 Championships in Melbourne, beat three-time winner Katarzyna Pawlowska from Poland and Russia's Evgenia Romanyuta to take the crown, Belgium's first ever in that discipline. Druyts, 24, from Wilrijk, took 12:59 minutes to win the 40 lap,

10km sprint.

Girls are just as likely as boys to chat in class, but boys are punished three times more frequently for the same offence, according to research carried out among 6,000 students and teachers by a team from the universities of Ghent, Leuven and Brussels. Boys also receive lower marks in tests for the same performance, leading to demotivation and further reduced performance. Boys are also more likely to leave school without a diploma. "The bond between teachers and boys is less strong, and the stereotype still persists that boys are lazy and girls quiet workers, with unequal treatment as a result," commented researcher Els Consuegra.

The online taxi service Uber, which allows customers to order a taxi using a smartphone app, risks having its vehicles seized if it is not in line with the regulations on taxi services in Brussels, transport minister Brigitte Grouwels has warned. Uber announced its intention to begin operating in Brussels, and Grouwels has requested a detailed dossier on its services. "Taxis are a public service," she said. "The sector is subject to strict rules."

Several new legislative measures came into force on 1 March, including the ability to perform spot-check doping controls on the Belgian national football side in the run-up to the World Cup, an increase in the term of the national identity card from five to 10 years (except for children under 12) and the right to work beyond the age of 65 for functionaries employed by provinces, municipalities and social aid agencies, joining employees of the Flemish government.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Eric Gubel

Eric Gubel was named as interim director of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels last week, taking over from Michel Draguet, who had also been acting as interim director. The institution comprises four museums – the Jubelpark Museum, Museums of the Far East, the Halle Gate and the Musical Instruments Museum. Draguet, the director of Brussels' Royal Museums of Fine Arts, had fallen into disfavour with the staff at the Museums of Art and History over, among other issues, the run-down state of the buildings, particularly the Jubelpark museum. At one point, he forbade members of staff from speaking to the press in an attempt to stop the flow of disgruntled reports leaking out of the museums. Finally the secretary of state for museums decide to seek a replacement. Antwerp-born Gubel is an archaeologist, an art historian and a professor at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). He has been antiquities department at the Jubelpark museum for 14 years. His speciality is the Phoenicians, the ancient civilisation of the Mediterranean from about 1550 to 300 BC. He has authored more than 100

articles and monographs on the Phoenicians and their relations with Egypt and the Western parts of the Mediterranean. Gubel has also worked in the Louvre and collaborated with Unesco. And he has led archaeological digs in Lebanon and Syria, unearthing Phoenician religious artefacts dating back to the Iron Age. He lives in Brussels with his wife, Kristine De Mulder, who is the director of Europa. When it comes to pride in his own museum, he's anything but reticent. "Our collection of Egyptian art and our Greek and Roman collections can absolutely stand up against any of our European big brothers," he said in an interview. "We cover every civilisation that was ever important in Europe, from prehistory to the Renaissance." Gubel intends to take a conciliatory route in his new directorship. "I think I'm in a good position to keep the dynamic on track together with colleagues who have built up a great deal of experience," he said last week. "I believe more in a direction than in a director-general. I want to first hear from people before we take joint decisions."

OFFSIDE

Prison break

On 5 April, six teams of six prisoners each will set out to cycle the last 140km of the Ronde Van Vlaanderen, or Tour of Flanders. Before you start wondering if the penal system has taken leave of its senses, the teams will remain indoors, cycling on rollers, with the scenery of the end of the race provided by a computer simulation.

The Ronde op rollen was started back in 2012 by non-profit De Rode Antraciet, which provides a range of courses, sports and cultural projects in prisons. The prisons concerned are in Ghent, Bruges, Dendermonde and Oudenaarde, and this year for the first time, female inmates from Bruges and Ghent will also take part. "It's important in prison to pay



attention to everyday matters, to bring society into the prison," explained Eveline Vandamme, director of the men's wing at Bruges, to Focus-TV. "It's important for detainees to be able to take part in sports, to gain some structure and discipline."

The prison already takes part in the Start to Run programme, which found 30 inmates training on roads

around the prison. There were 94 applicants for that programme, and the Ronde op rollen has proved equally popular. "We had more than 50 who signed up," Vandamme said. "And of course we had to make a selection because it wasn't possible for everyone to take part."

Each of the prison teams is sponsored, and the proceeds go to a charity they choose themselves. They also have official patrons: In Ghent, mayor Daniel Termont represents the men, while the women can look to actor Pascale Platel. Both Bruges teams are patronised by former pro cyclist Roger De Vlaeminck, who won the Ronde in 1977.

► www.facebook.com/Derondeoprollen

Alan Hope

FLANDERS TODAY



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Campaign break

With the May elections coming up, we have been swamped with political messages over the last few weeks. All over Flanders, billboards with minister-president Kris Peeters asked voters "what kind Flanders they want to live in". On the internet, there was no escaping N-VA ads, showing ordinary citizens "choosing chance". Open VLD, meanwhile, opted for a rather poetic campaign, claiming "people have wings".

As the election date nears, one would expect the volume of the political messages to increase. But in fact, the opposite is true. Since last week, the ads have disappeared abruptly and will only reappear in the weeks before 25 May. This campaign break is called the *sperperiode*, a Belgian phenomenon.

The *sperperiode* is a sort of political embargo during the three months before elections, during which parties and candidates have to stick to a set of rules. They cannot, for instance, hand out gifts or gadgets, nor can they advertise on TV or billboards. Government communication cannot carry photos of politicians, as they often do outside the *sperperiode*. Most importantly, the amounts spent on campaigning are strictly limited.

These rules were imposed in the 1990s after a number of corruption scandals. Parties, it was believed, had no other option than to turn to private corporations to finance the soaring costs of electoral campaigns. The downside was that they felt indebted afterwards, resulting in unfair government contracts.

Party financing replaced the old system: all parties represented in some parliament or other now receive means by the state, to be used for their own functioning and campaigning. At the same time, the strict *sperperiode* rules were introduced.

But party financing is also increasingly contested. Many feel uncomfortable about the state handing out money to institutions they do not trust. Moreover, the amounts are rather generous, leading to parties creating extra administrative sections.

Internationally, the Group of States against Corruption (Greco) has criticised politicians being their own controllers. And the federal parliament can change the rules at any time. N-VA, the party set to win the May elections, can testify to that, as it only survived a disastrous election in 2003 because the party financing system was altered to its benefit.

Still, no-one wants a return to the old system, if only because no-one is missing more political campaigning.

Flanders launches new logo

Government updates lion and communications style to strengthen its image

Derek Blyth

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters launched a new logo and house style for the region yesterday at a special event in parliament that included several hundred civil servants.

The most noticeable change is that the rampant Flemish lion with claws bared has been replaced by a simpler image showing part of a lion's face. The logo is accompanied by two new slogans – *Verbeelding werkt* (Imagination works) in Dutch and "State of the art" for English communications.

The project to rebrand the region began back in 2010, said Peeters. The goal was to "create a uniform image of our region in Belgium, Europe and the world," he said, "and to strengthen the future of Flanders through tourism, employment and foreign investment".

Flanders' government departments currently work with more than 100



Flanders

State of the Art

different logos – a cacophony of styles that one designer described as "the wall of shame". The new logo will eventually serve as a unique image for all department communications across the entire region.

The new logo is due to be introduced gradually over the coming years. It will eventually be used for government stationery, uniforms, road signs, vehicles and buildings, while other logos will slowly be phased out.

The rebranding exercise includes the creation of a brand new font dubbed the Flanders Art Letter. Developed by typeface designer Jo De Baerdemaeker, it was inspired by the fonts designed by the Flemish renaissance printer Christophe Plantin as well as the work of the British designer Eric Gill. It is the first typeface created in Belgium for a government organisation and is compatible with both Macs and PCs, De Baerdemaeker said.

The new concept also incorporates a slanted line that can appear as a backwards slash or a picture cropped at an angle. "This symbolises Flanders as a cutting edge region," explained Peeters.

The government of Flanders is now catching up with the Dutch government, which introduced a single house style several years ago. Dutch government communications officer Mirke Beckers was at yesterday's event, explaining that the brand identity project took three years to implement and cost €18 million, but represents an annual cost-saving of €5 million. The Flemish design team note that while "the Flanders house style is more flexible," it is also expected to save money.

"Branding a region or country is not a choice," tweeted Peeters after the launch. "It's a must in the 21st century."

De Loketten will become visitor centre

For the past seven years, the Flemish Parliament has organised exhibitions of art and design in a beautiful Art Deco interior in Brussels. De Loketten has housed the work of such artists as Panamarenko and Jan Fabre, as well as the annual Henry van de Velde designers exhibition and fashion and jewellery designers. It also had a café where visitors could sample Flemish specialities. Parliament has decided to turn the space – a former post office building – into a visitors' centre. "The exhibitions attract too few visitors," admitted parliament speaker Jan Peumans in an interview with the website brusselnieuws.be. "The cost is extravagant."

One show last year on

Campaign traps one in three trucks over weight limit

One in three trucks inspected last year was found to be over the legal weight limit for Belgium, transport minister Hilde Crevits announced yesterday. The traffic police carried out spot checks on almost 5,000 trucks last year, of which more than 1,500 were found to be overloaded, some dangerously so. The fines levied on the truck companies amounted to €3 million, or twice as much as in 2010. Crevits said that the increased fines was due to the installation of a network of nine "Weight in Motion" detectors in the road surface. These allowed police to target trucks that were



potentially over the weight limit. The vehicles that triggered the sensors were pulled off the road for an official weight test. Some 81% of those failed the test, compared with an average rate of 20%, said Crevits. The transport minister is now introducing lessons for new truck drivers to raise awareness of the dangers of driving overloaded trucks. DB

New website to report illegal rubbish in Brussels

Brussels MP Brigitte De Pauw has created a page on her website called *Kuis Mijn Buurt* (Clean My Neighbourhood), which allows citizens to report rubbish in the street. Brussels has been trying for years to tackle the problem of rubbish on the streets – whether illegal dumping or citizen carelessness. The worst areas of the city for dumping are central Brussels and Anderlecht.

De Pauw wants to collect information sent in so that she can identify the problem neighbourhoods and then come up with a solution, whether it be prevention or prosecution of offenders. "The whole problem often starts because people have the wrong mentality," she said. "The apple core is just chucked away, the dog mess left behind in the street, the broken chair dumped next to the nearest rubbish bin."



She believes that many people in Brussels regard it as the local council's job to clean up the trash, rather than seeing it as their own responsibility to keep the streets clean. "We won't get a clean city until we change the mentality of Brussels citizens," she said. DB

www.brigittedepauw.com/kuis-mijn-buurt

Heinz in Turnhout closes, Flanders to request subsidies back

The government of Flanders plans to request that Heinz Belgium pay back the €942,110 it received in government support because it has failed to respect the conditions laid down in the 2007 agreement.

The government's response follows a decision by Heinz to close down its production plant in Turnhout at the end of this year, with the loss of some 200 jobs. The company said earlier in the week that it was moving production to Telford in the UK in order to reduce labour costs and increase efficiency.

Trade union leaders representing Heinz workers met on Friday with Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, government investments minister Ingrid Lieten and employment minister Philippe Muyters. They held talks under the terms of the Renault Law, introduced after the closure of the Renault factory in Vilvoorde, which gives workers the right

to seek support in finding employment. Peeters told the trade unions that he would do everything possible to protect as many jobs as possible.

The Heinz plant in Turnhout lost a major customer last autumn when fast food giant McDonald's announced that it would no longer be buying Heinz ketchup. At the time, McDonald's represented 45% of the Turnhout factory's turnover. DB



An act of love

Women who move to part-time work should plan for reduced pensions

► continued from page 1

In an interview with job search site Jobat in 2012, federal labour minister Monica De Coninck said she believed that all women should work full time. Responding to the enormous backlash that followed, she later wrote an op-ed in *Knack* to clarify her point: "I never said that women shouldn't work part time," she said. "I just said that people, and often that's women, should consider the consequences of part-time work."

A couple of months later, federal pension minister Vincent Van Quickenborne said that women should be aware of the consequences of voluntary or part-time work on their later pensions. At around the same time, the bank Delta Lloyd launched a campaign called *Vrouwen met pensioen* (Pensioned Women) to alert women to the existing retirement inequalities. The average pension for women in Belgium is €964 a month, while for men it's €1,297.

According to Hildegard Van Hove, director of the RoSa, a documentation centre and archive for equal opportunities, feminism and gender in Brussels, addressing the existing inequalities begins with addressing the way conversation is framed. "This is not just the responsibility of women," she says. She sees a trend where women are individually held accountable for "getting everything done, having a good job, having children, having a good pension – irrespective of their circumstances". For Van Hove, it's a social issue, plain and simple. "This is about the well-being of individuals," she says, explaining that everyone should have the right to live in a society "where things are organised in a way so that it's doable for people," where they can combine work and family, have some level of comfort and not constantly worry about being poor when they retire.



© Ingrimage

The Act of Love campaign encourages mums who quit working or who work part time to make financial legal arrangements with their partners in case the relationship dissolves

don't feel it, but you're constantly behind the eight ball," he says. "That's a disadvantage that you carry with you for the rest of your life."

Broadly speaking, there are two choices: the *verloftstelsels* or leave systems, which have a negligible influence on women's seniority and pension rights, and more traditional choices, like part-time work or quitting work altogether. In the latter two cases, women's seniority, pension and social security rights are affected much more heavily.

Denys points out that women who put their careers on the backburner

the consequences of putting their career on the backburner in the event of a divorce. Then they're forced to return to the job market and realise that "their degrees no longer mean anything".

That leaves two options for the women: They can accept jobs below their skill level or try to go back to school. She says she's seen a lot of women become bitter in the face of that kind of situation. "They say: 'My life is only going to start when my children are grown' or 'I have no life until my children are out of the house'."

Last month, Flemish equal opportunities minister Pascal Smet launched a campaign called *Act of Love* that goes to the heart of these issues. Research by the universities of Hasselt and Leuven, commissioned by Smet, led to the elaboration of so-called compensation clauses, which can be added to marriage or domestic partnership agreements to ensure that if one partner puts their career on the backburner to take care of the children, they are financially compensated for this if the relationship ends.

The aim of the campaign is twofold, says Agna Smisdom from the equal opportunities ministry. First, to get notaries to play a bigger role in raising awareness among couples. "A notary is like a legal guide who can help couples make these arrangements and point out that they exist," she says, adding that the legal nitty-gritty is incredibly complex, especially at the fiscal level. "Many notaries don't have that expertise," Smisdom says, "so we've given them a useful instrument there."

Second, she says, their aim was to start a conversation. "We wanted

to get people to think about these decisions and the consequences of their choices." There's nothing wrong with taking a step back, she says, "but there is a price, and it's not fair that that price is only paid by one of the partners when something goes wrong with the relationship."

One couple has heard the message loud and clear. Brussels resident Saskia Scheerlinck and her husband are fully intending to add a compensation clause to their marriage agreement.

In 2009, Scheerlinck gave up her high-level, full-time position as a customer relations manager at Opel Benelux in Breda, the Netherlands, when she became pregnant with her first child. She and her husband had long ago decided that she would stop working once they had children.

According to Scheerlinck, who is now pregnant with her second child, she was fully cognisant of the social security repercussions of her decision, but they were "absolutely not" a factor. "I'm not building up any pension rights here" – those are things you say jokingly," she says.

“*It's a societal problem that we need to fix as a society*

For her, when it came down to it, the practical, short-term considerations trumped all others. "I can't imagine someone saying: 'Oh, I want to raise my children myself, but I won't because I won't be able to build up any pension rights'."

Last month, Scheerlinck released the book *Crisis survival gids* with advice on how to make ends meet on one salary.

Sofie De Graeve, spokesperson for the *Vrouwen Overleg Komitee* (Women's Deliberation Committee) says the clauses are a positive step in that the government is recognising its responsibility and creating a framework to do something about the existing inequalities.

"But the compensation clauses remain a measure at the level of individuals, when this isn't an individual problem," she says. "It's a societal problem that we need to fix as a society."

► www.genderklik.be

“*There is a price, and it's not fair that that price is paid by only one of the partners*

The availability of work-life accommodations like part-time work schedules is widely credited with having brought more women into the workforce in Flanders. If 60% of women are active in the labour market today versus 35% in the mid-1980s, that's in part because there are far more options open to them beyond the black-and-white of working full-time, or not working at all.

But, as the saying goes, there's no such thing as a free lunch. According to Randstad labour market expert Jan Denys, the impact of extended breaks and quitting work altogether on women's careers can hardly be overestimated and is only just becoming evident.

First, women don't build up any seniority, which causes them to earn less throughout their careers. "You

also stop developing their professional skills and networks, which can make any re-entry into the job market much more challenging. "It's like musical chairs," he says. "When someone leaves their job, it's not a given that they can just get the same one back when they return years later. Often, they get a job that's less appealing."

While unfortunate, this imbalance is not necessarily a problem when couples stick to their vows and stay together for richer, for poorer. But in a country where two in three marriages currently end in divorce, the opposite is true. And with 80% of single parents women and 40% of single-parent households at risk of poverty, women overwhelmingly draw the short straw.

Dardenne explains that many of her clients admit they didn't think about



Saskia Scheerlinck of Brussels is adding a compensation clause to her marriage agreement

So it seems logical to share the financial repercussions, she says. "We don't have any trouble with that; we don't see it like a vote of no confidence."

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air ▶ Vueling

The Spanish airline, an affiliate of national carrier Iberia, is launching seven additional flights between Brussels and cities in Spain, Portugal and Italy next month. It has also announced a further development of its services at the end of the year in Brussels, with an expected 30% increase in traffic.

Biotech

► ThromboGenics

The biotech company, based in Oud-Heverlee, Flemish Brabant, is reconsidering its development and long-term strategy following the disappointing launch of its Jetrea eye treatment in the US. The company is said to be looking for a partner and may seek an outright sale.

Energy

► Electrawinds

The Ostend-based green energy and wind farm operator has opted for the €262 million rescue package presented by the Flanders investment fund Gimv and investment company PMV. The commercial court still has to accept the proposal, as the company is operating under its protection.

Hotels ▶ Motel One

The German budget hotel group is opening a 490-room motel in central Brussels next month. Priced at €69 a night, rooms are said to offer high-level comfort without stars. The company has said it plans to open another hotel in the upper part of the city.

Packaging ▶ VPK

The Aalst-based producer of board and packaging materials is investing €40 million in a third cardboard production unit in Wroclaw, Poland. The new operation is expected to come on stream early next year.

Pharmaceuticals

► Arseus

The supplier of products and services for the medical sector, based in Waregem, West Flanders, has signed agreements to acquire three unspecified firms in the US. With earlier acquisitions this year in the US and Europe, Arseus' recent investments total €160 million.

Property ▶ Office space

Property consultants Cushman & Wakefield puts Brussels in 38th position on the list of the world's most expensive office space. The survey says that London, at the top of the list, is five times more expensive than Brussels.

CEO of bpost appointed

Government approves the choice of the board of the state-run postal service

Alan Hope

The federal government approved the nomination of Koen Van Gerven as CEO of the federal postal service bpost last week. Van Gerven's name was proposed to the council of ministers by the bpost board. "The government sincerely congratulates Mr Van Gerven and wishes him every success," prime minister Di Rupo said.

Van Gerven (*pictured*) has been with bpost since 2006 and is currently director of mail and retail solutions. He replaces Johnny Thijs, who declined to have his mandate as CEO renewed after clashes with the government over the new salary cap. "Koen Van Gerven possesses all of the leadership qualities and experience required to lead bpost," said Martin Durez, chair of the board. "We are delighted that the



© Laurie Dierckx/Belga stock market. The main points of the plan are maintenance of the core business of mail delivery, growth and the continuing improvement of quality and efficiency.

Van Gerven said his aim was also "to have everyone on board," including customers, employees, shareholders and "society at large".

The new CEO will find his remuneration held to the limit set by the government of €500,000 salary and up to €150,000 in variable benefits and bonuses. That represents a small increase on what he earns now, according to Durez. It is just over half of the €1.1 million earned by his predecessor last year. "I think I must have the most transparent salary in Belgium," Van Gerven joked.

internal candidate proposed by the board – someone we have known for seven years – has been approved."

Van Gerven promised to continue

according to the strategic plan put in place at bpost by Thijs, whose departure was lamented by the company, the government and the

Ryanair flights take off from Brussels Airport amid protests

Irish low-cost airline Ryanair began its first flights last week from Brussels Airport against a background of union protests. Unions representing workers at the airport in Zaventem were protesting Ryanair's use of Irish labour laws for their pilots and other staff, many of whom are resident in Belgium. Because Irish social security contributions are lower, unions argue, this allows Ryanair to compete unfairly with other airlines, including Brussels Airlines, which dominates the airport.

"Workers cannot be allowed to be the victims of the rampant competition that exists between airlines," the unions said, calling for all employers at the airport "to apply the existing labour laws, sector and company agreements and to make a priority of employee safety". Flights were not affected by the protest.

According to the Halle-Vilvoorde chapter of Voka, the Flemish chamber of commerce, the arrival of Ryanair at Zaventem is a sign of the troubled situation of the major operators already at the airport. That situation is caused, said Voka, by "long-established unfair competition" from the federal subsidy of €30 million a year paid to airports in Wallonia, including Ryanair's traditional Belgian homebase in Charleroi.

"There can of course be no question of preferential treatment, and each company needs to abide by the social and labour laws in force," Voka said in a statement. AH

Human Rights League crowdfunds fight against new data law

The Flemish League for Human Rights has launched a €5,000 crowdfunding campaign to fight the introduction of a new law on data retention by telecommunications companies. The law, passed in 2013, obliges any company providing telephone or email services in Belgium to retain the meta-data relating to each phone call or email – the numbers or addresses of both parties, the length of the communication, the device used and more. The actual content of the message is not recorded. Investigators and other supporters of the law

say little will change: Companies already store such meta-data routinely, to compile customer bills, for example.

The league considers the new law a breach of the right to privacy. "We know very well that these data can be important to investigations," said the league's lawyer Caroline De Geest. "Security is important, but so is privacy, and this new law, in our opinion, goes too far and breaches the right to privacy and the right to confidential communications." AH

► www.mensenrechten.be

Torfs and IT consultancy AE are best employers in Flanders

The Torfs chain of shoe stores was voted the best place to work in Flanders last week by its own employees for the fifth time in the 12-year history of the awards. Torfs unseated last year's winner, McDonald's, to retake the title it has held twice before in the category of companies with more than 500 employees. Torfs had previously also won twice in the under-500 rankings before growing out of that category. "The ideal success formula doesn't exist and can't be summed up in a few sentences," commented CEO Wouter Torfs. "But continuous attention for your people and appreciating and rewarding them for their efforts helps much more than organising an office party once a

year... The most important thing is for people to have the feeling that they're working for a family firm, even if it's a large one."

McDonald's had to be content with second place this year, followed by recruitment agencies Accent Jobs and Adecco, with FedEx in fifth place. Meanwhile, the under-500 employees category was won by AE, an IT consultancy based in Leuven. AE helps other companies integrate their IT activities and topped SAS Institute, last year's winner, into third place after second-place Microsoft. Recruitment agency Ormit and IT company Easi round out the top five. AH

► www.greatplacetowork.be

Flanders launches campaign to be recognised as culinary top-spot

Flanders aims to become known as a top culinary destination in Europe by 2020, according to a new marketing plan launched last week by Toerisme Vlaanderen in the Rodenbach brewery in Roeselare, West Flanders.

"Flanders is seldom associated with culinary achievement and top gastronomy, despite having more Michelin stars per inhabitant than anywhere else, as well as 167 recognised regional products and seven under European protection," commented tourism minister Geert

Bourgeois. "We have to market ourselves better, both at home and abroad."

The plan for 2014-2019 was developed by Toerisme Vlaanderen together with the five provincial tourism organisations, city and local authorities and private partners. It has three main themes: beer, chocolate and excellent food.

"Beer and chocolate may be clichés," Bourgeois admitted, "but we'd be crazy not to take advantage of them. Our reputation for beer and chocolate will grow in the years to



the Young Kitchen Rebels promotion of 30 young chefs and the Vlaanderen Lekkerland ambassadors, where towns of culinary note are promoted by their province.

In related news, one of Flanders' most famous chefs, Piet Huysentruyt (otherwise known as SOS Piet), has been awarded a Michelin star for his new restaurant in the Ardèche region of France. Huysentruyt opened Likoké last summer and in October was named "discovery of the year" by the rival guide Gault&Millau. AH

► www.vlaanderenlekkerland.be

Ghent in top 20 for investment

The Financial Times ranking of most promising cities in which to invest puts Ghent at 20

Alan Hope

Ghent has slipped into the top 20 of cities in Europe where it is advantageous for companies to invest. The capital of East Flanders appears at number 20 in the *Financial Times* ranking released every two years and was the only Belgian city to be included. The newspaper's list of top 25 European Cities and Regions of the Future 2014/2015 is led by, on the cities list, London, Helsinki and Eindhoven. Brussels, meanwhile, came in eighth on the list of top 10 major cities in which to invest and also fared well in certain individual categories, as did Antwerp. For their plans to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), for example, Ghent comes fourth among western European cities and Antwerp 10th.

Brussels takes third place for economic potential and even heads the list of major European cities for human capital and lifestyle, ahead of Paris and London. The capital is sixth for infrastructure and eighth for business-friendliness.

In the previous ranking, Brussels came 19th overall and Antwerp 23rd – the two cities respectively eighth and ninth among western European cities. Brussels came eighth for economic potential, 10th for human resources, sixth for quality of life, fifth for infrastructure and third for business-friendliness – a sweep of the categories that the latest report comes nowhere close to repeating.



With 502,000 inhabitants, Antwerp comes into the category of mid-sized city and ranks seventh for infrastructure and third for business-friendliness, in competition with places like Zurich, Lyon and Coventry. The results are a disappointment for Antwerp, which last time managed to take second place overall in its group in the previous ranking, after Bristol, as well as second place for business-

friendliness, economic potential and FDI strategy and sixth place for quality of life.

With 248,000 residents, Ghent features in the list of small European cities, up against counterparts like Eindhoven, York and Aachen. Ghent comes in sixth overall and second for FDI strategy. Ghent's success this time around contrasts with the fact that it was entirely missing from the last lists.

The last category is micro cities, which includes Mechelen (82,325 inhabitants) in 10th place for economic potential and business-friendliness and third place for infrastructure. Mechelen made seventh place last time for infrastructure, two places behind fellow micro city Genk. The *Financial Times* list of regions is headed by Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany, followed by Scotland and

the Copenhagen area in Denmark. Flanders, meanwhile, makes an appearance among the large European regions, in third place for infrastructure. The Brussels-Capital Region features among the small European regions with Norfolk, Dublin region and Utrecht, and makes third place for business-friendliness, ninth place for economic potential and eighth place for human capital and lifestyle.

Last time around, the Brussels-Capital Region scored in 17th place overall, 10th place for human resources, eighth place for quality of life and 10th for business-friendliness.

Also in 2012-2013, Flanders made the list in eighth place among all regions for FDI strategy, as well as fifth place among large regions; Flanders came in 10th place for infrastructure. In 2010, Flanders was in seventh place among all regions overall, and in 2008 the region came second.

The rankings are based on data collected by FDI Intelligence, a subsidiary of the *Financial Times*, from 468 cities and regions across Europe on hundreds of data points. FDI strategy rankings are based on submissions from 180 cities and regions themselves. The whole data set is then evaluated by a panel of investment experts.

► www.tinyurl.com/ftinvest

City centre shopping in a slump

Retailers are feeling the pinch brought on by internet shopping and suburban big-box outlets

Alan Hope

Twice as many empty shops in town centres; 145% more shopping space in strip malls on the edge of towns and cities. That's the picture of the retail shopping landscape offered by a new report, commissioned by the government of Flanders from IDEA Consultants.

The report paints a picture of the flight of shoppers from local stores to chain stores on the edge of town – names like Casa, Brico and Blokker. The figures couldn't be clearer: Between 2008 and 2013 there was a net growth of 3,700 empty shops in Flanders, mainly in town centres. The total surface area standing empty doubled over the same period. At the same time, the surface area of shops on the periphery of towns increased by 1.5 million square metres, or 145%. About 7% of all shop premises is standing empty – a total of 900,000 square metres. The weight is falling disproportionately on city centres, explains Willem De Laat of IDEA Consult. "There, an average of 11% of shops are vacant, and in some areas the number goes as high as 35%," he

said. "Vacancies in town centres has almost doubled, from about 227,000 square metres [in 2008] to more than 450,000 square metres."

Focus on quality, rather than a frantic effort to fill shops come what may

Despite the increase in vacant shops, however, turnover in the retail sector remained stable over the period, allowing for inflation. But the report cautions that, with more and more customers now shopping online, the effects on bricks-and-mortar stores is likely to be felt in the years to come, with sales moving away from physical shops and more vacancies as a consequence.

According to a recent survey by the retail federation Comeos, 57% of residents in Belgium have already made at least one purchase online, suggesting the potential for a great deal of expansion.

Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters says the report does not represent a failure of his government's Shopping Plan, which set out to support local shopping areas in town centres. "The retail sector is a tanker that's difficult to turn around," Peeters says. "But we are determined to bring about a major change of direction for shopping. Our aim is to place the centre of gravity in city centres."

Earlier in February, the Flemish government approved a bill that translates the federal legislation known as the IKEA law into a regional law; the responsibility is one of several that have passed to the regions under state reforms. The basis of the law is a limit on the number of stores that may be established in areas outside of city centres. "Areas low on shops, for example, could be designated for development," Peeters explains.



"Or a province could declare a moratorium on strip malls." De Laat, meanwhile, advises local authorities to be creative in their efforts to fill vacant shopping areas. "Focus on attractiveness and quality, rather than a frantic effort to fill shops come what may," he says. "The challenge should be to see that people go shopping eight times in Antwerp city centre and twice in Wijnegem shopping centre, and not

the other way around." During the legislature now approaching its end, Peeters says, the government has approved €12 million in financing aimed at stimulating town centre retail development. "That gives municipalities the chance to restore façades, for example, or renovate buildings."

► www.detailhandelvlaanderen.be

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Step by step

Mobelife gets patients walking again with individualised hip implants

Andy Furniere

In one of its recent video news reports, the international press agency Reuters covered the story of a teenager in a wheelchair who learned to walk again. This *tour de force* was possible because an innovative implant manufactured by the Leuven-based Mobelife. In the last two years, this small Flemish company has made a name for itself with the made-to-measure implants it creates through 3D printing for patients with complex hip joint problems.

At the Mobelife offices in the Leuven district of Heverlee, CEO Tim Clijmans tells me more about the Swedish teen who was featured in the *Reuters* clip. "She suffers from Von Recklinghausen's disease, which severely deformed her left hip because of a tumour that destroyed her pelvis," he explains.

The girl ended up in a wheelchair four years ago, and her deteriorating condition forced her to leave school and be home-schooled instead.

Two years ago, the girl's doctor at Skane University Hospital in Lund learned about the implants made by Mobelife. "The doctor sent us her CT scans, and we set to work," Clijmans says.

Mobelife was established in 2008 but has only been commercially active for two years. The specialists use the precise image processing technology of 3D printer developer Materialise

to first analyse the patient's bone anatomy and quality.

One essential aspect is the position of the screws in the implant, which need to be in an area of the bone strong enough to keep the implant in place. Part of the implant is also made of porous material, enabling the bone to grow into the implant, essentially incorporating it into the body.

With computer models, the Mobelife team then carries out a biomechanical simulation of certain movements, virtually testing, for example, whether the implant would enable the patient to go up a staircase without difficulty. This simulation incorporates, among other things, the strength of the muscles and joint quality and the

body weight of the patient.

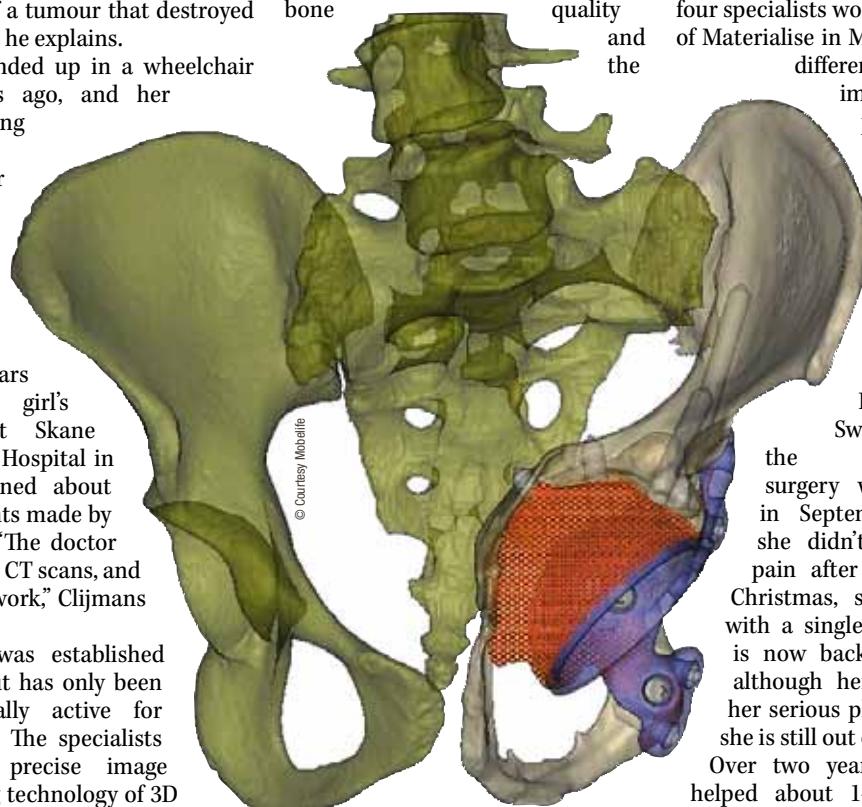
The design of the implant is always carried out in close co-operation with the surgeon, who has a thorough overview of the clinical condition of the patient. The position of the screws are also fine-tuned to the needs of the surgeon. If the design is finished, the implant is 3D printed in titanium in one day with extreme accuracy at the company LayerWise in Leuven. In less than a month, the surgeon receives the all-in-one customised Mobelife implant. "Our engineering know-how and 3D printing skills mean that we can manufacture accurate implants much faster than with more traditional techniques, like moulding and milling," explains Clijmans. Because there are also four specialists working at the office of Materialise in Malaysia, in a very different time zone,

images can also be processed around the clock. At Heverlee itself, Mobelife consists of a team of 20 specialists, most of them biomechanical engineers.

In the case of the Swedish teenager, the reconstructive surgery was carried out in September 2012, and she didn't feel any more pain after a few days. By Christmas, she was walking with a single crutch. The girl is now back in school and, although her disease causes her serious physical problems, she is still out of her wheelchair. Over two years, Mobelife has helped about 140 patients, the majority of them with complex hip

joint problems. "We don't replace the standard implants for routine treatments, but provide added value in the rarer cases," explains Clijmans. Mobelife helps patients with extreme osteoporosis, which causes an acute decrease in bone mass and density,

Part of it is made of porous material, enabling the bone to grow into the implant



Mobelife implants are custom-made for each patient and rigorously tested to ensure adequate mobility

Q&A

Frank Vermeulen is a professor of Roman archaeology at the University of Ghent. He and his research team applied remote sensing methods to learn more about ancient Roman towns in the Mediterranean

Remote sensing means being able to determine what is under the ground, right?

Right. These days, archaeologists have a battery of remote sensing techniques for geophysical survey at our disposal. We can now rapidly generate plans of partial and, in some cases, complete townscapes. These plans contain a huge amount of information, like buried structures in 2D, and – thanks to the ground radar – sometimes also in 3D. This allows us to address site-specific questions in a way that wasn't possible before. How large was the town? How many people lived here? Which type of houses were there?

Do you follow a fixed procedure? Remote sensing and aerial photography of the site are normally



done first, using already available evidence like aerial pictures and satellite imagery. With drones and remote-controlled airplanes, we can make new aerial photographs. After that, we plan a strategy of geophysical prospection, with a

total coverage of the site with one or two techniques, like magnetic survey or earth resistance survey, and application of a more detailed method, such as the ground radar, in strategic site areas.

So you don't have to do any digging to complete your work? In most cases, it's best to do some small-scale excavations of areas where the results of the non-invasive survey are the most interesting, or where the interpretation of these results is problematic. Sometimes these excavations provide more certainty for the final interpretation. They also give more information about the type of building materials used, the absolute and relative chronology, the functions of certain buildings...

Your team created a virtual reconstruction of the entire Roman town of Ammaia, located in Portugal. What can we learn from the model?

The reconstruction illustrates the urban environment of Ammaia and its inhabitants during the mid-second century. Thanks to an interactive video, tourists as well as students of antiquity can get an accurate picture of what a provincial town like Ammaia, which was modelled on Rome, looked like. The reconstruction shows the pattern of the streets, the public buildings, like the bath houses, aqueducts and water sources. We also located a large gold mine near the Tagus river, some iron mining sites and even the quarry that delivered the stones with which this town was built. **Interview by Senne Starckx**

www.radiopast.eu

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Belgium bans mobile phones for kids

It is now illegal in Belgium to sell mobile phones designed specifically for young children. The government is banning the sale of and advertisements for mobile phones in the form of a toy, such as a cuddly bear, meant for children younger than seven. "Using a cell phone increases the risk of brain cancer for young children because of the radiation that is released," said Guy Vandebosch of the University of Leuven. The law also stipulates that the radiation value (SAR) of each mobile phone has to be stated on packaging and advertising. Nearly 4% of GSM users in Belgium make calls totalling more than 30 minutes per day, which is considered the risk threshold. Almost all children in Belgium have a mobile phone by age 12, and two out of three 10-year-olds possess one.

Pharmaceutical history now on file

Pharmaceutical union, associations and federal health minister Laurette Onkelinx presented the Shared Pharmaceutical File last week. If a patient gives permission, pharmacists will be legally obliged to register each prescription the patient buys. Other data, like allergies and chronic diseases will also be included in the file. The information should help pharmacists to better advise patients and prevent medication errors.

The measure was taken because a growing number of patients visit multiple pharmacies. "Not everyone can access the file," assured Onkelinx. "The pharmacist has to have a therapeutic relationship with the patient. The patient can also withdraw permission at any time."

eCall system in all new cars from 2015

From October of next year, all new cars sold in the EU must be equipped with a system that automatically calls emergency services in case of an accident. The European Parliament has approved of the obligatory introduction of the eCall system in cars. Most countries are asking to postpone the measure one year so that they have time to update their emergency call systems.

When a car with the eCall system is involved in an accident, the emergency call centre will automatically be informed of the location of the vehicle, vehicle type, kind of fuel and number of fastened safety belts. The response time of emergency services should decrease by 40 to 50%, said supporters of the measure. **AF**

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Council requests bigger budget

In an election memorandum, the Flemish Interuniversity Council said that it might be necessary to increase tuition fees if the government doesn't allocate a bigger budget and more autonomy. The institutions want to set up their own policies and decide for themselves how to spend their funds. "We are the most-controlled institutions of the Flemish government," said Paul De Knop, rector of the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and chair of the council. The council has requested €150 million extra financing per year to invest in research and development but also more budget for infrastructure and staff. "We can't accept the current budgetary perspective," stated Willy Claes, chair of the Flemish Universities and Colleges Council.

Families' first uni students get support

The University of Leuven (KU Leuven) is setting up a test project to help students who are the first from their family to study at university, so-called pioneer students. According to KU Leuven, many pioneer students have trouble finding their way, which hinders their chances of earning a diploma. The faculties of Literature and Psychology and of Pedagogical Sciences will offer a free, week-long programme at the start of the next academic year structured to give newcomers a concrete view on the often unknown world of higher education.

"We are considering sessions on academic Dutch, sciences, social activities and reflections on identity or motivation," Heidi Mertens of the university's diversity department told student magazine *Veto*.

Request to remove teachers temporarily

The Education Secretary for Cities and Municipalities (OVSG) has requested that the government create a method to force teachers with an addiction or depression to take time off for treatment. According to the organisation, the increasing pressure on teachers is causing more and more serious issues that make them unfit to teach class. "But they often deny that they have a problem," said Patriek Delbaere, general director of OVSG.

The organisation said that the two methods in place to remove teachers – the disciplinary procedure and the negative evaluation – are not sufficient. "A punishment is not the right way to solve a temporary problem," said Delbaere. "We need the third option of a time-out with counselling." *Andy Furniere*

Ready for the real thing

Belfair in Ghent sees 3,000 students put know-how into practice

Kelly Hendricks

Belfair, recently held in Ghent, is not your everyday business fair: Here, the businesses taking part were fictive, created with the goal of getting young entrepreneurs on the road to success.

The 200 participating companies were all "practice enterprises": simulated import-export companies run by students in business schools or vocational courses administered by the Flemish public employment service (VDAB). These practice firms are meant to give young people a first taste of running a company. "The concept is part of a larger European network, but Belfair is the largest international business fair of its kind," says co-organiser Steven Dewaele.

This year's 200 stands were operated by practice enterprises originating not only from Flanders but also Wallonia, France, Italy and the Netherlands. Throughout the two-day event, more than 3,000 national and international students practised their entrepreneurial techniques. "It gives me great joy to see Belfair grow with each year's successful edition," says Dewaele.

Such success is needed in today's economy. With youth unemployment skyrocketing, students and young job-seekers already face an uphill climb. The local entrepreneurial waters are even murkier. According to the European Commission's 2013 SME Performance Review, only 57% of Belgians think entrepreneurs are perceived as having a high status in society. This may explain why

only 16% of Belgians have started a business and 9% intend to start one within three years.

Aware that something needed to be done to facilitate young entrepreneurs' first business steps, the Belgian Centre for Business Training (COFEP) teamed up with VDAB and the Flemish ministry of education and began the practice enterprise programme. In 300 schools and training programmes today, the programme has set up a business simulation, employing the same practices and procedures as a real company; the only difference is that no real products are produced and no capital earned.

While imaginary in nature, these practice firms are real laboratories for entrepreneurship. There are more than 7,200 practice firms established in 42 countries, each with its own specific business activity. This year's practice enterprises in Ghent specialised in everything from electronics and clothing to travel and fitness machines. Madibel from Deinze, East Flanders, proposes affordable local products distributed in creative ways, such as via its original SpeedyFryer frieten dispenser.

"We work with schools and the VDAB to give students the proper confidence to step out into the real business world later on," explains Dewaele. "After a year working in a practice enterprise, they are ready to join the workforce." The practice enterprises perform their simulated business activities mostly virtually, making



Students wheel and deal at the annual Belfair

21,700 domestic and international business transactions in 2013 alone via email and telephone.

Belfair, celebrating its 15th edition this year, is the annual event that brings together all the participating students who have worked in a practice firm that year. One would never guess that this fair was for practice: At last week's event, the tone was strictly business. Professionally dressed young entrepreneurs ran from stand to stand, trying to close sales.

"Both students and their mentors really look forward to attending the fair," said a COFEP practice enterprise mentor. Indeed, students prepare all year for the event, holding simulated client meetings, giving sales pitches and negotiating. A school or VDAB mentor guides them through the

process and gives feedback along the way.

In a new addition to the programme this year, 40 practice enterprises gave themselves the challenge of finding an original way to sell their company in the 60 seconds it takes to ride the elevator – the so-called "elevator pitch". Participants tried everything from original videos to poetic pitches and impressed the contest's jury, made up of HR directors Lina Timmermans and Carole Delava from Carrefour and Veerle Scheunis from Colruyt Group.

"These creative and committed young individuals' dedication was really outstanding," said Scheunis. "There is professionalism, commitment and innovation galore at Belfair."

► www.cofep.be

Initiative tackles the youth job crisis



© Corbis

Schoolbrug's Yamina Al Farisi says. "We live in a knowledge economy to which a diploma is the only entry ticket. The kids need to know this." It all starts when schools are no longer able to handle certain pupils. Then De Schoolbrug is called in. "First we look at the level of transgressive behaviour in the class, the prevalence of students skipping class and the risk of expulsion from school," explains Al Farisi. "Then we start the programme and stay for 10 to 12 weeks. Each week we train the kids in social skills, and we try to make them discover their own core qualities."

During the 12 weeks, "the pupils have to finish an assignment about one of the teachers they admire," continues Al Farisi. "When our work is done and we leave the school, this teacher becomes the pupil's coach for the next four weeks. We try to create a safe class environment, including someone who is always there, who can be trusted. At the same time, we try to foster belief in themselves so they are encouraged to finish school."

The other laureates include Brussels-based Odyssey, which works with 17 schools in the capital to motivate and encourage adolescents at risk of dropping out, and Foyer, an organisation connecting extremely marginalised youths with a migration background – mostly from Roma communities – with an education and the labour market. In Antwerp, Werkvormm organises workshops for children in primary and secondary school to explore their potential technical skills.

Daan Bauwens

across Belgium's three regions. From Chaos to Zen in the Classroom is one of the most original. The Antwerp-based organisation De Schoolbrug is the only organisation of the six that does not work with children outside the classroom but intervenes at school, dealing with the class as a whole. "Convincing the class of the importance of an academic education – that is what we do," De

Kid Rock

III and injured children at UZ Ghent create radio show to aid recovery

Tom Peeters

The excitement and tension is tangible at the heart of the children's rehabilitation centre at the university hospital Ghent. Over the past eight weeks, 10 kids and adolescents visiting the centre to recover from serious injury and illness have been learning how to make radio. Guided by mentors with professional experience in media, they've been following all kinds of workshops to learn radio skills. The hour-long programme *Radio Revakids* is the result of a unique pilot project by the hospital and the REC Radiocentrum. They recorded it last week and it soon went out on air, on the Ghent city radio station *Urgent.fm* and – even more nerve-racking – in every hospital room.

"I think I underestimated the impact a little bit," says 17-year old Astrid Ricquier, the oldest of the radio rookies. "It's far bigger than I expected. Even on the fourth floor, people told me they would listen." She has every reason to be excited. After a spinal operation last October, a few things went wrong, resulting in a long rehabilitation process – not something you would usually look forward to. But now family, friends and fellow patients are gathered to hear their programme, which was also filmed, so the proud parents will be able to see their kids announcing songs, making jingles and interviewing people they look up to.

"By giving the kids such a unique experience, their self-confidence is growing, which is always one of the most important factors in a successful rehabilitation," says occupational therapist Ilse Meerschaert.

It was Meerschaert who initiated the project by contacting the REC Radiocentrum. They set up a special project, providing a workshop based on a specific radio-related topic each Tuesday afternoon. "It was definitely a highlight for the kids," rehabilitation doctor Ruth Van der



Students Ayoub, Dilara and Ward took part in Radio Revakids with (from left) mentors Jef Carlier, Justine De Witte and Nele Raman

Looven says. "We saw how elated they were when they came back from the project." The Ghent-based REC Radiocentrum organised master classes, workshops and coaching for anyone interested in radio, explains Pieter Blomme, the man responsible for education and media labs. "We train and advise people who want to step into the professional field. Recently we had a project training two new football commentators for Sporting Telenet. But people with no professional radio ambition at all are welcome." Setting up a course for rehabilitating youngsters, though, was something they had never done before.

As a children's rehabilitation centre, Meerschaert says they try to think a bit outside the hospital walls. "We did similar projects before, such as a circus. I just think it's very important to refresh and try new things, especially when they are enabling you to approach the children in a more holistic, less analytical way. We try to work bottom-up, not only top-down."

And then she shows us a quote hanging on one of the walls, which gets to the heart of why this radio project was so successful: "Youngsters become conscious of

their possibilities in a natural way. Self-confidence and 'feeling good in your own skin' is a keystone in every rehabilitation process."

"We saw how elated the kids were when they came back from the project"

"From the start I was convinced it would be ideal to integrate the radio workshops as an overall project bringing all rehabilitation disciplines together," Meerschaert says. "Mastery and fluency of a language, social skills, creativity, motion... all those skills come together in radio-making."

"It was a perfect match, since the goals of rehabilitation are similar. We are helping kids with speech and language problems, whose neurocognitive functions are affected, but who are also mentally

coping with their rehabilitation. All of a sudden they were ripped out of their day-to-day life."

Making radio has a direct link with speech therapy, she emphasises. "But there's so much more: You have to prepare, research, edit and work as a team. You need to formulate and defend your own ideas at a meeting, but also be able to make compromises. You need to stand on a stage, being comfortable with getting feedback. All of this takes a lot of concentration and energy from the kids, but it was definitely worth it."

Astrid especially liked her interview with actor and television personality Nathalie Meskens. "It gave me a boost when I had a difficult time," she says. "A week earlier I couldn't join the others in the project because I was too ill. Talking to Nathalie while I was in hospital gave me new courage."

Another big plus for Astrid was the social context. "During the radio project everyone chatted with everyone. Silke and Yana I only knew by name, from crossing each other in the hallway, but now I can say they really became my friends."

"Often I felt the kids didn't have the feeling they were being rehabilitated," says Blomme. "They were just playfully working on their skills, without feeling like they were in therapy." So Meerschaert hopes there will be a follow-up to the project. "We're convinced it has an added value," she says. This week there will be extra training for the doctors, so they can keep on using some radio techniques within the hospital. But now – 26 February, four o'clock in the afternoon – it's time to party. While the parents are listening to *Radio Revakids*, the kids, their doctors and mentors are eating crisps out of bowls made from vinyl records and dancing to Elvis Presley, Stromae and the Bee Gees – all music they programmed in their own show.

www.urgent.fm

Alan Hope

BITE

Spreading the word

Some of the best ideas are the simplest, and there's nothing that can stop creativity, not even the competition of multinational giants. That's my conclusion, anyway, after sampling a new chocolate spread, launched during the recent Salon du Chocolat in Brussels. There is life after Nutella. The spread is produced by NewTree, a Brussels-based company, with products you'll doubtless have come across in supermarkets. They're known for making high-quality chocolate bars with exotic flavours like ginger, thyme and lavender, which use not only fair trade chocolate from the Dominican Republic and Peru, but also come with a certificate

that they're carbon neutral and contribute to the protection of the Amazon rainforest.

In fact, the whole thing is so right-on (even the packaging and the inks are sustainable) you'd be excused for thinking the spread itself was bound to taste hideous as a sort of penance. But no. The new spread is called Noir & Noisette, and that's exactly the right description. This is a market that's dominated by Ferrero's Nutella, of course, and where even major chocolate manufacturers like Cote d'Or have had a hard time making their presence felt.

But be warned, this is chocolate spread for grown-ups. It's dark and unctuous, and that's the



flavour that dominates. Although this and Nutella both contain 13% hazelnuts, here the nuts take a

back seat.

The spread is also based on cocoa butter and almond milk, and contains no added oil, and especially not palm oil. The problem with palm oil is not so much that it's only marginally less unhealthy than the trans fats it has tended to replace, but that producers in places like Indonesia are deforesting like mad to make room for plantations. The production of palm oil is destroying the habitat of endangered species like the orangutan. Last week Delhaize became the first supermarket chain in the world to commit to a refusal to carry products that contribute to deforestation.

www.newtree.com

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Aviation Day

Antwerp, Kortrijk-Wevelgem, Ostend-Bruges and Brussels airports will let visitors take a peek behind the scenes. See air-traffic controllers at work, try out a flight simulator, meet the drug sniffer dogs and learn about various jobs in the aviation sector. *8 March, reservations required*

<http://tinyurl.com/luchtvaartdag>

Flamenco Festival

Experience the fire and passion of Spain's traditional dance form with performances, film screenings and workshops. This Sunday, the family show *Flamenkita* combines music and dance in a fairytale for all ages. *Until 22 March, various locations in Bruges, tickets required*

<http://tinyurl.com/Flamenco-Festival>

Language Snack: Turkish

Each month, Munt punt offers a short introductory course in a foreign language. This month, in conjunction with the year-long project 50 Years of Migration, commemorating 50 years of Moroccan and Turkish immigration to Belgium, have a taste of Turkish. *8 March, 11.00-12.00, Munt punt, Munt 6, Brussels, free*

www.munt punt.be

Stargazing Days

The Astronomy Association is behind this annual event, when the public is invited to join amateur astronomers at observatories and observation points all over Flanders and look through their telescopes at the night sky. Jupiter and its moons will be visible, along with the moon and stars. *7 & 8 March, free*

www.sterrenkijkdagen.be

Circus Pipo

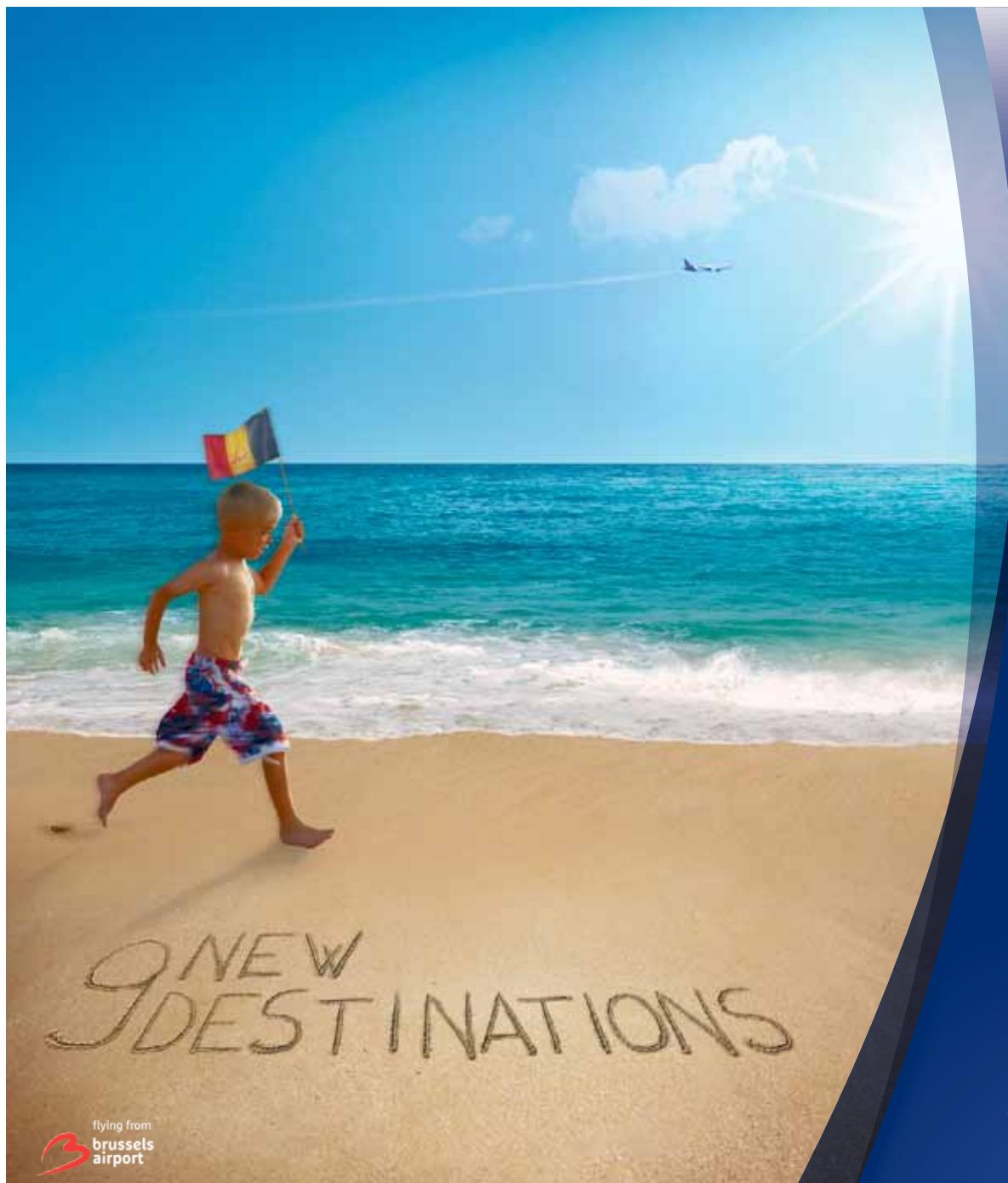
This traditional travelling circus was founded in 1860 by the Heppenheimer family. The eighth generation of Heppenheimer now perform in the show with other family members. This week they'll bring their tents to Duffel (Antwerp province). *7-12 March, €5 for kids, €10 for adults*

www.circuspipo.be

Venice in the Marolles

Celebrate Carnaval Venetian-style in the Marollen district of Brussels this Saturday. School groups, neighbourhood clubs and everyone else can take part in the parade. Prizes for the best costumes and performances. *8 March, parade starts at 14.00 at the Kapellekerk, free*

www.bruegel-marolles.be



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Teen eyes Olympic future

Antwerpener Xander Vercammen hopes to emulate his hero in future Winter Games

Marc Maes

As Flemish athletes returned home from Sochi last month, one young man was looking forward to the next Winter Olympics. Xander Vercammen, 14, is preparing for future success on the slopes and is gaining attention from national and international ski professionals.

"My first time on skis was when I was two-and-a-half," says Xander. "Actually, it was more like a mix of being carried by my parents and gliding, trying to keep my balance." Xander, who lives with his parents and his younger sister in Edegem, south of Antwerp, joined the Aspen ski school in Wilrijk. Aged barely five, he was invited to join the club's racing team. "The emphasis was on technique and slalom expertise," he says. The annual membership fee gave Xander licence to participate in competitions on the Flemish ski circuit.

"The good thing about skiing on artificial slopes is that it strengthens your balance on skis," he explains. "The skis grip less, meaning athletes have to enhance their movements and routines. But I prefer skiing on real snow."

In 2009, Xander was accepted into the Flemish Alpine Ski Academy, giving him access to international competition. "Due to the absence of ski competition infrastructure in Belgium, clubs go to ski resorts abroad for their internal championships," says Xander, who took part in his first competition at Val Thorens in the French Alps.

Inspired by Ted Ligety, the American skier who took gold in the giant slalom in Sochi, Xander decided to combine school and sports. His school, Sint-Eduardus in Merksem, "offers a lot of disciplines but no skiing, so I had to make arrangements with the teachers. Thanks to my classmates – and social media – I can keep up with taking notes and doing homework. The thing with skiing is that you have to maintain the 'snow feeling',



Fourteen-year-old Xander Vercammen took bronze in the slalom this year in Andorra

so weekly training is essential." Today, Xander competes in the under-16-category. After he came ninth in last year's Topolino

slalom," says Xander. "That might have to do with stress and pressure. The biggest challenge is when you're in the middle of a race and start to

The biggest challenge is when you're in the middle of a race and start to feel the burning in your muscles

championship – the world's biggest International Ski Federation competition for youngsters – he came third in the slalom at Vallnord ski resort in Andorra this year.

Xander and his parents are currently preparing for a week in Austria with the national federation. And then it's off to Italy later this month for the 2014 Topolino competition. "I do better in the giant slalom during training, but I get my best competition results in the regular

feel the burning in your muscles... continuing is the only cure then." He admits that, after two or three weeks of intense training in the mountains, muscular strain in his legs and knees can become a problem. "But we train a lot at school, with leg exercises, running, fitness and cycling."

Xander's involvement in top-notch ski competition also requires a substantial financial investment:

training throughout the year, buying

and maintaining the equipment and licences and insurance, not to mention the travel and lodging expenses.

"My parents, who own a butcher shop in Edegem, are my gold sponsors," says Xander. "But one of our clients came up with MC Livebox, a party concept for under-16s. They donate the proceeds of their events to young sportspeople." The MC Livebox party last month was a first step in what Xander hopes will become effective sponsorship. "Costs are increasing steadily and, although with the academy we try to get cheap transport and lodging, there's a lot of money out of our own pocket."

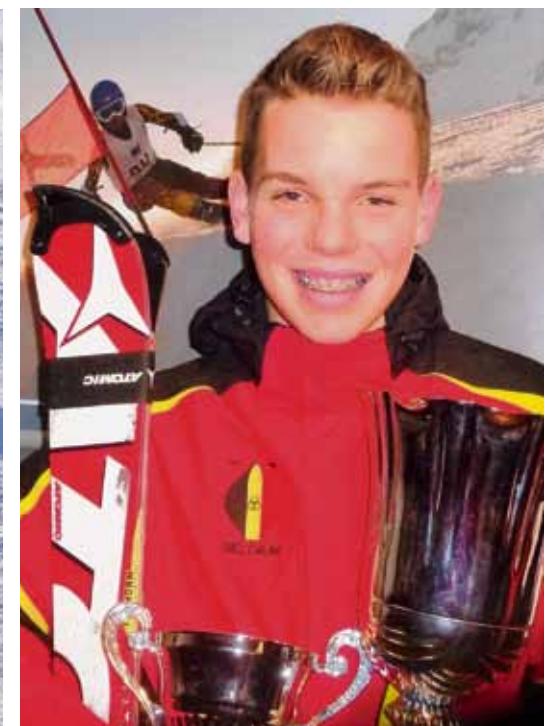
For the national selection, where the academy took on a substantial part of the expenses last year, individual athletes must provide a part of the budget themselves in 2014. "It's a pity to see how some promising skiers have had to let their career go because of the high costs and

lack of structural support for the discipline."

Sneeuwsport Vlaanderen, the official Flemish skiing and snowboarding federation, is subsidised through the Flemish Community. Xander met the strict criteria to become a member of the Belgian National A-Team and gets a subsidy corresponding to 15 training days abroad. "We realise this is merely a drop on a hot tin plate," says Lode Nolf, director of Sneeuwsport Vlaanderen. "The bulk of the expenses, including the trainer's fees, have to be paid by the athletes, or their parents."

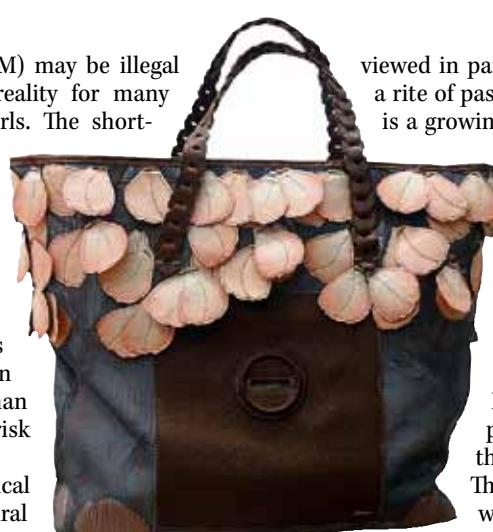
Sponsorship or endorsement deals could also provide crucial support for young athletes and improve the chance for a Belgian medal at the next Winter Olympics.

Watch Xander's best runs at [www.tinyurl.com/Xander-Vercammen](http://tinyurl.com/Xander-Vercammen)



Auction aids fight against female circumcision

Female genital mutilation (FGM) may be illegal across Europe, but it is a reality for many thousands of women and girls. The short-



viewed in parts of Africa and the Middle East as both a rite of passage and an incitement to chastity), there is a growing consensus – supported by the shocking testimony of individual victims such as Somali model and activist Waris Dirie – that action is urgently required to end this profoundly damaging practice.

Amnesty International is prominent in the fight against FGM, most recently with its Art for Action campaign. Members of the public signed pink paper rose petals, pledging their support to end FGM; Amnesty then asked a number of prominent artists to incorporate 8,000 of the more than 42,000 petals into artworks. The artists were asked to imagine a world without FGM, and their interpretations are colourful and varied: Ilaria Venturini Fendi

has produced an elegant handbag (pictured), Cypriot artist Nayia Evangelou a pregnant figure and Flanders' own Walter Van Beirendonck a huge pair of "Walking Lips".

On 13 March, these unique works, plus a piece created and donated especially for the event by Brussels master-milliner Elvis Pompilio, will be auctioned at an Auction for Action to raise funds for Amnesty's End FGM European network. In addition to fundraising, the aim, says Amnesty, is to take positive, creative action to tackle FGM and to move away from the image of passive victimhood. Emma Bedington

13 March,
19.00

Taschen Books
Lebeaustraat 18, Brussels
► www.endfgm.eu/en/a4a

Do not enter

Wim Catrysse's work features landscapes that are sometimes sculptural, sometimes sci-fi

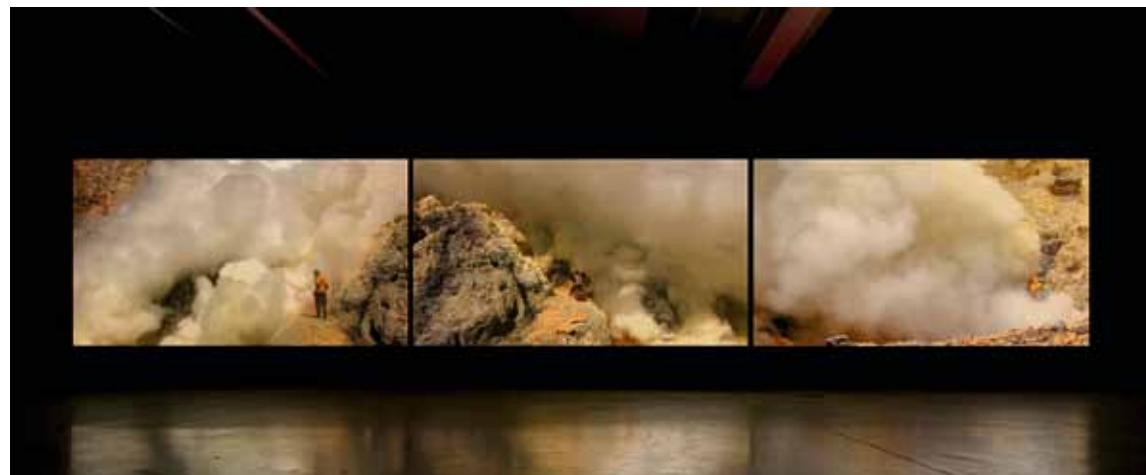
Tom Peeters

Watching the video installations of Antwerp-based artist Wim Catrysse is like experiencing the elements of nature. On giant screens – often triptychs with a sculptural quality – he shows you the driest of sandstorms in a Kuwaiti desert or the most toxic of sulphur fumes rising from an active volcano on Java.

Observing all these desolate spots thoroughly before filming, it's Catrysse's goal to make you part of a science fiction that is reality.

He has always remembered a quote from the American writer, filmmaker and activist Susan Sontag, he tells me during a visit to his imposing exhibition in Mechelen. "Science fiction is not about science," she said, "but about destruction," referring to the habit of sci-fi movies to suggest a new, wonderful discovery by an idealist scientist, while at the end destroying all hope.

Could it be that in science fiction the landscape becomes a lead actor, creating an estranged, often apocalyptic setting, just like the films of Catrysse do? But make no mistake: The remote places he travels to for the sake of art – Alaska, Indonesia, Kuwait – are (or were) very active, at least on a strategic and economic level. Their remote areas are merely hidden from outsiders by people protecting their oil, their gas, their minerals. So you may take the title of the exhibition *Restricted Areas* very literally.



first he wanted to film the military domains, but with only a tourist visa and control posts everywhere, this was a no-go zone. "So we kept hanging around the Main Supply Road, or MSR. This road leading to Iraq was built for the provisioning of military operations."

And then something unexpected happened. While driving on the MSR, he spotted a pack of dogs. "They were all lying down, lacklustre from the heat or digging holes in the sand to cool down. It really got interesting when a storm rose; the local weather forecast just said 'dusty', but if the horizon quasi disappears, I call it a storm [laughs]. Now the battle between nature's elements was even more prominent, and the dogs played a metaphoric role in it."

"MSR" is one of the two most powerful video installations filmed in Kuwait on display in Mechelen's Culture Centre. A tracking shot and a swelling, threatening soundtrack eventually lead to this surreal image of dogs in the desert and, at the very end, a passing army convoy. Though it's all chronological, Catrysse isn't interested in a plot. "For me, storytelling isn't the essence of the medium of film."

Explaining this statement, he takes me back in time, to the world's first cinema screening. "The audience saw a train coming on the screen, and they all hit the floor, seeking protection. Back then, they felt the impact of the medium; they felt the illusion was real. Bruce Nauman, one of the artists who has really influenced me, once said that a



Whether in the Kuwaiti desert or on an Alaskan volcano, Wim Catrysse makes documentary surreal

work of art should be like 'getting hit in the face with a baseball bat'. After he said it, he corrected himself: 'Better, like getting hit in the back of the neck. It has to hit you before you know it.' I like that idea."

It's one reason why Catrysse is working with expectations and tension, but never with a climax. His films come to an end, but at the same time they don't. It's more like they are rotating around an axis. Maybe, he suggests, that's because he never followed a formal film education in film.

For two years at art school Sint-Lucas in Brussels he studied painting, but under influence of film students, he moved to the interdisciplinary 'experimental atelier', where he shot performance art on video.

It was by recording these performances on film that Catrysse discovered his calling. "In fact, film was not totally different from painting," he says. "Through framing, you create an inside and an outside, and thus a perception."

What's equally striking is that his older studio work already contained the kernels for filming on location. "Unmastered Behaviour" from 2001 is a rotating cube in which the strange behaviour of the people inside is filmed. Though the self-provoked centrifugal power in a studio environment emerges differently from the powers working in natural landscape, it has the same starting point.

On location, Catrysse is often drawn to isolated land that is (or once was) reclaimed by industry. His first trip in 2006 took him to Alaska, where he followed a 120-kilometer trajectory to an abandoned copper mine in the mountains.

"I had seen aerial photos and became fascinated by how the

landscape was formed," he says. "Clearly, people wouldn't go to these barren territories if it wasn't for their greed in digging up an infinite amount of minerals. Isn't it ironic that the project was financed by Guggenheim, now known for his museums all over the world?"

What made it worthwhile for the Flemish artist was the micro-climate in the nearby Copper River, evoking a storm limited to the riverbed. Such topographical characteristics are crucial for his work.

Often, both the artist and his equipment are exposed to hostile conditions, which is reflected in the final product. Filming an active volcano in Indonesia, his expensive camera was destroyed by the sulphur fumes. "Very frustrating when it happens just after the second week of your six-week stay," he grins.

Nevertheless, 2010's "Outward-Bound" is a captivating experience, right on the border of science fiction and documentary, in which the filmmaker captures a modern image of slavery. Locals workers tap the sulphur on top of the volcano with a pipe system. The gas turns to liquid, and when it's ready, they drag it 1.5 kilometres down the volcano in 80kg baskets.

Catrysse is one of the founders of Escautville, an Antwerp organisation that supports video artists. All of his work, including the pieces that aren't featured in the exhibition, are illustrated in a book published by Roma Publications.

In the meantime, he's preparing his next trip – this time to Buzludzha, a peak in the Bulgarian Balkan Mountains, atop which a former building of the communist party is decaying. In winter it is snowed under, creating "an intriguing confusion between inside and outside, between architecture and landscape".

Another fine description of what he creates with his work, whether it's filmed in a 50°C. desert or on a minus 20°C mountain top.

Until
6 April

CC Mechelen & De Garage
Onder den Toren 12, Mechelen
► www.ccmechelen.be

“
For me,
storytelling isn't
the essence of
the medium of
film

Before his trip to Kuwait, Catrysse, 40, had seen aerial pictures of the country. He could distinguish three areas of activity: army bases, oil fields and cities near the coast. At

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Franz Erhard Walther: The Body Decides

This first solo exhibition for the influential German conceptual artist in Belgium features more than 100 works, from minimalist sculptures to abstract paintings, all raising questions about the nature of art and evoking a platform for social action. Until 27 April, Wiers, Brussels

Duane Hanson: Sculptures of the American Dream

Retrospective of 28 works by the 20th-century American artist, who reproduced the average American to scale. See "Fleamarket Lady", "Lunchbreak" "Bodybuilder" or "Old Couple on a Bench" and wonder at how realistic these depictions of daily life really are. Until 25 May, Museum van Elsene

► www.museumvanelsene.be

Théodore Géricault: Fragments of Compassion

The portraits that 19th-century French artist Théodore Géricault painted of mentally ill patients in the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris (pictured) showcased a seldom seen empathy. These paintings are joined by his drawings and prints and by paintings of contemporaries, such as Goya and Delacroix. Until 25 May, Fine Arts Museum, Ghent

► www.mskgent.be



Belgian art revolutionaries

To the Point: The Neo-Impressionist Portrait

Until 18 May

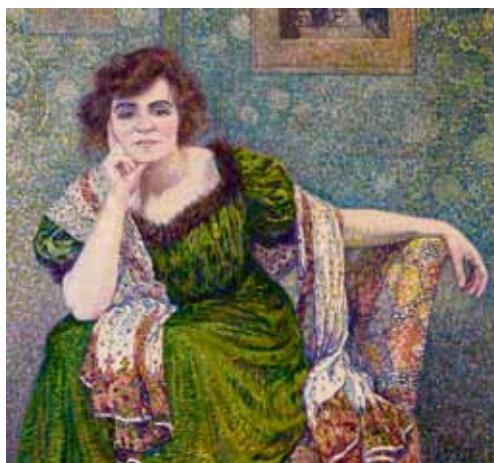
ING Cultural Centre, Brussels

► www.ing.be/art

It is thanks to prescient American art collectors and curators that an exceptional collection of pointillist portraits are on show for the first time in Brussels. After the Second World War, they bought works by a group of highly influential, yet neglected, Belgian artists.

It was Georges Seurat's famous painting "A Sunday Afternoon on the island of la Grande Jatte" that launched the style known as pointillism or, as the French artist preferred, divisionism. After exhibiting the work in Paris in 1886, Belgian contemporaries invited him to show it in Brussels the following year.

An enthusiastic reception gave birth to the Neo-Impressionist movement in France and Belgium. The latter included the artists Henry Van de Velde, Georges Lemmen, George Morren and Théo Van Rysselberghe, bringing an unusual



intimacy and depth of light to their work. Seurat's iconic painting rarely moves from its Chicago home, but *To the Point* reveals its influence. It begins with paintings from the French school: lesser-known names are a revelation, such as Achille Laugé. His monumental "Devant

la fenêtre 1899", proves how individualistic each artist could be within the movement.

Belgian artists follow and take centre stage. Although *Antwerpnaar* Van de Velde would eventually abandon painting for applied arts and architecture, his five masterpieces here are innovative with their Symbolist undertones. Three magnificent portraits of the Sèthe sisters by Van Rysselberghe, meanwhile, explain why the Ghent artist was the leader of the Belgian school (*pictured*).

As a sub-division of the larger Post-Impressionist movement, Neo-Impressionist artists renounced the open-air light used by their impressionist predecessors. Instead, they sought to create luminosity by painstakingly applying brushstrokes of primary colours, which form an optical mix in the eye of the viewer. But the pursuit was laborious, and slowly each artist abandoned the technique. Their legacy nevertheless shaped early 20th-century art. **Sarah Crew**

PERFORMANCE

De Wet

14-22 March | KVS, Brussels | ► www.kvs.be

KVS and gonzo Dutch theatre company Wunderbaum launched a years-long dialogue in 2010 with the off-the-wall performance *Rail Gourmet*. Their latest and last joint production, *De Wet* (The Law), is a slightly more sober affair. The theatre triptych examines the eponymous law from the perspectives of a Somali pirate, a Balkan prostitute and a



FAMILY

Toink

12-13 March | C-Mine, Genk | ► www.c-mine.be

Belgium's linguistic labyrinth doesn't make it easy to choose just any cultural outing, and if you're taking the kids along, it only gets murkier. Brussels production house Bronks has always understood this, consistently producing high-quality and dialogue-friendly theatre for youngsters. Its latest production, *Toink*, for kids aged seven and up,



FILM

Rapsodia Satanica

12 March, 20.00 | De Munt, Brussels | ► www.demunt.be

De Munt has lately reinvented itself with a series of unconventional offerings. They've streamed live opera on the beach and hosted pop/rock groups in the same hall where the Belgian Revolution started. Now the opera house celebrates the centenary of the classic Italian silent film *Rapsodia Satanica* with a screening accompanied by live soundtrack. It's not a completely off-the-wall choice. The film's director Nino Oxilia (who would die three years later, aged 28, in the First World War) sought to create a cinematic opera and even tapped one of the country's leading opera composers Pietro Mascagni to write the score, performed here by De Munt's house orchestra under the direction of Swiss conductor Philippe Béran. **GV**



CONCERT

Tuxedomoon

22 March, 20.00 | Biekorf, Bruges | ► www.cactusmusic.be

Formed in San Francisco in 1977, the cult group Tuxedomoon spent the Reagan years in self-imposed exile in Brussels before its membership dispersed to different continents, making for an even more nomadic collective life. Needless to say, this complicates live performance, which has become a rare occurrence, indeed. This year

promises to be different. Not only has Tuxedomoon scheduled several dates across Europe, but they are also releasing fresh work: a newly composed soundtrack for the odd 1970s art-house film *Pink Narcissus*. Their first concert in years is, fittingly enough, in Belgium. Then it's off to Germany, Switzerland and Italy. **GV**



Concert

Brussels

Cults: Club concert by New York-based duo who blend the sound of 1960s girl groups and 1990s shoegaze bands. Their second album *Static* is out now.

14 MAR 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

► www.abconcerts.be

Ostend

Ostend Night: The fourth instalment of De Grote Post's showcase series for local artists features three Ostend bands: New Wave outfit Der Klinke, indie rockers Monopole and fresh-faced pop group Audience in the Street

7 MAR 20.30 at De Grote Post, Hendrik Serruyslaan 18A

► www.degrotepost.be

Exhibition

Antwerp

RE: Work Brussels: Architecture students from Barcelona, Manchester and Bordeaux propose solutions for the capital's rapidly growing neighbourhoods. Free entry

12 MAR to 17 JUN at De Singel, Desguinle 25

► www.desingel.be

Ghent

Dirk Braeckman: The Flemish photographer presents First World War-era prints in a purpose-built display case. The photos were snapped by an anonymous eyewitness, probably a soldier

Until 1 JUN at SMAK, Citadelpark

► www.smak.be

Festival

Brussels

Offscreen Film Festival: Bozar, Cinematek, Cinema Riots and Nova participate in the seventh edition of this unconventional film festival celebrating independent and unreleased productions. This year's focus: British B-movies from the 1960s through the 1980s

Until 23 MAR across Brussels

► www.offscreen.be

WoWmen!: Now in its second edition, this multidisciplinary arts festival explores gender in art and society. There are plenty of performances, screenings and exhibitions as well as debates and original research

10-15 MAR at Kaaitheater, Sainctelettesquare 20

► www.kaaitheater.be

Talking Dutch

No dialect please, we're foreign

Derek Blyth

You may not have heard of Natalia, but she's been in the news a lot recently. The singer set off a storm of protest by presenting the Music Industry Awards on the Flemish channel VRT in a broad Kempen accent. It caused such a furious reaction that no one paid much attention to the winners. *De kritiek op Natalia via Twitter en Facebook was soms ronduit pijnlijk* – the comments about Natalia on Twitter and Facebook were at times simply painful, wrote *De Standaard*. *Er is maar een persoon die verstaat wat #natalia zegt en dat is ze zelf* – there's only one person who understood what #natalia was saying and that was Natalia herself, tweeted one critical viewer.

The newspaper helpfully listed some of things that Natalia had said during the awards ceremony. *Et ga vanavond een graaf feesje worre, dames en eere* – it's going to be a great party this evening, ladies and gentlemen, she told the audience, who were soon reaching for Twitter to register their anger in 140 characters.

It may seem odd that a region with such a rich variety of dialects should insist that TV presenters speak correct Dutch. An article in *De Morgen* tried to get to the bottom of the problem. *Waarom is dialect zo'n taboe bij de Vlaming?* – why is



dialect such a taboo issue with the Flemish?

An expert explained that the roots of the problem lay in the Flemish emancipation movement. *In de 19de eeuw wilde de intellectuele elite niets liever dan één standaardtaal in heel Vlaanderen* – in the 19th century the intellectual elite wanted nothing less than a standard language for the whole of Flanders. *Dat was belangrijk voor de Vlaamse eenheid en emancipatie, zodat we konden opboksen tegen de Franstalige cultuur* – that was important for Flemish unity and emancipation, so that we could hold our own against French culture. But others argued that it was simply a matter of respect for the viewer. *Van presentatoren of nieuwslezers mogen we toch verwachten dat*

ze Nederlands spreken? – Don't we have the right to expect our presenters and news readers to speak Dutch? asked Flemish MP Wilfried Vandaele. *Al was het maar uit respect voor alle Vlamingen die geen Kempisch begrijpen* – if only out of respect for all the Flemings who don't understand Kempen dialect.

Of uit respect voor de duizenden buitenlanders in ons land van wie we inspanningen vragen om onze taal te leren – or out of respect for the thousands of foreigners in our country who we expect to make the effort to learn our language. So it's goodbye Natalia and anyone else who tries to talk to us in a regional accent.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

Tribeca Film Festival @TribecaFilmFest

Here are 3 reasons why you should watch #TheBrokenCircleBreakdown this weekend: <http://bit.ly/1f2xCSj> pic.twitter.com/jmnJoc0AyH

Fems @KeepTheFaith_x

@RyanJenkinson1 just remember: if they start saying 'zijt gij zot of wa?' or 'ik krijg u nog wel manneke' you run, you run hard

Elyar Fox @ElyarFox

On the train to Brussels!! Be at MANNEKIN PIS at 3.45. Wear GREEN! And send me some more tracks for my #EuroFoxPlaylist? #ElyarFoxInBrussels

Mermaid @mermaid77479

Been catching up on Salamander on BBC 4. Rekindling the Flemish I tried to learn when I lived in Leuven. Here's a swear word for you, Verdomme!

In response to: New trams on the way for Antwerp, Ghent and the coast

Ginger Fenner: Where do I get my ticket? Kidding - unfortunately! LOL

In response to: Flanders starts campaign to become culinary hotspot

Arthur Lincoln: As an ex-pat from the United Kingdom I will always maintain that the Belgian kitchen is the paramount best in the world and I love it. When it comes to Belgian chocolates they are just lovely. There are so many aspects to life in Belgium which are better than my home country so I decided some time ago that I shall stay!!

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Poll

Flanders' athletes came back from the Olympics with zero medals. Should we give up on the Winter Games?

a. Flanders has no mountains and very little snow. Why waste time and money on taking part in the Winter Games?

36%

b. Our performance suffers from a lack of support. Winter athletes on the brink of success should be celebrated – and funded

64%

c. They didn't win medals, but they were there, and some of them performed very well. Let well enough alone

0%

Interestingly, no one who voted in our poll thinks things are A-OK the way they are. We should either give up entirely (preferable to more than one-third of you) or do it properly. A clear majority came out in favour of funding of athletes who show Olympic promise, which will be music to the ears of sports minister Philippe Muyters, who praised Flanders' top athletes at a

special event last week. He promised funding would be made available, though he emphasised that it would only go to athletes who have already proved their worth, not for start-up programmes. That's good news for the bobsleigh team, which finished in the top 10, and for Bart Swings, the speed skater who turned to crowdfunding last year to raise money for travel

THE LAST WORD

Playing hard to get

"He has a ponytail and looks a bit too brown, but whatever. I'm starstruck. I pretend nothing is wrong, but I'm ignoring him the way I ignore someone I'm in love with."

Veerle Baetens met Al Pacino at a Hollywood party, she relates in her daily Oscars diary for *Het Nieuwsblad*

New generation

"I'm not saying everyone should sit in parliament until they're 80, but there's a great loss of expertise. The collective memory is diluted. It's not because you're young that you're necessarily any good."

Only half of the sitting member of the Flemish Parliament are sure to return after the May elections, and Eric Van Rompuy isn't one of them

Lollipop

"It may have been intended playfully, but they didn't think it through. We don't want to see our young children confronted with drugs."

A father of two was not amused when someone yet unknown handed out cannabis lollies at the carnival celebrations in Genk. (They did not contain the active ingredient THC)

Keep calm and carry on

"We don't understand all the fuss. We've noticed no tension or unrest. Everything is normal."

Sigi Moors, a Flemish tourist in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, as the government advises Belgians to avoid the resort

Next week's question:

the Human Rights League is crowdfunding to fight a new data law that it says is a breach of privacy (see p6). How do you feel about your data being collected and stored?

Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on VOTE on the homepage to register your vote!

