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Nike wins FIT's Foreign Investment Trophy for new logistics centre in Limburg

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Flemish students take on a new job every week to help decide their futures

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# 100 years of radio

## Flemish public broadcaster VRT looks back on its humble beginnings

Els Mertens

Last Friday, 28 March, marked exactly 100 years since the first radio broadcast took place in Belgium. Flemish public broadcaster VRT is celebrating with a year-long exhibition in Leuven, special broadcasts and a new book on the history of radio

On 28 March, 1914, the first radio broadcast in Belgium hit the airwaves. It was a concert, broadcast from the royal palace in Laken. As almost no one had a radio, there were just 26 listeners.

In 1930, the Nationaal Instituut voor Radio-omroep (National Institute for Radio Broadcasting) was founded in Brussels. Radio pioneers launched the first-ever news broadcast *Het gesproken dagblad* (The Spoken Newspaper), so listeners – by then there were many more – could not only read about

current affairs but also listen to the news while sitting in their living rooms.

In 1937, the institute broke into Dutch- and French-speaking divisions, the precursors to today's VRT and RTBF. A year later, they moved into their brand new building, now known as Flagey.

Today, 4.2 million people in Belgium listen to the radio every day, but in 1914, this was the very pinnacle of innovation – the very first broadcast media. And while digital products, apps and online platforms change by the day, radio has stayed relatively the same for 100 years. That's remarkable in and of itself.

An exhibition in Leuven to mark the centenary, *R100+: beleef 100 jaar radio* (R100: Live 100 Years of Radio), takes visitors through radio history to the radio of the future. If you would like to sit on a throne and listen to the first radio broadcast,

like Queen Elisabeth of Belgium did 100 years ago, discover the first sportscasters or find out what visual radio is, then this is the place to be.

You get the chance to present a radio show, interview some of your favourite artists or create a jingle. The interactive exhibition is a brilliant opportunity to truly experience the magic of radio.

Paul De Wyngaert, production manager of VRT radio, feels nostalgic when he sees the exhibition. "I remember my introduction to radio as a child," he says, while gazing at the many versions of radios perched in the exhibition, above my head. "We used to have one just like that," he tells me, pointing at an antique Siera radio.

"As a child I was amazed to hear children singing on the radio; I didn't understand how there could be children hidden inside my radio. I also wanted to go inside the radio



# Zoo subsidies under fire

## Director of Pairi Daiza animal park questions the Flemish government's subsidies to KMDA

Alan Hope

Antwerp Zoo fulfils a social function, takes part in research and is not profit-driven, Flanders' tourism and heritage minister Geert Bourgeois said. Speaking on VRT radio, the minister was responding to criticism from Eric Domb, CEO of the Pairi Daiza park in Brugelette, Wallonia, about the amount of Flemish government subsidies allotted to the zoo. Domb has engaged legal counsel in consideration of a formal complaint against the subsidies to the Royal Society for Zoology of Antwerp (KMDA), which operates Antwerp Zoo (pictured) and the Planckendael

animal park in Mechelen. The subsidies, Domb claims, distort fair competition and are in breach of EU rules. His legal action would seek to have the next round of subsidies, due in 2016, withheld. According to Bourgeois, nearly all EU member states allow subsidies for zoos. "There no precedents, and I have no knowledge of any intervention by the European Commission," he said. According to Domb, KMDA received €97 million in government funding between 2002 and 2013, while his park only received about €10 million from Wallonia during the same period. According to a statement issued



by the KDMA in response, €60 million of that amount was for the renovation of the Koningin Elisabeth hall adjacent to the zoo, which it also manages. KMDA receives €2.3 million a year from the government for operating costs, the organisation said, and €3.8 million for investment in the maintenance and upkeep of the zoo as a historical monument. "We regret Mr Domb's comments and have never sought confrontation," said KMDA's director-general, Dries Herpoelaert. "It's too bad we can't work together in a constructive manner. We wish Pairi Daiza success in the future."

## Urban gardeners warned about safety of vegetables and eggs

City residents in Flanders who grow their own vegetables have been advised to wash them thoroughly and refrain from eating them altogether if grown next to roads or railways. The problem was reported in the popular science magazine *Eos*, which carried out its own examination of soil samples from Deurne and Hoboken in Antwerp province and Gistel in West Flanders. The soil in Gistel was satisfactory, but in Deurne the soil was approaching the limits for safe consumption in its levels of mercury and copper. In Hoboken,

the limit for heavy metal cadmium had been exceeded because of industrial pollution, and the report advised residents not to eat vegetables grown there. A team of Ghent University researchers, meanwhile, led by Gijs Du Laing of the Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry and Applied Ecochemistry tested 35 samples of leaf lettuce grown in the city and found levels slightly over the limit for cadmium and arsenic, and seriously over the limit for lead. "Fine particulates, which cause lead pollution, would appear to be at the root of the problem,"

professor Du Laing said. In all cases, researchers advised residents to wash home-grown vegetables thoroughly. Soil chemistry consultant Paul Römken, responding to a similar study done in Berlin, confirmed that veggies should not be grown "right next to a motorway." But he said that in other areas, "city soil is a perfect place for growing vegetables. I would say that it's more healthy to enjoy gardening and eating one's own produce than it is to worry about the possible risks". AH

## Working group to investigate First World War munitions

West Flanders governor Carl Decaluwé is setting up a working group to investigate the problems surrounding the disposal of toxic munitions at the base used by Dovo, the army's bomb disposal squad. The machinery used to disarm toxic munitions in Langemark-Poelkapelle has been out of service since 2012, with the bombs and shells being stockpiled instead. According to Dovo, some 3,200 shells containing poison gas, or Yperite – named after the city where it was first used – are currently awaiting disarmament. Both Decaluwé and the mayor

of Langemark-Poelkapelle, Alain Wyffels, were unaware of the situation until recent weeks when it was discovered that farmers in West Flanders were piling shells on their property rather than turning them into Dovo. Soon after, several hundred shells were found under a field in Passchendaele. The working group's first meeting will take place in April. Decaluwé said he has also written to defence minister and party colleague Pieter De Crem regarding the situation. AH

## Stolen Ghent Altarpiece panel recoverable, says historian

A Flemish historian says it is possible to bring an end to one of the most enduring criminal mysteries in Flanders, and the longest-running investigation on the books of the Ghent prosecutors' office. The panel known as "De rechtvaardige rechters", or "The Righteous Judges", from the Ghent Altarpiece has been missing since it was stolen in 1934. Historian and member of the Brussels Parliament Paul De Ridder says he knows that the panel is being hidden by a Ghent family. Jan and Hubert Van Eyck painted "Het Lam Gods", known in

English as "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" or simply the Ghent Altarpiece, in 1432 for a side chapel in the church of Saint John, now Sint-Baaf's cathedral. It is one of the world's first oil paintings and considered one of the finest examples existing of Nederlândish art. The altarpiece contains 20 double-sided panels and hinges that allow it to be closed. When open, it reveals a triptych showing God flanked by the Virgin and the Baptist, as well as singing angels and Adam and Eve. On the lower level, the work shows the Lamb of God on an altar, surrounded by



martyrs, prophets and saints, knights and judges. In April of 1934, two panels from the work were stolen in an attempt to extort money from the Bishop of Ghent. One of the panels was returned, and the other, depicting the Righteous Judges (pictured), has been missing ever since. The panel is thought to include portraits of the Van Eyck brothers themselves. The missing panel was replaced by a copy in the 1940s. Last weekend, De Ridder told VRT news that he had tracked the work to a "prominent Ghent

family", who have declined to come forward for fear of damaging their reputation. De Ridder declined to identify them, but in a similar story reported by *De Standaard* in 2012, the family was revealed to be that of the former Belgian minister August De Schryver. Spokesperson Annemie Serlippens of the Ghent prosecutor's office said they had received a tip as to the whereabouts of the panel last year and began an investigation. A number of members of the family have been interviewed, she said.

De Ridder said he hoped the case could still be resolved by agreement and that he was bringing the case to light to put pressure on the family to co-operate. His appeal was backed by the Bishop of Ghent, Luc Van Looy, who called for the panel to be returned out of respect for the "integrity and totality" of the work. However, Van Looy admitted that he held out little hope of a positive result. "I consider the chance to be very slim that I will see the panel restored in my lifetime," he told VTM. AH

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

93%

of KU Leuven law students who fail most of their first-year exams don't ultimately earn a degree. The university is considering requiring first-year students who perform badly to change their course of study

6 tonnes

of rubbish picked up by 1,500 volunteers on the Flemish coast, as part of a worldwide Clean Beach Cup campaign organised by power supplier Eneco

€5 million

compensation for shopkeepers who lost sales because of a breakdown of Worldlines' electronic payments system two days before Christmas

15.8m

draught of a ship leaving Zeebrugge harbour last week, a new record not only for the port but for all Flemish harbours

5 million

journeys taken using bicycles rented from Villo!, the bike-hire system in Brussels, since it was inaugurated in 2009



WEEK IN BRIEF

Belgium’s Prince Laurent, the younger brother of King Filip, is **slowly being revived from a coma** induced last week to allow him to recover from a severe lung infection. The hospital, Saint-Luc in Brussels, refused to comment, but newspaper reports quoted sources close to the family saying that Laurent’s condition was “developing favourably”. The waking process could take several days.

A team of researchers from the universities of Hasselt, Maastricht, Harvard and Edinburgh has shown that **anti-smoking regulations** have reduced the number of premature births, hospital admissions and asthma attacks among children. Smoke-free public spaces have resulted in a reduction of about 10% in the number of premature births. The number of hospital admissions and visits for first-aid consultations after asthma attacks decreased by the same proportion.

Regine Beer, one of the **last Belgian survivors of Auschwitz**, has died at the age of 93. Beer was born in Amsterdam, but her parents sent her to school in Antwerp, where she was arrested in 1943 because her father was a Jew. She passed through the Dossin Barracks in Mechelen before being sent to Auschwitz, where she survived until the liberation in 1945. She returned to Antwerp and became a teacher. In 1979, she began to share her story in public appearances in schools and in a wide variety of associations. “Until then, I had hoped to forget by keeping silent,” she explained once in an interview, “but it never happened. These are not happy stories, but we have to tell them so that it never happens again.”

The month of March was the **sunniest in more than a century**, with 210 hours of sun, compared to a seasonal average of 114 hours. The record in 1880 saw a total of 234 hours of sunshine in March. The massive installation of

**Finnish-style jogging tracks** in municipalities across Flanders has been a great success, according to the University of Leuven’s department of movement and rehabilitation sciences. The low-impact track, made of a shock-absorbent substances such as woodchips, have been installed in 47% of Flanders’ cities and towns. The tracks have an average length of just over one kilometre and cost €66,000 each to install. More than one in five users of the tracks are just starting out in jogging, the department said.

The Brussels-Capital Region’s new security system brings together **footage from 3,100 security cameras** in one place, public works minister Brigitte Grouwels announced. The system, costing €6 million to set up, includes camera footage from the fire service, transport service and the port of Brussels, making them all available to police. Grouwels stressed that privacy would be a priority and the use of the images scrutinised by an independent parliamentary committee.

Brussels Airport has dropped three places to number 72 in the **world ranking of international airports** compiled by research bureau Skytrax. The consultancy polls the opinion of more than 12 million passengers worldwide, on the basis of 38 satisfaction indicators. Munich was the top European airport, with Singapore Changi number one worldwide.

Environment minister Joke Schauvliege has refused a permit to what would have been the **biggest mink farm in Flanders**. The company intended to raise more than 161,000 mink on the site in Wervik, West Flanders. Residents, the city council, Gaia and Natuurpunt all opposed the plan, but it was accepted by West Flanders province if it restricted its numbers to 110,000. Schauvliege refused the permit, her office said, because the company had

failed to give adequate assurances that ammonia and smell nuisance would be kept to an acceptable level. “Good news,” commented Wervik mayor Youro Casier.

The **former ABC cinema on Adolphe Maxlaan** in Brussels, which closed last year after more than four decades of screening soft-core porn films, has been saved by a consortium made up of Cinema Nova, Marcel vzw and cultural heritage organisation La Rétime du Plateau. The group that owns the building was going to turn it into a restaurant, but the consortium reached an agreement to allow them to hire the cinema for its original use. The group now intends to collect the first year’s rent through crowdfunding.

Federal animal welfare authorities received **1,568 complaints of animal abuse** in 2013, down from 1,729 in 2012, according to senator Guido De Padt. However, 491 cases led to legal action, 134 more than in 2012. Animal welfare is due to become the responsibility of the regions after the elections, as part of state reform. “Sadly animal abuse continues to happen,” De Padt said. “And because it mostly takes place behind closed doors, it is difficult to investigate.”

A number of **legislative changes come into force** on 1 April: Every child care centre must have a licence from Kind & Gezin. People with low incomes get an increased tax break as the so-called “work bonus” increases from 8.95% to 14.4%. VAT on electricity decreases from 21% to 6%. The environmental tax on batteries is cut by 11 cents. Every person present on a major construction site has to be registered, for safety reasons and to deter illegal workers. Businesses with a turnover of less than €15,000 a year no longer need to have a VAT number.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



© Philippe Debrone/Kaattheater

Hugo Vanden Driessche

Hugo Vanden Driessche is leaving his post as the general director of Kaaitheater in Brussels at the end of the month, after 37 years of work with the institution. His place will be taken by Guy Gypens, currently the theatre’s artistic director. Vanden Driessche, 62, began his career in the cultural sector at Brussels’ Beursschouwburg in 1976, becoming its general director in 1981 at the age of only 30. It was Beursschouwburg that launched the annual Kaaitheater festival in the 1970s. Together with festival boss Hugo De Greef (who would later go on to run Flagey), Vanden Driessche created Schaamte, an artists’ collective that included names such as Josse De Pauw, Jan Lauwers and Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker. In 1987, Kaaitheater merged with Schaamte, with Vanden Driessche as its administrative director. After passing through the Contact and Culture Centre in Brussels and deSingel in Antwerp, he returned to Kaaitheater in 1993 as it moved into its new home next to the Brussels Canal, where it remains. In 1998, he became its general director.

Five years ago, Vanden Driessche was awarded the Flemish-Brussels Prize for his unreserved dedication to the cultural life of Flanders and Brussels, as the then culture minister Bert Anciaux put it. Over the years, Vanden Driessche helped launch *Brussel Deze Week*, was a member of the general assembly of Flagey and served as deputy director of Theaterfestival Vlaanderen. “He always performed his business and administrative roles with a huge respect for artists and their work,” said De Greef. “He knew that was the essence of his job. ... And they listened to him.” “He was one of the first people to give the chaotic arts world of those days a structural and financial foundation,” said De Pauw. “And he had a great deal of understanding for the artists, who are always wanting more, while resources are limited.” “He was an arts manager before the term was even invented,” said Hugo Weckx, a former Flemish minister of culture and Brussels. “He was there at the birth of Flemish cultural life in Brussels. We owe him an enormous debt of gratitude.

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Gulls 1, humans 0

Last week, Zeebrugge’s seagulls celebrated their first recorded victory over humans, when a court in Bruges ordered that construction works in the harbour be suspended so that the birds, until recently threatened with forcible contraception, reach the end of the breeding season. The attentive reader will recall that Flanders’ coastal seagulls have been waging a long campaign. In 2012, they started a series of guerrilla attacks because tourists were no longer bringing enough food to the beach. One worker at the rail freight depot in the port of Zeebrugge was hospitalised. The council proposed removing nests and sabotaging eggs. Down the coast in Ostend, they wanted to moor large bins of food offshore, like sacrificial offerings to a



© Kulica/Wikimedia Commons

feathery and wrathful god. The gulls were not fooled. They ignored the bins, preferring to eat the rubbish provided on the promenade. Likewise, they laughed up their sleeves at the special reinforced rubbish bags tested by the council, blithely digging into the bags and scattering everything inedible all over the streets. In Knokke-Heist, as befits its upmarket image, a fake fox attached to a remote controlled car

chassis was deployed to scare the gulls away, to equally futile effect. To be fair, the main plaintiff in the court case was human. Bird protection outfit Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen told the court that the breeding potential of some 6,500 pairs of gulls was at stake because their traditional grounds were occupied by construction equipment. If robbed of their breeding space, the gulls would probably move into town and nest on people’s roofs, VV said. The court ruled in their favour: Better the devil you know out on the outskirts than two metres from your bedroom. In the meantime, works are suspended. And, out on the shoreline, the birds plan their next move.

FLANDERS TODAY



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## 5TH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### And in the far left corner...

While the Netherlands and France have seen the far right (re-)emerge recently, in Flanders it is decreasing in popularity. Vlaams Belang, once a powerful political force, seems to have lost much of its appeal to N-VA, which caters to the same electorate with its nationalism and law-and-order discourse.

Remarkably, over here the far left has been on the rise for some time. For decades, PVDA was nothing but a fringe party, haunted by its adherence to foreign communist regimes and – some would say – its lack of a sense of humour. While its Dokters van de Wereld (Doctors of the World), which provided nearly free health care, were widely respected, the party never managed to convert their popularity into votes.

Now, PVDA is hoping to be the “surprise” of the May election. (Belgian wisdom has it that every election holds its surprise.) This has much to do with its leader, Peter Mertens, who has traded in the old dogmatism for the language of “ordinary people”. Mertens’ book on the financial and economic crisis, aptly called *Hoe durven ze?* (How Dare They?), became a surprise hit. Now he hopes for the same for his party.

For some years, PVDA (not to be confused with its Dutch namesake) has attracted trade union militants and other left-wing activists, many of whom are disappointed by the social-democrat SPA. They feel SPA has become one of the powers that be, and too intellectual, too.

Wallonia, by the way, is seeing the same evolution. While in Flanders, prime minister Elio Di Rupo is often seen as a domineering leftist figure, in his own region he is at times perceived as the exact opposite: a powerless prime minister of a right-wing government. This explains the increasing success of PTB, PVDA’s French-speaking counterpart.

This weekend, Di Rupo called a vote for PTB “useless”: The party hardly ever gets any MPs elected to parliament and, if it does, their number is too small to be of any influence. In Flanders, SPA leaders have issued a similar warning: Votes for PVDA “weaken” the left.

At a campaign meeting last week, Mertens refuted both statements: We strengthen the left, he said, pointing to the lower VAT on electricity and the debate on a capital tax, essential SPA issues. Even without representatives in parliament, we have influence in these matters, Mertens said. And that just might get him into parliament himself.

# “Brave little Belgium”

## US president Barack Obama visits the Flanders Fields American Cemetery

Derek Blyth

US president Barack Obama visited Belgium last week and included a tour of the Flanders Fields American Cemetery and Memorial in Waregem, West Flanders, an EU-US summit and meetings with the staff of Nato in Brussels. He ended his visit to Belgium with a speech at Bozar in front of 2,000 invited guests.

In the morning, prime minister Elio Di Rupo, King Filip and Obama were met by Waregem mayor Kurt Vanryckeghem. All three placed wreaths on the monument in the cemetery, where 368 American soldiers from the First World War are buried. Waregem is the only American military cemetery in Flanders.

“To the staff of this Flanders Fields cemetery and the people of Belgium, thank you for your devotion,” said Obama in a speech after a tour of the cemetery, “watching over those who rest here and preserving these hallowed grounds for all of us who live in their debt.

“We just spent some quiet moments among the final resting places



From left: US president Barack Obama, King Filip and prime minister Elio Di Rupo visit the Flanders Fields American Cemetery and Memorial in Waregem, West Flanders

of young men who fell nearly a century ago,” he continued, “and it is impossible not to be awed by the profound sacrifice they made so that we might stand here today. In this place, we remember the courage of brave little Belgium.”

Obama’s speech in Bozar was delivered to an audience of 2,000,

many of them young people from immigrant backgrounds. He began his speech by joking: “I have to admit, it is easy to love a country famous for chocolate and beer.”

But that was the only moment of lightness in a speech drafted to inspire the young people in the audience. “Do not think for a

moment that your own freedom, your own prosperity, that your own moral imagination is bound by the limits of your community, your ethnicity or even your country,” he told them. “You’re bigger than that.” Then he moved on to the issue that had come to overshadow his visit to Europe, which included a nuclear summit in the Hague and a meeting with the Pope in Rome. “Just look at the young people of Ukraine, who were determined to take back their future from a government rotted by corruption,” he said. “None of us can know for certain what the coming days will bring in Ukraine, but I am confident that eventually those voices for human dignity and opportunity and individual rights and rule of law – those voices ultimately will triumph.”

He ended by insisting that the US had no intention of intervening in the conflict. “We have sent no troops there. What we want is for the Ukrainian people to make their own decisions, just like other free people around the world.”

## Chinese president Xi Jinping on official visit to Belgium

Chinese president Xi Jinping landed in Belgium on Sunday with his wife, Peng Liyuan, for the first-ever official visit of a Chinese president to the EU. Arriving just days after the visit of US president Barack Obama, the Chinese leader was met at Brussels Airport by Belgian prime minister Elio Di Rupo.

The couple began the three-day tour of Belgium with an audience with King Filip and Queen Mathilde at the royal palace in Brussels. They then travelled to Pairi Daiza animal park in Wallonia, where they opened the new panda house built to accommodate the two giant pandas, Hao Hao and Xing Hui, presented



From left: Queen Mathilde, Chinese president Xi Jinping, King Filip and Peng Liyuan. Xi is the first Chinese president to pay an official visit to the EU institutions

to Belgium earlier this year by the Chinese government. Monday saw them at Brussels’ Musical Instruments Museum and the EU institutions.

Xi is the first Chinese president to visit Belgium in more than 25 years. As *Flanders Today* went to press, he was expected to travel to the Chinese-owned Volvo plant in Ghent and address the students and staff of Bruges’ College of Europe in the city’s Concertgebouw. **DB**

## New scheme to get over-50s back into the workforce

Flanders’ employment minister Philippe Muyters has launched a new scheme to provide support to job seekers over the age of 52. The region’s employment and training agency, VDAB, will extend its programmes to job seekers up to the age of 60 as of 1 April. Previously, VDAB’s services to those over 52 were limited. The measure has received a budget of €1.4 million.

“Everyone says that we have to keep working longer to ensure that we can continue to pay for our social security system,” said Muyters, “but also because we can make good use of the talent and skills of the over 50s in the labour market. By raising the age to 60, we are sending out a clear message to people over 50 that they have qualities that can and should be used.” **DB**

## Former US ambassador thanks Belgian leaders for support

Howard Gutman, the former US ambassador to Belgium, revealed in TV talk show *Reyers laat* last week that Kris Peeters and other Belgian leaders had supported him when he was accused of sexual offences in June of last year.

During his last few weeks as ambassador, a member of staff in the US state department claimed that accusations that Gutman (pictured) had solicited prostitutes and been involved in drug deals in Brussels’ Warande Park during his term had been removed from a report. The US ambassador’s residence is across the street from the park.

Gutman vehemently denied the allegations, and an investigation found no evidence



of misconduct. Gutman spoke about the scandal for the first time publicly last week. “When it hit the Belgian press, it was no fun to be me,” he said. “The park is under 24/7 surveillance

to protect the residence of the US ambassador, so no one could do anything without everyone knowing about it.”

Gutman described how he had been supported by Belgian colleagues during the ordeal, mentioning federal defence minister Peter De Crem, EU Council president Herman Van Rompuy and Princess Astrid.

He was particularly grateful, he said, to Flemish minister-president Peeters, who supported him at a business event just hours after the allegations emerged. “Kris Peeters gave me a big hug,” Gutman said. “I will never forget that.” **DB**



# 100 years of radio

## Radio has survived through a careful balance of tradition and innovation

► continued from page 1



The exhibition *R100+* in Leuven takes visitors through the history of Flemish radio; make your own radio show (below)



## NEW BOOK: RADIO FOR LIFE

VRT has released a book for its centenary in radio. *Radio For Life: Wonderlijke verhalen over 100 jaar radio* (Radio for Life: Amazing Stories Covering 100 Years of Radio) reveals the highlights of Flanders' radio history.

VRT journalist Ng Sauw Tjhoi (pictured) searched through the Flemish public broadcasters' archive for months, discovering funny anecdotes, forgotten radio moments and lots of interesting facts.



The book includes items about legendary radio programmes such as the comedic news show *De rechtvaardige rechters* (The Righteous Judges, Radio 1), which eventually moved to television,

and the radio drama *Het koekoeksnest* (The Cuckoo's Nest, Radio 2). It also covers historical tidbits like how certain pop songs were banned by radio stations.

Ng Sauw has worked behind the scenes for the Radio 1 shows *Voor de dag*, *De Ochtend*, *Vandaag* and *Joos*. He currently teaches broadcast media at both the Erasmus University College and the Free University of Brussels (VUB). He has twice won a radio prize awarded by Belfius bank.

► [www.lannoo.be/radio-life](http://www.lannoo.be/radio-life)

set and have other people hear me – and I did, in a way. I had the chance to work as a radio announcer, which was always a dream of mine, so I grabbed the opportunity with both hands.”

*R100+* is targeted at all age groups, so indeed children can discover where the technology they so take for granted began. “People over 40 will probably recognise a lot of objects, sound clips and images in this exhibition from their childhood years,” says De Wyngaert. “You can see things here that are in the collective memory of a lot of Flemish people. Younger people can learn about radio history and find out what it was like for their parents and grandparents to listen to the radio. It's also fun to go behind the scenes, to take a look inside a studio from 1938, for example, or to find out what the backstage area looks like where artists would get ready before a show.”

“People are always going to listen to the radio. That's something that will never change

Also wandering about this special preview of *R100+* is Guy De Pré, whose Radio 2 show *De Pré Historie* was recently awarded the title of Best Radio Show in Flanders by listeners. “My favourite items in this exhibition are the radio mixer, headphones, microphone and computer that give visitors a chance to create their own radio show,” he says. “I think that's fantastic for someone who's never done that before.”

Walter Baele, comedian and host at Radio 2, walks into the exhibition with a big smile on his face: “I remember listening to the local football game on the transistor radio as a kid. This exhibition brings back memories for me. There are so many cool items here; it's like travelling through time.”

Despite the inroads of television and the internet, radio is just as relevant now as it was in 1914, claims De Wyngaert. “Radio is a wonderful medium,” he says. “It's a lot more

unpretentious than television, with more simple technology. Radio is also constantly reinventing itself and evolving. When television was introduced to the Flemish people in 1953, the transistor radio was also invented, so people could listen to the radio almost everywhere, wherever they went. We are not afraid of the internet because I don't think it's going to make radio obsolete. I think the radio will always be playing in the background.”

Radio 1 personality Jan Hautekiet agrees. “People can listen to it in the car, at home, at work, via their smartphone, via their tablet or laptop, etc. No matter where you go, radio is always present, yet unobtrusive.”

Radio is also one of the best ways to introduce new music to audiences, says Hautekiet. “It is much more than just a way to stay informed about what's going on in the world. From the start, there was music. At first it was only classical music, but since the 1950s, it was a great way to introduce pop music to teens.”

According to De Pré, the future of radio looks very bright if stations continue to use social media to interact with their listeners. One of the most important reasons why radio is still so successful, is that there is a station for every age category and every musical taste.

In Flanders, “for classical music there is Klara, young people who like hit music will tune in to Q-Music or MNM,” he says. “When they prefer alternative music, they will listen to Studio Brussel. For people who like 1960s, '70s, '80s and '90s music, or songs in Dutch, there is Radio 2. If you'd like to hear more than just the news but also get background information, then you will listen to Radio 1.”

And crucially, he continues, you can get radio online. “People can listen to Flemish radio stations via the internet, so even if there is no radio around, they don't have to miss a thing,” says De Pré. Unlike with the internet, though, “everyone grew up with radio, and you can listen to it anywhere. People are always going to listen to the radio. That's something that will never change.”

In fact, he says, doomsayers in the 1950s pronounced the end of radio when television came along. “But it wasn't. When the internet was invented, some people had that same concern, but radio is still here, and it always will be.”

► [www.100jaarradio.be](http://www.100jaarradio.be)

## 100 JAAR RADIO: SPECIAL EVENTS

The exhibition *R100+*: *beleef 100 jaar radio* is only open to groups and is staged in Leuven's Radiohuis, from where Radio 2 Flemish Brabant is broadcast, for at least a year.

MNM will broadcast twice from the Radiohuis: On 2 April, the pop music station presents the show *Generation M* and on 22 May, it broadcasts *UrbaNice*, both from 21.00 to midnight.



WEEK IN  
BUSINESS

## Aluminium ► Aliplast

The Lokeren-based producer of aluminium profiles for doors and windows is expected to be sold for €500 million, following the decision of its majority shareholder, the French Sagard investment fund.

## Autos ► BMW

The German car manufacturer has opened its first-ever luxury "Brand Store" in Brussels. The facility, located on Waterlooiaan, will showcase the company's top-of-range vehicles, a restaurant and exhibition facilities.

## Catering

## ► Pain Quotidien

The innovative Brussels-based chain of bakeries and coffee shops with 210 outlets in 17 countries is said to have received an unsolicited buy-out proposal worth more than €300 million from America's Starbucks group.

## Dairy ► Ijsboerke

The producer of ice cream and frozen pralines, based in Kasterlee, Antwerp province, is hiring an additional 75 workers to meet increased demand following the successful development of its sales in Europe and Asia.

## Logistics ► Belgium

Belgium is in third position on the World's Bank list of best Logistics Performance in the world, after Germany and the Netherlands. The country was only 12th in 2007.

## Fashion ► FNG

The Antwerp-based fashion house, which produces the brands Fred & Ginger, CKS and Claudia Sträter, has increased its capital by €10 million to finance its expansion in Western Europe. The company has 130 of its own stores and distributes its products in 1,500 retail shops.

## Fast food

## ► Vanreusel

The Limburg-based producer of snacks and supplies for *frituur* shops is bidding to acquire the Dutch Beckers company, producer of the Bicky Burger. The move would allow Vanreusel to push capacity of its Hamont-Achel production unit to 25,000 tonnes a year.

## Retail

## ► AS Adventure

The British Lion Capital investment fund is seeking a buyer for the Brussels-based leisure and outdoors equipment retailer. Sales at AS Adventure have almost doubled to €360 million since it was acquired by Lion in 2007.

## Nike best foreign investor

## The multi-national won Flanders Investment &amp; Trade's annual trophy

Alan Hope

Supporting goods manufacturer Nike has won this year's Foreign Investment Trophy, awarded by Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) for the most inspiring investment in Flanders last year. The award, in its second year, was handed over in Brussels last week by FIT CEO Claire Tillekaerts.

Nike purchased a 23-hectare site in Ham, Limburg province, for the construction of the company's third site in Flanders. The centre will increase Nike's capacity in the region by 35% and create about 500 new jobs, ranging from graduates to unskilled workers. The site, due to be operational by 2016, will co-ordinate logistics activities between 200 factories and more than 100,000 retail outlets.

"We are very pleased with this award," said Kurt Van Donink, general manager of the Nike European Logistics Centre in nearby Laakdal, "especially considering the many great foreign investment projects in Flanders. For us, this award serves as a recognition of the



Kurt Van Donink accepts the Foreign Investment Trophy from Claire Tillekaerts

hard work of – and I can't stress this enough – an entire team."

Nike won the prize through the vote of the 300-strong audience present at the ceremony, over Air Liquide and Lidl. "Nike is an icon, but all four nominees have presented fantastic projects tonight," said Tillekaerts. "We are very happy to be able to put their projects in the spotlight with this award."

FIT promotes Flanders as a region with strong investment opportunities and a skilled workforce, as well as supports Flanders-based companies in international entrepreneurship. "The trophy was created to focus on the importance of foreign investment for Flanders," said Tillekaerts. "Belgium is ranked by the KOF index as the most globalised

country in the world, given that our economy is driven by the global setting and by our international perspective. We are convinced that foreign companies play a major role in the creation of sustainable long-term growth."

Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters emphasised that the region still had plenty of opportunity for growth. "Faster flow of trade, bigger investments, stronger ties with foreign companies and nations – that is what drives our economy," he said. "While the economy all over Europe hardly grew in the last year, our exports increased by 1.44% in the first 11 months of 2013 to €271 billion. That is an absolute record." The region also saw, he said "an impressive" increase in foreign investments in 2013. "There were 191 investment projects by foreign companies, which is more than 20% more than in 2012. Almost half of them were greenfield investments. This led to 4,076 new jobs, a 9% increase."

## Arrests and injuries as Sinksenfoor operators protest in Antwerp

Angry fairground operators blockaded roads in the centre of Antwerp last week in protest at plans to move the annual Sinksenfoor from the centre to the outlying district of Borgerhout. Four police officers were injured in the 26 March action, and 43 protesters were arrested, mainly for public order offences but also for rebellion and possession of a weapon.

The protest began at 5.30 with about 100 vehicles holding up traffic on Singel, one of the main arteries leading to the Antwerp Ring Road. Later the protest grew to 230 vehicles, which blocked main junctions, allowing only some public transport through. When fairground operators were faced with angry motorists, police intervened.

The annual month-long Sinksenfoor, scheduled to begin on 7 June, was moved to a new location by the city after a court found in favour of residents of the previous site, who complained of noise nuisance. Operators who run the Sinksenfoor attractions are angry that the fair – Belgium's largest – has been moved to a more remote location.

A delegation of the operators went to city hall to try to have a meeting with members of the city council. "They have to make some concessions, and so do we," a



spokesperson said. The operators refused to lift their blockade, however, until Antwerp mayor Bart De Wever listened to their grievances. De Wever refused to meet the fairground representatives until they stopped the blockade.

The blockade "caused Antwerp a great deal of economic damage," De Wever said. "Children did not make it to school, caregivers were unable to get to their patients, my own doctor was unable to reach me. These are consequences we cannot ignore." De Wever has been under medical supervision for some weeks after being hospitalised with a lung infection.

The protest ended without resolution, with operators threatening to repeat their action. AH

## Retailers can round up prices on cash purchases

The federal government has agreed to allow retailers to round prices up or down to the nearest five cents. The new measure will allow shopkeepers to avoid dealing with one- and two-cent coins. The coins will continue in circulation, but their use will be much reduced as a result of the measure.

The new rule allows – though does not require – retailers to round up prices that end in 3, 4, 8 or 9 cents; amounts ending in 1, 2, 6 or 7 must be rounded down. The change applies only to cash purchases; payments with a bank card will remain the same. The rounding off will apply to the final total, not for each individual item, and a general exception is made for medications, for which the price charged will be exactly that shown on the packaging.

The regulation will solve two related problems: Shopkeepers who are forced

to carry large quantities of one- and two-cent coins from the bank, and consumers who mostly empty pockets and purses of the coins at home, effectively removing them from circulation.

The French-speaking socialists (PS) oppose the measure for fear that rounding up will lead to an overall increase in prices as retailers will change prices to avoid being forced to round down. This has not proved to be the case in the Netherlands, where the measure was introduced in 2010.

The retail industry welcomed the decision on the whole but regretted the difference between electronic and cash payments, which Comeos, the retail industry federation, said would disadvantage retailers not equipped to accept electronic payments. Finance minister Koen Geens said the measure would be evaluated after two years. AH

## €6.5 million and 105 jobs for Ford's Limburg test centre

Ford Europe has announced a new investment of \$9 million (€6.5 million) to extend the company's auto test centre in Lommel, Limburg province. The extension of the Lommel Proving Ground (LPG) is a result of the growing demand for safety features in cars, the company said.

Among other issues, EU authorities have promised new regulations to ensure the safety of vulnerable

road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians, when involved in accidents. LPG includes a massive track on which new Ford cars are tested for safety, manoeuvrability and a number of other features.

As a result of the new investment, LPG will be able to take on 105 workers – 69 labourers and engineers and 36 administrative staff – from Ford Genk, which is due to close in December. Ford also held out the

promise of future employment.

"The need will be mainly for specialised engineers, depending on the technology to be tested there," said union representative Pierre Vrancken following the works council at which the investment was announced. "However, Ford is keeping quiet about what exactly is planned for Lommel, for competitive reasons."

LPG was established in 1965 and

includes 80 kilometres of test track. It employs 350, including 170 test drivers who clock up six million kilometres of test driving a year. The centre is equipped for various types of testing: durability, corrosion, functional performance, brakes, ride and handling and root cause investigation of problems in cars. LPG has been Ford's centre of excellence for Europe since 2008. AH

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



# A giant leap for online radio

## Radionomy buys AOL assets in a deal that puts it at the forefront of an internet revolution

Alan Hope

He's a former bookkeeper and aspiring DJ, and he's done something no one has before – taken the lead in a segment of online media away from the Americans. Alexandre Saboundjian is the founder and CEO of Radionomy, which this year became the world leader in internet radio.



Alexandre Saboundjian made a deal with AOL in 10 days

Internet radio is like regular radio except that the media is not carried on the airwaves, but on the internet. That gives it two huge advantages: No radio frequencies, thus no limit to the number of stations available, and automatically international. On the Radionomy website, you can choose from categories, like blues, classic, country, jazz, metal, etc. Each category contains sub-categories, and each sub-category contains dozens of stations. Currently, about 7,000 stations from around the world are available through the site. Streaming your station through Radionomy is free, but there are

some conditions. Each station is limited to a library of 80,000 licensed works – music and other content. On top of that, stations can programme 5,000 tracks made in their own studios.

Radionomy, based in the Brussels district of Anderlecht between the Brussels-Charleroi canal and the remains of the Senne river, offers nine months of broadcasting for free to stations, after which the station needs to reach an average audience of 130 streaming hours a day to stay on the free programme. For four minutes every hour, Radionomy runs advertising. Station managers get a cut of the revenue, and the company claims incomes can reach as high as €5,000 a month.

The company's leap to the forefront of online radio came in January, when it acquired two assets from internet pioneer AOL. Radionomy acquired the rights to Shoutcast – software for media streaming online, which brought with it another 55,000 internet radio stations – and Winamp, a media

buy Winamp and Shoutcast, and so we decided to see if there was still a window to allow us to talk to AOL," Saboundjian tells me. "We explained who we are and what the plan would be if we were to bring those two pieces into our company. In 10 days, AOL decided to go forward with us."

The companies did not release the details of the deal, but insiders put the price of the transaction at between \$5 and \$10 million (€3.6 and €7.3 million). AOL paid an estimated \$80 million (€58 million) for the two properties back in 1999. The money for the acquisition came in part from venture capitalists Union Square Venture and Bain Capital, as well as the US television network CBS. AOL retains a 12% stake in the two properties.

The deal moves Saboundjian's company to the first rank in internet radio. The acquisition of Shoutcast came soon after Radionomy's merger at the end of last year with TargetSpot, a company specialising in online audio advertising. Radionomy now owns about one in

*“One hundred percent of the radio public will move to online sooner or later”*

player for desktops and Android phones.

Winamp was launched in 1997, retaining a huge following of fans who were distraught when AOL announced last November that it was shutting it down. "We got information in November that Microsoft was in talks with AOL to

every two online radio channels in the world.

"The world market for radio advertising is worth about €11 billion," Saboundjian says. "Last year about €728 million of that went to online radio. One hundred percent of the radio public will move to online sooner or later. The



Seven thousand radio stations at your fingertips through the Brussels-based Radionomy

question is simply whether that takes five, 10 or 20 years to happen." It was Shoutcast, which comes with its own streaming technology, that was the main attraction in pushing Saboundjian to seek talks with AOL, but the eyes of the faithful users of Winamp will be on what becomes of the application now that Radionomy has vowed to keep it alive.

"The goal is to create a new version by the end of this year, here in Brussels," says Saboundjian. "I think nowadays users are looking for software you can have on your computer, on your mobile phone and in the car in the future, so we will redesign with that in mind. I'm

convinced there is still room for new features in a player. Winamp is well-positioned to meet the needs of the future, and gain back its leading role."

Radionomy, says Saboundjian, has a dedicated team working on development of the app, while retaining the features users have come to expect: playback for 60 audio and video formats, 6,000 add-ons, including skins and plug-ins, coverage in 16 languages and, of course, access to the more than 60,000 internet radio stations Radionomy-Shoutcast now provides.

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

## Antwerp concert series heads to US in June

On the eve of the Night of the Proms' 30th anniversary concerts in its home town of Antwerp, the successful music formula kicks off in the US for the first time, with shows in Dallas, Omaha, Kansas City and Little Rock.

Night of the Proms, a "classical meets pop" series of concerts that launched in Antwerp in 1985, is also staged in the Netherlands, Germany, Luxemburg, Sweden, Denmark and Poland. In 2011, the mix of big hits performed live by the original artists, backed by a classical orchestra, caught the eye of International Media. The American TV production company often makes programmes for the country's national public television network, PBS.

"They suggested that we produce a TV series about the event," says Jan Vereecke, director of PSE Belgium, which manages Night of

the Proms. "The trailer, particularly the spectacular visual effects of the concerts, inspired Paul Emery, CEO of Emery Entertainment, to set up a number of concerts in the US."

After attending Night of the Proms shows in Germany, Emery persuaded the concert promoter AEG Live to join in – the result is four shows from 19 to 22 June in arenas that hold between 6,000 and 10,000 people.

Emery and PSE Belgium set to work putting together a programme matching the expertise of Flemish conductor Robert Groslot, his Il Novecento Orchestra, the Fine Fleur Choir and John Miles' Electric Band with multiple Grammy Award winners and Proms veterans. The line-up includes Michael McDonald, Kenny Loggins, The Pointer Sisters, Nile Rodgers & Chic and the comedic opera singer Natalie Choquette.

"We have created an extraordinary



Il Novecento Orchestra will perform in the US this summer thanks to the growing international renown of the Night of the Proms series

programme," says Groslot. "We are confident that an American audience will enjoy this magical night of entertainment as much as the artists on stage do."

The TV series about the Night

of the Proms started airing last winter. "We had to clear additional performance rights for artists like Sting, Meat Loaf and James Brown, but we eventually got the green light," says Vereecke. "The series

is now airing on the PBS network; there's a Night of the Proms show on TV every 48 hours."

The biggest challenge now is ticket sales," he says. "We know we can handle all the rest – the promotion, content and logistics – but it's about conquering the American audience."

At the beginning of March, Vereecke, Groslot and Emery visited the venues and conducted interviews on local PBS stations to promote the concerts. Much of the audio-visual equipment will be provided in the US, but specific equipment is being shipped from Antwerp by container. A team of 100 people will also travel to the US in June to help stage and run the concerts.

Antwerp's Night of the Proms will take place in November. The line-up has not yet been announced.

Marc Maes

► [www.notp.com](http://www.notp.com)



## WEEK IN INNOVATION

### In search of Vesalius' grave

A team of Belgian archaeologists, historians and artists is convinced that the grave of pioneering anatomist Andreas Vesalius lies under a car park on the Greek island Zakynthos. The team, organised by Belgium's consul in Greece, Theo Dirix, hopes to retrieve the skeleton in the coming month. Vesalius, born in Brussels 500 years ago, is the author of one of the most influential books on human anatomy, *On the Fabric of the Human Body*. He died in Zakynthos in 1564. "It used to be thought that he was buried in the Franciscan abbey at Zakynthos, the capital of the island with the same name," said Dirix. "But thanks to recently discovered eyewitness reports, we now know he was probably buried in the Santa Maria delle Grazie church in the centre of Zakynthos." The city centre was destroyed by an earthquake in 1953. Researchers have ascertained that the church probably stood on a spot that is now an apartment building, crossroads and car park.

### IWT invests €250,000 in Zora robot

The government of Flanders' agency for innovation through science and technology (IWT) is investing €250,000 in the continuing development of the humanoid robots called Zora, a joint project between Ostend technology company Qbmt and Ghent University. Zora will be deployed in, among other sectors, rest homes and hospitals to read the newspaper or the daily menu, assist rehabilitation and exercises and entertain residents and patients. The funding will help pay for development of the 57-centimetre-tall robot to help patients with epileptic fits and to monitor muscle development in patients undergoing rehabilitation.

### Extra €1bn must be invested in research

According to Flemish innovation minister Ingrid Lieten, the next government has to invest €952 million on top of its current funding for scientific research if Flanders is to become a top region in the sector. Flanders promised the EU that it would spend 3% of the region's income on research and development (R&D) by 2020. It is counting on 2% of it to come from the private sector, particularly the chemical industry. The government of Flanders, said Lieten, hasn't reached its goal of 1%. The government that follows the May elections has to find on average an extra €159 million a year above the current budget.

AF

# Printing the future

## Logistics companies must re-invent themselves in the face of 3D printing

Senne Starckx

Let us first debunk a myth: 3D is not at all new, nor is it revolutionary. Back in the 1980s, scientists and engineers were already experimenting with so-called additive manufacturing – the not-so-catchy synonym for 3D printing. However, in those days they were merely printing prototypes, mainly because 3D printers were incredibly slow.

But that has changed. Nowadays 3D printers reach speeds of several layers per minute. That's almost as quick as a conventional machine like a milling cutter. In addition, modern 3D printers can master a broad range of materials, like metals, plastics, ceramics and even organic material. Some state-of-the-art printers can even combine several raw materials – just like an inkjet printer combines several inks to form all the colours of the rainbow.

In light of advancing technology, the Flemish Logistics Institute (VIL), which aims to encourage Flemish companies to develop and implement innovative logistics concepts and technologies, has begun a project to help local businesses adapt to the changing landscape. The main advantage of 3D printing over conventional manufacturing is that it's inherently economical where the material is concerned. Objects are created bottom-up, layer by layer, so not a single gram is lost. Compare this with conventional manufacturing, which works top-down and creates objects out of a larger quantity of raw material, or out of a material poured into a mould. The ancient Greek sculptor Phidias carved his statues out of blocks of marble – by

which he wasted a lot of expensive material. Ideally, a 3D printer doesn't leave any waste.

Just like a 2D printer uses ink to print text, drawings and photos, a 3D printer uses raw materials to create 3D structures. The printer head spurts the material – in liquid or powder form – in the desired pattern, layer by layer. Some 3D printers use a laser head to immediately melt the powder and make it solid. Because a 3D printer spurts the material in separate, very thin layers, almost any design is possible.

Another advantage is that the designer has almost infinite freedom. Metal objects with curved holes inside can now be produced as one single object – whereas before they had to be made in different milled parts, after which the parts had to be welded together. That's why 3D printing

originated as a technique to produce high-grade prototypes, for example for dental implants, prosthetics and aviation components.

Several economic sectors should prepare themselves to incorporate 3D printing in their business model. One sector that really should think get ready now, before 3D printing is all around the manufacturing industry, is logistics.

While the conventional logistics sector still relies on the distribution of goods produced in a centralised setting – one factory makes all the spare parts and sends them to all the stores in the chain – 3D printing makes it possible to radically decentralise production. A chain store provided with a 3D printer can print its spare parts on its own, based on instructions from the mother factory. In the ideal scenario, every chain store in a particular company has its own 3D printer, so the company no longer needs a third party that controls the delivery of the goods.

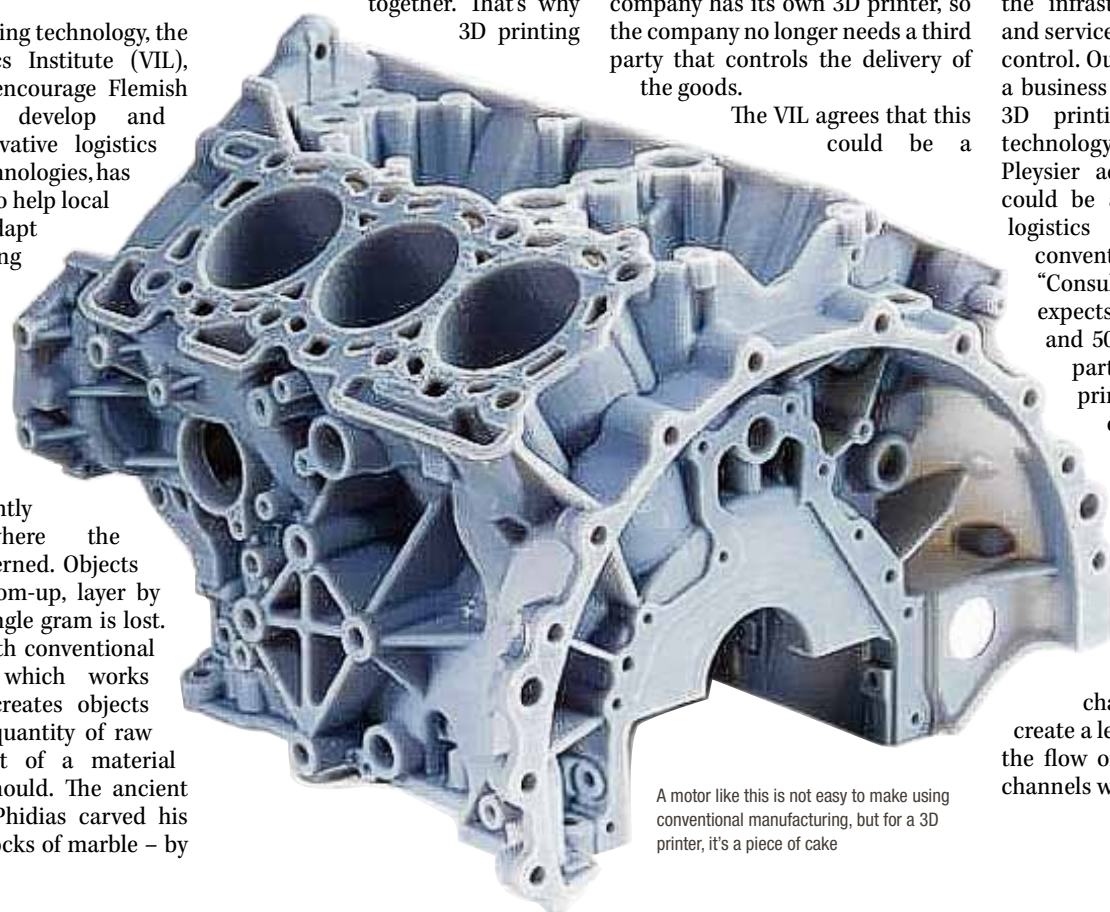
The VIL agrees that this could be a

nightmare scenario for the sector. That's why it has initiated a new project to "map the opportunities of 3D printing related to the logistics of spare parts": in other words, to come up with a plan to prevent the logistics sector becoming totally redundant in the event that every small firm in the near future is able to print its own spare parts.

With 11 logistics companies from Flanders (including bpost, DHL Express, Volvo Group Logistics Services and Van Hool), the VIL wants to create a roadmap based on a thorough analysis of the market and the available technology. "We want to discover which 3D printing technology might be the most suitable for which kind of products," says Luc Pleysier, programme manager at the VIL.

"Afterwards, we will study the impact on the different logistics processes, the infrastructure and operations and services like assembly and stock control. Our overall goal is to create a business model that incorporates 3D printing as a cornerstone technology in our economy." Pleysier admits that 3D printing could be a threat to the current logistics sector, with the conventional supply chain. "Consultancy firm McKinsey expects that by 2025, between 30 and 50% of all parts and spare parts will be produced by 3D printing. This will result in a cost saving of between 40 and 55% for the eventual buyer compared to conventional manufactured and distributed products. That changing market will have consequences for the entire logistics chain: Local production will create a lesser need for storage and the flow of goods and distributing channels will change."

► [www.vil.be](http://www.vil.be)



A motor like this is not easy to make using conventional manufacturing, but for a 3D printer, it's a piece of cake

## Q&A

During his PhD, Kasper Eersels of Hasselt University's Institute for Materials Research developed a method of tracking cancer with a device based on thermometers

### How can thermometers be used to track cancer?

I developed a biosensor platform mainly consisting of a plastic sensor chip and two thermometers. The thermometers continually monitor the temperature difference between the chip and fluid containing cells. By examining this temperature difference, you can tell which cells are cancerous and which are not. You can also distinguish different types of cancer, for example breast cancer and leukaemia. I'm the first scientist to use this method to track down cancer cells.

### How did you come up with this idea?

I was inspired by a former fellow

PhD student at Hasselt University who used thermometers in a device to examine DNA mutations. The development of this particular device was not a goal from the start of my PhD, but after hearing about this idea, I tested it for my own application and it turned out to show promising results.

### What are the advantages of your device?

It's relatively simple to set up and it's a lot cheaper than other solutions. My innovation costs about €400 if you don't include the laptop necessary for analyses. With the laptop, you would need a budget of around €1,000. Other devices, for example optic lasers, can cost between €10,000 and €100,000.

My low-cost device will never be able to replace these ultra-sensitive devices, but it can be a useful addition to the research equipment, for applications that don't require the most sensitive analyses.

### Is your device almost ready for commercial use?

Not yet; to detect cancer cells in patients' blood samples, we need to increase the sensitivity of the prototype by about 10 times. We have tested the method with a so-called buffer fluid which has a similar acidity and salt content to blood, but a less complex composition. I will work on improving the device for at least nine months more, when my current contract finishes. But



there is already a lot of interest, mainly from Belgian institutions but also from centres in Germany.

Interview by Andy Fumiere

► [www.uhasselt.be/IMO](http://www.uhasselt.be/IMO)



# Bridging the school-work gap

## Two young Flemings have tried a different job every week for eight months

Daan Bauwens

Born and raised on a large farm in the East Flemish countryside, 19-year-old Brecht Herteleer knows hard labour and long days. Hanne Reumers, a dreamy 18-year-old who loves music, words and photography, seemingly couldn't be more different from Brecht.

But the two have one important thing in common. Like most young adults, they didn't have the faintest idea what to do with their lives after finishing secondary school.

All that changed about a year ago. A couple of months before graduation, their curiosity was piqued by an unusual vacancy soliciting people just like them – teens who didn't know what they wanted to do with their lives. They both applied for and got the job, and subsequently saw their lives take an unexpected turn. Or to be more precise – 40 different turns.

Starting last August, Brecht and Hanne have tried out a different job every week. The two began as welders, then became cleaners, call centre operators, nurses, fitness coaches, butlers, hairdressers, undertakers, butchers, and even sailors.

The "Roadies" initiative was organised by Klasse, the Flemish education department's multimedia platform that publishes the education magazines *Klasse* and *Maks*. The Klasse editorial team came up with the Roadies idea.

"For good reason," says Yvette Schreurs, who co-ordinates the Roadies project. She says that most final-year secondary school students don't know what to study simply because they don't know what they want to do after graduation. "This is something that has come up in every poll for at least 10 years," she says. "It's a problem that needs to be addressed."

“Once you've started a new job, it's hard to remember what happened last week

The *Klasse* team began brainstorming and realised that teenagers seemed to lack the necessary experience to know where their real talents lie. Yet knowledge of these talents was precisely what they needed to make the right study choices. "In other words," Schreurs says, "the gap between secondary school and the labour market is too wide. With this project, we want to bridge that gap."

To that end, Schreurs and the Klasse team began looking for both funding and candidates. After finding



sponsors and partner organisations, like the Flemish public employment agency VDAB and the European Social Fund, Klasse published an ad calling for "final-year students who don't know what to study and have an adventurous attitude".

After a selection process that spanned three months, Brecht and Hanne were chosen from the more than 300 candidates who responded to the call.

The two underwent several weeks of media training, safety training, crash courses in photography and writing, and were then unleashed onto the labour market. "It was, and still is, a lot of fun," says Brecht, now in week 32. "But you shouldn't forget that we're not doing this just for ourselves. We're doing this so others can make an informed choice about which path to follow."

In other words, there's more to Roadies than just switching jobs every week. As in real life, every job comes with after-hours responsibilities. At the end of every week, Brecht talks about his experiences on the radio. He keeps his friends and fans posted through social media. And every Friday, the popular *Iedereen beroemd* TV programme on Eén features a four-minute special about Brecht's adventures at his latest job. Hanne puts her editorial skills to good use, writing about their experiences on the Roadies blog and in a weekly column in the free daily *Metro*. She also photographs their experiences to capture the magic – or misery – of the moment.

Each of the jobs Brecht and Hanne have done are covered in individual webpages on the Roadies website that give interested young adults all the info they need. "There's information on the sector, on exactly what the job entails, on the requirements, on what you need to study and the links to all the relevant websites of higher education institutions and their programmes," Schreurs explains.

For Brecht and Hanne, the nine months of hard labour are coming to an end. "Fun but exhausting" is



Hanne tries her hand at making furniture, while Brecht takes on nursing in two of the 40 jobs the pair have done over the last eight months

how Hanne describes the busy work schedule. "The change is nice, but properly doing a job requires focus," she says. "So once you've started a new job, it's hard to remember what happened last week."

For his part, Brecht says he got what he signed up for – a lot of experience. "I didn't want to choose something to study right after college. I wanted some time to think."

And he *has* gotten a little closer to knowing what he wants to do in life. "I prefer small companies over big ones," he says. "The reason is simple: Big companies have big bosses, somewhere there high up, and there's a million little rules to follow. You don't have that in smaller companies. The boss works with you by your side, and there aren't as many rules."

He also discovered that he likes jobs that get him out of doors. "and I love making things with my own hands. I'm thinking about studying garden

architecture. An architect can stay in the office and do the thinking part, but at the same time he can choose to go outside and do the shaping of the garden himself. It's good to study something that gives you a choice."

For Hanne, things aren't as clear. Still, there were three jobs she absolutely loved. "Radio was so much fun," she says, "I liked doing the research, writing the stories, creating the news programme. Then, taking care of people with physical disabilities. Third, teaching Dutch to adults who don't speak it. This last one stood out because of the positive atmosphere and the positive people I worked with."

Hanne is currently thinking about studying communication sciences, although she admits she still hasn't made up her mind. "It's hard to narrow down your options in life," she says. "Choosing is a real drag."

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

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### VUB wants more courses in English

The Free University of Brussels (VUB) has asked the next government for the possibility to organise more courses in English. In an election memorandum, rector Paul De Knop asked that the next government take into account the institution's special position as a Dutch-speaking university in an international city. It is requesting more flexible language regulations, the opportunity to organise more courses in English in co-operation with other universities and the possibility to more easily award double diplomas. It has also called for the introduction of a minister of student affairs. The VUB also wants financial support for its planned library and learning centre, which it would build and use in collaboration with its French-speaking counterpart, ULB.

### Decree clarifies pupil rights and obligations

Increasing legal conflicts at Flemish primary and secondary schools have led to a new decree that spells out pupils' rights and obligations. One important change is the clear appeal procedure in the case of exam disagreements or definitive suspensions. There is now a procedure with an appeal commission made up of the class council and external experts, who will judge each case. Members can review an earlier decision or impose additional testing. In future, parents can only formally appeal after a conversation with a mediator. Pupils who have to repeat a year in primary school are also now entitled to receive a more thorough explanation as to why, and girls with children will receive maternity leave and be entitled to temporary home education.

### Pre-schoolers language test abolished

The government of Flanders is scrapping the language test for children who were not present for at least 220 half-days in their last year of pre-school. Children who missed too many days were found to suffer from a language deficit and have problems at the start of primary school. A new language screening procedure is being introduced at the start of the next academic year meaning schools will be able to oblige children to catch up on their Dutch in a language immersion programme. A class council, which includes teachers and staff from the pupil support agency CLB, will decide whether and under what conditions a child can enrol in primary school. **Andy Furniere**





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# Taking the indie route

## Multilingual preschool in Brussels has been going its own way for 10 years

Ali Edelstein

When people familiar with Flemish education hear “Tutti Frutti”, they usually think of the similarly named policy programme introduced by the Flemish education department to get kids eating more fruits and vegetables in schools.

But there’s another Tutti Frutti – a Brussels nursery and language school that Patricia Pitisci opened in 1997. Her idea was to introduce language-learning to children at a young age in an engaging, playful way.

At the time, a lot of people didn’t think her approach would work, Pitisci says, or even be beneficial for children. But the school has come a long way since then, and the nursery section is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

“Today, Tutti Frutti sets an example,” Pitisci says, referring to the active and open pedagogy the school observes. “There are no problems or tensions here when it comes to learning languages.”

The colourful, scent-filled halls of the school are filled with young voices speaking English, Arabic, French, Dutch, Chinese and Spanish. At Tutti Frutti, children between the ages of three and 11 learn languages through the development of cognitive skills while taking part in activities such as painting, dancing, and cooking. The school also offers language workshops to local schools led by Tutti Frutti educators.

According to figures from the European Commission, 98% of children between three and six (the compulsory school age) were enrolled in formal preschools in Belgium in 2011, making the country a leading example of early childhood education in Europe.

A demographic boom, however, in Brussels and Antwerp in particular, has led to overcrowded classes in many schools. Another big problem,

according to Pitisci and her staff, is the late age at which many local schools begin offering a second and third language. It puts them at a disadvantage, she says, in a country like Belgium, which is not only officially trilingual but home to the European institutions, where English is widely spoken.

With over-enrolment an increasing problem, it can prove to be a battle for expats moving to Flanders and Brussels to secure their children spots in local public schools. Perhaps that is why only 65% of Tutti Frutti’s pupils are native Belgians, with the rest predominantly foreign English-speakers.

With its central location in the Sint-Gillis district of Brussels and annual fees of approximately €400 – which can be paid in monthly instalments – the school is affordable and easily accessible by public transport, making it an attractive alternative to some of the other suburban-based international schools with tuition fees that can go as high as €30,000 per year.

A political sciences graduate, Joy

“I just want the kids to love Dutch and associate it with something fun

Simar began working at Tutti Frutti in 2005 to fulfil her interest in music, while looking for another job. But the longer she stayed, the more her satisfaction grew. Not only did she enjoy playing music and teaching



Tutti Frutti organises local workshops to convince parents of the benefits of interactive education

languages, she began to love the school for what it had to offer.

Recounting her most recent lesson, Simar says her primary concern isn’t how many words the children have learned by the end of the lesson. “I just want them to love Dutch and associate it with something fun and playful that they want more of,” she says.

Pitisci and her team are building local partnerships to expand this mind-set across the Brussels educational community. Last month, Tutti Frutti hosted its “Morning of Languages”, with youth and educational associations like EducArt, Recre-A-Sons, and Espace Bamboo leading workshops in pottery, cooking and yoga for families, to demonstrate the benefits of an interactive education to parents.

In another recently launched outreach event, cooking classes are offered at the Brussels caterer Fonteyne The Kitchen. In these workshops, Tutti Frutti students can practice their English or Dutch while learning to cook a meal for four that they get to take home.

All of the school’s efforts are funded

by local partnerships and its minimal fees. Because it instructs children in multiple languages, the school is ineligible for federal or regional government subsidies. But Pitisci says that the lack of subsidies allows them to keep the school in neutral territory between Belgium’s language communities.

The school administrators have also turned down offers from corporate sponsors. Instead, Tutti Frutti keeps its operating costs low by using recyclable and second-hand materials purchased or donated by the local community. They educate the children about sustainability and wastefulness.

Simar says that in some of the schools where she has taught, she observed children cutting triangles out of paper and then throwing away the scraps. “We don’t do that here,” she says, pointing out that many local businesses also donate recycled paper to the school and that such donations are always welcome.

► [www.tutti-frutti.be](http://www.tutti-frutti.be)

## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Children’s Cultural Festival

Ostend hosts a city-wide cultural programme aimed at kids, with dozens of workshops, performances and more. The historic casino building serves as the festival’s headquarters, with information about each day’s events. *4-21 April, Kursaal Oostende, Westhelling, free, reservations required for some activities*

► [www.springtij-oostende.be](http://www.springtij-oostende.be)

### Tour of Flanders

Belgium’s biggest and most famous cycling event of the year is on Sunday, kicking off on Bruges’ historic Markt. Arrive early to see the contestants being introduced; the starting gun goes off at 10.15. There’s also a free concert on the Markt the night before with Flemish dance band Praga Khan.

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

### Castle Festival

Calling all would-be knights! Historic Horst Castle opens for the season with a fun family festival. There will be children’s workshops, storytelling and face-painting for the kids, plus a market of regional products and an exhibition about the castle’s restoration for their parents. Children in costume will get a surprise. *6 April, 10.00-17.00, Horststraat 28, Holsbeek; €6 (adults), €4 (kids), free for under-sixes*

► [www.tinyurl.com/castle-festival](http://www.tinyurl.com/castle-festival)

### Antwerp Ghost Walk

A guided tour in Dutch through the back streets of old Antwerp with spooky tales of saints and sinners, myths and legends. Stories of hauntings, crime and punishment are sure to raise chills – but humour is the best weapon against fear. *5 April, 21.00-22.30, meet at the statue of the Lange Wapper, Jordaenskaai, €10, reservations recommended via 0485 50 59 16*

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

### Herkenrode in Bloom

The abbey and gardens of Herkenrode in Hasselt open their doors with special activities for the whole family. A guided bicycle tour at 13.00 goes to the Japanese Garden, which holds its Cherry Blossom Festival on the same day. Guided tours of the gardens at 14.00 and 15.00 and tastings of the abbey’s products including beer and honey. *6 April, 10.00-18.00, €4-€7, bike rentals available on site, registration details on the website*

► [www.tinyurl.com/Herkenrode-in-Bloom](http://www.tinyurl.com/Herkenrode-in-Bloom)

## BITE

### Rice pudding

Rice pudding always conjured up images of school cafeterias and retirement homes for me. It had to be one of the all-time most banal dishes. I’m almost ashamed to admit those former apprehensions now that I’ve gotten to “know” this lovely dessert a bit better.

According to old Flemish folklore and a saying that is still used to this day: *In de hemel eet men elke dag rijstpap met gouden lepeltes*. If heaven is indeed a place where one eats rice pudding each and every day with golden spoons, my earlier misconceptions couldn’t be further off the mark.

Rice pudding was historically something of a delicacy – sweet, exotic and reserved for special occasions. It became popular in the middle ages, when imported



rice and spices, like cinnamon and saffron, were new and hard to come by – as was a complete set of teeth.

You can see bowls of the yellow stuff depicted in famous paintings by Bruegel, such as “The Peasant Wedding” from 1567. And while it will probably never regain its heavenly status, rice pudding is nonetheless still widely eaten and loved across Flanders.

If you’re lucky, you might find a dairy farm selling the dessert fresh. On the other hand, at the supermarket you might be surprised to find that rice pudding even comes in a can. But the best version is homemade, of course. The following recipe is simple and made with a few, easy-to-find ingredients, but it’ll warm your belly and perhaps remind you why it was once a celebratory dish.

#### Ingredients

1 l whole milk  
pinch of salt  
130g long-grain white rice  
75g sugar  
1 cinnamon stick  
1-2 pinches of saffron  
1 vanilla pod

#### Preparation

Cut open the vanilla bean and scrape out the contents. Bring the milk with a pinch of salt to a boil. Add the rice, sugar, cinnamon stick and saffron. Add both the vanilla pod and contents to the pot. Stir well with a wooden spoon.

Lower the heat, cover and let the mixture gently simmer for 40 minutes, or until the rice has soaked up all the milk and the pudding has reached the desired creamy consistency – it will thicken as it cools. Do not stir during this part of cooking.

Finally, remove the cinnamon stick and vanilla pod. Gently stir the pudding before scooping into several small bowls. Generously sprinkle with brown sugar before serving.

Robyn Boyle





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# Blurred boundaries

Koen Broucke might have been a lazy musician, but he's making up for it now

Daan Bauwens

Two exhibitions and an unusual music festival created by Flemish polymath Koen Broucke add a visual element to the work of musicians both classical and contemporary. He tells *Flanders Today* about spreading light in the darkness.

Imagination is everything. This aphorism is perfectly illustrated by Flemish artist Koen Broucke. In the leafy Antwerp suburb of Boechout, he shares his studio with a multitude of imagined characters. While a botanist spends long days in the garden, a concert pianist seldom leaves the room. In the meantime, a psychiatrist is gaining insights into the workings of the mind of his newest artist patients. With the help of these self-invented characters, Broucke says that he is able to see the world through the eyes of others in everything he creates. But next to this imagined entourage, Broucke himself dares to be a dozen different people all boiled into one. The 48-year-old writes books, performs and creates drawings, paintings, videos and installations. He studied history but would have liked to become a musician. Last week, Broucke's new show *Dark, Emotional and Energetic, Portraits of Musicians and Performance Drawings* opened at Antwerp's Museumstraat 25. On 5 April, he stages a small festival around the corner at Bernaerts event space in which his art will be in dialogue with music played by some of Flanders' most renowned musicians. "I had to make the difficult choice between art academy and conservatory when I was young," explains Broucke. "But I was much better at drawing. To be a really good concert pianist, you have to practise long and hard. It never ends. I have to admit, my choice did have something to do with laziness." Broucke's exhibition, which is on until 10 April, includes early and recent works, always depicting musicians playing their instruments. "The oldest ones are from the 1990s," he says. "I made them as part of a series that I called 'humanetics', some sort of insane effort to paint all possible different kinds of people. I painted faces of both famous and average people and stripped them of everything that had to do with fashion. I removed their clothes and their hair; the only thing that remained was the physiognomy." In 2005, Broucke began to paint himself in performance. He was inspired, he says, by the 19th-century Hungarian piano virtuoso Franz Liszt. "Liszt was an innovator in visual elements of concerts," says Broucke. Liszt



Koen Broucke in his workshop full of invisible friends

was known for adding facial expressions and sweeping movements that matched the emotions of the music. "He had his own kind of act back then, much in the same way the Rolling Stones or Lady Gaga have today." But there is no visual evidence of Liszt's personal style of performance. "I have started reconstructing these concerts based on old drawings and caricatures," says Broucke. "I made them into performances and then turned them into drawings. But to really get to know the body language of pianists, I needed to study it. That's when I started drawing pianists while they are playing." Broucke's first drawing and paintings started as very dark depictions of the world of music. But his paintings gradually evolved from *grisailles* – in monochrome, exclusively using shades of grey – into paintings that allow some brightness and colour, but merely in patches in the background of the work. "Besides," the artist says, "I usually portray musicians on the stage of a music hall where it's mostly dark. But within that darkness, there are small glimpses of light." That's something that has always appealed to him, he says: "applying sparks of light in the darkness. Just like the American impressionist James Abbott Whistler. His paintings of fireworks or night views of the city of Venice have always inspired me." By drawing and painting musicians, Broucke also manages to get closer to the life and career he decided against as a younger man. "That is

indeed the beauty of it," he admits. "Thanks to the portraits and performances, I have started working with musicians on a regular basis. I am on stage with them, part of them." But it's not just about being on a stage. "There is something truly special about music that visual arts can hardly provide," Broucke says. "When you work with musicians and performers, you are more than yourself. It's a pity that the visual arts are so individualistic. I sometimes try to work on the same drawing with two or three other visual artists, but it's rare and not easy. People on stage, whether it be theatre or music, they're used to working together. Each and every time, it's enriching for someone like me." During his festival Interchange, Broucke will work together with a handful of Flanders' most-admired musicians: singer-songwriter and experimental genius Mauro Pawlowski, for



Broucke's "Our Travelling Circus Life", 2005

instance, classical musicians Piet Van Bockstal and Jan Michiels and former city poet Peter Holvoet-Hanssen. The artists will appear on a stage surrounded by Broucke's works. "I am also planning on doing some really small interventions," Broucke explains, "like a *quatre-mains* on the piano or a small percussion intermezzo. But most of the time I will disappear into the background." During the concerts, Broucke's drawings and paintings of musicians at work will be projected onto the stage. Van Bockstal and Michiels will perform Schumann in a wood, where the trees contain the heads of famous composers. "It will be midnight by then," Broucke says. "I will project a forest in the background and the heads of the dead composers will be illuminated in a spooky kind of way." *Dark, Emotional and Energetic* and *Interchange* are accompanied by a third show. In *Nabeeld*, which opened last week in FeliXart museum in Drogenbos, just outside Brussels, Broucke puts works of his own and reproductions of lost works between paintings by Vincent van Gogh and Flemish artist Jan Cockx. "I love dialogues with people from the past. I learn a great deal from them," he says. "In Bernaerts I stand next to the musicians I have portrayed. In Drogenbos I stand between painters whose lost works I have tried to restore. It is the same, but different."

Until 10 April

Dark, Emotional and Energetic  
Museumstraat 25, Antwerp

Interchange:  
5 April, 20.00

Bernaerts Platform  
Verlatstraat 16, Antwerp

Nabeeld:  
Until 29 June

FeliXart  
Kuikenstraat 6, Drogenbos  
► [www.atelierbroucke.com](http://www.atelierbroucke.com)

## MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

### Traveller in Psyche

Roger Ballen

During apartheid, American photographer Roger Ballen focused on cultural deprivation and poverty among marginalised white communities in South Africa. In the 1990s, his work developed into a more complex and decontextualised depiction of the human psyche and existential voyages. *Until 9 September, Museum Dr Guislain, Ghent*

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

### Ravaged

Museum M

War brings with it cultural devastation: Art is frequently stolen or damaged during armed conflict. *Ravage* takes the burning of the Leuven University library by German soldiers in 1914 as a starting point for a full exhibition on damaged art in ancient, contemporary and current wars. Works by old masters and world-renowned contemporary artists try to answer one question: Why is art a target in war? *Until 1 September, Museum M, Leuven*

► [www.ravage1914.be](http://www.ravage1914.be)

### Ain't Painting a Pain

Richard Jackson

This impressive series of installations, maquettes and drawings shows just how radical an artist can, or should, be. American artist Richard Jackson has opened up endless new possibilities in the world of painting, pioneering an entirely new world of spatial dimensions and mixing it with sculpture and performance art. Inspired by an inherent sense of humour and simple objects, he has also brought the art of painting down from mythical heights to an everyday experience. *Until 1 June, SMAK, Ghent*

► [www.smak.be](http://www.smak.be)



Richard Jackson's "The Laundry Room (Death of Murat)" at SMAK



WEEK IN ARTS  
& CULTURETomorrowland best  
dance festival

For the third year in a row, Boom's dance music festival Tomorrowland has won Best Music Event at the International Dance Music Awards in Miami. The event, which takes place in Antwerp province in July, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. In celebration, the festival is expanding from three to six days, covering two weekends. The festival's 300,000 tickets are already sold out. Also big winners at the music awards were the DJ duo Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, who brought home two prizes: Best European DJ and Best Artist Group. Last year the Willebroek-born Greek brothers won Best Breakthrough DJ.

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

AB wins Culture  
Management award

Brussels concert venue Ancienne Belgique has won the Flemish Culture Award for Cultural Management, awarded by Flanders' culture minister Joke Schauvliege in collaboration with the Bilsen Fund for Cultural Management. Both the large and small halls of the venue are booked solid nightly with a diverse array of music on the programme. AB recently took over management of the abandoned American Theatre at Heizel and is transforming into a multi-disciplinary culture centre. "Great and small have been to the AB," said Schauvliege. "That they keep coming back is the merit of a dynamic organisation that is not afraid to modernise without putting away the past in a filing cabinet. That is what makes the AB a name people remember, both at home and abroad."

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

New penguin shuttle  
for Planckendael

The Planckendael animal park in Mechelen is laying on a special shuttle bus during weekends, school holidays and every day in the summer. Dubbed the Penguin Shuttle, the bus (pictured) is decorated with the Antarctic birds and will take visitors bound for the park from the train station and back again. The park is launching the service to take the place of the privately owned boat that used to take visitors down the Leuven Canal from the station to the park. The boat stopped operating last year.

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



## “I followed the pigeon home”

## American in search of the perfect bird heads to West Flanders in new movie

Lisa Bradshaw

“Have you ever held a pigeon before?” Dominique Deruddere asks me, with such a critical look that I'm embarrassed to admit I haven't. Perhaps I too quickly made light of juvenile delinquents in America's roughest inner-cities being taught pigeon fancying to set them on the straight and narrow.

Deruddere has had plenty of experience with the birds over the last few years, planning and making the film *Flying Home*, which opens in cinemas this week. It's an English-language, cross-cultural love story set in – of all places – the world of pigeon racing in West Flanders.

“It's really nice to hold a pigeon,” the Flemish director tells me. “People have told me that when you hold a pigeon, something happens to you – and it does. Now I've experienced it. It gives you a sense of tranquility, a sense of rest.”

There is a reason, after all, that the pigeon – also known as a dove – “is the symbol of love and peace and is used to represent the holy spirit. You know, they could have picked another bird; there are plenty of birds,” Deruddere laughs. “But it's the pigeon.”

It's a feeling that Deruddere, 56, appreciates after seven years of living in LA. “A lot of people there are constantly thinking about power and money – and more power and more money,” he says. “I have the impression that they are somehow forgetting what the real purpose of life is, what is *real* in their lives. That might sound sentimental, but it's also true.”

*Flying Home*, he says, “reminds you of something essential – what the real value of life is. For me, the movie is an ode to love and the strength of love – the fact that you cannot *live* without love.”

The movie, filmed almost entirely in English, tells the story of Colin, a New York investment banker played by Irish actor Jamie Dornan – poised to become a superstar once *Fifty Shades of Grey* opens early next year – who finds himself in West Flanders on a



Dominique Deruddere took a break from LA to shoot *Flying Home* in West Flanders

mission to purchase one of the world's fastest pigeons for an Arab sheik. But the good people of West Flanders don't know this: They think Colin is a mild-mannered schoolteacher searching for his great-grandfather's First World War grave.

Colin's ruse is necessary in order to acquire the bird, as its stubborn, elderly owner Jos (Jan Decleir, typecast but still wonderful) refuses to sell. But the young man begins to question his motives when he sees the passion behind the local pigeon fanciers' hobby – and when he gets to know Jos' pretty granddaughter, Isabelle.

It's a bit of a departure for Deruddere, 56, whose previous work is more geared towards the dark side of love: *Crazy Love* (1987) finds a boy's sexual awakening bitter, his adolescent romance tragic and his adulthood ultimately perverse, while *Wait Until Spring, Bandini* (1989) has the working-class title character abandoning his loving wife and children for his wealthy employer. The film for which Deruddere is most famous is *Iedereen Beroemd!*

(*Everybody's Famous!*), which was nominated for the Foreign Language Oscar in 2001. In it, a young man falls in love with a woman he has kidnapped.

“*Flying Home* is a romantic film,” he admits, “and I think if you're going for romance, you should really do it and just push down that gas pedal as far as you can.”

It's also, he says, “a story where someone makes the same journey I've made, but in reverse.” Deruddere left Brussels for LA in 2007 to make a movie. That particular project fell through, but the director, with his wife and two kids, decided to stay on America's west coast for the foreseeable future.

It was in LA that Deruddere was reminded about Flanders' love of pigeon racing – releasing pigeons from a designated site and recording the best times as they return to their respective roosts. The sport is extremely popular in Flanders, but when the director was a kid in Limburg, “I thought it was the most boring thing in the world,” he laughs. “And then when I moved to Brussels,

I just thought of them as a nuisance, as flying rats.”

It wasn't until he saw racing pigeons flying in the sky over LA that he realised it was an international sport, with a lot of prestige and prize money at stake. “The idea stuck in my head,” says Deruddere, who finally found time to focus on the project over the last three years.

The movie's subplot about Colin's great-grandfather being a soldier in the First World War and this year marking the centenary of the conflict “is just a coincidence,” he says. “I'm working on four scripts at the moment, and this is the first one to be finished.”

A big attraction of *Flying Home* for expats is that it was shot mostly in English. So if you've never experienced the formidable talents of some of the region's most legendary actors – Jan Decleir, Josse De Pauw, Viviane De Muynck – now is your chance. “I've known these actors my entire life,” says Deruddere, “I am very lucky that all these people agreed to make this film with me.”

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

## REVIEW

*Flying Home* ★★☆☆

An English-language cotton-candy look at love and pigeons in West Flanders

When American businessman Colin (Jamie Dornan, pictured) arrives in West Flanders, he immediately discovers two of the region's traditions – rain and detours that go nowhere. After his car gets stuck in a field, he walks into Bunderzele, soaking wet, where he is met by the pastor (Josse De Pauw) who is renting him a room.

Colin has arrived, he says, to search for the grave of his British great-grandfather, who fought in the First World War. But the audience knows the truth: Colin is a selfish, greedy yuppie, who has come to acquire – by any means possible – one of the world's most talented racing pigeons from local yokel Jos (Jan Decleir), who thus far has refused to sell

to the fabulously wealthy Arab Abdullah (Ali Sulman). The sheikh has made it clear that if Colin can acquire what he wants, he might be inclined to invest unthinkable sums of money in his firm.

The only thing complicating matters is Jos' innocent granddaughter Isabelle (Charlotte De Bruyne), who Colin starts to like just a bit too much.

The English-language film *Flying Home* is at its most successful when it takes advantage of its fish-out-of-water scenario: A New York investment banker's adventures in rural Flanders feels fresh even if you've seen the idea a hundred times before. It's also a treat to hear such classic Flemish actors as De Pauw, Decleir and Viviane De Muynck (unforgettable as the pastor's strong-willed housekeeper) speaking English.

But in the end, it's a tough sell to convince us



that Colin – the ultimate corporate bad guy – could make a 180-degree turn in just a couple of weeks, no matter how cute Isabelle is. We see the same thing happen with Colin's father: a lifetime of specific behaviour is washed away with a couple of stern looks and a few photos from the attic. *Flying Home* is fun to watch, it's just not easy to believe.



Another year older, and deeper in debt

# No Country for Young Men

Until 3 August | Bozar, Brussels

► [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

Although not officially part of the cultural programme of the Greek presidency of the EU Council, the timing of *No Country for Young Men* is most certainly no coincidence. Its predecessor exhibition in Bozar, *Nautilus: Navigating Greece* (ongoing until 27 April), looked back to antiquity to show us the currents – often quite literally maritime currents – that have shaped Greek culture over the millennia. *No Country* takes us no further back than 2008, when a butterfly fluttered its wings on Wall Street, and the Greek economy was plunged into a catastrophe that has only grown worse since. Greek-born, Brussels-based curator Katerina Gregos invited 30 contemporary artists to reflect on their experience of the last several years. “Their work explores the current crisis in Greece – its effects but also causes – with a

special focus on the social and humanitarian parameters,” she explains. “It is the largest presentation of contemporary Greek art outside Greece in a decade, and the first exhibition of its kind to deal with the subject.”

There’s work by Belgo-Greek comic strip illustrator Philippe Grammaticopoulos (pictured), whose 2009 animated short *The Bellies* anticipated some of *No Country*’s recurring themes: greed and predatory consumption. Nikos Navridis presents a neon installation that subverts Samuel Beckett’s clichéd wisdom: “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” In the context of the crisis, this otherwise benign dictum looks like just another first-world problem.

There’s also the cleverly titled Depression Era, a Greek arts collective. Inspired by documentaries commissioned by Franklin Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration, the collective has been recording the crisis in words and images since 2012. Depression Era’s 30-odd artists



have amassed far more material than they can display at *No Country*, so a simultaneous satellite exhibition is on across the street at Atelier Bouwmeester (until 16 May). In keeping with these explicitly social concerns, entry is free for both exhibitions to all and sundry. **Georgio Valentino**

## VISUAL ARTS

### Broomberg & Chanarin

Until 8 June | FoMu, Antwerp | ► [www.fotomuseum.be](http://www.fotomuseum.be)

Antwerp’s Photo Museum presents the world’s first retrospective of the collective work of London-based artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin. The duo, with a collaboration spanning 17 years, are known for their unconventional approach and confrontational themes, notably war and identity (both individual and ethnic). Nor is their own medium spared; they critique and deconstruct photography itself. But photography, it seems, is a forgiving sort. The dynamic duo have been invited to institutions as prestigious as the Museum of Modern Art and the Tate Gallery. The FoMu exhibition, subtitled *Everything Was Beautiful and Nothing Hurt*, presents 100 works, among them the artists’ award-winning book interventions. **GV**



## CONCERT

### Gallon Drunk

9 April, 19.00 | Magasin 4, Brussels

► [www.magasin4.be](http://www.magasin4.be)

It’s impossible to imagine the current crop of young garage-rockers without the guiding light of London’s Gallon Drunk. These elder statesmen have espoused their signature blend of anarchic blues-punk since the late 1980s and, if they’re not a household name, they are nonetheless respected by critics and warmly welcomed by audiences all over Europe. For all that, however, they refuse to rest on their proverbial laurels. Indeed, Gallon Drunk’s eighth album, *The Soul of the Hour*, is considered to be among the band’s finest. Recorded in Hamburg, the disc finds singer/guitarist James Johnston, sax wailer Terry Edwards, drummer Ian White and newly drafted bassist Leo Kurunis experimenting with ‘70s kraut-rock elements, making for a bizarre hybrid genre: Euro-Anglo-Americana. **GV**



## FAMILY

### Baby Animals

Until 11 June | Museum of Natural Sciences, Brussels | ► [www.naturalsciences.be](http://www.naturalsciences.be)

The Museum of Natural Science’s Baby Animals exhibition, due to wrap last month, has been extended by popular demand. Not only does it feature über-cute eye candy in the form of toys, photos, films and life-like (but, alas, stuffed) specimens,

but it is also presented in a way that allows human kids to identify with their critter counterparts, to see childhood as a universal process of growth and learning. Interactive consoles and games are an integral part of the experience. Although the presentation is tailor-made for kids aged three to eight, frankly anyone with a beating heart can enjoy this stuff. Be warned, however, that hourly capacity is limited and may max out on holidays and weekends. **GV**



## PERFORMANCE

### Drums & Digging

10 April, 20.15 | C-Mine, Genk | ► [www.c-mine.be](http://www.c-mine.be)

From brutal colonial exploitation to bitter post-colonial conflict to international co-operation, the relationship between Belgium and its former colony, the Congo, is still evolving, thanks not just to politicians but to artists as well. Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula has been shuttling between Kinshasa and Brussels since 2006, when he embarked on a collaboration with Brussels’ KVS. Their latest piece, *Drums & Digging*, is a road movie in the form of a contemporary dance piece, with Linyekula and his Kabako company performing the journey from the choreographer’s hometown Obilo to Mobutu-era boomtown Gbadolite to Kisangani, his current residence. The performance premiered in Kinshasa last year before being staged at the



Avignon Festival in France and the KVS in Brussels. This one-nighter in Genk’s repurposed coal mine is its final bow in Belgium. **GV**

## FESTIVAL

### Zottegem

**Hometown Rockabilly:** Three local bands - Fifties Fever, Backseat Boppers and Fuel Kings - play swinging rock’n’roll, rockabilly and surf

**4 APR 20.00 at De Blauwe Wolk, Grotstraat 22, Grotenberge**

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

## FAMILY

### Ghent

**Spekken:** Colourful, candy-themed Easter edition of this children’s theatre festival for kids ages two to 12, featuring diverse performances and free workshops

**7-12 APR at Tinnenpot, Tinnenpotstraat 21**

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

## FILM

### Brussels

**Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival:** More than 100 horror, sci-fi and fantasy films, a Fantastic Night (four movies and breakfast), plus the usual festival village, body painting contest, street theatre, comic strip stand and more at the 32nd edition of this boisterous annual event

**8-20 APR at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat**

► [www.biff.net](http://www.biff.net)

## CONCERT

### Brussels

**Asaf Avidan:** After two steamy concerts at the AB and Rock Werchter last year, the Israeli singer-songwriter and musician is returning to Brussels for a magical, acoustic show called Back to Basics

**28 SEP 20.00 at De Munt, Muntplein**

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

## PARTY

### Oudenaarde

**The Magic Night of Bubbles & Fire:** Cycling mecca Oudenaarde celebrates on the eve of the Tour of Flanders with a giant party on its main square, featuring a four-hour act with fire, music and a sky filled with bubbles

**5 APR 20.00 at Grote Markt**

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

## FOOD & DRINK

### Poperinge

**24 Belgians/24 Beers:** Opening weekend of this new exhibition at the Hop Museum invites guests to sample 24 little-known beers selected by 24 well-known Belgians

**5-6 APR at Hop Museum Poperinge, Gasthuisstraat 71**

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

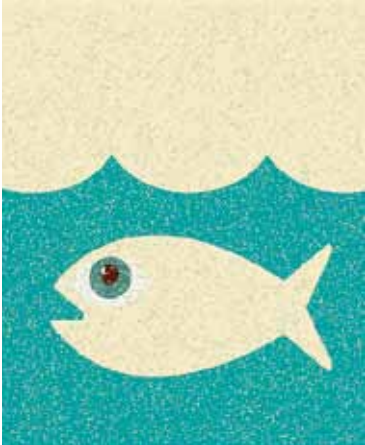


# Talking Dutch

## Something fishy on the road

Derek Blyth

It started with an accident involving a truck on the Brussels Ring. Nothing new about that. But this truck was carrying 21 tons of fresh fish. *Woensdagochtend is een Luxemburgse vrachtwagen, geladen met 21 ton verse pladijs, kabeljauw en zalm, gekanteld* – On Wednesday morning, a Luxembourg truck laden with 21 tons of fresh plaice, cod and salmon overturned, reported *De Standaard*. Anyone who drives in Belgium knows that it only takes one early-morning accident on the Brussels Ring to cause chaos across the entire land. *De vrachtwagen versperde alle rijstroken en het verkeer op de Brusselse buitenring lag volledig lam* – The truck blocked all the lanes, causing traffic on the Brussels Ring to come to a complete standstill. To make matters worse, the rescue operation took several hours longer than usual because the food inspectorate had to send a team of experts to the scene of the accident. *Eerst werd ervan uit gegaan dat de volledige lading vis verloren was* – Initially they thought that all the fish was going to have to be thrown away. *Maar de Federaal Agentschap voor de Veiligheid van de Voedselketen kwam ter plaatse*



*en stelde vast dat alvast nog een gedeelte kon worden gered* – but then the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain arrived and decided that some of it could be saved. And then, reported *De Standaard*, there was another problem. *Ook op de binnenring ontstond er extra fileleed door kijkfiles* – There was additional traffic misery on the ring because of cars on the other side stopping to look at the accident. Soon people stuck in the traffic started posting photos on Facebook and adding smart comments using the Twitter hashtag #pladijsfile (plaice traffic jam). It's what you

do when you are stuck in traffic for three hours because of 21 tons of fish lying on the road. Someone even had the time to come up with a new Dutch proverb: *Ligt de ring vol met pladijs, tel een uurtje bij je reis* – if the ring is full of plaice, add an hour to your trip (except in Dutch, it rhymes). The police, however, were not amused. *Bestuurders riskeren een boete van €110* – Drivers risked being fined €110! Because of sarcastic comments on Twitter? No, instead *volgens de wegcode is elk gebruik van uw gsm of smartphone die u in de hand houdt tijdens het rijden verboden* – it is illegal to use a mobile phone or smartphone held in your hands while driving, *De Standaard* warned. But hang on. The drivers were stuck in traffic. No one was driving anywhere. No, said the police. *Het verbod geldt dus ook wanneer u in de file staat of voor een rood licht* – the ban applies even when you are stuck in traffic or at a red light. *Bestuurders moeten zich enkel en alleen concentreren op het verkeer* – drivers have to do one thing and one thing only: Concentrate on the traffic. So next time you are stuck in traffic, please ignore the fish.

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

- Pedal BXL @PedalBX**  
Lovin the #offroad #deliveries! #asse #groen #corelio #hln #messlife #flanders <http://instagram.com/p/mD1cLyoZR0/>
- World War I - Day by day**  
Yesterday US President Obama visited the memorial chapel of the Flanders Field American Cemetery in Waregem, West Flanders
- Paul Ainslie @cllrainslie**  
A model of a World War I battlefield in the Ypres, Belgium museum #Ypres #Flanders #LestWeForget @EFTours pic. [twitter.com/eGiSgO464n](https://twitter.com/eGiSgO464n)
- U.S. Embassy London @USAinUK**  
President #Obama is in #Belgium this AM visiting the #Flanders Field Cemetery. You can watch live here - <http://dld.bz/dmyhJ>
- Marcus Burghardt**  
Changes made to the finish lap of #VoltaCatalunya for safety reasons because of rain. what if it rains in #flanders??? good luck in #GentWevelgem
- New Europe @New\_Europe**  
#Obama honors fallen soldiers, remembers lessons of WWI at #Flanders Field <http://neweuro.pe/1m5T1PX>
- Acidez**  
This is the last Acidez Eurotour show in Brussels Belgium, we are the Beer Drinkers Survivors till the end!!!! see you tonight Brussels Punx!!!!

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# Poll

Experts have spoken out against the test that determines if pre-schoolers are ready for primary school. What do you think?

- a. The test is harmless and could be helpful in figuring out a child's educational level

33%
- b. Teachers are better judges of a child's abilities; let them decide if the kids are ready

33%
- c. No one needs to decide: Children in other countries go to primary school without going to pre-school, and they seem just fine

33%

Well, it doesn't get much more evenly divided than this: three options, an equal number of votes for each. As we reported last week, the Toeter Test is given to children in pre-school to ascertain if they are ready to go on to primary school. The exam tests kids' overall attitude towards school and also specific skills in maths, writing and language. Interestingly, the split vote of our poll reflects the way the test is viewed in pedagogical circles: Experts claim it offers no benefits and may even cause needless anxiety among little kids. Yet half of all schools in Flanders are still using it to determine if a five-year-old is

scholastically ready to take the step up to primary school. Perhaps schools should not be allowed to use the test to determine a child's ability to move up but, as explained by Patrick Lanckswert, as an early warning sign of any academic problems. That is what the test was developed to do, he claims.

**Next week's question:**  
Radio 1 is running a poll to find the best Belgian invention. We've chosen our favourites from Flanders: the birth-control pill, jpeg photo compression, mosquito milk insect repellent and obstetric forceps. Which one do you think is the most important?  
Log in to the Flanders Today website to pick your favourite invention!

## THE LAST WORD

- Drastic measures**

"In the end, there was only one solution: Saw them in pieces." The Royal Museum for Central Africa, closed for renovations, had to cut up their stuffed giraffe and elephant specimens when the exit proved too small for them to leave the room
- Low water mark**

"Seventy kilometres of unremitting monotony." Paul De Moor's comments on the Flemish coast in his new travel book were not all equally welcomed by the tourist industry
- Sorry, wrong number**

"Seventy-five, for example. You write seven and five, but you say five and seven. That's crazy. Stop doing it." RTBF journalist Christophe Deborsu, Flanders' favourite Walloon, on the one thing about Flanders he would change, in *De Morgen*
- Hands where I can see them**

"Starting next week ... you can only come into the shop by showing your identity card." Kim Schinkels of La Boutique in Brasschaat is sick of shoplifters and is taking steps

