

Countdown to 25 May

Our run-down of all the Flemish parties and what they stand to gain – or lose – this Sunday

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Burial at sea

More and more Flemings are scattering their loved ones' ashes in a ceremony on the North Sea

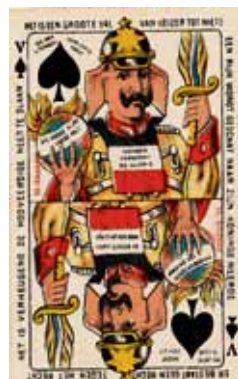
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Come up trumps

How playing cards educated soldiers during the First World War in Turnhout exhibition

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Textile empowerment

Antwerp costume workshop brings low-skilled workers and performing arts world closer

Toon Lambrechts

Lack of experience can often prove a stumbling block for job applicants, especially for low-skilled workers. Antwerp-based textile workshop Doek is offering job-seekers the opportunity to gain work experience, one costume at a time.

It's lunchtime at the Doek workshop in the Borgerhout district of Antwerp. Everything is quiet. Unfinished purple dresses that will be used in a Danish TV show are spread out across the sewing machines. One of the scenes takes place in a sewing workshop and shows a number of seamstresses stitching. The director needed unfinished dresses and called on Doek.

The pictures on the walls showcase other Doek realisations

such as zebra motif men's suits, giant puppets with turbans and special outfits to make actors look overweight.

Lies Van Assche, the brains behind the two-year-old employment project, explains that Doek's goal is to make clothes, or more precisely, "textile objects" for the cultural sector. Doek's workshop is housed in the building of the part-time vocational school Het Keerpunt and closely collaborates with the institute.

"We offer them the opportunity to gain work experience," Van Assche says. The idea is that students move on to regular jobs with a valuable work experience on their CV after completing the programme at Doek.

Mohammed Arbab Jafer joins us. The young Afghan is studying

clothes making at Het Keerpunt and is also participating in the Doek programme. Right now, he's working on the dresses for the TV show. "But I learned a lot of things here, like straight and overflow stitching," he points out.

Textiles isn't entirely new to Jafer. In Afghanistan, his father was a tailor, and Jafer would often help him as a kid. "So I had some experience already. That's why I opted for textile training," he explains. "I can even make traditional Afghan clothes, if someone else cuts the patterns at least, because it's very difficult."

In the 18 months he has been at Doek, Jafer has worked on many of the non-profit's assignments. "Everything you see in the pictures, I helped make," he says, adding that the

Suspect arrested in 30-year-old Brabant Killers case

Police arrest man suspected of being part of the gang that killed 28 people in the 1980s

Alan Hope

Police in Brussels have arrested a man thought to be a member of the notorious Brabant Killers, who carried out a wave of murderous attacks in Belgium in the 1980s. The Brabant Killers, also known as the Nivelles Gang, were responsible for a series of violent crimes in the 1980s, beginning with the murder of a police officer in Waver in 1982 and ending with the killing of 13 people during two robberies of Delhaize supermarkets in Overijse and Aalst in 1985. The gang then vanished, leaving behind 28 dead and 40 wounded. The case – and the failure of police to solve it – is legendary in Belgium. According to one theory, the gang was made up of members of the federal police intent on destabilising the state and ushering in an extreme right-wing government. Others believed they were assassins out to kill one or more specific

people, using the robberies and random killings as a smokescreen. Despite two parliamentary commissions on the subject, no convincing evidence backing any theory ever came to light. In the 29 years since the last attack, police have discovered bullets, shell casings, a jacket and a watch believed to have a link to the gang, but last week's arrest is the first. The man arrested at the weekend, identified as Jean-Marie T, is 68 and lives in Brussels. He is alleged to be one of the men on the sheet of identikit photos issued by police in 1997. According to Christian De Valkeneer, prosecutor-general for Liège, the suspect was identified by three witnesses at the time the photos were issued but was never questioned. The man spent most of the intervening years in France, where he is alleged to have boasted

of his criminal exploits to cafe patrons. According to the man's lawyer, he is mentally ill and invented the stories for attention. He now denies any involvement in the case and will be examined by a psychiatrist. The last of the gang's crimes, the raid on Delhaize in Aalst, will be 30 years old in November of next year, the term after which legal action is barred. Police and justice minister Annemie Turtelboom are in favour of finding a way to prolong that date. "I've always said that the moment there is evidence that could lead to a resolution of this collective trauma, then we need to prolong the statute of limitations," Turtelboom told VTM News. "We still have a good year and a half after the elections to work that out properly."



The 1990s sketch thought to be Brussels resident Jean-Marie T

Anderlecht retain league title after dramatic season turnaround

Anderlecht won their third consecutive Belgian football league title on Sunday – their 33rd overall – with a 3-1 win over Lokeren on the final day of the season. The victory gave the Brussels club a two-point edge over runners-up Standard Liège, with third-placed Club Brugge a further point behind. The title marks a dramatic turnaround for Anderlecht coach Besnik Hasi, who took charge after John van den Brom was fired in March following a ninth league defeat of the season. Anderlecht finished the 30-game regular season in third place, 10 points behind leaders Standard and six adrift of Brugge. But their final surge in the 10-match play-offs ensured they leapfrogged their rivals to the title. Meanwhile, Manchester United's uncapped winger Adnan Januzaj has been named as part of Belgium's squad for the



World Cup, one of 12 England-based players in Marc Wilmots' 24-man selection. The 19-year-old, born in Brussels, could have played for Kosovo, Albania, Turkey, Serbia or even England, but opted for Belgium. Januzaj is joined by United team-mate Marouane Fellaini, Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany, Tottenham's Jan Vertonghen, Arsenal's Thomas Vermaelen, Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet and Everton's Kevin Mirallas. Others include goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and defender Toby Alderweireld of Spanish champions and Champions League finalists Atletico Madrid, and Bayern Munich's Daniel Van Buyten. Belgium start their campaign against Group B opponents Algeria on 17 June. **Leo Cendrowicz**

Trucker arrested after fatal accident on E17

A truck driver who caused an accident on the E17 motorway at Zwijnaarde, near Ghent, last week has been taken into custody. The man is reported to be a 39-year-old Romanian national. Two people, a Dutch couple in their 50s, died in the accident. The accident took place on the Antwerp-bound carriageway, when a lorry ran into a Volkswagen van that was at a near standstill in a tailback caused by roadworks, pushing it into the lorry ahead of it, which in turn ran into a third lorry. The van burst into flames, as did the second lorry's cabin. That lorry driver escaped, but the Dutch couple in the van both died at the scene. The motorway remained blocked until late in the evening. The Romanian driver said that he did not have time to brake. According to the Ghent prosecutor's office, he was driving too fast, and there were no signs of braking on the roadway. The man will appear before a court in Ghent next week, which will decide if his detention is to be prolonged. **AH**

Federal economy ministry hacked

The federal government is screening all of its services for signs of cyber-espionage, the council of ministers announced, after it was reported that the economy ministry had been hacked. Federal economy minister Johan Vande Lanotte confirmed the attack, which took place in January but was first reported by *De Tijd* newspaper last week. The report came just days after it was revealed that the foreign affairs ministry's computer system had been the victim of an aggressive virus known as Snake or Ouroboros, thought to have originated in Russia. According to a senior economy ministry official, speaking to VTM News, the break-in affected only a single work station, which was soon isolated and rendered ineffective. No important or confidential documents were consulted or downloaded, the official said. Earlier in the week it was revealed that the foreign ministry computers had been infiltrated and a secret

dossier on Ukraine copied. Aside from that, the full extent of the hacking is still being investigated. Ouroboros, named after the serpent in Greek mythology that swallows its own tail, is a complex cyber weapon able to find its way into networks and open them up to hackers. According to the government, the CIA had offered to help with the screening, but the offer was not accepted. In September last year the United States' National Security Agency was suspected of involvement in the hacking of computers on the Belgacom network to monitor mobile phone traffic in the Middle East. The government has set aside €2 million to pay for the operation. Prime minister Elio Di Rupo recently announced an additional €10 million for cyber-safety, to be under the authority of the new Belgian Centre for Cyber-Safety, approved in December and due to be set up by the incoming federal government. **AH**

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

4.9%

of candidates for Flemish Parliament in the 25 May election have an immigrant background, a "very small share" according to Minorities Forum director Naima Charkaoui

€2,400

annual premium granted to any member of the Brussels regional civil service who gains fluency in sign language, under a new rule placing sign language on a par with other non-native languages

40%

less carbon dioxide emissions by 2030, as part of the Brussels public transport authority's emissions plan. Energy use will be reduced by 10%

45,000

voters in the Brussels-Capital Region hold a Dutch-language identity card, compared to 55,000 during the last regional elections in 2009

15

minimum age of students allowed in to the new course in babysitting at Thomas More University College in Lier, where youngsters learn strategies of caring for children of different ages and the basics of first aid

WEEK IN BRIEF

A lower court in Brussels has told authorities in the facility municipalities in the *Vlaamse rand*, or Flemish periphery of Brussels, that they have to send out **election summons to French-speaking residents** in French. The court considered the issue after a complaint was lodged by four French-speaking residents in Wezembeek-Oppem, one of the Flemish towns just outside Brussels where French speakers are granted certain administrative language rights. Flemish minister Geert Bourgeois, responsible for the *Vlaamse rand*, will appeal the decision.

The federal government has sent two experts from the B-Fast emergency help response team to Nigeria to determine how to help the families of the more than **200 schoolgirls abducted** by the armed Islamist group Boko Haram last month. B-Fast disaster management head Geert Gijs explained that the team “will be looking to see whether it would be helpful to send a team of aid workers to provide medical and psychological support to the families or to the girls themselves if they are found”.

This year’s **Ark Prize of the Free Word** has been awarded to novelist and columnist Jeroen Olyslaegers. The prize was instituted in 1951 by the Flemish writer Herman Teirlinck, with the intention of ensuring that freedom of expression remained free of “ideological small-mindedness”. Olyslaegers was praised for his social engagement, not only in his texts but in community works such as his urban kitchen, which distributes food to the poor. The award will be handed over at a reception in Antwerp on 28 May.

Antwerp’s city council has written to Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits requesting a study on the technical **feasibility of covering the city’s extension to its Ring Road**, known as the Oosterweel connection. The minister agreed to further research the idea. The idea of enclosing parts of the Ring was launched recently by the activist

group Ringland and has since been under consideration by several political parties from government and opposition. The benefits of covering the planned extension, which will connect the Ring Road to the port and to the E19, are a significant decrease of both noise and air pollution and an increase in usable urban space.

The federal police will **no longer deploy police dogs** in maintaining order during demonstrations or riots because of a growing number of incidents, according to a new order issued by federal interior minister Joëlle Milquet.

The number of road accidents involving **pedestrian fatalities increased by 4%** in the last five years, according to figures from the Belgian Institute for Road Safety. That’s a disappointing result, according to Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits, whose department set a target of 50% fewer fatal accidents by 2020. The Institute has called for more 30 km/h zones in urban areas, where most accidents occur. “Speed is a determining factor in not only the risk of an accident involving pedestrians but also the consequences,” said Werner De Dobbeleer of the Flemish Traffic Foundation.

Conchita Wurst, the drag queen persona of Austrian performer Tom Neuwirth, who won this year’s Eurovision Song Contest, will appear at Antwerp’s Pride festival this summer. She will sing as part of the festival’s closing ceremonies on 10 August.

Houthalen-Helchteren and Beringen in Limburg province have opened **condolence books for the victims of the mining disaster** in the Turkish town of Soma. Both municipalities have large Turkish communities, many families having come to Limburg in the 1960s to work in the mines. Genk Mayor Win Dries, meanwhile, sent a letter of condolence to various officials and mining-related associations in Turkey. Dries said he was in talks here

to create some sort of support action for the relatives of victims.

Belgium comes second place among European countries for **respecting the rights of LGBT people**, according to a report by the gay rights group ILGA-Europe. As in 2012, Belgium follows just behind the UK. “The political will to combat homophobia and transphobia is strong at every level,” the report says. “Another positive factor is that gays and transsexuals admit they suffer little discrimination in Belgium.”

Bancontact-MisterCash has updated its smartphone app to allow payments in online shops. Until now, the app was available for person-to-person payments, from one smartphone to another. In future, shops and webshops will generate a QR code to be scanned by the app, which then carries out the payment transaction. The same procedure can be carried out in retail shops that are not equipped with a standard card reader terminal.

The federal government has added the wrecks of two ships – the lightship Westhinder and the Royal Navy minesweeper HMS Wakeful – to the **list of cultural heritage**, North Sea minister Johan Vande Lanotte announced. The Westhinder sank following a collision in 1912, with the loss of 10 lives. Wakeful was active in the First and Second World Wars, but sank during the evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940, with the loss of 700 British troops.

Drink-driving convictions based on the Dräger 8510 breath-test apparatus between May 2007 and December 2012 could be overturned, according to the ruling of a court last week. The apparatus was subject to adaptations, which the court has now found were not in line with the procedure governing its use. The court acquitted a driver found guilty on the basis of the test. The ruling could affect outstanding cases, although cases where the fines have already been paid will not be affected.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Élodie Ouédraogo

Many Olympic medalists vanish from view soon after glory, but former Olympic sprinter and hurdler Élodie Ouédraogo was in the news recently, two years after she retired from her professional career, soon after the London Olympics. Ouédraogo is the third fastest Belgian woman of all time in the 100m sprint and the second fastest in the 400m hurdles. She was part of the 4x100m relay that took silver in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Ouédraogo was born in Brussels in 1981 to parents from Burkina Faso. In 1983, her mother left Brussels to travel back to her homeland and left Ouédraogo in the care of relatives. She intended to return when her problems with her husband were resolved, but she never did. “I can’t describe what I suffered,” she said. “I accepted the sacrifice of leaving her so she could study.” Ouédraogo, 33, was reunited with her birth mother only this year, as part of the series *Heylen en de Herkomst*, broadcast on VIER, in which journalist Martin Heylen accompanies well-known personalities back to their roots. The encounter between mother and daughter was harrowing to watch – for Heylen and for viewers. The mother repeatedly

stressed her own suffering and puts the blame for not having seen her daughter in more than 30 years onto the sister who brought Ouédraogo up, who she calls her mother. “It’s only out of respect that I’m still sitting here,” Ouédraogo says at one point, speaking to Heylen in Dutch so the others won’t understand. “In all my life, I don’t think I’ve ever felt so lied to. To have to sit here and listen to her make up stories about my mother is breaking my heart into a thousand pieces. I was ready for a lot, but I was really and truly not ready for this.” Fortunately, soon after that meeting was broadcast, she was back doing what celebrities more usually do: presenting a cookbook. The recipes in *Het Gezonde Kinderkookboek* (The Healthy Children’s Cookbook) were submitted by and for children, and Ouédraogo has contributed nutrition and sporting tips. The recipe competition – 28 recipes made the cut from more than 3,000 submitted – and the book benefit the Zeepreventorium, a rehabilitation centre for sick children in De Panne. The book costs €4.99 and is available only at Lidl supermarkets.

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

To infinity and beyond

It’s not often a press release moves one to thoughts of “the all-encompassing character of the universe” or “a glimpse of the immeasurable cosmos”, but that was the inspiring tenor of one that crossed the Offside desk last week. The document was announcing a new co-operation between the government of Flanders and the Flemish People’s Observatories, including an increase of financial support from €517,000 to €667,000 a year. The Flemish People’s Observatories are a group of astronomical societies spread across Flanders: AstroLAB IRIS in Ypres, the Cosmodrome in Genk, Cosmix in Bruges, Mira in Grimbergen, Ghent University’s Armand Pien society and Urania in



Hove. Their activities revolve around the popularisation of astronomy and space travel and the various related scientific questions. Every month, Mira holds an “Astroclub”, usually hosted by the nation’s most famous star-gazer, weatherman Frank Deboosere. On 30 May, he’ll be talking about exploding stars, and on 27 June, the subject will be eclipses. “Because of the all-encompassing character of the universe, astronomy is linked to all branches of science,”

the government’s press release states. “Thus, astrophysics describe the characteristics, the behaviour and the evolution of bodies and structures in the cosmos; astrochemistry the chemistry of the empty universe; and astrobiology the question of life elsewhere in the cosmos.” The observatories also offer visitors that glimpse of the immeasurable, with events such as Twilight Night in October, Science Day in November, star-spotting day in March, Heritage Day in April and sun-spotting day on 6 July. All of the observatories across the region take part in major events and also offer guided tours and planetarium shows on a regular basis.

► www.volkssterrenwachten.be

FLANDERS TODAY



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

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

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The Dehaene factor

Parties can never completely plan their election campaigns in advance. Something unexpected can always happen. In 1999, for instance, Belgium faced a food crisis after a dioxin spill. The sitting coalition of Christian-democrats and socialists, and then prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, paid the price and lost the elections to the opposition of liberals and greens.

Though the event does not touch the lives of that many people directly, the unexpected passing away of Jean-Luc Dehaene is also having an impact on CD&V's campaign.

Dehaene was Flanders' most respected elder statesman. Politicians from all parties have nothing but praise for the man "who led this country into the euro zone". Dehaene was left-wing by conviction, but as a typical Christian-democrat he stuck to the centre, using austerity recipes whenever necessary. He was no fan of institutional discussions, yet he shaped the country into the federal state it is now.

In the media, he was a man of few words, but behind the scene he crafted the most delicate of compromises. He was exceptionally intelligent, yet to the outside world he always kept up the image of a folksy guy, enjoying a football game and a beer.

Because of his death, CD&V decided to suspend its campaigning for a couple of days, and a good number of debates were cancelled. This Friday, two days before the elections, Dehaene's funeral will take place – another moment of contemplation rather than fierce debate.

As CD&V resumed its campaign, leader Kris Peeters called for a campaigning style "as Jean-Luc would have wanted it: with respect for others and much commitment to and passion for Christian-democracy". Subtly, he contrasted Dehaene's style – as an "experienced guide" – with that of N-VA's immensely popular leader Bart De Wever, a man of confrontation rather than compromise.

De Wever, too, however, refers to Dehaene. "In his era, bold decisions were taken," he says. Read: the type of decisions N-VA also wants. The contrast here is one between standstill and economic progress.

Whether all of this will have an impact on the votes remains to be seen. De Wever cautions against "Wetstraat myopia": What politicians consider to be important often differs from what voters think. Even CD&V is sceptical about the exact impact. As one candidate said last weekend: "It's completely irrational. People rave about Dehaene, yet they vote for someone who stands for everything he did not."

Jean-Luc Dehaene dies at 73

Funeral this Friday for "country's greatest prime minister"

Derek Blyth

The former Belgian prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene died last week at the age of 73. A Flemish Christian-Democrat with roots in Bruges, Dehaene died following a fall in France, where he was on holiday with his wife.

Dehaene (pictured), who earned a variety of nicknames over the years, such as "the Flemish carthorse" and "the plumber", was known for his tough negotiating skills but also for how he appealed to the public.

He was a major political force in both European and Belgian politics, leading the country for seven years during the 1990s at a time when the Flemish and Walloon regions were gaining greater autonomy. He was also instrumental in ushering in the euro.

His leadership coincided with the Dutroux crisis in the mid-1990s, when Belgium's international reputation was seriously compromised by several child murders and a botched investigation. Dehaene lost the leadership in 1999 following a second crisis – the dioxin food scandal.

In the election that followed, his



party, CVP (now CD&V), lost its status as Flanders' biggest party, a place it had held since 1945. The loss led to a new government coalition formed by Guy Verhofstadt (Open VLD).

Having spent much of his career living in Vilvoorde, Dehaene went on to serve as mayor of the city for six years. In 2004, he became a member of the European Parliament. As a widely respected elder legislator, he

played a key role in setting up the European Union's constitution that same year.

Dehaene only retired earlier this year after undergoing a successful surgery for pancreatic cancer.

President of the European Council and former Dehaene colleague Herman Van Rompuy was visibly shocked by the news. "He was the greatest prime minister this country has ever known," he said. "I told him,

'If I have learned anything, Jean-Luc, I've learned it from you.'"

Willy Claes, who once served as vice-prime minister under Dehaene, noted his role in promoting Brussels. "The reason Brussels is the capital of Europe today is thanks to Dehaene," he said.

The CD&V party has put aside all election campaigning until Sunday out of respect. "We have lost a statesman who played a key role in the Belgian political framework of the past decade and in creating the united Europe in which we live today," said party leader Kris Peeters. Dehaene's funeral is scheduled for this Friday, 23 May, at the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw church in Vilvoorde. He will receive a state funeral, though without the usual military guard of honour. "It will be a funeral in the Dehaene style, without too much fuss," said CD&V president Wouter Beke.

The family has asked sympathisers not to send flowers or wreaths but to make a donation to the Fonds Maaikje Lars Trees, a charity set up by Dehaene to carry out research into the genetic origins of cancer.

25 May: What's at stake for Flemish parties?

The federal, regional and European elections presents voters in Flanders with a number of choices. A comparison of party programmes by a number of analysts shows a return of ideology and a clear left and right wing in terms of economic and social policies. What do the Flemish parties stand for? And what is at stake for them on 25 May?

Vlaams Belang. Flemish nationalist and Eurosceptic, returns to the themes that have made it successful in the past: migration and the threat of Islam. At a recent meeting, party prominent

Filip Dewinter led his fans in the shout "fewer, fewer, fewer", imitating Dutch politician Geert Wilders' controversial question about whether his followers wanted "more or fewer Moroccans". The party also launched a number of campaigns deemed racist. These hardly caused a stir, though, as the momentum seems gone for Vlaams Belang.

What's at stake for Vlaams Belang? As much of its electorate has switched to N-VA, its very survival might be at stake for the party, which stands at 6% in the polls.

The nationalist N-VA and its leader **Bart De Wever**

dominate this campaign, as they did in 2010. With its V-plan (for *Verandering*, or change), its attention has shifted to economic and social issues, with plans for government cuts and lower taxes. Two proposals stand out: cutting unemployment benefits after two years and a change to the index system that links wages to the cost of living. It is unclear who is up for the post of minister-president after the elections: leading lady **Liesbeth Homans** or founding father **Geert Bourgeois**.



What's at stake for N-VA? With 30% of the vote, it would become *incontournable*: Coalitions without it are impossible. Finding coalition partners may be harder, as its ruthless campaign has alienated many an opponent.

The liberal **Open VLD** has seen its economic programme taken over by N-VA, making

it harder for them to stand out. The party made a notable move, however, by supporting the Ringland initiative to cover the Antwerp Ring Road. Its strongest weapons are two popular politicians: **Maggie de Block**, secretary of state for migration and asylum, and **Guy Verhofstadt**, who might not become president of the European Commission, but will definitely propel his party's European result.

What's at stake for Open Vld? The liberals have lost much of their appeal to N-VA. Can they reach out beyond their traditional following of 13% and/or make their way into the federal and Flemish coalitions?

CD&V's Christian-democrats traditionally take the centre ground. With

a programme for economic growth and social progress, they essentially stand for stability and defend the achievements of minister-president **Kris Peeters**. The legacy of Jean-Luc Dehaene may benefit CD&V yet, as its campaign mostly centres around "experienced administrators" such as **Hilde Crevits**, revelation **Koen Geens** and of course Peeters.

What's at stake for CD&V? It has to ensure voters do not take it for granted to achieve its goal of a minimum of 20%. Also, Peeters' political future is on the line; he will quit politics, he says, if he cannot stay on as minister-president.

The social-democrat **SP.A** is on the defensive, profiling itself as the "anti-N-VA". It is the

defender of the welfare state (including the index mechanism), the federal government with prime minister **Elio Di Rupo** (PS) and the reform of secondary education. SPA boasts some strong ministers such as **Johan Vande Lanotte** and **Freya Van den Bossche** but is also considered "outdated" by some analysts.

What's at stake for SPA? Groen and PVDA could nibble away at its results; SPA stands at 14% in the polls.

Groen has been invigorated by the success of Ringland, the grassroots initiative to cover the Antwerp Ring Road. The party also has a strong social programme. Waiting lists – for child, elderly and special needs care – are its focus. All of this makes the greens a competitor of SPA, which is warning voters not to "split the left-wing vote". Party president **Wouter Van Besien** says that he is ready to "take up its responsibility". Read: be part of a coalition government.

What's at stake for Groen? Can it transfer its winning mood into the double digit result (over 10%) of which it dreams?

The extreme left **PVDA**, meanwhile, has moved beyond its traditional fringe status. Its success is driven by the economic crisis and by its charismatic leader, **Peter Mertens**. The party's message, unchanged since the 1970s ("let the rich pay for the crisis"), has become relevant again. Its voters are mostly people who are disappointed by the traditional left, including many union representatives.

What's at stake for PVDA? The slogan "Vote Peter Mertens into parliament" shows the party's limited ambitions: one elected representative is all it takes for a triumph. **Anja Otte**



Textile empowerment

Doek offers job-seekers work experience, one costume at a time

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Borgerhout giants parade was one of the most interesting projects. Jafer also knotted the turban for one of the giants in the Ommegang parade in Mechelen, using traditional Afghan techniques.

During the procession itself, he also knotted turbans for children and volunteers. "That was fun, working together with so many people," he says, looking back. "When I see people in the parade or on stage wearing clothes I made, I feel proud. After all, I made the things they're wearing with my own hands."

I ask Jafer (pictured below) what he wants to do after he completes his clothes-making training, and his answer surprises me. "Car mechanics," he says. "I also have some experience with that. But I don't know actually; we'll see."

Doek works under the umbrella of the Kopspeel non-profit, a workshop specialised in stage decorations for cultural productions. They share a similar aim of offering work experience to job-seekers so they can gain access to regular employment. "The only difference between us is the material," says Van Assche. "Kopspeel works with wood and metal; we do textile. But both Doek and Kopspeel focus on work experience in the cultural sector."

Van Assche says the idea to link work experience, textile and culture sprang from her own experience as a veteran freelance costume designer. "For 20 years, I worked for theatre, which I still do. Many of the projects I did in all those years had a social-artistic background." She once, for instance, set up a temporary costume workshop for a theatre production in which psychiatric patients designed and created their own costumes.

Van Assche discovered Kopspeel at the suggestion of an acquaintance. "And because the school had a textile and clothing department in the building, the pieces fell together," she says.

The Doek public is diverse. Some of the participants are students at het Keerpunt completing their internship, others are sent by welfare agency OCMW or Encora, the Antwerp adult training centre.



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© Doek

Clockwise from top: Doek workers have created body altering costumes for KVS' Schiz theatre production, giants for heritage projects and costumes for processions

currently in the workshop can draw patterns, for instance. In such cases, she asks professionals to lend a hand because their clients expect quality products.

At first, most of the jobs came from performing arts and theatre

cultural field. That gives them a kind of pride and a boost to their self-esteem," she says. "They see that what they create here in this workshop is worn by others during events. And heritage events like the giants procession or other parades lend themselves to this far better than performing arts because these events are more open to everyone."

Van Assche also tries to take the Doek workers along to the theatre productions for which they made the costumes, though most of their students aren't familiar with performing arts. "Many of the people who work here are from a different cultural background, and for them culture is something that takes place in the streets or in public spaces," the Doek founder says. "Something like the theatre where you enter at 20:00 in the evening to go watch a show is new to them, and it is often difficult to arrange it."

But Flanders also has a strong tradition of cultural performances

in public spaces with its many historical processions and street theatre festivals. Such open events make the interaction that Doek wants to achieve a lot easier. Van Assche: "Heritage is more about the culture of everyday life. When a giants parade, like the one here in Borgerhout, takes place, everyone is involved. It becomes easier to connect with people from the rest of the world. That's strange because much of our heritage is deeply rooted in a Flemish or Catholic tradition. And yet it works. Our experience with the giants parade in Borgerhout was very positive."

Many heritage events in Flanders are run by volunteers who often also create the costumes. But Van Assche says it has become increasingly difficult to find people who are ready to really commit to the work. Doek can offer a valuable addition in that respect, she says. "To me, it doesn't really matter what we make, it is the underlying objective that is important. And that

is communication and interaction. Heritage-connected assignments lend themselves to these aims, so I hope we'll get more projects like the Mechelen giants parade in the future."

Newcomers often bring a lot of experience with them from their native countries. Knooppunt, a new Doek project, will soon be kicking off to better use such knowledge. "The techniques that people bring with them are very valuable," says Van Assche. "We can learn a lot from them, although we often don't see it like that. With Knooppunt, I want to work on the exchange of experience, to initiate creative interaction."

Planned for July, the first Knooppunt project will be a children's workshop that teaches participants artisanal clothes-making techniques from countries like Tibet and Afghanistan. More projects to link international and Flemish traditions are expected follow.

► www.kopspeel.be

“One of our intentions is to make the people who work here more visible in the cultural field”

Van Assche says that the resulting mixed group is one of the difficulties of the project. "Some of them have a lot of experience from their home country but are here to learn Dutch on the job. Others are only at the beginning of their training in clothes making."

Van Assche says that no-one

organisations, but lately the workshop has been landing more and more assignments from heritage associations such as the Mechelen giants – an interesting turn, according to Van Assche.

"One of the intentions of Doek is to make the people who work here, and their skills, more visible in the

WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Appliances

► Van Marcke

The country's largest distributor of heating and bathroom appliances is developing its Malta-based Izola Bank affiliate to provide consumer credits to its clients. Employing over 1,200 people worldwide, the Kortrijk-based firm has more than 100 outlets locally and a further 50 in Europe and the US.

Biotech ► MDXHealth

The Ghent-based biotechnology company specialised in cancer diagnosis and treatment has signed a distribution agreement with American Pathology Partners to promote its ComfirmMDX test against prostate cancer in the US.

Containers ► MSC

The port of Antwerp's largest container shipping operator is shifting its activities from the crowded Delwaide docks area on the right bank of the Scheldt to the Deurganck dock on the left bank. The move will allow the Italo-Swiss-owned MSC to further develop its activities and increase its workforce by 700, in addition to the estimated 10,000 jobs the company already provides.

Food

► Vandemoortele

The Ghent-based food products group, specialised in bakery and margarines and one of McDonald's bread suppliers, is investing €50 million in its frozen bakery division in France and in Central Europe.

Food service

► Chi-Chi's

The US chain of Tex-Mex restaurants has plans to open 35 additional local outlets over the next five years. The company already operates 15 restaurants in Belgium and will open two more later this year in Ghent and Ostend.

Property

► Cofinimmo

The Brussels-based property development group has sold the Danish ATP pension fund its 104,000 square-metre North Galaxy buildings close to the city's North Station for €475 million – the highest amount ever paid for an office block in Belgium.

Retail ► Premaman

France's Orchestra-Premaman, retailer of baby and mother-to-be products, will take over all 38 of Belgium's Home Market stores, which declared bankruptcy earlier this year. Premaman has promised to retain all 233 workers for their new stores. The French retailer already has 110 outlets in the country.

€200 million from EU for project in Brussels canal zone

The European Commission has doubled its six-year funding for the area

Alan Hope

The European Commission has announced funding of €200 million over the next six years for the canal zone in central Brussels – twice as much as the area received in the previous six year period.

The money is for European Regional Development Fund investments in sustainable construction, waste management, food, health and the creative sector. The zone is a former industrial area and includes both sides of the canal, which runs through the entire region, linking the centre of the capital with Antwerp and the North Sea.

Recent years have seen a number of advanced and innovative projects in the area, from the building of a new European school in Laken to the tallest apartment block in the country and



a new cruise terminal. Two of the new shopping and leisure centres planned for the Brussels area – Uplace and Dockx Brussel – are within the canal zone.

The area contains four of the 10 strategic areas targeted by the Brussels-Capital Region for international development. They are the Schaarbeek Formation railway site, intended to become a multi-modal logistics platform; the district around South Station; the Tour & Taxis site; and the area around West Station.

Among the projects that shared in the €114 million in grants from Europe over the last six years are the Bellevue training hotel, the ecological business centre Greenbizz and the city farm to be built on top of the roof of the Anderlecht abattoir. EU funding provided an estimated 600 jobs as well as 100 spaces for children in day care.

Projects can apply for a grant from the 2014-2020 fund by submitting an application by 25 July.

De Lijn drivers in talks over disciplinary actions

Unions representing drivers at the Flemish public transport authority De Lijn have cancelled a planned industrial action due to begin on 26 May. Instead, the two sides have agreed to a conciliation period of 45 days.

The unions had called the action in protest at a new disciplinary regulation for telephoning and texting at the wheel, up to and including dismissal for a third offence. For a first offence, a driver would receive a warning, and for a second offence, a suspension of four days.

In addition, De Lijn wanted to refine its procedures for dealing with traffic fines incurred by drivers. In future, only the most minor offences, including speeding up to 10 km/h above the limit, would be paid by De Lijn, with drivers themselves responsible for more serious offences.

Unions were angry that they were not consulted about the changes to disciplinary actions. De Lijn argues that the telephoning and texting rule change was necessary because of the increase in complaints from customers – as many as one a day last year.

During the conciliation period, the federal labour ministry's inspection service will determine whether the works councils of De Lijn – of which there are six – are competent to decide on the changes. If so, they will then address whether it is possible to reach an agreement within the councils. AH

Belgian airlines take Ryanair to court for unfair competition

The Belgian Air Transport Association (Bata) has filed a complaint with the commercial tribunal of Brussels against Ryanair, alleging unfair competition. Bata represents Brussels Airlines (BA), Jetairfly and Thomas Cook Belgium.

Ryanair's Belgian hub is Charleroi Airport, but since February, the low-cost Irish airline has been active at Brussels Airport. Its staff are subject to the more advantageous Irish system for tax and social security. This allows Ryanair to save money on personnel costs compared to its main Belgian competitors.

The Irish airline also escapes the indexation of salaries applicable in Belgium, as well as avoiding the costly payments involved when laying off staff.

"Our position is very simple," said Bata lawyer Filip Tilleman. "When one works in Belgium, and when one employs people in Belgium, one ought to be bound by Belgian labour laws. Just because you have your headquarters in another country, you're not above the law."

The Ryanair staff concerned are not just working in Belgium, they are based here permanently, and some have Belgian nationality. They should not, therefore, be covered by the system of another country, Tilleman argues.

Ryanair, in turn, has filed a complaint with the EU, alleging that state aid paid by the federal government to support national airlines,



particularly BA – its biggest competitor – is illegal.

In related news, BA transported more than 585,450 passengers in April, making it the best April ever for the airline. The results were attributed to a slight economic recovery, a late Easter this year and an increase in the destinations on offer.

BA's passenger numbers for European destinations increased by 10.6%, with the US and Africa up by more than 20%. Seat occupancy was up by 4.5 points to 77% of capacity. Brussels Airport also enjoyed a record month, with 980,140 passengers boarding flights, an increase of 16.6% on the same period last year. AH

Leuven bartender wins World Draught Masters

The 24-year-old Leuven barkeep Marjolein Geuens, who was chosen last month as the best beer server in the country, has now been crowned the best beer server in the world at the Stella Artois World Draught Masters international competition in Cannes last weekend.

Geuens (pictured), who has been working as a server for only six months and was the first woman to win the Belgian title, now becomes Stella's official ambassador for a year. "A perfectly poured glass of beer is a sign of respect for both the client and the beer," said Debora Koyama, global vice-president of Stella Artois, which is part of AB InBev, based in Leuven. "We're delighted to welcome Marjolein into the Stella Artois family." The nine steps, according to Stella Artois, in



serving the perfect beer are:

The purification, in which the branded glass is cleaned and rinsed.

The sacrifice, in which the tap is opened to allow the first drops of beer to flow away.

The approach, where the glass is held at a

45-degree angle under, but not touching, the tap. The crowning, where the glass is lowered to allow a head to form naturally.

The separation, when the tap is closed as the glass is withdrawn.

The decapitation, in which the head which projects above the rim of the glass is removed.

The cleansing, where the sides and bottom of the glass are rinsed.

The two-finger rule, whereby the ideal head is two fingers thick.

The presentation, as the beer is served on a clean beer mat, the logo on the glass facing the customer.

Geuens works at 't Archief in Leuven's Zeelstraat. AH

Getting the right care

A psychiatric detention centre in Ghent will treat mentally ill prisoners

Senne Starckx

With the opening of a new centre in Ghent this month and the stone-laying of a similar facility in Antwerp earlier in the year, the justice system has finally tackled a long-standing and nagging problem: that of detainees being put in ordinary jails when they need psychiatric assistance, after a court has judged them to be of unsound mind.

According to Paul Cosyns, emeritus professor in psychology at the University of Antwerp, who chaired a colloquium on the issue this month, about 900 prisoners in Belgium don't get the care they need. "Of the more than 1,100 detainees in jail in need of treatment, 900 of them don't get any or are treated inadequately," he says, warning that the figure can be expected to grow.

According to Cosyns, this is a structural problem – one for which Belgium has been condemned 14 times by the European Court for Human Rights – and thus needs a structural solution. "The competence for the care of these people should be transferred from justice to public health," he says. "Besides that, detainees should not be excluded any more from public health care."

The two new facilities – forensic psychiatric centres, or FPCs – will together have space for 450 detainees. The centre in Ghent, designed by Abscis Architecten of Ghent and de Jong Gortemaker Algra of Rotterdam, opened this month and has space for 264 male detainees with an average or high security risk. "The FPC is not a terminus, but an intermediate station," said Hans Meurisse, general director of the Belgian prison system.

So in what sense does the new FPC in Ghent differ from a normal prison? According to Meurisse, the facility is comparable to a psychiatric hospital, with the difference that it has a high security level. "The building



Ghent's new FPC will house approximately 260 detainees

is surrounded by a 6.5-metre high wall and camera surveillance, but it has also has a transparent fence in the less protected departments," he says. "Perhaps the biggest difference from a common prison is that it has no bars in the rooms, so the detainees don't constantly have the feeling that they're locked up."

The arrangement of the various departments in the FPC in Ghent also resembles the treatment path that every detainee has to pass through. There are separate departments for



orientation and observation, for specific and enforced treatment and for resocialisation – the eventual goal is that a detainee can integrate into society and function normally again, often with assistance in daily life.

While the facilities in Ghent and Antwerp are the first of their kind in this country, our northern neighbours have for years been housing the dangerously mentally ill in specialised facilities. Currently there are 12 in the Netherlands, of which eight are managed by a private company. The Belgian government has also chosen a private partner for the management of Ghent centre, the Dutch group Parnassia.

For a preview of what life in the FPC in Ghent will be like once all 264 inhabitants have been settled, it's good to take a look at the Dutch example.

Typically in FPCs in the Netherlands, detainees are given different types of leave that prepare them for reintegration into society. The first,

the probationary leave, has been criticised heavily in Dutch politics, as several detainees have committed serious crimes while on leave outside the FPC.

Moreover, a considerable percentage of the Dutch detainees are not always happy to be placed in a specialised facility. Their motivation is that sitting out their sentence in a normal jail gives them certainty about when they will be released – even if the sentence is often longer than it might be in the FPC.

The problem with being moved to an FPC is that the detention period can always be extended – giving the detainee lots of uncertainty about when they will be allowed to step back into society.

What the system of leave and extensions in Ghent and Antwerp will look like is unknown. Belgian justice still has to fill in the details in the legal framework that aims to help those who belong neither in prison nor in society.

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Prize for lung expert Lambrecht

Professor Bart Lambrecht, lung specialist at Ghent's University Hospital and researcher at the Flemish life sciences institute VIB, has received this year's Francqui Award. Lambrecht was chosen for the prestigious annual award for a Belgian scientist for his ground-breaking research on allergies and asthma. He was part of the group of researchers that ascertained that excessive hygiene can result in a malfunctioning of the immune system because of a lack of infections. The goal of researchers now is to find ways to "re-train" the immune system so it reacts normally to these common allergens.

€2 million for Limburg Makes It

The government of Flanders is investing €2 million in the project Limburg Makes It. The project allows Hasselt University's research institute imo-imomec to further support the manufacturing industry with innovations, such as use of materials in new products and underlying processes and technologies. Limburg Makes it is part of the SALK recovery programme for Limburg province and runs until 2017. The platform will expand the existing interaction between imo-imomec and SMEs from the manufacturing industry and initiate collaborations with new companies. An active recruitment campaign with workshops, seminars and visits will be set up to involve the business world and encourage innovation.

Biotech drug production simplified

Researchers at the Flemish life sciences research institute VIB have developed a technology that shortens the sugar structures of biotech-developed medications while retaining their therapeutic effect. Currently, the final step in the production of medications developed through biotechnology entails ensuring the right sugar structure, an essential but complex and expensive procedure. VIB's innovation should make it considerably simpler and cheaper. Nearly all biotech drugs are proteins produced by living cells, to which a mixture of sugar structures are attached. These are important for the efficacy of the medication, but their complicated structure also causes problems during production. VIB researchers have changed these cells by adding an enzyme from a fungus, to truncate the structures to a smaller shape.

Andy Furniere

Q&A

David Van Rooij is a lecturer of marine geology and geophysics at Ghent University. He was part of the team that mapped the distribution of deep-sea waste in European waters

The waste on the surface of the world's seas is well known. But there's also a lot on the deep-sea floor?

Sadly, this is true. The environments we surveyed were all in the deep sea, far out of reach of the influence of humans, both in depth and distance. At least, that's what we thought. But the few hundred sampling points in the study already show that there's a dramatic amount of waste on sea and ocean floors.

How does waste end up there?

Below the first 100 metres of the water column, where the circulation is strictly wind-controlled, there are

large layers that all follow a different circulation pattern – often global. Besides that, the continental slope is cross-cut with several canyons, often as large as the Grand Canyon. When the deeper circulation layers cross the shallow continental shelf seas, these canyons act as a gateway that gives access to the deep-sea abyssal plains. In some cases, they may funnel shallow water particles through dense currents towards the deep-sea – a process called "cascading".

A well-known undersea cascade is the Mediterranean Gulf of Lion [off the southern French coast], where dense winter-cooled water sinks in one particular canyon near the French-



Spanish border. These cascades may bring pollutants to depths of 4.5km in just a few days.

How did you discover all the waste?

Our research team in Ghent is interested in the past and present living conditions of deep-water ecosystems,

and in deep-water coral reefs in particular. These are widely dispersed over the European continental margin, but are very much present in canyons. We use our remotely operated underwater vehicle, Genesis, to find these reefs and to take water and coral samples.

We are interested in better understanding the transport of sediment particles through these canyons, since they are partly the food source for deep-water reefs, of which we still know very little. However, during conferences we shared experiences with other marine researchers, and that's how we noticed the common observations of waste in the deep sea. We then decided to make a focal point of this issue and publish the combined results. **Interview by SS**



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The academic gap

Team of researchers have red-flagged a school performance gap in Flanders

Andy Furniere

The most recent “Pisa” test has shown an alarmingly large gap between Flemish students in terms of the best and worst scores. The decisive factors behind the stark differences between students appear to be their socio-economic background and ethnic origins.

The researchers also found that significant segregation exists between schools with mostly disadvantaged students and schools that attract students with more social opportunities.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) is a global study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that assesses 15-year-old students’ performance in mathematics, science and reading. It is organised every three years.

The Group for Research on Ethnic Relations, Migration and Equality (GERME) of the Free University of Brussels (ULB) analysed the last Pisa test – conducted in 2012 and focused on performance in maths – at the request of the King Boudewijn Foundation. The report is called “Towards quality schools for everyone?”.

The positive news is that the ULB team, led by Flemish sociologist Dirk Jacobs, found that the average general knowledge of Flemish students is high. In a group of 21 countries – 19 European countries plus the United States and Canada – the Flemish region reached the second-best average score, just after Switzerland.

But the report also reveals that Flanders is at the bottom of the ranking that focuses on the achievement gap between the best and worst students. This gap is 271 points wide on the Pisa score – the equivalent of six study years.

“This finding is in line with the results of earlier studies,” says Jacobs. “Flanders keeps scoring well on the general average performance of students, but has a big problem



with equal opportunity.” The difference in knowledge is closely tied to the students’ socio-economic and ethnic background.

“The registration policy has work towards improving the social mix in schools

Students of migrant descent on average score 98 points less than native children – a difference of two study years. Meanwhile, 38% of Flemish students with foreign roots don’t reach the minimum education level expected at the age of 15, compared to 15% of the Flemish student population at large.

The students’ background isn’t the only decisive factor: School

environment also plays a substantial role. According to the researchers, youngsters of foreign origin and vulnerable social backgrounds are too often clustered in so-called “concentration schools”.

“In other countries, such as in Scandinavia, the spread of students with different types of backgrounds is much better,” they write in the report. The ULB researchers say one idea might be to try to attract the best teachers to join these schools, with higher wages for instance.

Professor Jacobs points to Finland as one country with an exemplary education system, but also mentions an interesting reform initiative in Poland. Between 2000 and 2003, Poland succeeded in restructuring its education system, quickly reducing the achievement gap between best and worst performing students, while improving the average scores of students in general.

While in the past some 50% of students were sent to professional education at an early stage, under the new system Poland created a new, common basic programme until the age of 15. The reform also included other measures such as giving schools the freedom to choose their education methods and

approaches.

In the report, the researchers highlight four major points of attention for policymakers. Firstly, they feel that the government has to focus on school desegregation by better regulating school choice. “The registration policy has to employ more fine-tuned, transparent and centralised enrolment procedures to improve the social mix in schools,” the report says.

To end the so-called Flemish “waterfall system”, in which students often end up in technical or professional study streams after a meandering school trajectory starting in general education (ASO), the researchers propose the introduction of a “common basic programme in the first grade, and even to the age of 15 or 16 years.”

This common basic programme should include courses in technical and technological subjects, so that youngsters can make an informed and positive choice about technical or professional education.

A third aspect raised by the researchers is the high number of students who have to re-sit a year. “Research shows that it not only isn’t very effective, but it’s also very expensive,” the report states. The researchers realise that swiftly doing away with the system is not feasible, but they suggest directing more resources toward extra aid for students with deficits, under the supervision of specialised teachers. “Efforts should also be taken to convince teachers and school administrators that a re-sit is inefficient,” they write. Finally, the researchers also identify the re-evaluation of the teaching profession as a key challenge.

The King Boudewijn Foundation is hoping the report’s results and suggestions will be included in the current political debate – in Flanders especially, with the proposed secondary education reform having become an important local electoral issue.

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Gender and diversity Master’s launched

The Flemish government has approved a Master’s degree in gender and diversity, which will be set up through a collaboration by the five Flemish universities. The interuniversity Master’s programme can be provided from next year, education minister Pascal Smet announced. “Gender and diversity are two subjects that are getting higher on the public agenda and are increasingly common in the minds of the population and the policy-makers,” Smet said in a press release. He believes many companies and organisations are in need of expertise on gender and diversity.

English test for academics recognised

An international panel of experts has recognised Flanders’ English-language tests for academic staff administered by all Flemish universities last year. Flanders’ education minister, Pascal Smet, had given universities the freedom to create their own tests but said they should follow internationally accepted criteria. Academic staff who passed the test now have proof of sufficient English language skills and can continue to teach in English. Those who failed the first time have until February next year to improve their knowledge and pass the test. If they fail again, they are not allowed to give lessons in English. The test was taken by 1,717 lecturers and professors, of whom 1,549 passed.

GoodPlanet to teach sustainable mobility

GoodPlanet Belgium, which promotes sustainable living, will choose two secondary schools from each Flemish province to take part in the project STOP motion?!, which it will launch this autumn. At the kick-off session, students in the third year will receive details on a real problem from a mobility client, such as Flemish public transport authority De Lijn. During lab sessions, the students will work to formulate a concrete answer. In the final session, called Hackathon, students will finalise their product or action. They will present all the solutions to the clients, Flemish policymakers and the press. The sessions will be spread over the entire school year, during which they will be assisted by GoodPlanet coaches. The project is supported by the government of Flanders. AF

► www.goodplanet.be

Q&A

Professor Geert Molenberghs is the chair of the Commission on Scientific Integrity at UHasselt and recently moderated a debate on academic fraud

Scientific and academic fraud have been hot topics in recent years, even in the popular press.

There have been several high-profile cases of fraud in the press recently, and surveys show that increasingly more researchers have either manipulated results themselves at one point or know about colleagues who did. A major cause is the pressure to publish in scientific magazines as much as possible.

Researchers don’t always commit fraud on purpose, however. Sometimes they make mistakes due to a lack of time, or sometimes they don’t realise they are committing plagiarism. In some Asian cultures, for instance, it’s not always the

custom to mention the source of a well-known quotation or study because the researchers assume all the readers already know it.

What’s the best way to go about tackling the problem?

We need to put more focus on quality instead of quantity – go back to a kind of “slow science”. One method, for example, would be to introduce more peer reviewing – the evaluation of work by one or more scientists with similar expertise. Universities also have to concentrate on prevention by raising more awareness among researchers of the importance of scientific integrity – in the doctoral schools, for example. In the case of



serious offences, such as endangering lives through significant adjustments in analyses, researchers of course have to be strongly penalised.

What do you think about the recently launched Flemish Commission on Scientific Integrity?

The commission can be helpful in providing a second opinion after the local university commission has rendered opinions on complaints about unethical practices. It’s also positive that this Flemish commission will become an expertise centre on research fraud, but it’s too soon to evaluate its impact. The government should also change the current financing model for research, which now leads to pressure to publish as much as possible, without introducing more complex regulations and mechanisms. **interview by AF**

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIESMemorial Day
Remembrance

Every Sunday in May, a commemoration for American soldiers killed in the First World War is held at the Flanders Field American Cemetery in West Flanders. Highlights include the national anthem, the poem "In Flanders Fields" and a fly-by of F-16 fighter jets. 25 May, 15.00, Wortegemsesteenweg, Waregem, free

► www.aomda.org

Summer Opera at
Alden-Biesen

This popular summer performance series is held on the grounds of a historic castle in Limburg province. The programme includes Mozart's "Don Giovanni" as well as a children's opera called "Cinderella's Dream," an original production aimed at kids aged 6-9. 23 May-21 June, €20-55

► www.zomeropera.be

Stand-up
Paddleboarding

This ancient watersport, practised by the Polynesians, is new to Flanders. Learn how to paddle while standing on a long surfboard with a free introductory lesson. Registration via the website. 25 May, 10.00-16.00, Haverwerf, Mechelen, free

► www.peddeldoortvlaanderen.be

Fairy Tale Walks

From May to October, these guided walks for kids and their parents are offered in and around Sint-Truiden. Costumed storytellers enthral young listeners with fascinating tales from the past (in Dutch). Kids in costume receive a surprise. 25 May, 15.00, Velm Castle, Halleweg 32, Velm, free

► www.tinyurl.com/fairytaletalk

European
Windmill Day

Visit the Van Hauwermeiers Mill in Massemen (Wetteren), and see the old mill in action. Enjoy some homemade soup and buckwheat pancakes. Throughout the day, spelt, wheat and rye meal and flour will be available for sale. 25 May, 10.00-18.00, Watermolenstraat 64, Massemen, free

► www.uitinvlaanderen.be

Flemish
Renovation Day

Planning to renovate your house? During the 16th edition of this open-house event, builders and architects show off their recent accomplishments. Private houses and businesses in every province will be open to the public. Registration required via the website. 25 May, 13.00-18.00, free

► www.devlaamserenovatiedag.be

Flowers for foodies

Flemish company Bell'Aroma opens warehouse in Brussels for edible flowers

Alan Hope

Even dedicated foodies who wouldn't quail at eating head cheese or sheep intestines might find it a little bit odd to eat flowers. Aside from the odd nasturtium in a stir-fry or a stuffed zucchini flower, most of us confine our diet of plants to the green parts.

Edible flowers is a trend in gastronomy, however, and one of the leaders in the trade is Van Laethem. The company from Vlezenbeek, Flemish Brabant, opened a new warehouse in the European Centre for Fruit and Vegetables on Werkhuizenkaai in Brussels last week. "We're number one in Belgium in the supply of fresh herbs, and among the leaders on a European level," said John Van Laethem, eldest son of founders Armell and John senior. The company has been selling edible flowers for 15 years, but because of the growing interest and demand for special herbs and miniature vegetables, it recently created Bell'Aroma to deal with that specialist trade.

The new warehouse is specifically for specialist herbs and flowers and will shortly include a



packing facility upstairs, creating five to 10 new jobs – a welcome extra, according to Brussels-Capital Region minister Brigitte Grouwels, on hand to cut the ribbon.

Jean-Pierre Bruneau, chef of the restaurant Bruneau in Ganshoren, prepared a number of dishes for the occasion: a terrine of salmon and eel with sea bluebells (*Mertensia maritima*), a tiny bell-shaped blue flower with a strong flavour

of oysters and the sea; a custard of Parmesan on a sauce of rocket, with tiny sprigs of the flowers of wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*); a salad of quail eggs, lardons and bitter leaves that included dandelion and sea bluebells.

Edible flowers range from the small and delicate, intended to give just a hint of flavour, to a mouthful, without dominating a dish. Those varieties include marguerites, fuchsias and tagetes (a member of the sunflower family), large and muscular enough in flavour to elbow the cutlet right off your plate.

"Chefs like Jean-Pierre Bruneau come by regularly," John Van Laethem said. "We're able to order what they need for them, and in some cases even grow it specially. We're now growing basil flowers exclusively for a restaurant here in Brussels."

Unfortunately the same service is not available to the rest of us: the European Centre is open to trade only. Van Laethem's advice: your local greengrocer can obtain anything Bell'Aroma produces.

► www.bellaroma.be

City Jam game teaches road safety

Youth TV channel Jim has kicked off a campaign promoting road safety among young people, with an online game based on mobility and traffic safety in urban areas.

City Jam is a location-based game using tablet computers with music as the central theme. Participants play members of a band who make it to the top by completing tasks related to road safety in Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Hasselt or Leuven.

Jim VJ Sean Dhondt takes on the role of music manager in the game, guiding the band to popularity and success. "With City Jam, we're demonstrating the importance of road safety to young people, but in a very entertaining way," he says. "We don't want to come across as pedantic, but the message has to be

clear: Road safety is very important, and they are the new road users."

Fellow VJ Erika Van Tienen plays a police officer. She keeps an eye on the players as road users and helps them make better choices. "I think City Jam is the ideal way to reach young people," she says. "It's a fun game, but it also makes them alert about the dangers of traffic."

The game's target audience is students between 15 and 18, who can play with classmates in teams of two to four.

Official figures from 2012 show that teenagers and young adults are vulnerable road users. For example, 16- to 24-year-olds make up 11% of the Belgian population but represent 24% of injuries and 19% of fatalities caused by traffic accidents. Traffic



is also the leading cause of death among youth aged 15 to 24.

Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits backs the campaign, which was created with iMinds, the Flemish independent research institute that stimulates ICT innovation.

"Safer traffic is one of the priorities of Flemish mobility policy," Crevits says. "Education and awareness are essential for a successful road safety policy. Young people in secondary education are our priority group. What better way to get their attention than with a sharp-looking game? Young people learn how to behave in certain traffic situations while having fun." Els Mertens

► www.cityjam.be

BITE

Culinary Carousel in Mol

Three prominent brasseries in Mol, Antwerp province, have joined forces to offer a unique experience that combines walking and dining. During Culinary Carousel, guests enjoy a starter in the first brasserie, followed by a main course in the second and dessert in the third. Along the way, they can discover the quaint little centre of Mol.

The three brasseries are unique: Belle Vue is centrally located, close to Mol's surprisingly lively nightlife district. Chapeau is close to the best shopping streets, while De Onthaasting, true to its name (The Relaxation) is an oasis, tucked away inside an Art Deco house in a quiet pocket of town.

Every season, a different brasserie acts as starting point on the culinary carousel. Here, guests receive the first course, along with a map of the walking route and tickets for the next course and dessert. While



the menu also changes with the seasons, one constant is that guests have the option of a meat, fish or vegetarian main course.

The *Spijkers met koppen* (Nail heads) walk is 2.5 kilometres long, but it is perfectly possible to go directly from one brasserie to the next, as they are no more than 500 metres from one another. The walk comes highly recommended, however, as it immerses guests in the history, architecture and culture of Mol.

Just follow the "nail heads" along the footpath. They lead the way along a

number of historic and otherwise noteworthy sites, including the protected *Wolwashuisje* (wool house) from 1879, a reminder of Mol's industrial past, the Sint-Pieter and Pauwel church, famous for its ability to attract lightning, and the fully restored Old Watermill on the river Nete, which dates back to 774. "We believe very strongly in the concept," say the three brasserie bosses (*pictured*) on the event's website. "We see it as an original way to discover Mol in all its facets. Mol has an attractive and compact centre that's ideal for discovering on foot. It's the perfect thing to do as a couple or with a group of friends."

The spring menu features a starter of cod with rhubarb compote, caramelised tomatoes and shallot butter sauce at Chapeau. At De Onthaasting, the main course is your choice of baked salmon with

asparagus, guinea fowl with cream of peas or the vegetarian asparagus, Flemish style.

And finally, you'll be glad you walked the entire route when you see the dessert at Belle Vue: fantasy of white chocolate, with creamy mascarpone and coffee.

The €39 price tag covers three courses plus an after-dinner surprise; drinks not included. Reserve at least 14 hours in advance at info@lekkerstappen.be.

Starting points

Until 20 June: Chapeau, Voogdijstraat 8

21 June to 20 September: Belle Vue, Corbiestraat 22

21 September to 20 December: De Onthaasting, Laar 14

Tuesday to Friday, afternoons and evenings, latest departure at 19.30

► www.lekkerstappen.be

Robyn Boyle

Rest in peace, at sea

Ostend boat company sees rise in people wanting their ashes scattered in the North Sea

Martin Banks

Astronaut Neil Armstrong did it. So did Sir Francis Drake, Alfred Hitchcock and Janis Joplin. They were all buried at sea. Armstrong's ashes were scattered in the Atlantic, Drake ended his days in a lead coffin off the coast of Panama, and the final resting place for Joplin and Hitchcock was the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

And increasingly, people in Flanders are choosing the same route. More and more people are asking to have their ashes scattered in the chilly North Sea off the Flemish coast.

Franlis, an Ostend-based company that normally takes day-trippers on sightseeing trips around Zeebrugge harbour, has seen a big increase in demand for its memorial services. So popular has the idea become that the company now performs about 200 ceremonies a year, for individuals or for up to five families at a time.

In Belgium, unlike in some countries, relatives are allowed to take a loved one's ashes home, but, for Franlis owner Michael Seeger, this begs the question: "Just how long would you want a deceased's ashes sitting in the front room?"

Seeger entered the maritime funeral business 12 years ago and his company is thought to be the only one in the area offering such a service. Back then, he oversaw about 10 services a year, but this has gradually risen, and last year's total represented a 15% increase on the figure for 2012.

"Cremation has, of course, been going on since time immemorial," he says, "but this type of burial has definitely become more popular. The more traditional forms of ash scattering on grass or storage in urns are often seen as impersonal or unemotional. But a scattering at sea somehow provides a more dignified and touching way of immortalising the deceased's memory."

Many families, he continues, "don't really understand what it means to have one's ashes scattered at sea.



Franlis owner Michael Seeger (left) oversees an ashes-scattering services in the North Sea

the ocean. Another man chose it because his late brother had "loved freedom" and it was the sort of funeral he would have wanted.

Scatterings have to be cancelled if the weather isn't right – too windy, too foggy – but the sunny spring day when I witnessed a service was just about perfect. It begins with the captain's assistant welcoming the funeral party aboard. The ashes are carried on board in a special soluble urn, while the bosun's call is played. The Belgian flag (it can be another depending on the deceased's nationality) is hoisted at half-mast on the foredeck before the vessel – a

sea. Within minutes, the ashes start to seep out of the urn and into the relatively calm waters of the North Sea.

The captain sails around the place where the ashes have been scattered and sounds the ship's horn three times as a last greeting and sign of respect. The flag is raised completely and the vessel makes its way back to Ostend.

The whole process takes just under 90 minutes. Back on land, the captain gives the family a certificate mentioning the geographic position of the scattering – the final resting place of a much-loved son and husband. It's a simple, dignified experience.

Seeger recalls a recent sea burial he oversaw of two young Belgian children who were killed in a road accident. The company always tries to respect any special wishes, such as longer sailing times or burials at sundown, he explains. "On this occasion, the parents asked for two white doves to be released into the air immediately after the children's ashes were scattered into the sea. It was a particularly moving moment."

About 70% of sea cremations carried out by Franlis are for Belgians, usually people with a seafaring background or perhaps simply because they happen to have had an apartment at the coast and felt a bond with the sea. Others have included French, British and even people from the US: generally Belgians who have emigrated to the States but requested that their ashes



be scattered back home when they died.

Up to 60 relatives can attend the service on board, unless the ashes of more than one individual are being scattered. If no relatives are present, the crew scatter flowers into the sea with the ashes. One of Seeger's more unusual ceremonies was for a Vietnamese monk who had a Buddhist burial at sea, something of a rarity even in the Far East.

Franlis ceremonies – which can be given in Dutch, French, English and German – must comply with EU regulations: Burials have to take place at least 500 metres from shore, in fine weather and on a vessel licensed to carry out such tasks. For Franlis employee Yasmina Youmni, freedom is the central theme of scatterings at sea. She believes there is something to be said for not being confined inside an

urn or buried in a numbered square in the wall.

With burial at sea, there is no grave to visit. But, Youmni says, a watery grave offers the chance of being released into the "infinity of the worldwide seas and oceans".

In times of economic crisis, financial issues also come into play. The total cost of a Franlis sea burial is €825, which, as one family member says, represents a considerable savings on many other types of burial. Youmni points out that scatterings also mean that relatives don't have to maintain a grave site.

Belgium is one of Europe's more densely populated countries and, in some cities, coffin burial space is running out. Franlis now wants to encourage the practice of burial at sea to help ease overcrowding in cemeteries.

► www.franlis.be

"The parents asked for two white doves to be released after the children's ashes were scattered into the sea. It was a moving moment"

One of the most common reactions we get after a ceremony is that the family now consider the deceased to finally be at peace. Knowing this gives me a great sense of personal satisfaction."

It's a view backed by relatives of people whose ashes have been scattered in this way. One woman said her mother had requested a sea service because she had been born into a family of fishermen and loved

35-foot refurbished former UK naval ship – chugs out of the West pier at Ostend and heads out about five miles to the open sea.

Once there, the ship's engines stop and a simple speech is read out, on this occasion with music gently playing in the background. Flowers are scattered, the dozen or so relatives pay their last respects and the ship's bell is sounded while the urn is slowly lowered into the

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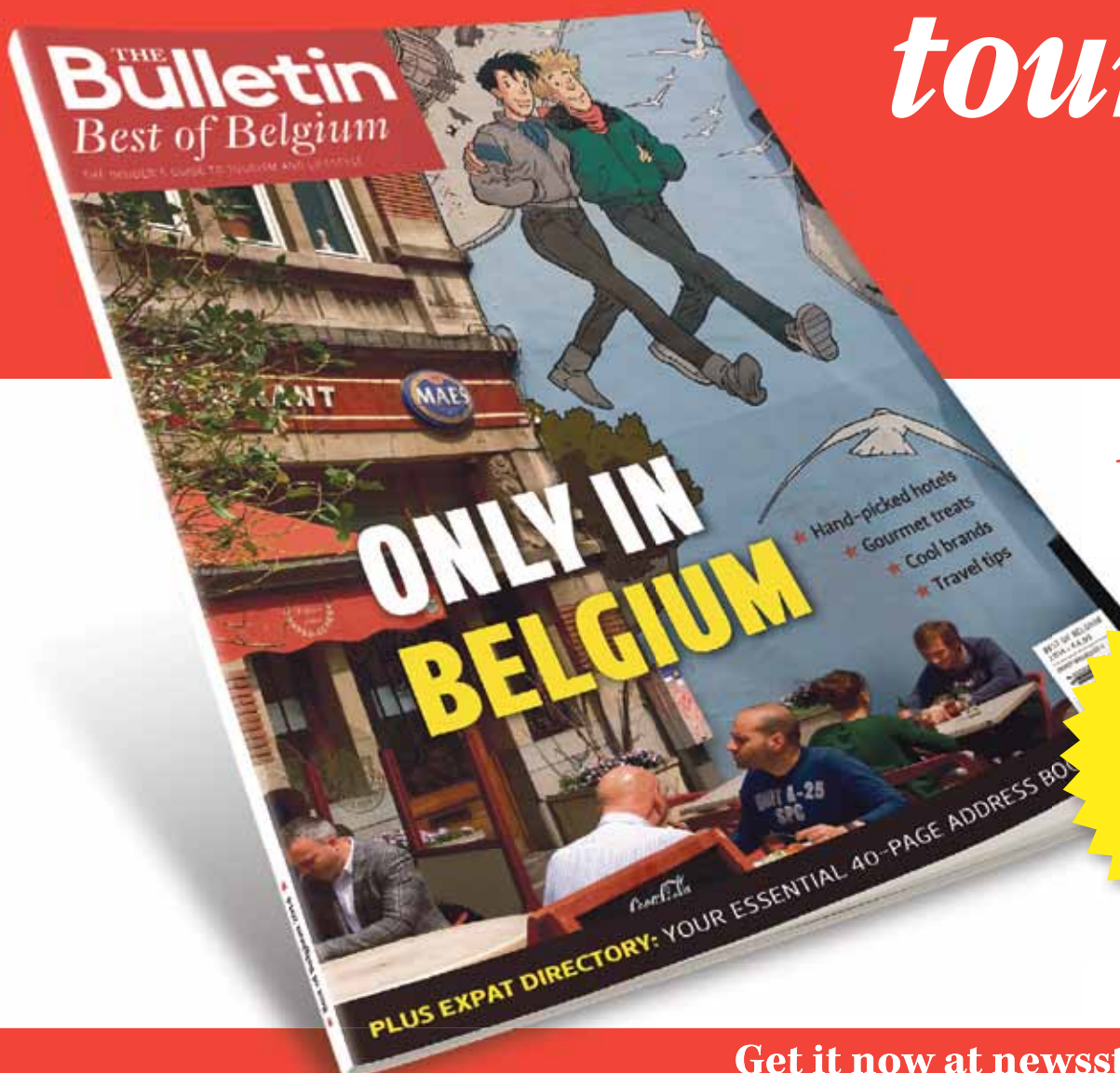
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Moving to his own beat

Philosophy meets performance in Daniel Linehan's karaoke dance mash-up

Tom Peeters

A choreography for seven dancers, messing around with the classics of literature and philosophy, presented as a karaoke evening. In short, that's the newest chapter in the interdisciplinary curriculum of the American dancer and choreographer Daniel Linehan. Since his 2008 move to Brussels, where he studied at Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's PARTS dance school, Linehan has been constantly mashing up styles and disciplines. "I really value dance, choreography and the research of the body, but when I make something that's only dealing with the body, its shapes, space and movement through space, I can only be self-referential," he explains. "But I want my dance to involve the outside world."

By mixing dance with other art forms, such as video, photographic image, text and even singing, Linehan has always been researching the relationship between the field of his own expertise and this outside world. "My definition of dance and choreography is expansive," he says. "I feel free to use many different media to see how they interact with the body and even change the quality of the body. It helps me to break my patterns, both in my body and in the other dancers' bodies, as well as my patterns of thinking."

In *The Karaoke Dialogues*, soon to be performed in Brussels and Antwerp, the venue is filled with television screens. They are both on the stage and behind the audience. The dancers relate and move to the rhythm of the text they read on them, even though this sounds a bit abstract. "A consonant has a certain kind of feeling and quality that produces a different physicality to an open vowel," Linehan explains. "The words also mean something, evoking certain images that we are interpreting."

"I've put the text in such a way that it has its particular rhythm and timing, like on a karaoke video," he continues. "The words on the screen kind of dictate the rhythm of the sentence. The text is in a format of

something that goes through time, making it similar to dance moves."

A normal karaoke show exploits the shared culture of pop music. Linehan picked a different form of shared culture: novels or essays from classic writers such as Kafka, Cervantes and Plato. "At first I was just looking for striking dialogues in their work. I didn't have a fixed theme in mind," he says. "But while doing research I found that I was most drawn to texts that referred somehow to a legal procedure, either establishing law or committing a crime, investigating the crime or the passing of a verdict." So law became – surprisingly, even to the choreographer – the main link between the different texts. But why would you combine karaoke with texts about law? "I realise it doesn't sound like the most exciting and popular topic. But people have always been fascinated by trials and crimes. On the other hand, there's a reason why these classics have survived. They have a universal appeal and are still relevant."

Take *The Republic* by Plato. The dialogue written around 380BC deals with the theme of establishing law. "One extract says everyone should stay in their own station and trust the experts to ensure the smooth functioning of society," Linehan says, connecting the ancient writings to the situation in Europe since the financial crisis. "Didn't we also have to trust the financial experts and the technocrats, because the situation was 'too complex to handle' for the common people?"

This link with the law started to make even more sense when Linehan realised that the procedures he follows as a choreographer – starting with very abstract movements, just using rhythms and sound for inspiration, and ending with the creation of something very concrete – is quite similar to the application of law. "Here you also have to figure out and translate a very formal law or strict rule into something concrete."

"The relationship between the law and choreography is that both have limitations that dictate what you can



Daniel Linehan's *Karaoke Dialogues* puts literature in the mouths of dancers

do," Linehan says. "But within these limitations there's always a certain freedom. Dancers may have to be in certain places at certain times, but for me it has always been interesting to find where the dancers make choices in the moment, even if their movement in time is choreographed." With this freedom of limitation

we arrive at the very centre of the choreographer's work, prominent in his earlier solos and works for small groups and expressed in last year's book *A No Can Make Space*, which the author will present during the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in a lecture performance on 22 May.

Made in close collaboration with

21-24 May

Kaaaitheater

Square Saintelette 20, Brussels

30 May

deSingel

Desguinlei 25, Antwerp

deSingel, where he is *artiste associé*, and the Flemish designer Gerard Leysen from Borgerhout-based graphics studio Afreux, again Linehan was challenging himself to do something in a form he's unfamiliar with, now trying to show similarities between the process of making a dance choreography and designing a book.

To make sense of certain fragments you have to flip the book around. Sometimes the top of the page is separate from the bottom, enabling you to mix and match different texts. "Making these different designs and layouts creates a certain interaction, a dance, between the reader and the book."

Ever since his 2008 arrival in Brussels to study at PARTS, Linehan has embraced the possibilities of the city. "Before, in New York, I had to work many hours a week at a restaurant in order to pay the rent. I didn't have enough time to devote to my artistic research," he says.

"After graduating I didn't feel the need to go back because a lot of exciting things were happening just around the corner. Here I have better opportunities to find residencies and show my work, whereas in New York there wasn't such an inspiring cross-cultural dialogue going on between different scenes."

Though it's always been a hunt to find residencies, co-productions and financial support for new projects, recent partnerships with deSingel, the Lille Opera – where he has a residency – and Sadler's Wells in London have made it easier to concentrate on the creative process.

"In Lille I could start working on a larger scale, swapping the intimacy of small theatres for larger venues. In deSingel I started a choreographic workshop and even worked with a bunch of unemployed people, which was really outside what I normally do, but I need such experiences to keep me inspired."

The Karaoke Dialogues is in English with Dutch and French surtitles

► www.dlinehan.wordpress.com

MORE PERFORMANCES THIS WEEK

@WBenjamin2014

Victoria Deluxe & Het Collectief

Inspired by *Das Passagen-Werk* by the Marxist philosopher Walter Benjamin, the Ghent social-artistic workplace Victoria Deluxe tries to imagine what stand the visionary critic of the emerging consumer society would take today. With the nostalgic strings of the Brussels chamber music group Het Collectief, referring overtly to the Romantics, it promises to challenge our unrestrained idea

of progress before giving away our votes. 16-17, 21-24 May, *De Expeditie*, Ghent

► www.victoriadeluxe.be

Batucada

Marcelo Evelin/Demolition Inc.

Batucada is not only the name of the percussion section of the Brazilian samba, it is also an urban parade that choreographer Marcelo Evelin created for Kunstenfestivaldesarts. More than 50 performers will dance to the rhythms of the *Batucada* "demonstrating how a festive



Urban parade *Batucada* is the highlight of Kunstenfestivaldesarts

carnival procession and a grim protest march do not essentially differ from each other very much" in what is announced as the apotheosis of the Kunstenfestivaldesarts 2014. 22-24 May, *Cinema Marivaux*, Brussels

► www.kfda.be

Hier Is Wat Ik Denk (Here is What I Think)

Wouter Deprez

Before concentrating on *Slijk* (Sludge), his new show about the Great War opening this autumn,

the Flemish comedian performs for the last time *Hier Is Wat Ik Denk*. Coming back to Flanders after an inspiring stay in South Africa, he realised there was more to life than our own little backyard. Offering a revealing mirror to his audience, while it is entertained, he focuses on the tasks we have as civilians. 22-23 May, *Arenbergshouwborg*, Antwerp; 29-31 May, *NTG*, Ghent

► www.wouterdeprez.be

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTUREFlemish actors can't
live off income

Professional actors in Flanders can't live off the money they make and usually have other jobs on the side, according to a study released by Ghent University's sociology department, carried out at the request of Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege. The study revealed that only 8% of Flanders' TV, film and stage actors make a living over the long-term from acting. The rest work other jobs in-between or fill in their pay gaps with unemployment benefits. "The reality of a working actor doesn't remotely match the image that many people have of it," the report states. Schauvliege said she would work with the Flanders Audiovisual Fund to bring together producers and actors to discuss performance fees.

English version of
14-18 rescheduled

Studio 100, producers of the mega-musical *14-18*, have rescheduled the 22 May English-language version of the show for logistical reasons, the company said. Running at the Nekkerhal in Mechelen until July, all but one of the dates are in Dutch. The English-language show will now take place on 15 June. Anyone with a ticket to the 22 May show can use it on 15 June or receive a refund. There are still tickets available to that show, which can be purchased via the website. *14-18* is a massive musical about a group of Flemish friends during the outbreak of the First World War.

► www.1418.nu

Environmental
permit for
Tomorrowland

Antwerp province has approved a 20-year environmental permit for the summer dance festival Tomorrowland. The permit ensures that the festival cannot be moved for environmental reasons from the De Schorre recreational domain in Boom for at least two decades. Previously, environmental permits for the festival, which attracts more than 180,000 revellers every year, were granted on a year-to-year basis by the Boom city council. In the light of the festival's extension this year to two weekends and the ensuing complaints filed by residents of the town, the festival found it a good idea to secure a long-term provincial permit. The permit covers such concerns as sewage, electric generators, the use of fireworks and noise levels. Lisa Bradshaw

Cardboard weapons

Exhibition explores propaganda powers of card games in war trenches

Senne Starckx

As the centenary of the start of the First World War creeps ever closer, the pain and suffering experienced by soldiers and citizens alike is increasingly taking centre stage in the arts. The National Playing Card Museum in Turnhout offers some welcome relief in its war-themed exhibition, which focuses entirely on the role of playing cards in the trenches, hospitals and war strategy rooms.

Although kings, queens and jacks couldn't fire rifles, they gradually came to be seen as "cardboard weapons". According to Filip Cremers, curator of the National Playing Card Museum, metaphors based on card game terminology always become popular in the run-up to wars and armed invasions.

"What Russia is doing right now in Ukraine, you could call a brag," he says. "We can only guess what card they'll play next. Similarly, the European superpowers that set the world on fire 100 years ago didn't realise that some of them were playing bluff poker."

In August of 1914, the countries' diplomatic game of poker resulted in the outbreak of the First World War. By the end of that year, playing cards made an appearance in the muddy trenches.

The exhibition in Turnhout explores the role of playing cards at the front. For ordinary soldiers on either side, decks of cards often represented their only pastime. "War can be boring," says Cremers. "We very often remember wars because of their battles and their victories, but the fact is that the First World War consisted of long periods of waiting. In trenches, hospitals and camps, the days were pretty long. To pass time, soldiers played games."



War-time card decks served propaganda, counter-propaganda and instructional purposes

But the generals in the war rooms and the politicians at home saw another reason to embrace the soldiers' beloved hobby. Sure, the card games were an easy way to provide occupational therapy, but they also proved a convenient tool for more weighty issues like the soldiers' morale, perception of the enemy, and a (limited) form of internationalisation. The Germans were the first to recognise these special powers of playing cards. When their large army couldn't advance beyond a 600-kilometre network of trenches at the Western front, they began promoting playing cards as *kriegswichtig*, or strategically important.

German hearts and spades became the cardboard equivalent of ammunition – hence the exhibition's title *Kartonnen wapens*, or cardboard weapons.

"The Germans produced three of these propaganda decks," Cremers explains. "They depicted German war heroes, famous generals and battle scenes. Production of these decks reached the astronomical number of one million by the final year of the war."

The exhibition highlights another interesting fact about the "trench

cards". As the war dragged on, seemingly endlessly, new combat technologies came into play, so new decks had to be designed, produced and sent to the front. In 1918, just a couple of months before the war ended, a new card game depicting the just-established German air force made its debut at the frontline.

But good propaganda doesn't just glorify one's own party, it also blackens the opponent. The Germans developed a set of "counter-propaganda decks". On view in the exhibition are cards with caricatures of Serbian King Peter; Russian Tsar Nicholas, or "Nicky"; and Winston Churchill, the not-yet-so-famous First Lord of Admiralty of the British Empire.

Luckily for the card-makers, the Germans had so many enemies they could fill an entire deck without the same figure having to be used multiple times.

Although the Germans started the

"cardboard war", the Allies quickly caught on. The French eventually proved the undisputed masters of counter-propaganda. In a 1915 satirical cartoon, German Emperor Wilhelm is shown playing his last card ... the jack of spades. The card depicts the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand, a Germany ally – but not a very strong or reliable one.

For the Allies, card games also served another goal. With the English soldiers – and from 1917 on the Americans – fighting side by side with the French and Belgians, cards were also used to teach the English-speaking troops basic French vocabulary.

In one deck, made especially for American soldiers, a popular soldiers' song was translated into French. Other decks depicted the banners and colours of the allies' regiments and fleets so that the soldiers learned who they were fighting with – and against.

The images weren't the only aspect of the cards to change during the course of the war. As the situation in the trenches worsened, the cards were given an extra layer of varnish so they would better withstand the harsh conditions.

Miniature cards that fit in soldiers' uniforms were also produced – "pocket decks" *avant la lettre*. And last but not least, some armies even developed accessories to ensure that soldiers who lost a hand or arm on the battlefield could still play cards in the hospital.

Until 31
December

National Playing Card Museum

Druivenstraat 18, Turnhout

► www.speelkaartenmuseum.be

Exhibition examines unreal in the real

"Bertha of Antwerp" is the perfect poster girl for *Uncannily Real*, a new Antwerp exhibition exploring neo-realist tendencies in Belgian and Dutch art between the two World Wars. Painted in 1931 by Dutch artist Pyke Koch, Bertha (pictured) is clearly meant to look real, yet there remains something unsettling about her appearance. The painting still tests the limits of representation, only not with the modernist strategies that previously resulted in reality being dismantled. There is no distinct school of Low Countries neo-realism, so the exhibition explores its theme more obliquely, putting together artists who appear to be following the same line of thought. It does this by drawing on work from Antwerp's Royal Museum of Fine Arts, the city's Plantin-Moretus Museum and the Gemeente Museum in The Hague. Bertha's grotesque side is explored further in the work of Flemish artist Henry Van Straten, whose woodcuts



depict an underworld of jazz clubs, burlesques and boxing. Bawdy and often politically incorrect by present standards, Van Straten nevertheless captures a powerful idea of 1920s debauchery. There is also more character-driven work in his illustrations for Willem Elsschot's novel *Soft Soap*. The realism is more forgiving when

artists paint themselves, yet the results are still revealing. Take Georges Van Raemdonck's manic stare, or the three striking self-portraits that follow Charley Toorop from a bohemian 30-something to white-haired 60-year-old.

Uncannily Real's most daring proposition is to remove Paul Delvaux from the questionable embrace of the Belgian surrealists and place him with the Dutch magical realists. These include Koch, Carel Willink and Raoul Hynckes, a Belgian who fled to the Netherlands during the First World War and did not return.

Delvaux's "The Pink Bows", with his characteristic nudes in a night landscape, is placed opposite Willink's "Simeon the Stylite", with the saint perching on a

column while a city burns in the background. Two further works by Willink support the argument that the two artists inhabited the same classically influenced dream landscape.

Other highlights include Koch's hyper-real "Chimney Sweep", a pair of large canvases by Flemish expressionist Gustave Van de Woestyne, and a Modigliani-inspired portrait of a young woman by Brussels-born Georges Creten. There is also a lot to enjoy in the still lifes, from Hynckes' dead duck, sensuously enfolded in linen, to Dick Ket's study of shed junk, an evocative wreckage of dead leaves, rose stems, barbed wire and broken brick, set off with a bird's nest and an abandoned enamel bowl.

Ian Mundell

Until
31 August

Koningin Fabiolazaal

Jezusstraat 28, Antwerp

► www.kmska.be

Reaching out to expats on Luxemburgplein
Brussels Jazz Marathon

23-25 May | Across Brussels
▶ www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be

For the 19th consecutive year, the national jazz scene and selected international names gather in Brussels for hundreds of free concerts. And this year extra efforts have been made to attract the expat community, with the addition of Luxemburgplein and venues near Schumann to the four original outdoor locations: Grote Markt, Zavel, Sint-Katelijnplein and Fernand Cocqplein. Between the squares and the 76 participating clubs and bars, crowds for the festival are enormous. Free shuttle buses enable visitors to change venues easily, making their choice between traditional and modern jazz, roots, Latin and world music. The Grote Markt, as usual, looks to be a promising starting point on Friday. Dutch pianist Rembrandt Frerichs opens the evening with his trio, immediately emphasising the borderless



attitude of jazz, freely commuting between European classical, American jazz and Arab music. Later that evening, the American soul tornado Robin McKelle (*pictured*) presents her new album *Heart of Memphis*, on which the singer dips her grainy voice in the native soil of the blues. The first line-up at Luxemburgplein has a very

festive appeal. The opening jazz and soul beats of local DJ DawOnder are followed by the Copenhagen-born and Zappaesque jazz rock from The Dynamite Vikings. There's a tribute to famous Belgian jazz saxophonists – from Jack Sels to Steve Houben, Ben Sluys and Fabrizio Cassol – led by Dimitri Delvaux. And on Sunday, the European Parliament prolongs the festivities until 23.00 with extra concerts and election results. Among young local talent are pianist Igor Gehenot and the inventive Brussels trumpet player Jean-Paul Estiévenart. La Tentation continues their yearly tradition of inviting the BJM visitors at a swinging dance evening with Charleston and Lindy hop lessons and concerts. Kids can bring their families on Saturday to a special Mini Marathon on the Zavel where the jazz idiom is expanded with an actor and a puppeteer. **Tom Peeters**

VISUAL ARTS
Invisible Musicians

Until 11 June | Woluwe Shopping Centre, Brussels
▶ www.theshopping.be

In our romantic imagination, history was a time of purity and authenticity. The arts in particular were more homespun, more human and thus more real. Nonsense. Art and technology have always been linked. The *Invisible Musicians* exhibition showcases some of the earliest attempts to push this relationship to its extremes, to automate the process of music-making and leave

the musician out in the cold. The most famous example is the player piano, which could be programmed using replaceable rolls of score (the 19th-century equivalent of software). There are many others, too, some of them labyrinthine in their Rube Goldberg-esque complexity. In all, 120 pieces are on display, right there in the shopping centre, the oldest dating back to 1750. **Georgio Valentino**



PARTY

GET TICKETS NOW

Dance with the Devils
17 June | Sportpaleis, Antwerp
▶ www.belgianreddevils.be

The World Cup is nearly upon us, and with it comes a prime opportunity to party. Antwerp's Sportpaleis is hosting the party to end all parties to mark the Red Devils' first match in Brazil. Not only will the game be broadcast live on what's being touted as the biggest screen in Belgium, but the match will be bookended by concerts by some of the country's biggest headliners, including Flemish rapper Coely and hometown heroes Triggerfinger. Similar celebrations are being organised throughout World Cup in different cities. **GV**



CLASSICAL
Anne Cambier

23 May, 20.00 | D'Ieteren Gallery, Brussels
▶ www.classicandclassics.blogspot.be

Cars and classical music make strange bedfellows. Yet the successful concert series Classic and Classics has proven it's a rather inspired mix. The venue is the D'Ieteren Gallery, dedicated to the eponymous local family's long history of producing horse-drawn carriages and, later, automobiles. Belgium's finest classical musicians are invited to perform amidst the D'Ieteren's collection of industrial artefacts. The season's closing concert stars soprano Anne Cambier, a veteran of the Flemish Opera (*pictured*). She and pianist Maïko Inoué perform selections from Mozart, Puccini, Donizetti and more. As is customary at Classic and Classics, both artists will join the audience for a celebratory drink or three after the curtain comes down. **GV**



MARKET

Fiesta Europa
23 May, 11.00 | Nieuwe Kaai, Turnhout
▶ www.fiestaeuropa.eu

For five years, the travelling market Fiesta Europa has criss-crossed Flanders, bringing with it food, drink and other goods made by European neighbours. Indeed, participating vendors hail from all corners of the Continent. One of the Fiesta's goals is to foster communication and

exchange between the peoples of Europe. So this isn't just a market; it's a multicultural festival of sorts. The Fiesta's arrival in Turnhout coincides with the start of the town's week-long boating convention, so there will be plenty of nautical goings-on as well. **GV**



CONCERT
Antwerp

Robert Cray Band: One of the greatest guitarists of his generation, Robert Cray holds five Grammy awards and has sold more than 12 million albums worldwide for his unique style that blends blues, rock, soul and jazz 22 May 20.30 at De Roma
▶ www.deroma.be

Ghent

Wim Mertens Trio: Tribute to the late Dany Vandebossche, Flemish politician and culture specialist with a passion for music, featuring a solo performance by trumpeter Bart Maris and music by Flemish composer, pianist and guitarist Wim Mertens and band 28 May 19.00 at De Bijloke
▶ www.debijloke.be

FOOD&DRINK
Across Brussels and Flanders

Restaurant Week: More than 300 top restaurants offer a gourmet three-course dinner for just €29.50 and a three-course lunch for €24.50 Until 31 May in participating restaurants
▶ www.restaurantweek.be

Brussels

Culinaria: Major annual gastronomic event for foodies, the chance to see some of Belgium's greatest chefs in action and taste their culinary creations 21-25 May at Tour & Taxis
▶ www.culinariasquare.com



FAIR
Waregem

Artist's Book Fair: Third edition of the annual contemporary artist's book fair, with readings, talks, and an exhibition of work by young Flemish artist and architect Pieterjan Ginckels 23-24 May at Be-Part, Westerlaan 17
▶ www.facebook.com/bepartwaregem

MARKET
Mortsel (Antwerp province)

100% Zelfgemarkt: Handmade goods market featuring unique gifts, jewellery, knitwear, sculptures, toys and more 24 May 14.00-18.00 at Stadsplein
▶ www.tinyurl.com/zelfgemarkt-FB

Talking Dutch

I'll have the cake

Derek Blyth

I was sitting in one of these old Flemish country taverns out in the Westhoek pondering the beer list when I noticed something odd. *Gebak met shit of mouse*, it clearly said on a little blackboard attached to the wall. Cake with – well, you get the rest. I did a little research on the internet to find out what this was all about, and it didn't take long to find out what I had already suspected – *Nadat restaurant De Hollemeersch al uitgepakt had met een Eigen Kweek-menu, komt nu praat- en eetcafé Sint-Hubert op de Markt van Wijtschate met het shit of mouse-gebakje* – After restaurant De Hollemeersch came up with an Eigen Kweek menu, the Sint-Hubert cafe on the Markt in Wijtschate is now offering shit of mouse cake. Now I don't know if you remember, but a while ago I wrote about the television series *Eigen Kweek*. Set on a cannabis farm near Wijtschaete run by a Flemish potato farmer who got into financial difficulties, this comedy became something of a sensation in Flanders. At its peak, 1.8 million people watched it, or almost one in three of the Flemish population. Frank was married to a beautiful Filipino mail-order bride who spoke no Dutch, so he was forced to communicate with her in a strange mangled mix of West Flanders



© Ingrid

dialect and English. One of the funniest moments in the series comes when he tries to describe *hagelslag* – those little chocolate sprinkles that the Belgians put on toast and that look like, well mouse droppings. Cindy Declercq, who runs the kitchen at Sint-Hubert, told the local newspaper how she came up with the idea of *gebak met shit of mouse*: *Toen we enkele weken geleden op Radio 2 lachend zeiden dat we space cake zouden serveren, kwamen meteen al enkele mensen hierop af* – When we joked a couple of weeks ago on Radio 2 that we were going to serve space cake, some people came straight here. *Ze dachten dat het echt was* – They thought we meant it.

Dat heeft ons aan het denken gezet om er toch iets mee te doen – That made us think that we should really do something. When Declercq read that the tourist office was creating an *Eigen Kweek* route, she knew just what was needed. And so a new West Flanders speciality was created – *Het is een biscuit met chocolademousse, verse slagroom en uiteraard hagelslag, wat hier in het West-Vlaams muzestroentjes heet* – It's a biscuit with chocolate mousse, fresh cream and of course chocolate sprinkles, which we call mouse droppings in West Flanders dialect, Declercq said. It's not yet a *streekproduct* – a protected regional speciality – but it can surely only be a matter of time.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

Jumy Mathew @jumathew
completed my first 20 KM run yesterday ..wow what a feeling ..should do this more often #Brussels #20kmBruxelles #may18th2014


Koen @kdecl
The #BelgianPride in #Brussels was awesome! It's always okay to be yourself. #equality #freedom

Klaartje Van Kerckem @k_vankerckem
Is anyone in #Ghent coordinating aid for #SerbiaFloods #BosniaFloods #poplave #Poplave2014? Want to help out. RT pls @Stadgent @sp_a @groen

In response to: Residents in Wondelgem must green-up front gardens
Miryam Van Beveren: I live nearby. Probably the regulations provided by the developer had not been specific enough for everybody to know what was expected within the framework of this kind of development.

In response to: Talking Dutch: I'll have the cake
Ros Lavender: In some parts of the UK you can get a sort of pastry called a Squashed Fly. Elsewhere I think it's called a Raisin Slice.

In response to: English-language test for academics officially recognised
Miranda Martin: It is very strange that the number of native English-speakers teaching in Flemish universities is only maybe in the dozens while Flemish and Dutch academics in the UK and USA are very common. If English is the medium of teaching there should be a premium on native speakers.

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Poll

Picnickers will take to the streets again in protest against Brussels' plans to divert traffic to pedestrianize Beursplein. What do you think?

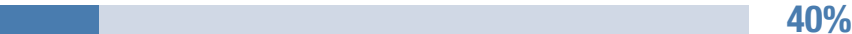
a. Removing traffic from one street inevitably diverts it to another. The picnickers got what they asked and should be satisfied



b. The council's plan ignores the main problem of too much traffic in the area. It needs to be reviewed



c. Driving in the centre is a nightmare; ban cars altogether and leave the centre to cyclists, pedestrians and public transport



Brussels City's plans for Beursplein is a limited victory for those who protested for a more liveable city. Although they respond to picnic protestors' ultimate demand to pedestrianize part of the traffic-flooded Aanspachlaan, they also include elements that will have an impact on surrounding streets,

diverting traffic instead of reducing it. An inevitable result, according to a minority of you, about which nothing can be done. The vast majority of respondents aren't so sanguine, split evenly between those who think the city council needs to think again – one of the complaints about

the plan is that it was thrown together as a response to the Picnic The Streets movement without much thought – and those who would go much, much further. The way things stand at the moment, the council is not budging. Another huge picnic is planned in front of the Beurs on 8 June.

Next week's question:
Education researchers have advised mixing students of differing academic abilities in one class, theorising that the students who do well will positively influence those who don't (see p9). What do you think?

Visit the Flanders Today website to vote! www.flanderstoday.eu

THE LAST WORD

Incorrigible
"You shouldn't listen to good advice too often."
Rock singer Arno, the eternal rebel, interviewed in *Het Nieuwsblad*

Indomitable
"The engine is still the original, as well as the leather seats. I only have to chuck a litre of oil in every 5,000 to 6,000 kilometres."
The 1992 Mercedes belonging to Danny Kellens of Maasmechelen has the highest recorded number of kilometres in the country, at 1,157,788

Immeasurable
"Adult jellyfish normally don't survive the winter, but, since it was so mild, they did and kept on growing."
Marine biologist Jan Haelters on the arrival of jellyfish 50 centimetres wide in the North Sea

Unobtainable
"They call up every day. Every day I get the same question three or four times."
Events organiser John Goeman of Berchem can't keep up with demand for samba dancers to pep up World Cup parties in June



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