

## Elections2014

- N-VA wins big in “the mother of all elections”
- Coalition with and without N-VA possible
- Vlaams Belang shrinks, Groen surges

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© courtesy UZ Gent

## Gangnam style

**Robot Zora is fun, smart and a useful new tool for Flanders' care homes and schools**

Andy Furniere

To cope with the aging population, more technological solutions are being developed to enable people to live at home longer and to help staff at rest homes. One of the most high-tech applications is Zora, a robot that's currently a member of the team at De Boarebreker in Ostend.

**A**fter a trial period of several weeks, the humanoid robot Zora was recently handed over to staff at the De Boarebreker rest home in Ostend. With its cute appearance, the 57cm-high robot looks like the latest toy craze as it walks into the room where this press conference is taking place.

Although Zora (*pictured*) has several fun features, like flickering lights that simulate emotional reactions, the robot is much more than a gadget. Its name already hints at what it is capable of: Zora is an acronym for Zorg Oudereren Revalidatie en Animatie (Care Elderly Rehabilitation and Animation).

Because of the zeal of its handler, we're told later, poor Zora trips on its way into the press conference and – just as it is programmed – lets out a yell. But once the robot has recovered and is placed on a table, it gives a flawless demonstration of its capabilities.

After a staff member has pushed some buttons on a simple remote control, Zora stands up on the table and plays songs like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and “Gangnam Style”, while dancing – encouraging the rest home residents to imitate its movements.

This activity is one of about 30 applications that programmers have installed on Zora. The software programming is by a company from Ostend, Qbmt, while the robot itself is a product of the French firm Aldebaran Robotics.

De Boarebreker is the first rest home where Zora is a full-time member of staff, though two other Flemish rest homes are also using it. Eight other trial projects are in the pipeline, including rest homes in the Netherlands. The feedback from staff will help the programmers to improve the robot's applications and adapt it to the needs of staff and residents.

The choice of De Boarebreker as a main testing location for Zora is not a coincidence: The grandmother of Fabrice Goffin, one of the two managing directors of Qbmt, lives there.

Each Zora costs €15,000, but Qbmt has set up an agreement with the bank ING and has found a private partner to finance the leasing costs of €271 per month: communication bureau Gevaert Graphics in Wingene, West Flanders.

Apart from dancing, Zora can also help during activities like bingo and carry out interactive guessing games. “By the end of the year, we want to expand the number of applications to around 100,” says Goffin. “Many of them will involve repetitive tasks, such as reading out the newspaper. It is not our goal to replace staff members with

▶ continued on page 5

# Man kills three at Jewish Museum

## Brussels police ask for help in determining the identity of the shooter

Alan Hope

**A**n unidentified gunman shot members of the public in and around the Jewish Museum of Belgium in Brussels on Saturday, killing three at the scene. Another man was seriously injured. Police have issued photos and security footage of the attacker and are appealing for witnesses.

Last Saturday, 24 May, at 15.50, a man got out of a car and entered the passageway leading to the Jewish Museum in Miniemstraat, near the Zavel. After firing several shots, the man ran off. Pedestrians in the immediate vicinity saw four people shot in the face or head. Two died instantly, and one at the scene later. The fourth, a 25-year-old man, was in critical condition in hospital as *Flanders Today* went to press.

Two of the victims were an Israeli couple in their 50s from Tel Aviv, a spokesperson for the Israeli foreign ministry said. The woman who died



at the scene was a French national who worked as a volunteer at the museum.

Footage from a security camera inside the entrance to the museum shows a man of medium build in

a flat cap wielding what appears to be a Kalashnikov rifle several times and then running away into Miniemstraat, carrying a messenger bag and sports bag. Another film shows the man

wearing a lilac pullover and grey cap and trousers. Police appealed for people who may recognise the man to call the free number 0800 30 300. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters said he had reacted with horror when he learned of such "incomprehensible and absolutely senseless brutality". King Filip was reported to be "dismayed".

"Brussels has been touched in its heart and must come together as never before," said Pascal Smet, Flemish minister for Brussels affairs. Reactions to the shooting came from around the world. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the killings were "the direct result of a permanent incitement to hatred of Jews and the state of Israel". Pope Francis, speaking in Tel Aviv, expressed his "deep sorrow" and echoed calls for an end to anti-Semitism.

Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte

sent condolences to his Belgian counterpart, Elio Di Rupo, and to Netanyahu. British PM David Cameron expressed his sympathy for victims and their families.

Across Belgium, security has been heightened in Jewish quarters, particularly in Antwerp, home to a large Jewish community. "We want to be as well prepared as possible, should anything happen in Antwerp as well," police spokesperson Veerle de Vries said. "There's an increased alert in the diamond quarter all year round, and now that alert has been raised to the highest level for the rest of the city."

A spokesperson for the museum said the attack was "a real tragedy for our institution", adding: "We have every confidence in the Belgian authorities, in police and in the justice system – that they will solve this terrible crime quickly."

## Belgium says goodbye to Jean-Luc Dehaene

Last Friday saw the state funeral of former Belgian prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, who died on 15 May in France. The funeral was held at Onze-Lieve-Vrouw church in Vilvoorde, just outside of Brussels. It was, as the family had requested, an informal ceremony, with Jacques Brel's love song "Ne Me Quitte Pas" playing as people arrived at the

church and a guard of honour made up of scouts lined up on the steps outside.

The ceremony – held in the town where Dehaene lived and where he was mayor for several years – was attended by most senior Belgian politicians, including European Council president Herman Van Rompuy and Flemish minister-

president Kris Peeters. A large crowd gathered outside the church to follow the ceremony on a screen. The relaxed mood extended to the traditional funeral card, which had a political cartoon, drawn by *Knack* cartoonist Karl Meersman during the contaminated chicken scandal in 1999, which eventually led to Dehaene's downfall. It showed

Dehaene's head in the shape of an egg, with the message EI NDE (a play on the Dutch words *ei*, egg, and *einde*, end).

Dehaene once said in an interview that he liked the cartoon and wanted it on his funeral card. A message from his wife, Célie, was printed inside the card: "Optimistic to the end, full of courage and strength. Always in my heart." **Derek Blyth**

## Flipkens and Wickmayer head to French Open

Flemish tennis players Kirsten Flipkens and Yanina Wickmayer are hoping to redeem their disappointing starts to the year with powerful performances at the French Open, which began in Roland Garros, Paris, at the weekend.

While both players have at times impressed in recent years, neither have been close to winning any of the majors. Flipkens' Quebec Bell Challenge win in 2012 is the only WTA title between them.

Flipkens is still hoping that her late bloom – the 28-year-old reached her first ever Grand Slam semi-final at Wimbledon last year – will continue. Now ranked 22nd in the world, down from a career high of 13 last August, she lost her first match last week in the Internationaux de Strasbourg



to 96th ranked Zarina Diyas.

Twenty-four-year-old Wickmayer, once 12th, is now in 65th place in the world rankings and is still struggling to justify her earlier career promise. Flemish player Alison Van Uytvanck (94) will also be on the courts in Paris. **Leo Cendrowicz**

## "Castle murder" investigation complete

The investigation into the murder of Stijn Saelens, who was killed in his castle home in Wingene, West Flanders, in 2012, is now complete, the Bruges prosecutor announced. The prosecution hopes to see three men committed for a jury trial.

Saelens disappeared in January of 2012. Police found blood and a spent cartridge in his home. His body was found three weeks later in a shallow grave on a piece of land alongside the E40 motorway belonging to Pierre Serry, a local criminal with ties to Saelens' father-in-law, André

Gyselbrecht. Both men, together with Gyselbrecht's son, Peter, will now be sent for trial, though none of them is thought to have fired the single shot that killed Saelens.

Saelens, according to prosecutors, intended to move to Australia with his wife and children. They claim that this led to André Gyselbrecht calling on Serry to use his criminal connections to arrange for Saelens to be "taught a lesson". It was apparently not the intention that Saelens be shot or killed, but something went wrong.

leading to a shot being fired. Absent from the trial will be the man thought to have planned and carried out the attack. A signal from the mobile phone owned by known Dutch criminal Anton van Bommel was recorded several times in the days before the murder in the vicinity of the castle. However, van Bommel died of cancer three months after the killing. Investigators believe a second person was present with van Bommel at the time as he would not have been in a healthy enough state to carry Saelens' body alone. **AH**

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

1,674

cafés and bars in Brussels in 2013, 10% more than five years before, despite the smoking ban

2,000

applications received by Plopsaland theme park in De Panne in two days after reports that 500 seasonal jobs were still vacant

3,000

Belgians suffer from early-onset dementia, meaning before the age of 65. Several Flemish expertise centres have collaborated for the new website [jongdementie.info](http://jongdementie.info)

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home-jackings took place in Flanders in 2013, and none in Brussels, according to the interior ministry. Between 2010 and 2013 the figure for Flanders was 81

€13 million

in European, Flemish and provincial aid for agriculture in Limburg province, to finance 110 projects over seven years

## WEEK IN BRIEF

Film director **Peter Jackson** was in **West Flanders** last Wednesday to visit First World War sites. Famous for his *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* movies, Jackson is a New Zealander, and many New Zealand troops took part in fighting in the area of Mesen – better known at the time by its French name Messines. He visited the new statue of a Kiwi soldier on Mesen's Grote Markt, as well as the Messines Ridge Cemetery. He also called in at the town's Tourist Information Centre, extended with the help of a subsidy from the New Zealand government. On Wednesday evening, he attended the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres, where his great-uncle, who was one of the New Zealand casualties, is commemorated.

The Brussels-Capital Region and the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) is switching to environmentally friendly **electric and hybrid vehicles**. Brussels-Capital Region said that it will cut its vehicle fleet by 26% and that 55 of the remaining 85 vehicles will be powered by electric or hybrid engines to reduce pollution and carbon emissions. The VGC, which represents Flanders' interests in Brussels, said it will cut its fleet from 40 to 31 and implement efficiency measures so that vehicles are driven fewer kilometres.

The Belgian Institute for Road Safety will **continue to announce the location of speed traps** on the radio, despite calls last week from the association of parents of victims of road accidents to stop. The organisation claimed that the warnings cause drivers to slow down when approaching the mobile speed cameras, leaving them free to drive too fast elsewhere. Only one in three locations is provided to broadcasters, police explained.

Brussels-City is applying to **host the start of the Tour de France** in 2019 as an homage to Eddy Merckx, to mark the 50th anniversary of the first of his five Tour victories. "Eddy

would fire the starting shot from the balcony of the city hall," said alderman Alain Courtois. "It would be a fantastic commemoration." The last time the tour started its first stage in Brussels was in 1958.

Final arguments in the **Tomorrowland case** will be heard on 11 June in the court of appeal in Antwerp. Seven residents of Boom, Antwerp province, where the dance festival is held, lost a motion for an interim injunction on the second weekend of the festival. Meanwhile, the lawyer for the residents has lodged a new complaint alleging conflict of interest after it was revealed that members of the Antwerp provincial council, who recently granted the festival a 20-year environmental permit, received free festival tickets.

Brussels faces an **oversupply of cinemas** in the near future, according to Gino Van Ossel, professor of retail management at Vlerick Business School. New arrivals include cinemas in the new shopping centres Uplace in Machelen and Docks Bruxsel in Laken, the 2,500-seat Euroscoop in Anderlecht, a new Pathé Palace in Brussels and a possible new UGC complex in the south of the region. The new cinemas are arriving during a downward trend in cinema attendance, Van Ossel said. "I have grave doubts about the profitability of all of these projects."

The prosecutor-general for Antwerp will seek the arraignment of all eight members of the special police intervention squad involved in the 2010 incident in which 26-year-old **Jonathan Jacobs was fatally injured** while being restrained in a police cell in Mortsel. Earlier, the prosecutor had called for the officers not to face charges, but that has now been overruled by the superior office. In addition to the eight officers, a doctor and the former director of a psychiatric hospital, who refused entry to the victim, will be sent for trial, together

with the commissioner of the local police in Mortsel, who called in the intervention squad.

From 1 September, the start of the new school year, 17 secondary schools in Flanders will begin teaching **certain subjects in languages other than Dutch**. A new law opened up the option to all schools; 25 applied for approval, and 17 were approved. Participation in the classes by students is voluntary, and classes in Dutch will run parallel to the foreign-language classes.

Flemish cyclo-cross champion **Niels Albert** would be able to resume racing after an operation to repair the heart rhythm condition which last week led him to announce his retirement from the sport. According to prominent cardiologist Pedro Brugada of Brussels University Hospital, "there are certain treatments that exist only here in the UZ Brussel, and certain unique people with many years of experience who are able to apply those treatments." Albert's spokesperson was said to be considering having further tests carried out.

Six organisations that are part of the directorate-general Environment have committed themselves to helping to **clean up the North Sea**: the Foundation for Sustainable Fishery Development, the Healthy Seas Project, Ecoduikers, Waste Free Oceans, DEME and VLOOT. The agreement is part of the programme "Together towards a waste-free North Sea", set up in 2012. The partners will mainly clean up waste around shipwrecks and bring the marine waste to land via their ships.

Coffee-shop chain **Starbucks** has opened a new branch on the **Grote Markt** in Brussels, the 13th in Belgium and the fourth in the centre of Brussels, after Rogier metro station, Brussels Central and Brussels North railway stations. The location will be open seven days a week.

## OFFSIDE

### Veronique Evrard

It's one of the major disappointments among people of a certain age that the year 2000 came and went, and we still don't have jetpacks and flying cars. Perhaps something like that was in the mind of Paul Geens, a chicken farmer from Hoogstraeten, Antwerp province, whose invention just won an Innovation Prize from the Better Poultry Health Symposium in the Netherlands. Geens is shown in a video on YouTube riding his "Chicken Trolley" up and down the narrow passages of his laying house. The device looks a bit like we always imagined a flying car would, except it's suspended from a system of rails in the ceiling. It also moves up and down so he can see into the

different levels of his machinery. The laying house operates what is called a deep litter system, in which the hens, although they live indoors, run free in the specially prepared "dirt" that lines the floor. The Chicken Trolley allows Geens to sail blithely over the heads of his feathered flock, which run around safely underneath.

The Trolley, Geens explains, "is fitted with a radio and music player; there's a basket attached to put dead chickens into. The speed is adjustable with a pedal, you can go forwards or backwards. In 2004, I built my first hen-house, and I found that the welfare of the hens was hugely improved by then, but the welfare of the poultry farmer had gone backwards a few steps.



Jury members present Paul Geens (centre) with his prize

And that's something I wanted to change."

The Chicken Trolley won the prize, with 46% of the vote, ahead of a system for poultry management involving 24-hour internet contact, developed by Porphyrio in Leuven, and a tool for tackling blood lice in laying hens called Q-Perch, made by Vencomatic of Duizel in the Netherlands.

## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



### Martine Tanghe

Whatever you may think of the results of the election, one thing is certain: One of the strongest election performances was delivered by someone who's not even standing.

Martine Tanghe has become the most respected face on Flemish television, as anchor of VRT's evening news and presenter of such programmes as Sunday's election round-up. Her former colleague Siegfried Bracke, who stood for N-VA, had plenty of gravitas but was never regarded with affection; her co-presenter Ivan De Vadder is all policy and no personality.

By common consent, Tanghe brings to the job professionalism, unflappability, an openness that inspires the viewer's trust and one of the most impeccable speaking voices in the public sphere. She also knows when to crack a joke: In the run-up to last weekend's, she asked Bruno Tobback about his party's youth wing and their vote to legalise cannabis. "What did you think then – shit?", she said, referring both to the popular term for cannabis in Flanders and most politicians' opinions on the matter. "I see you're an expert," Tobback replied to her pun. Tanghe was born in Aalter, East Flanders, in 1955 and studied languages at Leuven, with the intention of becoming a schoolteacher. After a time teaching Dutch in Latin America,

she entered the Flemish public broadcasting service, now known as VRT, in 1977. Apart from a brief break in the 1990s when she worked as a spokesperson for the Flemish Parliament, she's been there ever since.

Aside from being the news anchor, she also presented the discussion programme *Volt*, and since 2005 has deployed her blue-chip diction in the reading of the text of the annual *Grote Dictee der Nederlandse Taal* – where participants have to take down a fiendishly difficult dictation with as few mistakes as possible.

In 2011, her newsroom colleague Freek Braeckman became the only well-known personality ever to win the *Dictee*. However, Tanghe was not present that year. One month before, she had taken sick leave after being diagnosed with breast cancer. During her absence, her place at the newsdesk was taken over by Phara De Aguirre, another breast cancer survivor.

Like De Aguirre, Tanghe returned to the screen. And like De Aguirre, she reappeared for an election show and was awarded the Flemish Television Star award as best presenter of the year, in 2013. On Sunday during the election returns, a poster appeared on Facebook with images of Tanghe at her news post through the years. It was titled "The mother of all elections".

## FLANDERS TODAY



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# Landslide victory for N-VA

**Vlaams Belang just about disappears, Groen does well at “the mother of all elections”**

Anja Otte

**A** part from the extreme-right Vlaams Belang, most parties found reasons to be cheerful during Sunday's election night. A closer look at the results, however, shows that not everyone is a winner. “Is there anyone here who did not get elected?” **N-VA president Bart De Wever**’s quip to his supporters in Antwerp says it all. In all but a few electoral districts, N-VA pulled down the most votes in Flanders during yesterday's elections, by a wide margin.

With a result of 32% region-wide, and close to 40% in Antwerp province, the nationalists became the largest political party in the Flemish Parliament (43 seats) and the federal House of Representatives (33 seats).

Also allowed to cast a vote for a particular politician instead of – or in addition to – a party, the Flemish electorate also chose De Wever as its favourite politician. He received more than 300,000 votes, while his fellow party member Liesbeth Homans received more than 160,000 votes. N-VA is now expected to take the initiative to form the

government of Flanders. It will also play an important role in the formation of the federal government.

## Disappointment

The Christian Democrat's (CD&V) results are mixed: it lost four seats in the Flemish Parliament but gained one in the federal parliament. All in all, a disappointment to **CD&V**. With 18 and 20% (25% in West Flanders), it can no longer claim to be Flanders’ “people's party”, and leader **Kris Peeters** received fewer personal votes than N-VA's Homans. CD&V does find itself, however, in a very comfortable second position when it comes to the formation. “We are ready to take up responsibility at both the Flemish and federal levels,” said a confident Peeters.

## Hanging on

The liberals of **Open VLD**, too, saw mixed results, losing two seats in the Flemish and gaining one in the federal parliament. The difference between the two is due to the “Maggie effect”: **Maggie De Block**,



N-VA president Bart De Wever, flanked by party leaders Geert Bourgeois and Liesbeth Homans

in the Federal Parliament. Its results were particularly good in cities, such as Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven and Brussels. Although the party was willing to be part of the next coalition government, it is unlikely that it will.

## End of an era

Twenty-three years after “Black Sunday”, when **Vlaams Belang** positioned itself as an important political force, the far right has lost most of its appeal to N-VA. It lost nine federal seats yesterday and 15 in the Flemish Parliament. “Vlaams Belang is not dead yet, we will be back,” commented president **Gerolf Annemans**. Vlaams Belang's defeat is a dream come true for De Wever. The small leftist **PVDA** narrowly failed in its ambition to get one representative elected in parliament. **Lijst Dedecker** also failed to get over the electoral threshold of 5%, marking the end of the political career of Jean-Marie Dedecker.

the popular state secretary for migration and asylum, propelled her party's federal result in Flemish Brabant to 25%. De Block's personal result – over 100,000 votes – is second only to De Wever's. “We hung on,” said party president **Gwendolyn Rutten**.

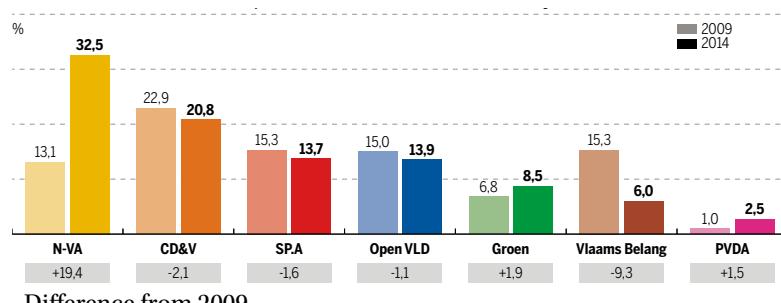
**SPA**, too, “hung on”: It lost just one seat in the Flemish Parliament. The party did relatively well in West Flanders, home to relentless

campaigners **Johan Vande Lanotte** and **John Crombez**. SPA will be “humble and realistic” in the formation, president **Bruno Tobback** stated. He dreams of “uniting the left wing vote in the same way the right is united today”.

## Clear winner

**Groen**, at 8%, won three extra seats in the Flemish Parliament and one

## Flemish Parliament 25 May 2014



Difference from 2009

## Short & sweet

This election was the first to follow the split of the constituency Brussel-Halle-Vilvoorde. In spite of all the controversy BHV caused before and after the 2010 elections, hardly a word was said about it this time around. • Hype of the day: *stemfies*, *selfies* takes in the voting booth. Dozens of them found their way to the internet, although most did not show the actual vote cast. • Due to software problems, the Brussels results were suspended on election day. Brussels politicians have asked for the 20-year-old voting computers to be replaced by the traditional pencil and ballot paper. • On election day, Bart De Wever wore a neck tie in yellow, orange and blue, the colours for N-VA, CD&V and Open VLD respectively. A foreshadow of the

new coalitions? De Wever neither confirmed nor denied. • Right before his 2012 victory speech, De Wever famously got angry at the DJ who failed to stop the music on time. This time, the song “Euphoria” by Loreen had finished by the time De Wever made his way to the stage. • The N-VA president is also known for starting his speech with a Latin quote. “Vicit Vim Virtus,” he said: Virtue conquered force. “Never before have there been attempts this powerful to put out the Flemish. But the Flemish have cast their vote, and they have voted for change.” • CD&V, SPA and Open VLD all described their results similarly: “We held on.” The commentators' response: “Hanging on is the new winning”

## Government of Flanders

# CD&V holds the key to “logical coalition”

Winning the elections is one thing, forming a government is another. N-VA party president Bart De Wever has “a clear mandate” from the Flemish electorate but faces a difficult task of forming not one but two governments.

As the region's biggest winner, N-VA is now taking the initiative to form a Flemish government. De Wever prefers a “logical coalition” with CD&V, which would have a majority of 70 of the 124 seats in the Flemish parliament. At the closing debate on election night, the tone between De Wever and CD&V's Kris Peeters was friendly – jolly, even. However, the “classic tripartite” – a coalition of the

three traditional parties CD&V, Open VLD and SPA, leaving out the winning N-VA – would also have a majority in parliament. In this case, CD&V would be leading the formation. This alternative gives the Christian-democrats extra leverage. It may present N-VA with its demands, not just on the Flemish but also on the federal level, which could slow down the Flemish formation.

Open VLD could possibly be invited to join the coalition, too. The liberals have made this conditional on the covering of the Antwerp ring road. According to De Wever, this is possible without turning back earlier decisions on this topic.

## Federal government

# De Wever I, or Di Rupo II?

Shaping the federal government may be a painstaking process, but N-VA wants to avoid a long crisis. In spite of his victory, N-VA party president Bart De Wever had probably hoped for a different result. His party is by far the largest at the federal level, yet a coalition without N-VA also remains possible. The parting coalition has even gained two seats.

It is up to the King to decide who makes the first move. N-VA is the obvious choice, but there is also a tradition that the prime minister is someone from the largest political family in the whole country. That is still the socialists, even after some loss for the French-speaking PS.

N-VA's spectacular result in Flanders cannot be ignored, though. Leaving this party out from the start is impossible. But who wants to enter a coalition with

De Wever? On the Flemish side, that would be CD&V and Open VLD, provided they get what they want on the Flemish level, too.

Finding French-speaking partners will be much harder, as they both fear and loath the nationalist N-VA's programme and leadership. This explains De Wever's rather moderate tone on election night. For the French-speaking liberals and Christian-democrats, entering an N-VA-led government is like dancing with the devil, carrying a risk of losing out in the next election. N-VA itself prefers a government without PS, but that might be harder to realise than one would expect.

Either way, N-VA has stated it wants to avoid “a long political crisis” – a repeat of the 2010 formation that lasted 541 days.

# Gangnam style

## Humanoid helper is making a big difference to lives of rest home residents

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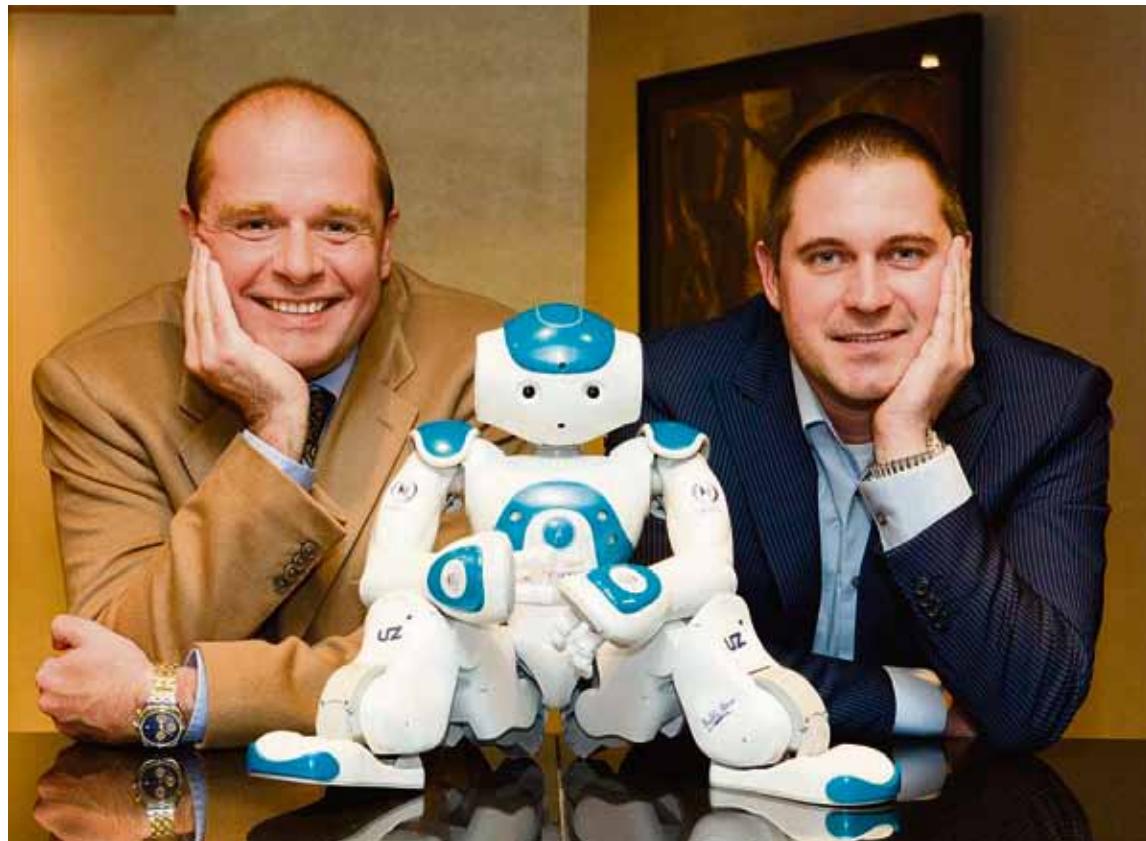
robots but to help the staff at the rest home to devote more personal attention to the residents."

Through its cute appearance and playful features, the robot should also help to alleviate the loneliness residents sometimes feel by keeping them company and interacting with them. People with dementia are seen as an important target group. Zora also has two cameras in its head, providing carers with video material to observe and evaluate people's reactions.

**“***It's very pleasant to have her here; it's almost like a piece of art*

One of the features currently being optimised is facial recognition. With this technology, Zora could help to keep elderly people from wandering off while disorientated, which is a big problem in rest homes.

"After scanning the photos of residents and linking them with the names of the people in the robot's memory, Zora should be able to call out to the people," says Goffin. Fall detection is another important feature. The robot will be programmed to go up to people who may have fallen, ask them questions about how they feel, while staff examine the situation via the cameras and arrange assistance if



Qbmt managing directors Fabrice Goffin (left) and Tommy Debleick with Zora

necessary.

Patrick Delanghe, physical therapist at De Boarebreker, confirms that the robot is a helpful addition to their team, though that doesn't mean it can replace a member of staff. "While Zora demonstrates the dance movements during an animation activity, we have our hands free to personally help the people with the exercises," says Delanghe. The robot is also programmed to make jokes during the activities, helping to improve the general atmosphere.

According to Delanghe, the robot succeeds in breaking down emotional barriers that some residents have built around them. "One of the residents, who hardly spoke to us and didn't like to participate in physical exercises, has opened up since Zora arrived," he says. "She spontaneously started talking to the robot and is much more enthusiastic during activities." That the robot has won over the hearts of a number of residents of De Boarebreker is clear. After the robot

has finished its demonstrations, 92-year-old Simonna Codenie cradles it in her arms like a baby. "It's very pleasant to have her here; it's almost like a piece of art," she says, smiling. "Besides, she's always in a good mood and ready to help out during activities."

Codenie also says that Zora keeps her company while she is painting, one of her hobbies at the rest home. The various opportunities that Zora provides have not gone unnoticed by the government of Flanders. Its

investment agency, PMV, is showing a concrete interest, while its agency for innovation through science and technology, IWT, has recently allocated a budget of €250,000 to a project set up by Qbmt with Ghent University (UGent) and the University Hospital of Ghent (UZ Gent).

For the project, Zora will be connected to a device to record electromyograms (EMGs) or, in other words, measure the muscle contractions of people during rehabilitation exercises. "So the robot will help therapists analyse the progress of patients and whether they are carrying out the exercises correctly," explains Tommy Debleick, co-managing director of Qbmt.

This particular project is part of a large research initiative, set up last September by Qbmt, UGent, UZ Gent and the Christian Mutuality. The two-year project is investigating the ways in which the robot can be deployed to provide interactive support to patients who are rehabilitating or suffering from epileptic fits.

Zora's instructions, accompanied by music and sounds, should encourage rehabilitating patients to practice their movement exercises with enthusiasm, even when a therapist cannot be present. As Zora has two cameras, the therapists can afterwards check the videos to examine the intensity of the training and make adjustments to the therapy if necessary. This monitoring would be further fine-tuned through the recording of EMGs.

Via a Wi-Fi connection, the robot will be able to analyse the electrical activity along the scalp (EEG) and of the heart (ECG) – commonly used to diagnose epilepsy – and to ask personalised questions in the case of an epileptic fit. The current fit detection systems often generate false alarms, so the robot's detection skills could prevent unnecessary interventions by nurses.

Zora could be programmed to ask for help, and the medical staff could always keep an eye on the situation through the cameras in the robot. The project at UZ Ghent will also examine the extent to which Zora could be effective in working with children. Youngsters are, in any case, an important target group for Qbmt, which is also providing several schools in Flanders with the robots to help children with autism, for example. "Children with autism, who often have problems with social interaction but enjoy interaction with technology, are encouraged by Zora to more actively participate in games," says Debleick.

According to Debleick, Qbmt has been hit by a deluge of questions since the end of last year, from organisations both at home and abroad. "We were originally thinking to develop our commercial activities only from 2016, but the level of the interest has sped up this process."

► [www.qbmt.be](http://www.qbmt.be)



Zora puts residents through their paces at De Boarebreker in Ostend



A Zora robot sang "Happy Birthday" to this 100-year-old rest home resident

## WEEK IN BUSINESS

## Airports ▶ Ostend

The French Egis airport management company has plans to develop an industrial aircraft wrecking and recycling activity at Ostend Airport.

## Audio-visual ▶ Netflix

The US-based film streaming service has announced that it will launch on the Belgian market before the end of the year. The company is expected to provide access to local programming as well as popular series and movies from around the world.

## Chocolate ▶ Puratos

The specialist in bakery products and additives, based in Groot-Bijgaarden, just outside of Brussels, is investing €21 million in its Belcolade chocolate production unit in Aalst to increase capacity by up to 50 percent by the end of 2015.

## Food service

## ▶ Just Falafel

The Abu Dhabi-based fast food chain of falafel dishes and sandwiches, with outlets in the US, UK, Japan and Australia, will open its first two restaurants in Brussels before the end of the year. The company has plans for a further 10 outlets in Belgium before the end of 2015.

## Machinery ▶ Boucherie

The world leading producer of tools and industrial equipment needed to manufacture tooth and hair brushes, based in Izegem, West Flanders, is merging with the Italian Borghi company.

## Retail ▶ Premaman

France's retailer of baby and mother-to-be products is opening Europe's largest children's products store in Zaventem at the end of August. The company is also investing €25 million to renovate, rebrand and develop 31 of the 38 Home Market stores it acquired last week.

## Transport

## ▶ Steelexpress

The transport affiliate of Arcelor-Mittal, based in Overpelt, Limburg province, has been taken over by the Genk-based H Essers transport and logistics company.

## Virtual technology

## ▶ DNA Interactif Fashion

The Kortrijk-based high tech developer of virtual fitting rooms is to supply 600 of its iStyling equipment to Chinese fashion outlets in partnership with the Shanghai Yin Science Technology firm. The deal, worth €4.4 million, will help DNA further develop its tri-dimensional expertise and sales worldwide.

# Government, Siemens and UZLeuven Employers of the Year

**Annual award measures employment policies, atmosphere and job security**

Alan Hope

**S**iemens, the government of Flanders and the Leuven University Hospital (UZLeuven) have been named as this year's Employers of the Year, a competition organised by Vlerick Business School, HR company Acerta and jobs magazine *Vacature*.

According to the organisers, staff evaluations of employers is increasingly dependent on job security, which now moves up into third place behind job duties and corporate atmosphere in the evaluation. They also point out that the private sector is losing ground to government service, education, health care and social services.

The award is a combination of public votes and a jury of professionals. Visitors to the award's website were asked to choose the most appealing employer in Flanders/Brussels from a list of 600 in the three categories. The 60 businesses nominated by 7,500 members of the public were then asked to complete a



© UZLeuven

questionnaire on their employment policies. A jury of experts selected a short list of nine organisations, with the final winners chosen by Acerta. German engineering and electronics company Siemens, with its Belgian subsidiary based in Brussels, takes the award's gold medal in the private

sector. Silver and bronze went to home-grown Janssen Pharmaceutica and Bayer, respectively.

The public prize for the private sector, decided by votes from HR professionals and local executives, going to Volvo Cars in Ghent.

The government won in the category

of non-profit enterprises, ahead of the federal public health ministry with silver and the University of Leuven with bronze. "This award is not only a recognition of the staff policy of the Flemish government, but also a sign that the outside world considers the administration to be a good employer," said Flemish minister for the civil service, Geert Bourgeois. "That's essential if we want to attract and keep our skilled personnel in the future."

UZ Leuven (pictured), the largest hospital in the country, came first in the social profit sector, against the Christian Mutualty at second and the university clinic of Saint-Luc in Brussels at third. The public's choice award in the social profit sector went to Ghent's University Hospital. Belgacom, meanwhile, was given a special award for its diversity policy; the telecommunications giant recently appointed its first woman CEO.

## €2.8 million for "smart specialisation" projects

Just days before the end of its term, the government of Flanders announced financial support worth €2.8 million for eight projects involved in "smart specialisation". The eight were selected from applicants invited last year to submit proposals for projects under the heading New Industrial Enterprise.

The projects cover a variety of fields: technology to store electricity in hydrogen batteries; the use of drones to carry out security patrols of industrial properties; an open innovation cluster to allow Flemish companies in speech-technology to achieve economies of scale currently

limited by the reach of language; the creation of a "state of the art" in aquaculture to identify and quantify market potential; methods for recycling used concrete; new techniques and applications for incorporating flax and hemp fibres into plastics.

Two of the project applicants work in the field of 3D printing, a specialisation that took Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters to Wallonia yesterday, where he visited the largest group of 3D printers in Europe, located in Seraing. Flemish companies work closely with researchers in the area. AH

## Brussels Airport diamond robbery suspect arrested in Morocco

Authorities in Morocco have reported the arrest of four men wanted in connection with a number of armed robberies, including the diamond robbery that took place at Brussels Airport in February of last year.

The four are wanted for "attempted murder, armed robbery at goods transport warehouses, a major jewel theft at a European airport and an armed attack on a Belgian hospital with the intention of helping a prisoner escape," the Moroccan press release says.

The robbery at Zaventem saw eight armed and masked men in police uniforms robbing a Swiss Airlines flight. The men in two cars

gained access to the airport tarmac through an adjoining construction site. Without firing a shot, the men robbed the aircraft of a load of diamonds and other valuables worth an estimated €38 million. That shipment was under the security of Brink's.

Thirty-one suspects have already been arrested since the robbery took place, and four remain in custody. The Dutch press has made a connection between the airport robbery and a robbery of security company Brink's in Best, a town to the north of Eindhoven, in March last year, as well as earlier robberies from Brink's in Amsterdam in 2011 and Schiphol in 2005. AH

## Wilrijk beats China to €15 million Atlas Copco investment

Atlas Copco, the Swedish manufacturer of tools and equipment, plans to invest €15 million in its production facility in the Wilrijk district of Antwerp, which specialises in compressors, the company's CEO Ronnie Leten has announced.

The investment will mainly concern the development of advanced rotary screws, the most important part of a compressor, which uses a generator to compress air, which is then used to power tools. Antwerp was successful in the bid, over the company's facility in the Chinese city of Wuxi.

"Wilrijk appeared to be more competitive than Wuxi," Leten said. "In addition, we consider it strategically important to develop new competences in our core

factory for compressor technology, which is Wilrijk."

Before taking over as CEO of Atlas Copco worldwide in 2009, Leten – who was named manager of the year in January by *Trends* magazine and Kanaal Z – was boss of the Wilrijk plant. "This decision is certainly not based on favouritism," he said. "We can't allow ourselves that. Antwerp was simply more competitive than Wuxi when you looked at the whole picture."

The decision, he said, demonstrates that Flanders still has a significant role to play in the manufacturing industry, as long as companies are able to remain at the forefront of innovation. "The incoming governments must focus on industrial policy, which is also social policy," he said. AH

## MIVB to invest in automatic metros from 2019

Brussels public transport authority MIVB is investing €430 million in 43 new metro trains to make the lines 1 (Weststation – Stockel) and 5 (Erasmus – Hermann-Debroux) fully automatic, without the need for drivers.

The new phase of development will begin in 2019, when the metros will be automatically propelled but with a human driver still present. The frequency of metro trains on the two lines will go up to one every two minutes. The process of automation will be complete by 2023, with human drivers no longer present, and frequency increased to a train

every 90 seconds.

The transport authority says that the increase in frequency is required to keep up with the expected increase in capacity if passenger numbers grow as they have in recent years. Last year the number of journeys went up by six million, to nearly 355 million trips.

Earlier this year, MIVB announced that it was constructing a test-line for driverless metro trains at the new depot planned at Erasmus, adjacent to the railway line Brussels-Ghent. The new line will be 1.2 kilometres long and cost some €50 million. AH

# Seasonal reminiscing

## Antwerp researchers say trees can remember unusual climate conditions

Andy Furniere

Trees can detect when something's not quite right. That's what researchers from Antwerp University (UA) discovered in a recent experiment.

The scientists found that trees "remember" warm winters. Their research revealed that their leaves not only sprout sooner after unusually mild winters but also in subsequent years.

The UA research groups Plant and Vegetation Ecology (Pleco) and Molecular Plant Physiology and Biotechnology began an experiment to examine the effects of warm winters on the formation of leaves in the autumn of 2009.

Warm winters have become increasingly common due to global warming, raising important questions about the impact of such mild winters on nature. The research in Antwerp was realised with the support of the Swiss University of Basel and by Beijing University in China.

In the experiment, Antwerp scientists planted different native oak and beech trees in 25 greenhouses of approximately one square metre. Simulating the conditions of unusually warm winters and examining the springtime effects,



The UA greenhouse experiment is the first of its kind to demonstrate trees' reaction to global warming effects

they compared the development of the trees with those of trees growing at usual temperatures.

"The warm winter not only caused the trees to form leaves about two weeks earlier, but also to lose them more quickly in the autumn," says Matteo Campioli from the Pleco research group. This was the main question the scientists hoped to answer, but the experiment also yielded another key finding – one that caught them off guard.

"The second winter, we didn't raise the temperatures in the greenhouses," says Campioli, "but the trees again formed leaves earlier than usual – about 10 days earlier. We didn't really see that coming."

In other words, the experiment suggests that trees have a kind of "memory" that causes them to respond to a disturbance in usual climate conditions for several years. This is the first time that a greenhouse experiment has demonstrated this kind of global warming effect.

The researchers then examined a database with information on thousands of trees across Europe. This open-access database, which includes plant phenology data sets, is the result of the EP725 project funded by the Austrian ministry for science & research and the EUMETNET network of European meteorological services. Again, the Antwerp researchers found the same pattern in the trees'

development. This strengthened their belief in the domino effect of warm winters on leaf formation.

These effects have important consequences for trees like oaks and beeches, whose leaves only sprout during a two-week period in the spring. "If the leaves sprout early, there is an increased chance that they will face frost in that period, during which the leaves may be seriously damaged," explains Campioli. "Trees like poplars can again form leaves later in the summer, but oak and beech species will not recover that same year."

If the trees lose their leaves, this has important consequences for wood production and the absorption of greenhouse gasses. But the altered leaf period may also impact life in and around the trees, since oak and beech trees provide food and shelter for many other organisms, like birds and insects.

The results of the Antwerp study were published in the leading scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. UA is now looking to follow up the research by examining the effects of warm winters over longer periods and on other tree species.

## Doctors debate health screenings at sports events

Last week, several doctors again publicly pleaded for the screening of amateur athletes before mass sporting events, after four runners suffered heart attacks during the 20k of Brussels on 18 May. One of them, a 28-year-old Belgian journalist, died in hospital.

Pedro Brugada, the internationally famous heart specialist of the University Hospital in Brussels, and well-known Antwerp sports doctor Chris Goossens have both been outspoken about the issue in previous years and again this year. "People overestimate their capacities and underestimate the

track," Goossens told *De Standaard*. "In France, you can only participate in such an event if you are medically screened in advance. It's about time that Belgium followed this example." Last year, a man in his 50s died taking part in the event, and in 2011, a man of 26 died.

Brugada pointed to the large number of participants as one of the problems. "More than 40,000 people running all at once through these streets is just way too many," he said. "They're running stuck to each other like sardines, with the result that the temperature surrounding them increases intensely."



The Red Cross reported that 650 runners needed their services during the event, and 38 were taken to hospital. "650 interventions out of 40,000 participants is a horrifically high percentage," said Goossens. Goossens points to Antwerp's annual 10-mile run as a better

example of how such events should be organised. Although 35,000 take part in it, no one has ever died. "It's a flat parcours, capped at 16 kilometres. Organisers provide information ahead of time on how you need to prepare for it." The 20k of Brussels has no such information for participants.

Flemish sports minister Philippe Muyters responded that he is not in favour of government-mandated screenings. He said that federations and organisers of sports events should remain free to make their own decisions about the issue. AF

## Q&A

**Emilie Maccarini, a Master's student in communication sciences at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), won the London School of Economic's first Digital Innovation Challenge. She recently presented her conclusions during a conference at the London School of Economics**

### What did you examine in your paper?

I investigated whether Generation Y – people born between 1980 and 1994 – is more motivated by gaming features in education than younger and older generations. "Gamification" refers to the use of gaming strategies in non-game contexts to engage people in carrying out certain tasks, such as learning. Certain marketing professionals think that these features are necessary to keep "digital natives" interested during lessons.

### Can you give some examples of such strategies?

Yes, like introducing leaderboards on websites to make the

accomplishments of students – like high scores – more visible, giving students increasingly difficult challenges to solve or using a narrative format to explain subject matter.

### Did you find that Generation Y needed this approach to concentrate?

No, the results of my online survey demonstrate that these youngsters are not more or less susceptible to gamification strategies than their older and younger counterparts. I only discovered that Generation Y members have a greater preference for e-learning over classroom education when there is time

pressure to accomplish a task. But gamification is far from being the Holy Grail for educators who want to motivate digital natives. A leaderboard with high scores can, for example, also be demotivating if students don't succeed in ever seeing their names there.

### Your essay won you a visit to the London School of Economics.

Yes, I spent three days at the institution, which was a very stimulating experience. I also had the chance to present my essay during the annual Social Study of Information Technology conference, a prestigious occasion with researchers from all over the world. The advice and



contacts I gained during my stay should help me a great deal in my further career. Interview by AF

▶ [www.digitalinnovationchallenge.org](http://www.digitalinnovationchallenge.org)

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

### Texting innovates language

Research by PhD student Benny De Backer of Antwerp University shows that texting and chatting doesn't impoverish language as often thought but allows youngsters to experiment with creative language use. His research involved 28,000 people aged from 13 to 20; he found that spelling mistakes were, in general, rare in chat sessions. "On average, about one out of 50 words is spelled incorrectly," he told *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "For a quarter of the words, youngsters consciously deviate from the standard spelling, with the purpose of converting spoken or regional language into a written form." Youngsters use many English words while texting and chatting. "One out of eight messages includes at least one word of English origin," said De Backer. Popular words include "nice" and "dude". Youngsters also convert many English words to a Dutch form: "Clean", "OK" and "all right" are often written as "klien", "okeej" and "olraajt".

### Free courses on e-media literacy

Hasselt's PXL University College and the Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy will provide a free online course in media literacy next January. The course deals with topics like online privacy, effective searching and the impact of the digital world on our health. For each topic, an expert will give an introduction and coaches will help participants process the subject matter. Participants can evaluate their progress through self-tests and will be encouraged to take part in discussions on online forums. The 10-week course is organised via the Massive Open Online Course, an education platform accessible to everyone. The government of Flanders, on the initiative of media minister Ingrid Lieten, is subsidising the programme.

### Pakaans awarded for clever inventions

Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed, and the creative economy think-tank Flanders DC have announced the winners of their Pakaan competition, designed to encourage creativity and entrepreneurship in primary, secondary and higher education. The initiative challenged students to develop an innovative idea, product or service. During a closing ceremony, awards were given to fourth-year pupils from the Sint-Monfort primary school in Kontich, Antwerp province; secondary school students from the Paters Jozefieten College in Melle, East Flanders; and Bachelor's students from the PXL University College in Hasselt. AF

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# A perfect partner

## Antwerp University is lending out economics students to non-profits

Andy Furniere

It's a familiar problem: small non-profits and other social organisations that, no matter how important their work, struggle to attract volunteers and sponsors and to get their message across loud and clear. More often than not, they lack the lavish budgets of private companies to hire consultants to help them increase the efficiency of their operations.

The Applied Economic Sciences department at Antwerp University (UA) is now lending out its students and their business chops to help organisations in just such straits.

In the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Project, UA business engineering students get two years to increase the efficiency of non-profits and other social sector organisations. The goal of the project is to foster a sense of corporate social responsibility in the students and to offer free support to organisations that cannot afford to hire expensive consultants.

In a closing ceremony held last week, 160 UA students presented their CSR results to an audience of academic, not-for-profit and business people. Representatives of the three sectors also each presented an award to their favourite project.

This year, an award was handed out to a project that helped improve the financial organisation and communication strategy of BX Brussels football club for the city's youth, chaired by Red Devils captain Vincent Kompany. Other winners included a project focused on increasing the accountancy efficiency of care organisation MKL and an initiative to attract sponsors for the Royal Flemish Philharmonic's opMaatorkest for children.

"The 40 projects this academic year were selected from more than 100 requests, which shows that there is a great need for the skills of our students," says UA professor Johan Braet, who established the CSR project four years ago.



Youth football programme BX Brussels is one of the non-profits receiving help from UA economics students

"Many organisations could be less dependent on subsidies if they further professionalised their operations."

Some organisations, like the Antwerp-based Payoke, which helps victims of human trafficking, are so satisfied with the project that they have participated every year. Larger organisations, such as Antwerp's social aid agency (OCMW) are also eager for the students' help. The CSR project also helped the international Hollaback organisation, which combats street harassment, set up a local branch in Antwerp.

PhD student Jelle Van Camp, who is responsible for the practical side of the project, says that certain problems within organisations regularly recur. "They often struggle to efficiently manage their financial means, to develop dossiers to apply for subsidies, to attract volunteers, to reach their target groups through appealing communication and to set up long-term business plans."

The first step in the CSR project is for a team of four professors and a dozen assistants to make a first selection among the organisations' applications. Groups of four students – a mix of first and second-year Master's students, or so-called junior and senior consultants – then choose their five preferred projects.

After all the groups are assigned a particular focus and have partnered with an organisation, the students work on developing solutions with the help of an academic staff member during a one-year period. Students can choose a new project when they advance from the first to the second year of the Master's programme.

The university makes manuals with tips and tricks available to those organisations that failed to make it past the selection round. CSR project administrators hope to expand the project to other UA faculties in the future – the law and biomedical

departments, for instance. The universities of Ghent and Leuven have also shown interest in bringing the project to their campuses. For the Master's students, the CSR project offers practical experience, which helps them master the course methodology and skills to work on concrete, real-world assignments. The idea is that their accomplishments will look good on their CVs and will help them win over future employers during job interviews. During the closing ceremony of the CSR project, students can also make useful contacts with different companies. "Social responsibility is furthermore more and more important in the business world," says Van Camp. "Companies are, for example, increasingly convinced of the advantage of taking into account the environmental impact from the start of a production process."

Van Camp mentions Swedish furniture giant Ikea, which is working to reduce its waste by integrating its packaging in its products. "Social responsibility, however, comprises much more than sustainability initiatives and must take into account the different needs in our heterogeneous society," he says.

Professor Braet hopes the project will help create a new generation of CEOs and consultants more aware of social issues, like poverty. "At the start, our students are often very out of touch with worlds where a sufficient budget is not a given and with groups such as human trafficking victims," he says.

Braet and his colleagues hope the students will bring the CSR experience they gained to the table in their future, typically high-profile jobs. "In these positions, they often have the opportunity to keep helping different social groups by creating products or services adapted to specific needs," he says.

► [www.ua.ac.be](http://www.ua.ac.be)

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### 90% leave primary school speaking Dutch well

Nine out of 10 pupils reach the minimum standards for Dutch reading and listening skills at the end of primary education, according to a study carried out in May last year at 107 Flemish primary schools by the Flemish education ministry. For reading skills, 91% of pupils in the sixth year of primary last year attained the *eindtermen* – the final requirements for pupils to move on to secondary school. That is a slight improvement compared to 2002 and 2007, when 89% reached the minimum standards. For listening skills, 87% reached the *eindtermen*, the same as in 2007. There is still a gap between pupils who only speak Dutch at home and those who speak another language, but the socioeconomic family situation is also an important factor.

### 21,000 pre- and primary places needed

The next Flemish government has to provide at least 21,000 extra seats in pre-schools and primary schools over the next six years. In Brussels' Dutch-speaking schools, the shortfall is 6,000. The figures are part of a note from the Flemish education administration to the political parties that will negotiate a new government coalition after last Sunday's elections. The estimates are based on figures from 15 municipalities, including Antwerp, Ghent, Mechelen, Kortrijk, Leuven, Asse and Wervik. The creation of so many places will require an investment of about €400 million.

### Shorter summer holidays suggested

An academic year that starts in the first week of September and only six weeks of summer holidays are the main features of a major reform of higher education suggested by a working group made up of university and college managers and representatives of the Flemish Association of Students. A first advisory note, analysed by the Leuven student paper *Veto*, forms the basis of further discussions. The note proposes re-sits just after the Christmas holidays that follow three weeks of exams in the first semester. Re-sits currently only take place in August. If students don't pass the exams the second time, they can transfer to another study area or school and lose less time in their education trajectory. A second re-sit would be possible in July. The group say the reform is not a goal in itself but a means to start a debate. AF

## Q&A

**Bram Spruyt is an assistant professor of sociology at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). He recently conducted a survey on the voting behaviour of university students in Flanders**

### Were you surprised by the results?

We have been polling students at VUB since 1989. So we already know that a party like Groen is rather popular among its students. Also, the Flemish nationalists N-VA getting so many votes didn't come as a surprise. But something that did surprise us was the finding that so many of the students are "floating voters" – even in the period when this poll was carried out, less than a month before the elections, they hadn't decided who to vote for. That means that big shifts between the results of our poll and the actual election results among the Flemish student population are

likely. At some level, I'm worried about this, since it implies that electoral behaviour is highly dependent on individual events.

**To what extent do universities alter their students' voting behaviour? Are there differences between the average first-year student and a well-rounded Master's student, for instance?**

A few years ago, we compared a group of students' political opinions from when they entered university with those they held four years later. We didn't find big differences. So the impact of following higher education

turned out to be rather marginal. On the other hand, this strengthens our thesis that the choice of which university to attend in Flanders still heavily depends on ideology – if not of the students themselves, then of their parents.

**Should universities keep the political profile of their students in mind? Or should they be fully neutral institutions when it comes to politics?**

I think universities should encourage their students to talk about politics and to discuss ideas about society in an open and respectful way. In order to do so, it might be interesting to know the political opinions and preferences of students because teachers then could offer a



counterweight. A university should of course not try to influence the political preferences of students. But we have a moral duty to make them reflect on their own ideas and preferences. Interview by Senne Starckx

## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Ostend at Anchor

Flanders' biggest maritime festival is an annual gathering of classic ships from all over Europe. The theme this year is the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Ostend at the end of the Second World War. Twenty "little ships" that participated in the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940 will attend. *29 May-1 June, free*

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

### Taste of Ghent

Five-day culinary festival in the heart of Ghent, with gourmet chefs, food stands, cooking demos, wine tasting, beer and cheese pairing, workshops for kids and gardeners and more. *28 May-1 June, Emile Brauplein, Ghent, free, some workshops €10*

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

### Open Church Days

For the seventh year in a row, the churches of Belgium will open their doors to the public for two days. The emphasis is on the role of churches in the community and as part of our cultural heritage. This year, the theme is the centenary of the First World War, with concerts and exhibitions at some locations. *31 May-1 June, free*

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

### Summer scavenger hunt

Each summer, Flemish cultural organisation Davidsfonds organises a scavenger hunt in a different region. This year it's around Hasselt and Genk in Limburg. Choose from bike or car routes, and either family-oriented or more challenging questions for a chance at prizes. *31 May-14 September, €19 including guidebook, from Tourism Hasselt, Maastrichterstraat 59*

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

### Folkloric Harbour Festival

Free outdoor festival with live music, antique and flea markets, carnival rides, folk dancing, folkloric giants and fisherman's parade on Sunday. With North Sea Folk & Shanty Festival on Friday and Saturday. *29 May-1 June, Blankenberg harbour*

► <http://cultuur.blankenberg.be>

### Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition

This blockbuster traveling expo focuses on items from the famous shipwreck recovered from the ocean floor. New sections for the Belgian edition feature the lives of 27 Belgians who were on board as well as Belgium during the Belle Epoque. *31 May-30 September, Paleis 2, Brussels Expo, Belgiëplein, Heizel, €15.90*

► [www.expo-titanic.be](http://www.expo-titanic.be)

# One slow coffee, please

## Brussels embraces speciality coffee trend with multiple coffee bar openings

Katrien Lindemans

**W**hile the rest of the world was sipping syrup-flavoured coffees, Brusselaars looking for a decent take-away coffee house have had their work cut out for them. Until now. In recent months, the capital seems to have caught up with the caffeine trend, with new speciality coffee houses popping up across its districts.

The latest newcomer is Bocca Moka near the Stefania roundabout in the city's Sint-Gillis district. It's run by Karina Salieva, who opened the bar because of her absolute love for coffee. "I used to work as a sales representative for a hotel chain," she says. "In every city, I saw these lovely coffee places but somehow in my hometown of Brussels, there wasn't anything like that."

About a year ago, she decided to start something on her own. She quit her job and found herself on a plane to Italy for an intense barista training.

“

*Locals are not familiar with this kind of coffee drinking*

"I wanted to distinguish myself from other coffee bars and focus on different brewing methods," Salieva explains. "The V60 ceramic drip and Aeropress weren't being used in Brussels, so I decided to focus on those and add even more options."

### BITE

#### Father's Day on the Farm

If you're lucky enough to have a special father nearby – your own father or the father of your children – think about treating him to breakfast this Father's Day on 8 June. And not in bed, but rather on a real working farm. Choose from 16 farms across East and West Flanders, all of which are swinging their barn doors wide open for the occasion.

Families are invited to spend their Sunday morning in the countryside, often in the company of one or more four-legged beings, and tuck into farm-fresh products. Depending on the farm, this could mean Dad is in for some cheese and yoghurt, bacon and eggs, breads and pastries, jams, juices and more.

All 16 farms have something unique to offer, but some stand out for their most prized product or special Father's Day activity. In West Flanders: Den IJssbeer, a dairy farm in Meulebeke, is worth



Coffee houses and espresso bars using slow brewing methods have filled a niche in Brussels

At Bocca Moka (*pictured*) you can order Italian coffee straight from the mocha maker or a cup brewed by a Japanese siphon, a contraption that slowly heats the water through a halogen lamp. Soon to be added to the range of options: molecular coffee – a first in Belgium. "It's an experience similar to a hookah pipe, where you basically inhale the coffee," Salieva explains. All these methods take a little time, hence the umbrella term "slow coffee". But if you love coffee, it's worth the wait, since the slow brewing process really brings out

the flavour of the beans. "The speciality coffees are made with 100% single origin coffee; for the cappuccinos or espressos, I use an Italian blend of 80% Arabica and 20% Robusta," says Salieva. Finding the right spot for the bar proved a challenge. Salieva wanted to set up shop in the city centre, the European quarter or the Louiza area. "It took me about five months before I found a space that felt right for my project," she says. But since the beginning of May, the many shoppers, tourists and office workers in the upscale

area have a new spot to still their caffeine cravings. "Because of the neighbouring Italian embassy and school, I see a lot of Italian customers," Salieva says. "They drink their mochas strong – no milk or sugar – and often just standing at the bar."

Visiting tourists also have their own preferences. "They are quite keen on single-origin coffees and, as many of them are used to speciality bars, have no trouble choosing their brewing method."

For the city's locals, all this is still uncharted territory. "They're not familiar with this kind of coffee drinking," Salieva explains, "but they are very interested in the process and always want to know more about it."

Besides an extensive list of coffee options, Bocca Moka also serves muffins, cookies and cake, and Salieva has teamed up with an American supplier for her bagels. Different coffee makers and coffee beans are also sold at the bar, should customers want to test their own barista skills at home.

#### MORE SPECIALITY COFFEE BARS IN BRUSSELS

The story of OR Coffee began in 2001 with a small coffee roaster in Aalst, East Flanders. Partners Katrien Pauwels and Tom Janssen began from scratch, teaching themselves everything they needed to know about coffee.

They opened their first coffee bar in Ghent to attract a bigger crowd. It worked out so well, they opened a location in Brussels a few years later, close to the Beurs, followed by a second one just this year on Jourdanplein, right in the European quarter.

Pauwels and Janssen go many extra miles to serve the perfect cup, since they buy all their coffee directly from farmers across the world.

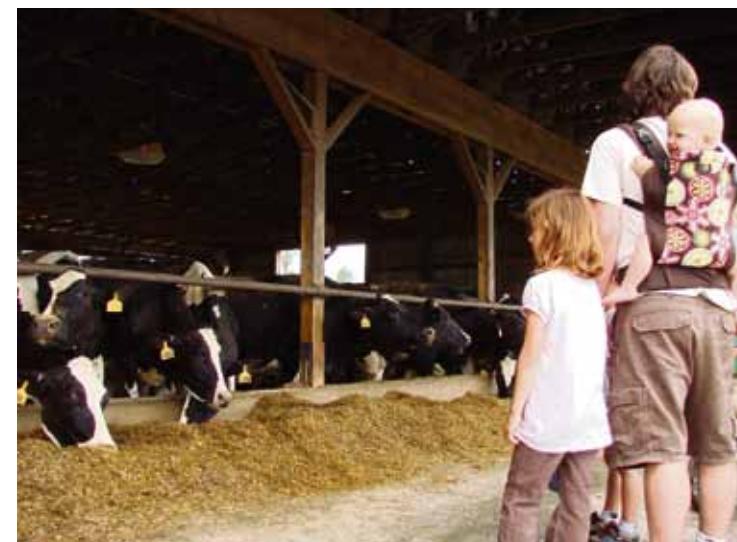
The OR owners plan to open a second coffee bar in

Ghent next year.

Located at the end of Louizalaan, Café de la Presse opened at the beginning of 2011 and has quickly become a gathering place for trendy coffee drinkers. Three years on, owner François Lafontaine has decided to branch out. At his new Café du Sablon in Grote Zavel, everything revolves around slow coffee. There's even a small indoor roaster.

While the cappuccino is the star of the menu at Café de la Presse, at Café du Sablon it's all about "slow drip". Customers choose the extraction method – Chemex, V60, Aeropress – pick their single-origin beans and enjoy their slow coffees.

Robyn Boyle



visiting for its scrummy ice cream cakes alone. IJshoeve d'Hooghe Scheure in Harelbeke, meanwhile, offers ice cream and carriage rides among the cows.

For its Father's Day breakfast, Het Warandehof in Alveringem, a root

vegetable farm specialising in rhubarb, will bake its own bread in a wood-burning oven. Pick your own raspberries and strawberries at 't Goed ter Heule in Menen, or come early to see the cows getting milked at 't Motelhof in Hooglede.

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

# A saint's lost music

## A 19th-century manuscript found in a basement may have been written by Father Damien

Toon Lambrechts

**C**leaning up the basement can lead to unexpected surprises. The Leuven documentation centre Damiaan Vandaag (Damien Today) recently found a music manuscript that had been lying there unseen for 30 years.

The piece contains Latin and Hawaiian songs from the era of Father Damien, the 19th-century Flemish priest who worked with lepers in Hawaii and was canonised in 2009. Researchers are now wondering whether he wrote it himself.

But how could such an important piece have lain untouched for so long? "That's a good question," says Ruben Boon, project manager at Damiaan Vandaag. "The monks of the order of the Picpus in Leuven collected a lot of objects during that time. Later, the collection in the Damien Museum in his home town, Tremelo, was reorganised, and some folkloric Hawaiian pieces were removed from the museum and stocked here, including a chest." That chest remained untouched in the basement for 30 years, until one day, Boon and his colleagues decided to see what was inside. "It was a very heavy chest; two men were needed to lift the lid. We found some braiding, and at first this piece appeared to be just a mat. But somehow it looked more authentic than the rest. We unfolded it, and it turned out to be a band of woven pandanus leaves with pages reinforced with kapa, both traditional Hawaiian materials."

On the first pages, Boon and his colleagues found the Mass in Latin, and further inside were Hawaiian songs. "That gave us an indication that the book was a choir book, but



Flemish soprano Noémie Schellens will sing pieces from the newly found songbook next spring

that it was also used to teach people to sing," Boon explains. "An expert from Resonant, the Flemish Centre for Musical Heritage, told us that it was not text but the Hawaiian way of writing down notes."

The Hawaiian language, continues Boon, has no dental consonants – sounds that are produced by putting the tongue against

the upper teeth – "so 'do' for them is unpronounceable. Therefore, the music notes have different names."

They had a musical manuscript from the mission in Hawaii, which was dated to the second half of the 19th century using an old museum catalogue. Could it have been written by Father Damien?

© Robie Maes "We do not know," is Boon's short answer. "It is from the same period as his stay at the leper colony of Molokai, and from Father Damien's letters we know that Damien formed a group of musicians, provided songbooks and made instruments himself. But we also know that he often lacked songbooks, just like other missionaries on the island. So maybe that's why somebody made a songbook themselves." It is possible to use handwriting analysis to determine whether Damien or someone from his immediate surroundings is the author of the manuscript. But for now, the priority is to protect the fragile paper.

"Whether or not Father Damien is the author, the piece gives a unique insight into the role of music in the mission in Hawaii," says Boon. "It is also an important intercultural document. The songs and the melody are Western, the language and notation Hawaiian. We have done a survey of several museums, including in Hawaii, but no one has a piece like this."

Damiaan Vandaag has enlisted the help of Boekensteun, a new crowdfunding project that focuses on books, both new releases and heritage pieces. The appeal has already reached its target, and then some: Flemish soprano Noémie Schellens and Leuven-based choir Camerata Aetas Nova have put their weight behind the project. Next May, when the manuscript will be restored, a performance is scheduled to bring the music back to life.

"Restoring this document just to put it back in the archive would be a pity," says Boon. "It offers a new, unexpected angle on the well-known story of Father Damien."

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

# A moveable feast

## Vrienden van de Smaak introduces food lovers to local produce, top chefs and each other

Diana Goodwin

**O**n a perfect spring day, my husband and I stood in the courtyard of a 17th-century farmhouse, sipping cocktails and chatting with fellow guests. Our host, Didier Bastiaens, mounted an overturned apple crate and welcomed us to the first instalment of Vrienden van de Smaak (Friends of Taste), a moveable feast that travels around the Flemish countryside throughout the summer. Vrienden van de Smaak is now in its third year of bringing together diners, local producers and celebrated chefs in unique outdoor locations. The locations and chefs vary, though a few chefs return every year.

Our dinner took us to the privately owned Herkenrode farm in Limburg, which was originally built for the nuns of Herkenrode Abbey. The menu, prepared by chef Vincent Tibau, incorporated local agricultural products as well as beer for each course from local craft brewers. Two of the three brewers featured on the menu were present among the diners and gave a brief explanation of each beer as it was poured.

The dinner started in the farm's courtyard with cocktails prepared by mixologist Jef Berben and apple juice from Haspengouw. We nibbled on hors d'oeuvres that included the Flemish classic rabbit with prunes, prepared with Eau-de-Bière from Wilderen Brewery, and bite-sized cheese croquettes made with Wilderen Kanunnik, a blonde tripel. After the introduction, we had a guided tour of the premises, which includes a recently restored monumental tithe barn from 1734, before passing through a gate leading to a wide lawn where a long communal table was set.

For Bastiaens, it's not just about the food. "We want to bring people together. We want people to meet each other and have a real conversation." The *vrienden*, it turns out, are just as important as the *smaak*. As he puts it: "With friends you are not formal; you don't feel stressed."

The dinners are relaxed, with Bastiaens and his minimal crew serving in jeans and T-shirts. "It's not the theatre you make around the food but the food that's important,"



© Raf Ketelaers he explains. "Purity and authenticity, that's what's important, and not whether I have five wine glasses on the table."

And yet the food was anything but casual. The first course, beef tartare garnished with local watercress, was served with La Cress, a crisp, blond beer made with watercress. This was followed by what turned out to be my favourite dish – salmon marinated in Wilderen gin and served with tender green

Regalys asparagus from Gingelom, a surprising treat in Flanders, where white asparagus usually holds sway. Jessenhofke RGLR, an organic blond beer, complemented the fish.

The main course was served in two instalments: slow-roasted local pork on a bed of farro, fava beans and celery, then pork cheeks braised in Wilderen Cuvée Clarisse, a dark brown ale. The meat was meltingly tender and flavourful, the mix of plump beans, earthy

spelt and crunchy celery the perfect accompaniment. Herkenrode Bruin, beer from the abbey's own label, provided an appropriate pairing in both taste and its historical associations with the location.

The quality and variety of the dishes are all the more impressive when you consider that everything was produced from an outdoor kitchen comprising two charcoal grills and a gas-powered paella pan. The chef and his team laboured furiously for the four hours it took to serve the four courses, all within view of the diners.

After dessert – fresh berries with a granita of Wilderen Kriek – we moved into the barn for coffee, tea and mini apple turnovers.

The next dinner is on 8 June, and a highlight of the season will be dinner at a private castle in Sint-Pieters-Voeren (also in Limburg) with the chef of Michelin-starred Château Neercanne over the border in Maastricht. One dinner each season is completely meatless, prepared by chef Philippe Van den Bulck of digital channel Njam!

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

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# “All memory is fiction”

Gaea Schoeters' second novel looks at doomed romance through the prism of world history

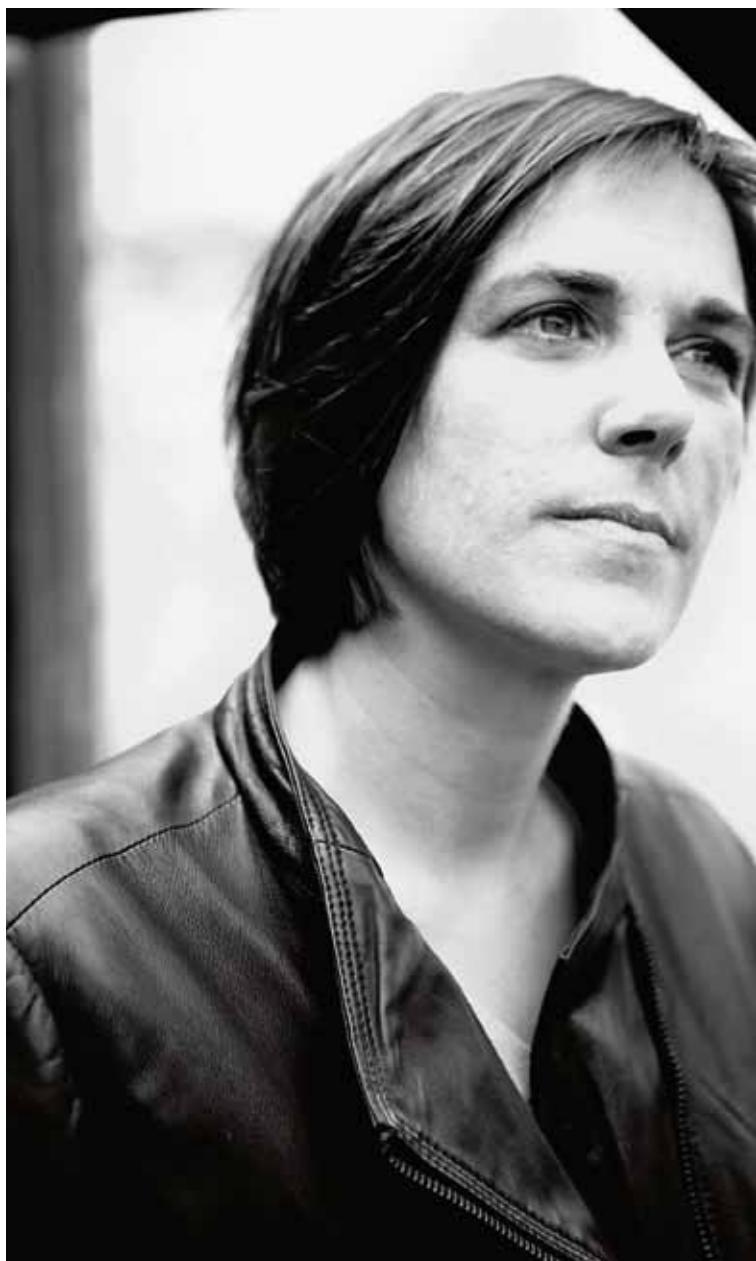
Rebecca Benoot

With her second novel, Flemish journalist and screenwriter Gaea Schoeters finds that fact and fiction have a way of influencing each other.

Gaea Schoeters is a busy woman: If she's not working as a journalist or screenwriter, she's writing books. The first appeared in 2009 after a seven-month road trip through Iran by motorcycle and was appropriately called *Meisjes, Moslims en Motoren* (Girls, Muslims and Motors). It was followed in 2011 by her first novel, *Diggers*, a thriller set in Flanders Fields. In her second fictional endeavour, *De kunst van het vallen* (The Art of Falling), Schoeters shows us what happens when love, classical music and history collide. What started out as a novella bathed in nostalgia – a sentiment all characters are afflicted by in one way or another – soon became much more than that. “My previous novel was 600-plus pages, so I intended to keep it short this time round,” Schoeters explains. “Love and loss were my initial subjects, but, because they are topics with a lot of wiggle room, I decided I could only write about them if the structure was very tight. So I went in search of a form that forced me to stick to the story.”

The narrator of *De kunst van het vallen* is a pianist who has an affair with the wife of a conductor. When the woman finally decides to leave her husband, things fall apart rapidly. Unable to play a single note after their break-up, the narrator, whose sex is undefined for the most part of the novel, meets Alex, a diver, at the local swimming pool.

After the narrator is encouraged by Alex to start playing again, Katharina, a Russian pianist who fled the Soviet Union, enters the



© Koen Broos

scene as a new coach. Once again, the narrator embarks on an affair to remember.

Reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, the main character's gender, or lack thereof, is an

intriguing aspect of the novel. “Initially I didn't want to reveal the sex of the narrator,” Schoeters says, “but I wanted to make a statement about the role of fiction. I believe as an author you are responsible

for half the novel: The other half is reliant on the interpretation of the reader. Readers look for things to relate to in a novel, and these are different for everyone.”

Although frustrating at first, this offers the readers an interesting main character who stays fairly anonymous, giving us the chance to fill in the blanks.

wasn't sure which path to take or which images or metaphors to use, but gradually she discovered that, in all those historical facts and tales, there were links with her love story. Fact and fiction influenced each other.

“Because the main characters are pianists,” she says, “the structure was actually handed to me, which

“History is also composed of stories, and it became my way of telling this story

The second part of the novel recounts the events slightly differently, since “memories are always fiction, especially when they actually happened,” as Schoeters writes. Add a little amnesia to the mix, and the result is a novel about dealing with the past and coming to terms with the future.

Yet the core tale is alternated with chapters about historic events featuring an array of characters such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Yuri Gagarin, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sergei Rachmaninoff. All characters symbolise something, creating several layers and adding an uncanny depth to the basic story, which is told over numerous short chapters.

“An affair that ends badly is a universal cliché,” Schoeters says, “which is why I didn't want to tell that story in too much detail. History was a way to look at the situation from a distance and describe those sentiments in a whole other, universal manner. History in a sense is also composed of stories, and, in this novel, it became my way of telling this story.”

When Schoeters started writing, she

is why the novel is constructed like a piece of classical music. The challenge was finding a piece that I could sculpt the novel on.”

The composition however, is sometimes a little too dominant, drawing our attention away from the devastatingly beautiful plot. Nonetheless, it is a bold choice to contrast a love affair, a personal piece of history, with world history. To quote *De kunst van het vallen* once again: “Those who want to experience life during a dictatorship should try an affair. Every telephone conversation, every text message is an irresponsible risk.”

Nonetheless, the serious and often tragic subjects are presented to us in such a playful way that you can't help but be captivated by these multiple realities.

*De Kunst van het vallen* is an ambitious novel full of mesmerising characters, anecdotes and history that mirror the simple yet poignant tale at the heart of the book. Filled with vivid imagery and powerful metaphors, it is a novel of ideas about time, coincidence and memory.

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

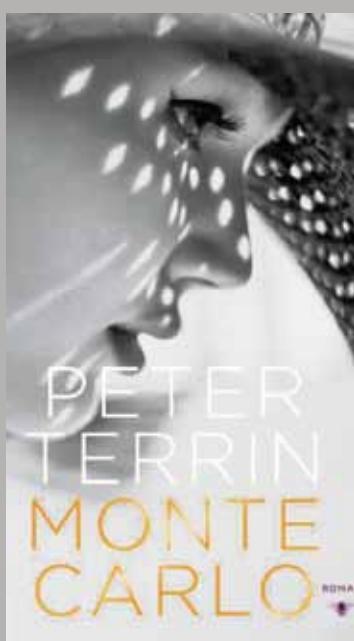
## FRESH FICTION

### Monte Carlo

Peter Terrin • De Bezige Bij

Peter Terrin follows up his award-winning novel *Post Mortem* with a story revolving around Formula 1 racing. Mechanic Jack saves the life of a young and voluptuous actress named DeeDee in Monte Carlo, where we follow his descent from adoration to self-preservation. Terrin's subtle and subdued storytelling turn this potentially sensational joyride into a work of art where no stone is left unturned and not a single word is superfluous. As he's pursued by inevitable tragedy, Jack and his escapades will linger.

★★★★



### Dood water (Dead Water)

Toni Coppers • Manteau

Thriller author Toni Coppers was nominated for the Diamanten Kogel in 2010 for his third novel starring inspector Liese Meerhout, whose adventure will hit the small screen in 2015 on VTM. In *Dood water*, Albrecht Stuyt, a retired mission priest, has disappeared after facing charges of unholy relations with several young boys. Meerhout investigates. Stuyt's pipe is eventually found on the banks of the Scheldt next to the body of a former prostitute. Several days later he turns up strangled on the same location. *Dood water* is a classic police procedural, no more, no less.

★★★★

### Sisterka

Marijke Libert • De Bezige Bij

Former journalist Marijke Libert's third book is literary non-fiction in which she tells the story of her 95-year-old great-uncle Ephrem. After a lifetime of silence on the matter, Ephrem decides to tell his relatives that, during the First World War, when he was a wounded soldier in a London hospital, he had an affair with a nurse, resulting in the possible birth of his only child. He broke all contact with Sisterka and led an uneventful and childless life in a Flemish village. Libert went in search of this mysterious figure, creating a tale where fact and fiction go hand in hand, in an attempt to clear up a lingering mystery that has haunted Ephrem all his life. ★★★★

### Het boek der ontwenning (The Book of Withdrawal)

Geert Colpaert • Van Halewijk

In a rehab facility, several alcoholics plod through the same old therapy sessions every day, until a new therapist arrives. They each start to blossom, discovering hidden talents and boosting their rehabilitation. At 58, VRT writer Geert Colpaert is finally debuting his first novel, a lovely work that illustrates how people are capable of fulfilling their potential, with a little encouragement and support. Simple and heart-warming, *Het boek* drifts on a pool of social commentary that makes you question the core of humanity and the capabilities of mankind.

## WEEK IN ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Commendation for Kazerne Dossin

Mechelen's Kazerne Dossin Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre on Holocaust and Human Rights has been given a special commendation at the European Museum of the Year Awards (EMYA). The jury paired the prize with the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial in Germany. "A joint special commendation goes to these two museums for their courage in opening up their institutions to the future and seeking new 'ownership' relationships, within the context of the Second World War," the jury wrote. Dossin, said the jury, is "a museum that makes clear statements and is thereby exceptionally courageous". Kazerne Dossin was the only Belgian museum to be nominated for the EMYA's grand prize of best museum of the year, which went to the Museum of Innocence in Istanbul.

## €2 million for nine film productions

Flemish government agency Screen Flanders has awarded a total of €2 million to nine film productions. The funding is awarded on the condition that each production spend as much in the region as it has received. Because generally much more is spent in the region than received, the money awarded, says Screen Flanders, should assure a total expenditure in Flanders of more than €9 million.

Included in the list of productions are *Belgica*, the new film by Felix van Groeningen, the Oscar-nominated director of *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. Also receiving funding are *Galloping Mind*, the feature film debut by famed Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus, and Geoffrey Enthoven's next movie, currently going by working title *Winnipeg*.

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

## New dancers for Royal Ballet Flanders

Royal Ballet Flanders has hired several new dancers ahead of its 2014-15 season, including Nancy Osbaldeston of the English National Ballet (ENB) and American-Cypriot dancer Anastasia Paschali. Osbaldeston won ENB's Emerging Dancer Competition last year. Paschali is joining from Leipzig Ballet; she has also danced with the Royal Danish Ballet. Soloist Jessica Teague, meanwhile, is leaving the company, and first soloist Altea Nunez is expecting her second child. Nunez will return next season to create a ballet for Choreolab and will be involved in educational projects.

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

## The eyes have it

## Antwerp doctor turns fascination with the body into photography exhibitions

Rebecca Benoot

Some time ago, doctor Jan Kersschot became so fascinated with his patients' hands that he transformed his practice's storage room into a photo studio where he began taking pictures of patients whose hands tickled his fancy.

His newfound passion led to *Handscapes* and *SkinScapes*, two exhibitions that transform the human form into abstract, almost alien, landscapes that change the way we perceive our own bodies.

Simple black-and-white photography, stripped of editing tricks or Photoshop, has become Kersschot's trademark, giving us a pure, realistic and almost uncanny perspective of a subject often taken for granted. His fresh outlook, influenced by his clinical background, makes the ordinary look extraordinary.

rooms at Studio Inspiration in Antwerp: a dark and intimate one and a light and airy counterpart. It's a duality that can also be found in Kersschot's photography, which cascades along the line between blurry and fully focused.

The eyes, shot in extreme close up, aren't just detailed entities, but give us a chance to look beyond the physical – straight into the depths of the metaphysical. Even when the eyes are shown closed, Kersschot plays with light and shadow, hinting at what lies beneath.

"Everyone sees something different," he says. "Some see hope, others sadness, and that's what makes these photographs so special and personal. Ultimately, they are the same eyes, but, depending on their state of mind, viewers will experience them differently. The photographs are abstract enough



*Some see hope, others sadness, and that's what makes these photographs so special*

His new show is *Eyescapes*. "Many people haven't seen an eye from this close before," the Antwerp-based doctor-cum-photographer tells me. "It seems familiar, but you see things that you otherwise wouldn't notice through the photos. There is a sense of discovery. It's actually about looking, solely looking at something and absorbing the image in its unadulterated form." It might seem banal at first, but it's something few contemporary photographers are doing. *Eyescapes* is displayed over two

that you can fill in the blanks." The longer you look at the photographs, the more you see, and that's exactly what Kersschot is after. He believes that you have to take your time to soak them up and let them talk to you, a method he enthusiastically calls "slow looking". Because of the deceptively simple lighting, subject and techniques, his work is also very accessible, evoking indescribable feelings in his patients, unassuming spectators and even the likes of the late art

curator Jan Hoet, whose hands he captured on film. "My imagery is my alphabet," says Kersschot. "Each photograph is a letter with which I tell a story; I just don't know what it's about. I like creating a dialogue with the viewers."

Kersschot says that many visitors to the exhibition so far have really responded to the work. "They recognise and connect with the photographs on an emotional level and often leave with a sense of wonder that even surprises me sometimes."

*Eyescapes* is art for the people, created by a man whose lack of

formal artistic training has given him a unique view. So unique that many of Flanders' artistic greats – Jan Fabre, Carl De Keyser and Jef Neve, to name a few – have all modelled for him.

Kersschot's work is all about texture and transformation, looking at things from a different perspective and opening our eyes to the bountiful beauty of the delicate details of the human form. Showing only 10 pieces at a time in his own gallery, he has taken the time to experiment and develop his craft, leading him to uncharted and, even for him, unexpected territory.

Studio Inspiration  
Volkstraat 38, Antwerp  
► [www.studioinspiration.be](http://www.studioinspiration.be)

## Antwerp exhibition puts children in front of the lens

Saying that the photographs in *Nonage*, at Antwerp's Gallery Fifty One, are all of children is something of a simplification. They range from toddlers, clearly at the mercy of the camera, to assured young adults, confident about how they look.

But none of the pictures is without some kind of ambiguity, which makes this modest exhibition a fascinating opportunity to think about how young people are photographed.

The most formal records of childhood are studio shots. Belgian photographer Norbert Ghisoland's 1925 image shows a plump little boy in knitted shorts, barely able to hold still in front of a painted landscape. The staging is similar in Malian photographer Seydou Keita's 1957 image of twin baby girls, apparently baffled to be in European clothes (*pictured*). In more recent photographs the situation becomes more complex.



Roger Ballen's shot of a girl sleeping beneath a portrait of a stern elderly couple, a cat perched on her hip, might be an unguarded moment or pure theatre. Either way, it is a beautiful image.

Meanwhile Elinor Carucci's

Renaissance iconography in its framing of a child's hand reaching up to a mother's cheek.

In parallel with these staged images is a line of more documentary photography, intended to record children at play or just wandering the streets. American youth looms large, from New York in the mid-20th century, as recorded by Arthur Leipzig, Jan Yoors and Bruce Davidson, to the contemporary California of Deanna Templeton. My favourite is by Helen Levitt, a small photographic proof from around 1942 that shows a boy battling the spray from a fire hydrant with an open umbrella. It has all the spontaneity of street photography, yet also suggests a struggle against the rush to adulthood. Ian Mundell

Gallery Fifty One  
Zirkstraat 20, Antwerp  
► [www.gallery51.com](http://www.gallery51.com)

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4-28 June | Beursschouwburg, Brussels

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

Summer's (almost) here, which means that Brussels' Beursschouwburg is about to open its fabulous rooftop terrace for weeks of music and film in the event Out Loud! Music is at the centre of the films, all from the 1970s, projected on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 22.30. Of course, *The Last Waltz* has to be in the selection: This film by Martin Scorsese about the last concert of America's famous roots rock ensemble The Band, became a bellwether for all future concert documentaries. Another classic is *Saturday Night Fever* with John Travolta and disco kings the Bee Gees. But Out Loud! also presents lesser-known gems, like *Cracked Actor*, a 1975 BBC documentary on the most chameleonic musician of that time, David Bowie. And if you want to experience how punk felt in 1977, you shouldn't miss *Punk in London* by the (then) young German director Wolfgang Büld.

*Wattstax*, meanwhile, is a documentary about the 1972 Wattstax music festival, the Afro-American answer to Woodstock. Shortly before the famous "rumble in the jungle" in 1974 between Foreman and Ali, an amazing throng of musicians played in Kinshasa. *Soul Power*, a documentary from 2009, collects backstage stories and concert clips.

Musically, Out Loud!, gives a platform, on Fridays and Saturdays, to mostly



unknown bands that deserve to win larger audiences. Black Cassette, the zesty Antwerp ensemble of Dutchman Sjoerd Bruil, for instance. Or the electronic lo-fi one-man band How To Dress Well, otherwise known as Brooklynite Tom Krell.

The first music night at Out Loud!, on 6 June, starts with a mix-tape market, where you can sell or trade your homebrewed tapes. What a great idea! I'll just have to get my cassette player working again. **Christophe Verbiest**

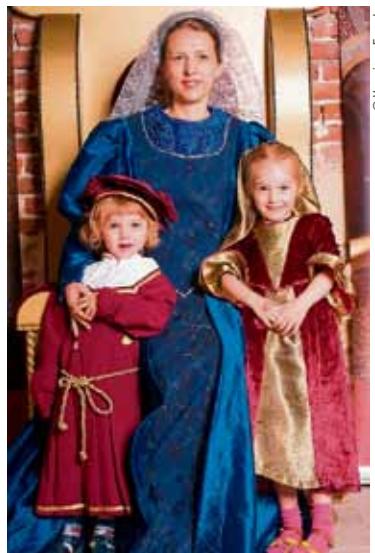
## FAMILY

### Carolus V Family Day

1 June, from 10.00 | Coudenberg, Brussels

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

The ruins of Coudenberg on Brussels' Paleizenplein aren't much to look at these days, but over 500 years ago the palace was the grandest in all of Europe, and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V ruled said continent from this very place. The summer-long Carolus V Festival aims to bring that period to life with a series of themed events. This Family Day is the perfect excuse to visit the remains of the palace, which will be filled for the occasion with performers in period costume. You'll hear medieval music, taste medieval cuisine and witness medieval sport. You and the young ones will even get the chance to play architect to the Emperor in an interactive 3D workshop. **Georgio Valentino**



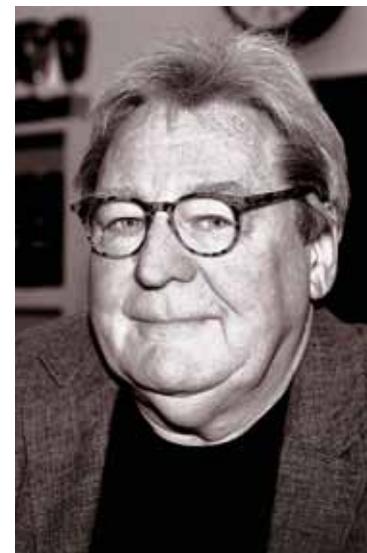
## FILM

### Brussels Film Festival

6-14 June | Flagey & Cinematek, Brussels

► [www.brff.be](http://www.brff.be)

This 12th edition of the European film extravaganza takes place at two of the capital's silver screen centres, Flagey and Cinematek. Seventy features will be screened over the course of the week, and one of them will win the coveted Golden Iris. This year's guest of honour is British director Alan Parker (pictured), who will present his cult masterpiece *The Commitments*. Indeed, BRFF is screening all 14 of Parker's feature films, including *Midnight Express* and *Mississippi Burning*, as part of a career retrospective. The man will also share trade secrets in a master class for aspiring filmmakers. Festival-goers can also enjoy concerts and even a round of cinematic speed-dating. **GV**



## CONCERT

GET TICKETS NOW

### Lily Allen

7 November, 20.00 | Vorst Nationaal, Brussels

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

British pop singer Lily Allen was only 20 when she was catapulted to stardom by the 2006 hit "Smile". She worked hard in her first flush of fame, releasing two albums and a string of chart-topping singles in just three years. Then she announced her retirement from the music business. As if. Five years later she's back with her third album, *Sheezus* and, by all appearances, she's back to her old rhythm. Not only is she touring Europe in the autumn, but she's already recorded half of her fourth as-yet-untitled album and declared that it shall be her last. Stop me if you've heard this one before. **GV**



## CONCERT

**Laïs:** Laïs' debut in the 1990s caused a folk revival in Flanders thanks to the trio's knack for fitting ancient folk songs with a modern sound. Twenty years on, the angelic voices of Jorunn, Nathalie and Annelies are more in tune than ever as Laïs performs a list of their best-loved songs 29 May 20.00, *Ancienne Belgique*, Anspachlaan 110, Brussels

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

### Gabriel Rios:

GET TICKETS NOW

The Puerto Rican singer-songwriter from Ghent makes his comeback this year with a new album, *This Marauder's Midnight*, a collection of purely simple yet powerful songs the singer created during his three-year hiatus in New York City 24 October 20.00 at *Koninklijk Circus, Brussels*

► [www.cirque-royal.org](http://www.cirque-royal.org)

## THEATRE

**D Festival:** Fourth edition of the international festival of contemporary dance, featuring *Harsh Songs* by Mauro Paccagnella, *Un Bruit* by Fanny Brouyaux, *Hérétiques* by Ayelen Parolin, *Monsters* by Sabina Scarlat and Nicanor de Elia and *Lands* by Eléonore Valère-Lachky, in addition to exhibitions, concerts and special performances for children 3-14 June at *Théâtre Marni, de Vergniestraat*, and *Théâtre Les Tanneurs, Huidenvettersstraat 75, Brussels*

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

## VISUAL ARTS

**100 Years in the Balkans: The Comic Strip in Resistance:** Collection of comic strips from the six republics that made up the former Yugoslavia, reflecting the turbulent history of this region of Europe and the difficulties artists had to overcome in the aftermath of civil war, including a lack of paper 3 June to 16 November at *Belgian Comic Strip Centre, Zandstraat, Brussels*

► [www.comicscenter.net](http://www.comicscenter.net)

## FESTIVAL

**CordeFactum Guitar Festival:** Sixth edition of the guitar and instrument festival organised by the Centre for Musical Instrument Making, featuring concerts by various international steel-string, flamenco and classical guitarists, lectures on different types of guitars, exhibition of the works of the world's top guitar builders, films and documentaries about guitars and more 29 May to 1 June at *Ursel Castle, Wolfgang d'Urselstraat 9, Hingene (Antwerp province)*

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

## EVENT

### Procession of the Holy Blood

29 May, from 8.30 | Across Bruges

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

The Feast of Ascension is a big deal all across the Catholic world, but in Bruges, it's huge. You see, the city's Basilica of the Holy Blood boasts a relic seeped in Jesus Christ's blood (hence the name). Every year, on Ascension Thursday, the Bishop of Bruges and his people celebrate this possession even more than

usual, dressing up in Crusader garb and taking the relic out for a stroll through town. For believers, it's a moving experience; for seculars, it's an immersive history lesson. For tech-heads, it's an opportunity to install the Holy Blood Basilica's app iHolyblood. We're not even kidding. **GV**



# Talking Dutch

## How does your garden grow?

Derek Blyth

You might have thought that anything goes in Flanders when it comes to decorating your front garden. You see the strangest things in Flemish suburban gardens, from replica Classical Greek statues to abandoned rusting Cadillacs. But it seems there are rules to be obeyed, at least if you live in the Lange Velden housing development in the Ghent district of Wondelgem.

*Tachtig gezinnen in een verkaveling in Wondelgem bij Gent moeten hun tuin heraanleggen* – 80 families in a development in Wondelgem have to redesign their gardens, said the story in *De Standaard*. *Niet omdat het tuinhuis te groot is, wel omdat de eigenaars enkele buxussen te weinig planten of iets te veel kiezelseentjes strooiden* – Not because the gazebo is too big, but because the owners have planted too few box hedges or they have scattered too many pebblestones.

I couldn't believe this when I first read it. Could they really be telling Flemish people what to plant in their front gardens? But then it became clear what was happening. Someone had complained.

*De bal ging aan het rollen toen één inwoner een klacht indiende tegen enkele buren* – It all started when one neighbour



filed an official complaint against some of his neighbours. *Daarop gingen controleurs in de hele wijk de plantjes tellen* – Then the inspectors went through the whole neighbourhood counting plants. *En wat blijkt: ongeveer tachtig gezinnen hebben de voorschriften niet gevuld* – and here's what they found: About 80 families had not followed the regulations. It seems that the Lange Velden has some pretty tough rules about how you decorate your front garden. *De inbreuken zijn uiteenlopend: van te veel verharding in de voortuin, over een verkeerd soort haag tot te hoge bomen* – the offences are

wide-ranging, from having too much hard material in the front garden, to planting the wrong type of hedge or trees that are too tall. The rules are now being examined by the Ghent alderman for planning, Tom Balthazar. *We zullen samenzitten met de ombudswrouw en de dienst Toezicht en kijken hoe we dit kunnen oplossen* – We are going to sit down with the ombudswoman and the inspection department to see how we can solve this issue. In the meantime, it might be a good idea to hold off buying that wishing well you've always wanted for the front lawn.

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

**Roger Protz** @RogerProtzBeer  
Special Flanders Ale marks World War One <http://protzonbeer.co.uk/features/2014/05/20/flanders-ale-salutes-tommies-belgians> ... @Chiltern\_Brewer @VisitFlanders @Visit\_ANWERP @visitbelgium

**simon falvo** @1step2theleft  
For #Chocoaddicts: From Mexico to Flanders - The Fascinating History of Chocolate <http://ow.ly/x3R28> #Travel

**The British School** @BSB\_Brussels  
Can you volunteer a few hours for Special Olympics athletics meet 29/5 in Mol and swim meet 31/5 in Antwerp? Email marleen.apers@telenet.be

**Anna Barbara** @annatobur  
Hundreds gathered in front of the Jewish Museum to show support and solidarity after the #shooting in #Brussels

**Lubo Mitev** @LuboMitev  
I voted for the Flemish, Belgian and European elections yesterday. It was also the first time I vote electronically.

**In response to: Robot Zora cares for the elderly in Flanders' rest homes**  
**Barbara Smith:** Sounds like a great idea!

**In response to: €200 million from EU for Brussels canal zone**  
**Miranda Martin:** This is welcome although it is a shame to see that no mention is made of green space and parks. They are surely what is most lacking in the canal area and it seems many opportunities are being missed in allowing land to be redeveloped rather than turned over for use as green space (the area around Tour and Taxi being a prime example).

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## Poll

**Educators advise mixing students of differing abilities in one class, in accordance with the idea that those who do well will positively influence those who perform less well. What did you think?**

**a. Students with lower scores won't get enough attention and will hold back the rest. Grouping by ability is good for everyone**

31%

**b. Dividing students will stigmatise those with lower scores. Students of every level should be encouraged to work together**

69%

Our readers came in at a two-to-one majority in favour of the expectation that mixed-ability classes will be better for students of all academic abilities. The report in question is concerned with the large

gap between high and low, which in Flanders is wider than nearly anywhere else in Europe. Mixed classes undoubtedly help motivate students at lower levels. If the gap is to be reduced, that's

all that's needed. Students who perform well aren't expected to feel the benefit. The educators' proposal effectively decides they've gone high enough and now have to allow the others to catch up.

## THE LAST WORD

### Porpoise built

"Somehow or other, a basketball kept for the animals to play with among themselves found its way into the water."

A dolphin trick at Boudewijn Seapark in Bruges led to an overhead pipe being broken and falling on some visiting children and teachers, injuring six

### Class act

"First I'll be going back to school, because there are exams coming up that need to be organised and corrected."

Aalst teacher Tom De Man, who won this year's edition of *The Voice van Vlaanderen* last Friday night

### Crowd control

"There's no shortage for those who want to book for the World Cup. Even someone who wants to fly to Rio on the eve of the final will find plenty of flights to choose from."

Hans Bourlon of kids' entertainment giant Studio 100, which is being investigated by the tax authorities

Marcelo Guarany of the National Civil Aviation Agency reassures fans

### Next week's question:

Brussels' transport authority MIVB plans to spend €430 million on new driverless metro trains. What do you think?

Log in to the Flanders Today website to register your vote! [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu)