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Photos © Port of Antwerp

# Anchored ambitions

### The mind-bogglingly huge port of Antwerp is vital to our daily lives – and it's still growing



Leo Cendrowicz

More articles by Leo \ [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)

\ [WWW.PORTOFANTWERP.COM](http://WWW.PORTOFANTWERP.COM)

The port of Antwerp is already a humongous operation, handling millions of tonnes of freight every day. And it's about to get much bigger. Flanders Today took a trip behind the scenes of Europe's second biggest freight port.

The claws hover for a moment before swooping down and scooping the treasure out from the belly of a gargantuan beast. At least that was what it looks like from the bridge on the MSC Katrina, a 366-metre, 140,000-tonne container ship that is bigger than the Empire State Building yet is somehow lassoed to an Antwerp port quay. The claws belong to a container crane, the operators of which are 30m above the water line. They operate these precise clamps that grab the hooks on the corners of containers stacked up to 10 levels below deck in the hold of a ship.

They whisk the containers out of the hold, over the ship's side and on to the quayside, where straddle carriers – 15m high vehicles nicknamed elephants – wait to lift them up and stack them with thousands of others.

The rate of removal in Antwerp is 42 crates every hour, the highest productivity in Europe. The MSC Katrina has 13,000 containers, all awaiting customers: Even with six working cranes operating throughout the night, those claws will be grasping at the beast's belly for a few days. This is what the port of Antwerp does. It loads and unloads millions of containers, which pile up on the quayside like Lego blocks, spreading almost as far as the eye can see. It transfers coal, grain, oil, cars and other essentials of our daily life. It's the gateway for almost all the stuff that we use, even if we have no idea how it got to us.

Around 90% of everything we buy, from fridges to coffee, from Rice Krispies to toilet paper, from iPhones to Nikes, is carried by ship at some point in its journey to the store. And for you, dear *Flanders Today* reader, that means it probably passed through the port of Antwerp.

The scale is mind-boggling: Last year nearly 191 million tonnes of maritime freight was loaded and unloaded at Antwerp, making it Europe's second largest freight port after Rotterdam. When it comes to standard containers, Antwerp handled 8.58 million 20-foot equivalent units (or TEUs, based on 20-foot or 6.1m-long containers), with a total tonnage of 102 million. It handles other stuff, too. Containers are 54% of the total volume, but liquid bulk – mainly oil – accounts for 59.5 million tonnes; dry bulk (like minerals, chemicals or grains) more than 14 million tonnes; conventional break bulk

# NMBS rescues early and late trains

## As changes to schedule continue, one-day strike brings trains to a standstill



Alan Hope

Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

Following public protest, the national rail authority NMBS has reconsidered its new train timetable, which will come into force in December. The authority has reinstated a number of early and late trains it was planning to scrap.

One of the main complaints from train users about the new timetable was the scrapping of early and late trains, which the NMBS said have a low occupancy rate and are not economical. Users responded that they also provide a social function in offering a service to those who need it most, such as shift workers with no alternative transport options.

Complaints also came from Brussels' arts sector, with theatres and concert venues seriously concerned about attracting fewer patrons if there was no train after



© courtesy Gazet van Limburg

midnight to get them home.

The new timetable is the first major reorganisation in 16 years and leaves nothing untouched. Not one train currently running will be on the same schedule. Every train

using the Brussels North-South tunnel link, for instance, will take two minutes longer over that stretch of track in an effort to ease congestion. The new schedule will be available online for the public to

check in a few days.

Meanwhile, the socialist rail trade union ACOD took strike action for 24 hours starting on Sunday evening, leading to most train traffic nationwide being brought to a standstill on Monday. Thalys and Eurostar trains experienced delays, and there were no trains at all into or out of Brussels.

Public transport users' group TreinTramBus echoed the words last week of NMBS CEO Jo Cornu, arguing that "striking rail staff were holding passengers hostage". Last week Cornu, who was experiencing his first strike action since taking the job, said that "by striking, they are smearing the image of the NMBS".

The strike was supported by the socialist union ACOD, which complains of a shortage of staff, leading to a situation where work-

ers are unable to take days off, with up to one million vacation days unused. The other rail union, AVC Transcom, declined to take part in the action.

NMBS staff have 53 vacation days a year. Most people, said Cornu, want to take their days during holiday periods, so some workers' leave is not allowed if too many people have applied for that period. But that is not a problem caused by lack of recruitment, he said.

Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed in Flanders, accused the union of pushing their own point of view at the expense of "innocent victims". "A strike always takes workers, bosses, students and tourists as hostages," Unizo said in a statement. "The impact is even greater at the start of the holiday period."

## FC Brussels calls it a day

Brussels football club RWDM Brussels has gone into voluntary liquidation as a result of intractable financial problems, chair Johan Vermeersch announced. "It's all over," he said.

The club, known simply as FC Brussels, was based in the Molenbeek district's Edmond Machtens Stadium and played four seasons in the first class before being relegated in 2008, when the problems began to get worse.

Last April, the club failed to obtain a licence for the second division and was forced to drop to the third. Authorities brought White Star Brussels of Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe to Molenbeek and joined fans in calling for Vermeersch to step down.

RWDM is a non-profit organisation. The members of the board of management have resigned, leaving Vermeersch to apply for a liquidator to be appointed to settle the club's financial affairs. "If Molenbeek decides I have to go, and there is no replacement, then the situation is very simple," said Vermeersch. "It's a pity the club has to be sacrificed in the process."

The club's players are among its main creditors, but there is little chance of them seeing any of their money back. The club's youth players were taken over by White Star, with plans to continue the highly-regarded youth programme started by Molenbeek.

RWDM Brussels FC was formed in 2003, when KFC Strombeek, dating back to 1932, moved to the Edmond Machtens Stadium. The name refers to Racing White Daring Molenbeek, a club formed from the fusion of two other teams in 1973. That RWDM also ended in a fall to the third division and financial problems. \ AH

## Vertonghen goal sees 10-man Red Devils top group

A 10-man Belgian team grabbed a late winner last week to settle their encounter with South Korea and top their World Cup group. It's the first time in history that Belgium have won all three group matches at a World Cup.

Although Steven Defour was sent off for a shocking two-footed challenge on Kim Shin-wook, Jan Vertonghen's 77th-minute goal meant Belgium reached the second round on the back of a 100% record in the group stage.

Marc Wilmots made seven changes to the side that beat Russia earlier in the week. Key figures like Eden Hazard and Vincent Kompany were rested and others, including Manchester United's Adnan Januzaj, had a chance to make their case after two fairly uninspiring performances from the team.

By the 25th minute Belgium should have been in front, Dries Mertens somehow missing from the edge of the six-yard box after a loose ball had spun into his path. But even against what amounted essentially to a second-string Belgian side, the Koreans seemed to lack the necessary quality to really trouble their opponents.

Belgium almost threw away their advantage when Defour was sent off for his tackle on Kim on the cusp of half time. Wilmots threw on teen sensation



© Jorge Martinez/Fotoarena/Corbis

Red Devils fans in Brazil go wild when match-winner Jan Vertonghen and other players leap into the stands

Divock Origi and Tottenham winger Nacer Chadli after an hour to try and open the game up, and 15 minutes from time he was rewarded when Belgium stole in front.

The lively Origi skipped free from a defender, unleashing a powerful shot at goal. When keeper Kim Seung-gyu couldn't hold on, Vertonghen was on hand to smash home the rebound from close range.

However, Wilmots will again be

concerned that his much-fancied team have revealed little across the course of the past few weeks to strike fear into the heart of the US, their second-round opponents, who they were due to play on Tuesday as *Flanders Today* went to press. "We knew all the games were going to be tough," Wilmots said. "But even with 10 men, we still pushed forward. These guys are really hungry."

\ Leo Cendrowicz

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

### 760km

of walking paths in the newly extended Pajottenland footpath network, the work of Toerisme Vlaams-Brabant and the Pajottenland and Zenne Valley regional landscape organisation

► [www.pajot-zenne.be](http://www.pajot-zenne.be)

### 16.93

times the local average annual income required in Antwerp to buy a house, according to a study for the Flemish Parliament, making it the most expensive place to buy. Leuven came in second

### €340 million

estimated cost to insurers of the heavy hailstorms over the Pentecost weekend in Flanders, for which 142,680 claims were submitted

### 159

schoolchildren had to be rescued last week from a Flandria riverboat in the port of Antwerp after fire broke out. No-one was injured

### €7.8 million

owed by the Flemish government to the Dutch pilotage association in fees for Dutch river pilots who guided ships to Flemish ports through the Scheldt estuary at a lower tariff than legally agreed

## WEEK IN BRIEF

Contrary to what he announced last month, Mehdi Nemmouche, the French national suspected of carrying out the **shooting attack at Brussels’ Jewish Museum** last month, killing four, has appealed to the French Court of Cassation to overturn the order to extradite him to Belgium. Nemmouche was arrested in Marseilles days after the 24 May shooting. The Cassation Court now has 40 days to rule on the appeal.

Too many students are **postponing their final exams** for one day by acquiring doctor’s notes, according to professor of fiscal justice Michel Maus of the Free University of Brussels (VUB). This month, Maus had about 20 students who postponed their exams because they provided a doctor’s note, he said. “It strikes me that stomach infections, migraines and food poisonings are widespread during each exam period.” The Belgian Association of Doctors’ Syndicates responded that it is not uncommon for students to fall sick during the exam period.

Work on the **expansion of Ghent Sint-Pieters** train station, the busiest in Flanders outside of Brussels, will last until 2024, two years longer than originally planned, the organisers of the project said. When the plans were drawn up in 2007, the station saw 37,000 passengers a day. That figure has gone up to 54,000 a day, which makes it more difficult to carry out the works.

One of the men suspected of **stabbing 19-year-old Mikey Peeters** to death on the Markt in Bruges at the end of May was last week fined €1,200 and sentenced to six months suspended for driving under the influence. Steven VG, 21, from Leuven, is in custody awaiting trial for the murder, while an accomplice remains at large.

Members of the Flemish women’s organisation Femma gathered at

the Sint-Fredegandus cemetery in Antwerp last week to unveil the **restored monument to the movement’s founder**, Maria Baers. Baers was one of Belgium’s leading Christian militants for women’s rights, but her grave and headstone had fallen into disrepair. The organisation has now applied to become patron of the grave, under the scheme which allows members of the public to “adopt” a grave in Antwerp in order to keep the site maintained.

While 98% of nurses in Flemish hospitals follow **procedures for hand washing**, only 80% of doctors do, according to the government of Flanders’ Zorginspectie, or Care Inspectorate, which paid unannounced visits to all 94 Flemish hospital campuses and 56 hospitals over the last year. “The figures illustrate the importance of continued attention by policymakers and hospitals to hand hygiene.”

**Children are too often taken to school by car**, leading to the under-14 age group being 63 times more likely to be involved in a road accident while cycling than other age groups, the cyclists’ union Fietzersbond reported last week. “It’s thanks to riding along passively that children and young people are lacking in road traffic experience,” said policy director Roel De Cleen. “They also have a disadvantage when they start to learn to drive.” The answer, Fietzersbond said, is to encourage children to cycle more often.

**Motorists should be subjected to medical testing** every 10 years in order to keep their driving licences, according to the Belgian Institute for Road Safety (BIVV). The organisation said the introduction of the new electronic driver’s licence provided the opportunity for a change to the procedure. The new licence has to be renewed every 10 years. That involves a declaration of no medical bar to driving, the BIVV said, but such a declaration

should be made by a doctor, based on a number of criteria still to be decided, but including eyesight and diabetes.

Flanders is no longer in urgent need of printers, welders or geriatric care personnel, but the region does have **a shortage of chefs**, according to a new list compiled by the federal service for employment. The list of “bottleneck jobs” determines which training schemes unemployed people can follow. Flanders has need of more trained chefs, as well as specialised accountants and anyone with technical training, from sales staff to engineers.

For the next three years, the 300 students of the Sint-Lukas artschool in Brussels will take classes at the **workshop of Flemish artist Jan De Cock** in the district of Anderlecht. From next year, the school’s buildings in Schaarbeek will undergo an extensive renovation. Director Kris Bauwens looked for an alternative location and found a new home for the school at the premises of the celebrated De Cock, a former Sint-Lukas student who has exhibited his work in museums such as the MoMa in New York and London’s Tate Modern. For 20 years, De Cock has been based at a former paper-making factory in Anderlecht. De Cock will not give classes himself but will function as an advisor.

The new **minister for animal welfare** in the incoming government of Flanders will not be the agriculture minister, negotiators for the coalition parties have agreed. Animal welfare is a new responsibility for the regions under the latest state reforms, but both acting minister-president Kris Peeters – himself responsible for agriculture in the previous administration – and animal rights organisation Gaia had called for the portfolio to be separated from agriculture, for fear of a potential conflict of interest.

## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



© courtesy FNG

### Dieter Penninckx

The “most daring entrepreneur in Flanders” is the kind of bad-ass title any business person would be happy to have attributed to him or her, especially when it comes from *De Tijd*, a newspaper that deals with business on a daily basis, and isn’t always what you’d call flattering. Dieter Penninckx trained as a civil engineer at the University of Leuven, as did his wife Anja Maes and fellow student Manu Bracke, the third partner in what would become FNG Group. Their first business venture in 2003 was the purchase of a business importing clothes for children: it doesn’t sound very likely, though it does sound risky. Three years later they launched their own label, Fred & Ginger.

The company followed a “build and buy” strategy: expansion combined with takeovers, which led Wilrijk-based FNG to a situation where half of their sales were in the Netherlands, and women’s clothing had joined children’s in the portfolio, with the acquisition of the Claudia Sträter brand. In 2008, when the company launched on Euronext Brussels, turnover was €20 million; in 2013 it had climbed to €135 million. FNG now employs 850 people, with 130 of their own shops and sales points in 1,500 department

stores worldwide. When the three were about to enter the world of kids’ fashion in 2003, Bracke’s father-in-law gave them a list of 10 reasons why they should avoid the temptation: They ignored every one. “The lack of knowledge that was constantly pointed out to them at the start turned out to be their biggest advantage,” said the jury of *De Tijd*, announcing the award. It seems they approached the business of fashion as the engineers they were: “Nobody in the sector in Belgium,” noted *De Tijd*, “is so focussed on big data, systematic process control and risk management.” Jury member and corporate finance consultant Eric Verbaere noted that “the more they heard the words ‘Don’t do it’, the more determined they were. They believed in themselves.” The company has outgrown its headquarters in Wilrijk and will soon move to a new space in Mechelen, designed by none other than top architect Stéphane Beel. Another media star, economist Geert Noels, recently became a director of the group. “They have the spirit needed,” he said. “Their strength is that there are three of them; they encourage each other. And their ambitions are huge.”

## OFFSIDE

### The last wolf of Flanders \ WWW.STAM.BE

Alan Hope

Did a worker in the STAM city museum in Ghent discover the remains of the last surviving wolf in Flanders? Flemish science magazine EOS reports that a member of the museum’s staff found the mummified paw of an animal in the storeroom. There was no identifying document for the item. Genetic testing showed that the foot was that of a wolf, and that the paw had at one point been nailed to a wooden door. In the past, a premium was paid to anyone who killed a predatory animal such as a wolf. (Our ancestors were rather less concerned with issues of biodiversity, being more worried about their sheep being carried off.) Proof of the kill was a right front



© Gunnar Ries/Wikimedia Commons

foot, and the foot found at STAM just happens to be the right forefoot of a wolf. The trophies taken from bounty animals, it seems, were routinely nailed to the door of the Gravensteen in Ghent, the former castle of the counts of Flanders, as a way of demonstrating to the public that the authorities were

doing everything necessary to keep them and their sheep safe. All right, but what’s to suggest it’s the last wolf in Flanders? The last recorded wolf in what is now Flanders dates to the 18th century. It was killed in Knesselare, East Flanders, in 1736, and a premium was paid out by the Gravensteen. According to carbon dating carried out on the STAM paw, that animal was killed in about 1700. Given the margin of error, that means the STAM wolf could be, if not the very last, then certainly one of the last, to be recorded in Flanders. The wolf paw will be on display at STAM this summer before being returned to the storeroom.

## FLANDERTODAY Flanders State of the Art

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## 5TH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### Musical coalitions

After the *non* from the French-speaking Christian-democrats CDH, the centre-right federal coalition government of which former *informateur* Bart De Wever dreamed is off the table. A coalition between N-VA, CD&V, MR and CDH was halted by CDH's mistrust of N-VA. That it has linked its fate with PS in the regional governments weighed heavy on CDH's decision.

So what options does the new *informateur*, Charles Michel (MR), have?

The first one is being called the **kamikaze coalition** because MR would be the only French-speaking party in a Flemish-dominated federal government. In spite of fierce opposition and an uncertain future, the French-speaking liberals are not averse to this.

One obstacle, though, is that Open VLD would be needed for a majority in parliament. CD&V shudders at the thought of joining a coalition that favours even more right-wing economic policies. Moreover, in this formula, it has no obvious claim to the function of prime minister, which it hoped to hand to acting minister-president Kris Peeters.

To complicate matters further, Open VLD demands representation in the Flemish government if it joins a federal coalition, but N-VA and CD&V have already agreed to form a Flemish government coalition between them. Letting in Open VLD means less influence – and fewer ministers. Onto the next scenario: a continuation of the **classic tripartite**, with Christian-democrats, socialists and liberals, but no N-VA. This is parting prime minister Elio Di Rupo's dream. The election result – with a victory for N-VA, but also extra seats for the parting coalition – only reinforces his belief in this. Election results in Flanders, however, put N-VA firmly in first place, and it is widely believed that this coalition would be seen as going against the will of the voters. It is also a nightmare for CD&V, which would be seen as giving in – twice. (To PS at the federal level and to N-VA at the Flemish level.)

Peeters' party also wants to avoid the scenario of the previous term, with N-VA part of the government of Flanders and in opposition at the federal level, as that only led to greater victory for the nationalists.

Another option seems even more improbable: the **confederate coalition** of N-VA, CD&V, PS and CDH, which would reflect the regional governments' coalitions. This, however, clashes with N-VA's rhetoric. In the campaign, it presented voters with a choice between "the N-VA model or the PS model". So how then can the two ever be reconciled?

# King appoints new informateur

## New federal government formation continues with party consultations



Anja Otte

More articles by Anja \ flanderstoday.eu

After Bart De Wever's resignation as *informateur* last week, the process of forming a new federal government continued this week as the king appointed Charles Michel, president of the French-speaking liberal party MR, as the new *informateur*. Michel will begin talks, he says, "with a blank slate". De Wever's resignation was due to a deadlock, created when the French-speaking Christian democrats (CDH) rejected a starting note by Bart De Wever to form a federal government.

Michel began by meeting unions and employers' organisations and acting prime minister Elio Di Rupo. He met with De Wever, leader of Flanders' largest party, N-VA, on Monday. As *Flanders Today* went to press, he was expected to again meet with Di Rupo, this time representing the French-speaking socialists PS, along with party president Paul Magnette. A report from Michel is expected by Friday. Meanwhile, Flemish entrepreneurs fear a repeat of the outgoing "tripartite" coalition – with Christian-democrats, socialists and liberals, but without N-VA. According to a poll by Unizo, which represents Flanders' self-employed, 72%



© Francois Lenoir/Reuters/Corbis

N-VA's Bart De Wever (left) and MR's Charles Michel

would rather not see a tripartite government, even if that means a long crisis. More than half would boycott such a coalition by postponing investments, not creating extra jobs or even sending production abroad.

As it became clear De Wever's mission had reached a stalemate, the king consulted a number of political party representatives, in an attempt to avert a repeat of the long political crisis seen in 2010-2011.

At a press conference after his resignation as *informateur*, De Wever

stressed that his party remains available for the federal coalition. "This story has not ended yet. N-VA is the country's biggest party. That comes with a big responsibility." CDH, meanwhile, offered an explanation for its rejection of De Wever's note. "We asked for guarantees on state reforms that were voted on in the previous term, of the same kind CD&V asked in Brussels. Why did De Wever not give these?" CDH's Melchior Wathelet asked in the news show *Terzake*.

De Wever's note was an attempt

to shape a centre-right coalition with N-VA, CD&V and the French-speaking parties CDH and MR, but CDH turned down the note. The note made no mention of certain key N-VA proposals, such as scrapping the annual cost of living index or limiting unemployment benefits.

Kris Peeters, the main negotiator for CD&V, expressed some concern at a number of media interviews acting prime minister Elio Di Rupo (PS) gave last weekend. Di Rupo called N-VA a "separatist" party – an implicit warning to CDH.

"I have read and heard many things this weekend, including things that complicate matters," Peeters said. Alexander De Croo (Open VLD), acting vice prime minister, also asked for more restraint on the part of the prime minister.

The talks for a new government of Flanders, meanwhile, are on track, with 21 working groups looking into matters such as education, economy and housing. The negotiators have to decide on €1 billion in cuts for the 2015 budget. Still, the new government, currently looking like a coalition made up of CD&V and N-VA, is expected by 11 July, which is Flemish Community Day.

## Steven Vanackere co-opted as senator

Wouter Beke, CD&V party president, has supported Steven Vanackere in an internal party vote about the co-opting of a new senator. Vanackere was finance minister in the previous federal government, until he resigned in March 2013, amid criticism of the ACW, his party's workers' movement to which he is closely linked. He was succeeded by Koen Geens.

In the May elections, Vanackere was a candidate for the European Parliament. He was not elected, as his party only obtained two seats, but his 150,000 personal votes was an excellent result. "I have no plan B," he declared after the elections. Due to the sixth state reform, voted in in the previous government term, the Senate will function as a meeting place of regions and commu-

nities. Fifty of its members are delegated by the regions' and communities' parliaments, and 10 are "co-opted" by the parties, according to their electoral results.

The other co-options are former journalists Pol Van den Driessche and Jan Becaas (both N-VA), former minister Bert Anciaux (SPA), academic and Lijst Dedecker defector Lode Vereeck (Open VLD) and academic Petra De Sutter (Groen). All of them failed to get elected on 25 May. Siegfried Bracke (N-VA) has been rumoured as the new speaker of the federal House of Representatives. According to *De Tijd*, Bracke has the support of N-VA, CD&V and MR. The speaker traditionally comes from the largest political group in parliament, which is N-VA.

In related news, Marianne Thyssen (CD&V) has the support of SPA, N-VA and possibly also Open VLD as Belgium's new European commissioner. Thyssen, an MEP since 1991, has not declared herself as a candidate yet. Belgium's representative in the European Commission is traditionally decided as part of the federal government talks. Meanwhile in the Flemish parliament, Jan Peumans (N-VA) was appointed speaker. Peumans succeeds Herman De Croo (Open VLD), who was interim speaker due to his seniority. Peumans' term, too, is temporary, as the speaker's job will be negotiated by the new government coalition. The speaker traditionally delivers the official speech on Flemish Community Day in Brussels city hall on 11 July. \ AO

## EU heads of state visit Ypres for First World War ceremony

EU heads of state visit Ypres for First World War ceremony

EU heads of state and government met in Ypres last week as part of their two-day summit, in commemoration of the start of the First World War 100 years ago. Security measures closed all traffic into and out of the city centre for the entire day.

The leaders, including Angela Merkel, François Hollande, David Cameron and Belgian prime minister Elio Di Rupo, arrived at the In Flanders Fields museum in Laken Hall in the late afternoon and were welcomed by EU Council president Herman Van Rompuy and Ypres mayor Jan Durnez.

Later, the group moved to the Menin Gate for a special edition of the Last Post ceremony and the inauguration of a special "peace bench" in

the gardens attached to the Gate. The leaders went on to dinner, and security measures were relaxed at around 18.45.

The extra security measures begin at 8.00 when a parking ban comes into force in the area of the Laken Hall and the Menin Gate. From 13.00, a security perimeter was in operation, with all motorised traffic, including public transport, re-routed. Visitors were allowed access to the centre after passing through one of several security checkpoints. Residents of the city centre received ID documentation to be allowed to remain for the day.

In Menenstraat, between the Menin Gate and the Laken Hall, shops and restaurants were closed for a time, with all terraces removed and windows closed. \ AH



© Francois Lenoir/Reuters/Corbis

From left: British prime minister David Cameron, Austrian chancellor Werner Faymann, Polish prime minister Donald Tusk, Swedish prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and German chancellor Angela Merkel in Ypres last week for a ceremony at the Menin Gate

# Anchored ambitions

Antwerp's port has been a crucial trade hub for mainland Europe since the 15th century

continued from page 1

(cargo that must be loaded individually) 10 million tonnes; and roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro, or wheeled cargo, mainly cars) 4.6 million tonnes.

The logistics are such that its operations cover an area of 120 million square metres, which is larger than the city of Paris. And yet the port's ambition is to grow further: Over the next few years, it will spread up the Scheldt estuary, open up to more and bigger ships, handle millions more containers.

How did Antwerp become such a lifeline, albeit one that is almost invisible to us?

For Eddy Bruyninckx, chief executive of Antwerp Port Authority, it is partly about convenient geography. "We are close to the hinterland, in a tremendously important part of Europe, close to a high density of producers and consumers and close to the origin and destination of cargo," he says. "We can make full use of our ecological and economic advantages; because the closer you are, the cheaper it is financially and the easier it is on the environment." Indeed, the port has been a crucial access point and trade hub for mainland Europe since the late 15th century. Although the open North Sea is about 60km away, the river is so wide and deep that the largest seagoing vessels can dock in the vast port area. Today, 60% of European purchasing power is within a 500km radius of Antwerp.

But the other reason for Antwerp's role is far-sighted enterprise. Until the 19th century, the port was at the entrance of the city, but the old quays in the Eilandje neighbourhood – long abandoned by industry – are now waterfront chic, decorated with landmarks like the recently opened Red Star Line Museum.

Now all the real port activity takes place in the area between Antwerp city and the Dutch border. Docks and quays have been carved out along the river, providing enormous space for the world's biggest ships.

As Bruyninckx explains, it is about anticipating future needs. The Port Authority manages and maintains the docks, bridges, locks, quay walls and land. It provides tugs and cranes, carries out dredging work and promotes the port in Belgium and abroad. Every terminal at the port has a tri-modal access, providing fast and efficient road, rail and barge transport to and from the hinterland.

And it gives land, warehouses, covering and quays in concession to businesses, while managing the utility lines and transport connections. Just within the port itself, there are 409km of roads, 1,061km of rail, 350km of pipes and 157km of quays. "It is all about productivity, and we now think of the port as just one part of the global logistics supply chain," Bruyninckx says.

One of the challenges in recent years has been security. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, a fence was quickly erected between the main road and the port, and ID became very important for the 62,500 people who work in the port every day. (The Port Authority itself has a staff of just 1,650.)

Scanners were used to track cargoes, and security checks became more rigorous. The Belgian authorities check 30,000 containers annually, about 0.32% of the total TEU in the port of Antwerp and find irregularities in 7% of them; sometimes this concerns smuggling, drugs, weapons or counterfeiting, but it is usually just about incorrect descriptions of the goods.

Now the port is getting bigger. It is taking over the land once used by carmaker General Motors, which fled Antwerp four years ago after closing its Opel plant. And it is preparing for a new generation of container ships that will dwarf the MSC Katrina.

"The ships are getting bigger and bigger. They are now talking about 22,000 TEU vessels," says Bruyninckx, who has headed the Port



© photos courtesy port of Antwerp

From the 1930s to the 1960s, there was a recreation area with open-air swimming pool at what is now the Noordkasteel dock

Authority since 1992, during which time it has doubled the total tonnage of freight it handles.

Even last year, the total throughput of 191 million tonnes was up by 3.5% year-on-year, breaking the previous record set before the economic crisis, just over 189 million tonnes in 2008. Part of this was due to the strong growth of liquid bulks, up 30%, thanks to the take-up of new facilities by Glencore and Total, part of Europe's largest integrated petrochemical cluster.

“As a child in 1960s and '70s, I would go to the locks, and I'd be fascinated

The port is now three years into a €1.6 billion, 15-year investment plan that includes the development of the Verrebroek dock and Saeftinghe Development Area, port facilities (construction of a second lock on the left bank, dock renovation, modifications to the Canal dock

and the Waasland canal), buying new equipment (a suction dredging barge, tugboats, dumb barges, a pusher barge and dock-mounted cranes and mobile cranes) and buildings.

In May, the port announced that MSC – the Swiss-headquartered Mediterranean Shipping Company, the second biggest in the world after Norway's Maersk – was to move from its current terminal in the Delwaide dock to the 2.5km Deurganck dock on the left bank of the

world, Berendrecht, inaugurated in 1989. The Deurganck lock has the same surface dimensions – 500m between the lock gates, 68m wide – but a depth of 17.8m, compared to Berendrecht's 13.5m. Due to become operational in 2016 on the Scheldt's left bank, the Deurganck lock will lead into the Waasland canal.

Costing an estimated €340 million, Deurganck will use three times as much steel as in the Eiffel tower and enough concrete to build a tower 35 floors high and covering an area the size of a football field.

But this is just part of the constant change sweeping through the port. "Every day you see something new," says Bruyninckx, 63, who grew up near Antwerp. He says the port has always been compelling. "As a child in 1960s and '70s, I would go to the locks, and I'd be fascinated.

"There were boats coming to Africa and dockers reaching into the crates to throw us oranges. It was like you were on the moon." He pauses as he tries to describe the scale of the change over the years. "But if it looked like the moon when I was younger, today it looks like Mars."



The massive new Deurganck lock will use three times as much steel as in the Eiffel tower



Antwerp Port Authority chief executive Eddy Bruyninckx

## WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Aerospace \ Asco

The Zaventem-based aerospace company is investing €100 million this year to launch the production of aircraft components in its Stillwater plant in the US. The company has also plans to increase production capacity and acquire new tools for its local facilities to meet growing demand in the Airbus and business jets sectors.

### Chemicals \ Emulco

The Ghent-based chemical products group has launched production of a state-of-the-art liquid polyisobutene polymer in partnership with Germany's BASF group. It is said to represent a breakthrough in terms of resistance and insulation. The new product is expected to be used extensively in the petroleum, cosmetics and food industries.

### Chocolate

#### \ Barry Callebaut

The Swiss-owned group has inaugurated a €4.5 million "chocolate academy" in Lebbeke, East Flanders, to train and teach future cooks and chefs on best practices and to develop research on the product.

### Food service

#### \ Starbucks

The US-based chain of coffeehouses inaugurated its 14th outlet in Belgium last week in the centre of Leuven. The other stores are located at Brussels Airport, the main trains stations and in the city centres of Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp.

### Investment

#### \ Flanders

Some 65% of the country's 175 inward foreign investments projects took place in Flanders last year according to a recent report by Ernst & Young.

### Mail order

#### \ Neckermann

Twenty workers for mail order company Neckermann.com in Zwijndrecht, Antwerp province, have been told they will not be paid for the month of June. The Dutch-owned parent company declared bankruptcy earlier in the week. Under Dutch law, banks are preferred creditors, and the company had a large outstanding mortgage on buildings. When that was paid off, "there was no money left over for salaries," according to a union representative.

# Bosch in Tienen announces 400 job losses

## World's top manufacturer of windscreen wipers shuts down an assembly line



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

Auto parts manufacturer Bosch announced last week that it is cutting 410 jobs in its Tienen factory (*pictured*) over the coming six years. Production at the factory in Flemish Brabant, the largest windscreen wiper factory in the world, stopped for the week following the announcement at a meeting of the works council.

Bosch management said the redundancies were the result of a "long-term and sustainable reorganisation of the product portfolio, structure and product strategy" of the company aimed at ensuring its long-term competitive position.

"It's our intention to keep the number [of job losses] as low as possible," said a company



© Ingimage

spokesperson. "It's still too early to give a full account of how the redundancies will be split

between floor workers and administrative staff." The German-owned Bosch has invested €13 million in the Tienen factory over the last two years, and the company stressed that it would continue to invest in assembly lines for the new generation of wiper blades, and in an improved rubber extrusion process. The production of conventional wiper blades, however, is no longer competitive and will be shut down.

Bosch Tienen employs 1,200 people and produces 300,000 wiper arms and blades a day. The last major restructuring was in 2009, when 420 redundancies were announced. In the end, 200 people were laid off, while a number of temporary contracts were not renewed

## Appeal against Tomorrowland decision fails

This year's 10th anniversary double edition of dance festival Tomorrowland can go ahead, after the court of appeal in Antwerp last week ruled the motion for a ban inadmissible. The lawyer for the residents who brought the action said she would set her sights on next year's edition. Tomorrowland organisers ID&T planned an extended edition for the world's most popular dance festival in Boom, Antwerp province, to celebrate its 10th anniversary. The usual three-day festival became six days over two weekends: 18-20 and 25-27 July. The festival has sold out its 300,000 tickets.

A group of residents filed a complaint against the second weekend, claiming they had not been given sufficient notice. Often residents of the small town go away for the weekend to avoid the noise and crowd nuisance.

They lost their case at first instance and went to appeal. The court of appeal rejected the call for a ban and also threw out measures requested to limit noise nuisance, claiming the applicants had failed to make a case that the noise would be enough to warrant the measures. The applicants were also ordered to pay costs.

"We're super relieved," said ID&T spokesperson

Debby Wilmsen. "The court agrees with us that all legal permits are in order, and we're glad to be able to get to work on the anniversary edition of Tomorrowland. We'll also continue with our neighbourhood work, which is a priority for us. We'd also like for the seven complainants to be involved in that."

The lawyer for the applicants, Griet Cnudde, responded: "I think it's a shame that my clients have not been recognised as victims of noise nuisance. Sadly, they'll just have to sweat this edition of Tomorrowland out with ear plugs."

\ AH

## Three in four businesses use job students

Three-quarters of all businesses able to use the services of job students do so, according to a survey by Unizo, the Flemish organisation that represents the self-employed. Job students are those aged 18 to 24 enrolled in full-time education.

Most employers (60%) reported hiring job students to lighten the load of full-time employees. Another third said they chose them because they offer more flexibility. Three out of 10 said they regarded job students as potential future employees and

considered the process a possible recruiting channel.

The status of job student was recently extended to allow them to work not only during holiday periods but also at other times of the year without losing their special tax status. Before 2012, students could work only during two specific periods a year for no more than 23 days each; now the annual allowance is 50 days anytime.

Last year saw more than 400,000 students employed during the third



© Ingimage

quarter – the period including the summer vacation – up from 398,000 the year before. "Job students are valued by employers," said Unizo director general Karel Van Eetvelt.

"They can be used with flexibility, to cope with peaks in work volume. However, more flexibility is needed."

At the other end of the career scale, another Unizo poll shows that hiring job applicants over the age of 50 offers a direct financial advantage to companies. As part of the latest phase of state reforms, the premium offered for the hiring of target groups – including the older unemployed – will soon be paid by the regions and not the national social security office RSZ. \ AH

## Belgocontrol unions shut down airspace over Brussels Airport

Passengers travelling from Brussels Airport last Wednesday were faced with longer queues than usual because of industrial action by staff at Belgocontrol, the national air traffic control agency. Belgocontrol unions closed down Belgian airspace for four hours.

The action led to massive delays and cancellations, with many passengers spending the night at the airport. Brussels Airlines and Jetairfly flights were delayed for hours, and flights from Ryanair and British Airways were cancelled, as were a number of flights from EasyJet and Vueling.

Air traffic control staff are protest-



© Courtesy Brussels Airport

ing cost cuts, which they say will have a negative effect on safety. Belgocontrol later announced it had reached an agreement with the union, ruling out the risk of further strikes as the holiday season gets under way. \ AH

## Woestijnvis wins football production rights

Independent TV production house Woestijnvis has been awarded the right to produce live Belgian first-class football for the coming three years, the Jupiler Pro League has announced. Woestijnvis will now handle the televised images for the three broadcast rights holders: Belgacom, Telenet and Voo.

Vilvoorde-based Woestijnvis was founded in 1997 and achieved fame with its offbeat brand of TV productions, including the nightly magazine *Man bijt hond*, the quiz *De slimste mens ter wereld* and drama productions like *Van vlees en bloed*. Parent company De Vijver Media also owns TV channels VIER and VIJF; it is now 50% owned by Telenet.

The rights to the weekly highlights round-up go to VTM, which currently broadcasts the package under the name *Stadion*.

The Monday evening football magazine, meanwhile, goes to the public broadcaster VRT; its *Extra Time*, presented by Filip Joos and Frank Raes (*pictured*), has been running on Canvas for the past three years. Highlights of all matches will also be shown online on the VRT's sports website, Sporza. "These are the same broadcasters as the last three years, which makes it easier for supporters, and that's important," said Pro League CEO Ludwig Sneyers. "We have made deals with broadcasters of experience and who we can trust to continue to develop our co-operation." \ AH

# Hungry for power

## Scientists in Ghent aim to reverse ICT's electric footprint



Senne Starckx

Follow Senne on Twitter \ @ssstarckx

WWW.IBCN.INTEC.UGENT.BE

A research group based at Ghent University has mapped the worldwide electricity consumption of computers, data centres and communication networks between 2003 and 2012. The results deliver an unmistakable warning: Consumption doubled during this period.

That means that the need for electricity by information technology (ICT) is growing much faster than overall power consumption in the world. Currently, the sector consumes less than 5% of the world's electricity, but if the trend continues it could become one of the greediest sectors within the foreseeable future.

Inside the ICT sector, communication networks are the top growers. From 2007 to 2012, their electricity consumption grew by 10% every year – resulting in a doubling every seven years – whereas the growth in the two other categories, computers and data centres, slowed slightly.

"In this period we saw a major transition towards a number of energy-efficient technologies," explains Ward Van Heddeghem, researcher at the Internet Based Communication Networks and Services research group (IBCN). "In 2011 the sale of laptops exceeded that of desktop computers, and because laptops are designed to work with a limited battery capacity, they



© MAURITZ ANTIN/EPA/Corbis

consume much less energy than desktops. And the old energy-devouring computer monitors were finally pushed out by LCD screens."

Van Heddeghem knows why networks are consuming ever more electricity. "The number of consumer devices that are digitally connected to each other increased significantly during this five-year period. And they all exchange an increasing amount of data. By way of illustration: The British network operator BT is now one of the biggest electricity buyers in the United Kingdom."

One of the research areas Van Heddeghem's group is focusing on is the development of more efficient technologies that can reverse the trend of an ever-growing energy need. He explains

that quite a few efforts have already been made over the past years, for example those that made data centres devour less energy.

In 2007, a typical data centre (the "clouds" where our personal data, websites and electronic services are stored) spent half of its power consumption on cooling, he explains. "In modern data centres, this has been reduced to less than 15%."

Consumption on the part of networks could be reduced heavily by raising the concept of "sleeping" to a standard, he believes. "Networking equipment currently consumes as much electricity when under full load as when it's idle. So it makes sense to put these devices to sleep when there is almost no network traffic or computing jobs to be done."

"Such sleeping could be for a very short period, in the order of microseconds, or longer periods, such as during the night. For example, the wireless networks that we use for our mobile phones have a lot of potential to optimise power consumption using this concept."

"Often, the number of mobile base stations in a certain area is dictated by the number of users the operator wants to serve. So it makes sense to put a number of them to sleep when the number of mobile users is low, especially at night."

## Prominent professor criticises retirement laws

One of Belgium's top scientists, dementia expert Christine Van Broeckhoven of the University of Antwerp, said in a recent interview that she won't rule out leaving Flanders on reaching the age of 65, as she will be forced to retire from Belgian academia.

Professor Van Broeckhoven (pictured), a molecular biologist, is regarded the world over as an authority on Alzheimer's and other neurological diseases and has received numerous awards. At the age of 61, however, her research career here is already limited. Like many others in local universities, she will have to retire at the age of 65. But the effects are already being

felt, she said, as the approach of retirement is affecting her access to multi-year research funding.

"This was the last year that I could apply for subsidy because any request must not run beyond retirement age," she told *De Standaard* in an interview. "I'm now 61 ... I'm being stopped. This country is guilty of age discrimination."

Van Broeckhoven's situation recalls the recent case of economics professor Paul De Grauwe, another international authority who was forced out by the University of Leuven on reaching retirement age in 2012. He walked straight into a chair at the London School of



© courtesy VIB

Economics. "I felt disparaged, like an old machine in a factory," he said at the time.

Van Broeckhoven echoed that

sentiment. "I know several colleagues who have been picked up by other countries after their retirement. I see colleagues getting on very well abroad. I was recently at a conference in Colorado. When I told people there that I'm no longer allowed to [apply for funding] here, they were astounded."

Without revealing any definite plans, she left the door open to emigrating. "I'm certainly not ruling out the possibility I might leave for another country after my 65th," she said, warning that inflexible retirement laws are undermining Belgium's academic base. "We're organising our own brain drain." **Alan Hope**

## Q&A

**Koen Andries of Janssen Pharmaceutica has received, with his French colleague Jérôme Guillemont, the European Patent Office's European Inventor Award for creating an antibiotic that also works on tuberculosis bacteria that have become resistant to other treatments**

**What makes bedaquiline more effective than other medicines?**

While other treatments only slow down the development of new bacteria, bedaquiline destroys the bacteria because it shuts down their energy supply. Although we still need to carry out a third test phase that may take around six years, consisting of trials on patients, the drug can already be used on patients for whom all other antibiotics provide no solution. This is quite exceptional and it shows how big the need for tuberculosis treatment is. It is estimated that a third of the world's

population carries the disease.

**When did you realise you were on the verge of a breakthrough?**

It was in 2003, about two years after I had taken up the project, which was launched at Janssen Pharmaceutica in the 1990s. At Guillemont's Paris lab, we carried out some trials on mice, which demonstrated spectacular results. Our treatment performed better than a combination of the three best tuberculosis medicines of that time. However, we also experienced setbacks; for example, the findings of our first trials on

patients were disappointing. The medicine did not have a strong effect because we only administered it for one week. After the patients were given the medicine for eight weeks, the results were just as spectacular as with the mice.

**When will the antibiotic be available to everyone?**

We hope to start the third test phase this year, so that in about six years the medication can be introduced all over the world. The need is especially large in South Africa, India and China. Although our antibiotic has not been approved in these countries yet – only in the United States, Europe, South Korea and Russia – it can already be administered in exceptional



cases there if an ethical commission agrees. We've heard that the drug has already saved the lives of several patients in South Africa.

**Interview by Andy Furniere**

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

### Slight rise in use of test animals

The number of animals used in Belgium's laboratories last year increased by approximately 26,000 compared to 2012. In 2013, 626,742 test animals were used in Belgium's 356 recognised laboratories. That's an increase of nearly 4.3% compared to the previous year, according to statistics from the federal government department of public health. The rise is mainly caused by the fact that more guinea pigs were used for obligatory tests for the development of vaccines. Just under half (48%) of the animals were used for the development and monitoring of health products such as medicine, with about 44% used for fundamental scientific research at universities.

### Egg and sperm donation site launched

Several hospitals have jointly established a website to raise awareness about the value of sperm and egg cell donations. While the demand for donations is increasing, the number of donors is decreasing. Since 2011, the University Hospital of Brussels has seen a 17% decrease in the number of donors. Last year, it had 54 candidate sperm donors, of which 26 ultimately became donors. The situation has forced the majority of Belgian fertility centres to appeal to foreign donor centres. Donors must be aged between 18 and 45, have no genetic or sexually transmittable diseases and not have what is considered a "risky sexual lifestyle".

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

### €720,000 for cystic fibrosis research

Six scientists from Belgian universities have received a total of €720,000 for their research into cystic fibrosis. The grants were awarded through the Alphonse and Jean Forton Fund of the King Boudewijn Foundation. Researchers from the universities of Leuven (KU Leuven), Ghent (UGent), Brussels (ULB) and Louvain-la-Neuve were selected by an international jury, which examined nine requests for funding. KU Leuven's Zeger Debyser and Lieven Dupont were recipients: Debyser works on gene therapy as a treatment for cystic fibrosis and Dupont is a lung specialist. At UGent, Alain Verstraete received support for his work on antibiotics. **AF**



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# VUB introduces multilingual Master's

## Flanders' first English-language diploma is response to a global society



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

Starting in September, students with a three-year Bachelor's degree in Linguistics and Literary Studies will be able to enrol for a multilingual Master's degree at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) – a first for a Flemish university.

Students registering for this Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literary Studies will be able to follow classes in Dutch, French, English, German, Spanish and Italian. One compulsory course on research methodology will be offered in English only. Completion of the programme also leads to an English-language diploma.

It's the first Master's degree of its kind that leads to an English-language diploma, though the university already had a specialised Advanced Master's of Arts in Advanced Studies in Linguistics (the Flemish universities' "Master after Master" degree), which also offers an English-language diploma. "With this Master's programme, the VUB is taking further steps in the internationalisation of its education," says Esli Struys, co-ordinator of the multilingual Master's programme. "Brussels is becoming increasingly popular with students from all over the world because of its multicultural character and the presence of the European institutions. This multilingual Master's can further improve the position of VUB on the international academic scene."

According to the university's administrators, the multilingual Master's could be useful in embarking on an academic career but could also open doors to international institutions and enterprises, where students could, for instance, work as cultural or communication experts.

The success of the university's multilingual Advanced Master convinced the VUB leadership of the need for



© Courtesy Vrije Universiteit Brussel

a multilingual Master's degree. Last year, the programme attracted 20 students, many of them from non-European countries and just three of them Flemish.

Still, the multilingual programmes are also of interest for Dutch speakers, says Struys. "An English-language diploma is a strong advantage if you want to pursue an international career." Dutch-speaking students can also opt to enrol for the traditional programme, in which the compulsory courses are taught in Dutch.

Such multilingual degree programmes only became possible in Flemish universities in 2012. Prior to that, local regulations prohibited higher education programmes from being delivered in languages other than Dutch. "There are still significant barriers," notes Struys. "We are always obliged to set up a parallel Dutch-speaking programme if we want to establish a programme that leads to an English-speaking diploma. That can be a difficult and costly operation."

Local education laws also state that only 6% of all Bachelor's degrees offered in Flanders can be taught in English. A degree programme is considered English-speaking when 18.33% of the courses are taught in

that language.

In a recent interview with *De Standaard*, Anne De Paepe, rector of the University of Ghent, asked the next government of Flanders to make the language legislation more flexible. "To attract more international students and scientists, we should be able to provide more programmes in English," she said.

De Paepe's call was greeted with enthusiasm by the business world in reports in *De Morgen*, with many entrepreneurs arguing that an academic-level command of English is necessary for further growth of the economy.

"We urgently need to start this language debate," said Pieter Timmermans, head of the Federation of Belgian Enterprises. "Last year, I approached all the Flemish political parties with the demand for changes, and they told me they would examine whether it's possible to interpret the current regulation in another way."

The federation thinks adjustments should be made now, while reforms of the Flemish education system are still high on the political agenda.

Wilson De Pril, director-general of technology industry federation Agoria, sided with Timmermans. "By offering almost only Dutch-

speaking education programmes, we close ourselves off from the outside world," he said. "All education decrees should be examined now that new governments are forming."

*De Morgen* also collected reactions from Flemish companies. "When it comes to knowledge of technical English, we definitely notice a difference between Belgian and foreign staff," said a spokesperson for Deme, the Antwerp-based global market leader in dredging. "Belgian students have a good basic knowledge of English, but this knowledge is not expanded into higher education."

A spokesperson for Sarens, headquartered in Flemish Brabant and one of Europe's leading crane operator and heavy lifting groups, agreed: "Without English knowledge, you are nowhere on the global market. It's time Flanders caught up."

Still, Struys admits that the issue is thorny. "Flemish universities also have the responsibility to protect the value of Dutch as an academic language," he says. "But an international environment like Brussels in particular requires more flexibility. The Flemish legislation should provide us more options to address the needs of students."

With the Content and Language Integrated Learning project it launched at the secondary-education level last year, the government of Flanders has already taken some steps. It is hoped that this decree, which allows secondary schools to teach up to 20% of their courses in a language other than Dutch, will better prepare students for a multilingual future.

"This is a step in the right direction," Struys says. "The earlier students are encouraged to develop their skills in multiple languages, the better for their language and general cognitive development."

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### More "sandwich tax" in primary schools

From September, more Flemish primary schools than ever will introduce the "sandwich tax" – meaning parents have to pay a contribution if their children eat lunch brought from home at school rather than going home to eat. Schools that have already introduced the measure are likely to increase the charge. School administrations say the policy change is a result of the increasingly tighter budgets of many municipalities. *Het Laatste Nieuws* found that one primary school in Hasselt charges children who eat their own lunches 25 cents a day, while some schools, like Sint-Pieters Leo in West Flanders, have raised the amount from €1.10 to €1.50 per day. For parents, the measure can mean an extra cost of €60 to €270 per year, per child.

### School for gifted pupils to open

The non-profit Leonardo primary school for highly gifted children will open in September in Oostvleteren, a district of Vleteren, West Flanders. The first school of its kind in Flanders, it will start with the status of collective home education. According to the founders, many gifted children have difficulties in school, often becoming demotivated and experiencing social or emotional problems. Ironically, this leads many to leave school without a diploma.

\ [www.leonardoschool.weebly.com](http://www.leonardoschool.weebly.com)

### KU Leuven considers entrance test

University of Leuven (KU Leuven) rector Rik Torfs has announced that he is in favour of the development of an entrance exam for certain first-year students, with the students' eligibility to enrol at the university dependent on the results. Torfs is trying to tackle the problem of too many students failing in their first year at KU Leuven. He would make the exam obligatory for students who come out of technical study streams in secondary school, for example, whose first-year pass-rates are lower than students who come from study streams that better prepare them for academic studies. AF

# UGent and JCW host Clever Forever science camp

\ [WWW.JCW.BE](http://WWW.JCW.BE)

With schools across the country finally having closed their doors, why would teens voluntarily spend their precious summer holiday inside a classroom? Because that's more or less what 15 youngsters between the ages of 13 and 16 signed up to do in August, when they will spend a week at the University of Ghent (UGent) to learn all about science.

The Clever Forever science camp is being organised by UGent and the non-profit JCW, short for Jeugd, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Youth, Culture and Science). JCW wants to inspire the youngsters by giving them a first-hand taste of different scientific disciplines.

The topics on the programme range from typical kitchen science experiments to practical applications to uncover the secrets of biopolymers, a particular type of biomolecule.

"The pupils themselves chose to participate in



this camp – not their parents," says Bart Bynens from JCW. "In general, these youngsters are just eager to learn new things. We give them the chance to do this in a unique environment – the laboratories of the university, as most of them are deserted during the summer months. The science camp programme also empha-

sises experimenting, rather than the traditional method of teaching."

Bynens says that one of the themes of the camp is problem-solving. "For example, in one workshop the students will have to develop a dwelling meant for developing countries that suffer from natural disasters, like earthquakes and floods."

But the aim of the camp is also to stimulate the imagination. "With experiments from physics and chemistry, we will explore some persistent misconceptions," explains Bynens.

But it won't be all work and no play during the science camp week. Every day will close with a leisure activity. "That could be a quiz, a team-building activity or some other group game," says Bynens. "Everything except science, as we don't want to saddle our participants with an overload of information." Senne Starckx

## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Brussels Beach

The capital's annual summer party kicks off on Friday with a spectacular evening show of dance, percussion, circus acts and fire performers. The artificial beach along the canal will offer entertainment, nightlife, watersports and volleyball until 10 August. *Opening festival 4 July, 22.30-midnight. Sainctelettesquare, Brussels, free*

\ WWW.BRUXELLESLESBAINS.BE

### Cherry Picking

The Jacobs Fruit Company in Sint-Truiden offers pick-your-own cherries every Sunday in July, but due to the warm spring and early season this year, they predict the fruit will be gone by the middle of the month. So don't wait! *5 July, 10.00-17.00, Heide 114, Sint-Truiden, €5 (not including cherries)*

\ WWW.JACOBSFRUIT.BE

### Gooikorts Folk Festival

Three-day traditional music festival with international bands. Also: market of traditional and handmade musical instruments, workshops, children's activities and camping. Legendary Irish group De Danann headline. *4-6 July, Festival Field, Gooik, €12-€42, kids 12 and under free*

\ WWW.GOOIKOORTS.BE

### Picnic at Herkenrode

Bring the family and your picnic basket for a relaxing afternoon on the grounds of a historic abbey and its gardens. Picnickers can augment their meal with fresh herbs from the garden. Also market stands with local products. *6 July, 11.00-18.00, free*

\ WWW.ABDIJSITEHERKENRODE.BE

### Sand Sculpture Festival

A highlight of summer on the Flemish coast, this annual festival of ephemeral art has moved to Ostend from Blankenberge for 2014. Presented in partnership with Disneyland Paris, the sculptures feature characters and scenarios from much-loved Disney movies. *Oceanfront near Zeeheldenplein, Ostend, daily 10.00-17.00 until 31 August, €8-€12*

\ WWW.SANDSCULPTURE.BE

### Antwerp by Bike

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\ WWW.ANTWERPBBIKE.BE

# Those quirky Flemings

## Two professors dig at the deeper truths behind Flanders' most obsessive habits



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ [flanderstoday.eu/andyfurniere](http://flanderstoday.eu/andyfurniere)

\ WWW.MYTHOLOGIEEN.WORDPRESS.COM

Why do most Flemings turn their gardens into flat, billiard cloth-like lawns? And why do so many locals carry a bottle of water with them at all times? These and many other Flemish peculiarities are examined in the new book *Kleine Vlaamse mythologieën* (Little Flemish Mythologies).

*Kleine Vlaamse mythologieën* is the result of a collaboration between Jan Baetens, head of the Literature and Culture research group at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), and theatre scientist Karel Vanhaesebrouck. They composed 30 short essays on modern cultural phenomena in Flanders, which are accompanied by black-and-white photos by Flemish photographer Brecht Van Maele.

In an amusing style – but no less critical for it – the authors dissect the most eccentric habits of their fellow Flemings.

The inspiration for the book was *Mythologies*, a 1957 collection of essays by French philosopher Roland Barthes – a classic. “Barthes created a new format by writing short analyses of daily customs or events that may seem banal at first sight,” says Baetens, “but actually say a lot about the people of a nation or region, and how they see themselves.” The authors set out to “hold a mirror up to Flemish society by spotlighting certain particularities – without providing big sociological or political theories – to encourage people to take a more critical view of customs that may seem evident, but are not.” One of these particularities,



Photos for *Kleine Vlaamse Mythologieën* were taken from photographer Brecht Van Maele's existing collection

according to the authors, is the typical Flemish garden. “A Fleming is unusually preoccupied with keeping the grass so short that it looks more like a football field or billiard cloth than like a natural environment,” says Baetens.

This “extensive manipulation of nature,” he continues, “is part of the larger belief in Flanders in the concept of an engineered society and the desire to reach a high level of efficiency and perfection in daily life.”

A garden also has a more important role in the largely urbanised region of Flanders than in neighbouring Wallonia, for example, where nature is much more abundant, and gardens are, consequently, less ruthlessly maintained.

In one particularly surprising essay, Baetens also wonders about the Flemish habit of always carrying a water bottle. “I was especially amazed to see swimmers in the pool who put a bottle on the side and regularly stopped to take a sip, because this is supposed to

improve their performance,” he says.

According to the professor, this is one of many aspects of a widespread health trend. “It seems to have become an obvious fact that we are all responsible for our health, while our health is actually something very fragile and can never be controlled completely,” he says.

Baetens, who also writes poetry in French, is also very sensitive to language trends in Flanders. One of his pet peeves is the abundant use of the prefix “top” to describe the excellence of something.

“Today, only what is ‘top’ is good enough – top model, top talent, top sport, top research, .... top potato, top complication, top shoe size, top unemployed person,” Baetens writes in his essay.

“If you use such prefixes too much, they lose their value,” Baetens says. “I also get annoyed when I read about a ‘genius’ in the press for the umpteenth time. If everybody is a genius, there actually are no real

geniuses anymore.”

In an essay that is unlikely to charm fans of N-VA president Bart De Wever, Baetens also examines the use of Latin quotes by the mayor of Antwerp in his speeches. “One of the purposes is to demonstrate that Flemings are highly educated people, but it is also a strategy to seemingly say something very deep without actually conveying anything of much importance,” Baetens says, while emphasising that *Kleine Vlaamse mythologieën* has no political inclinations.

In another essay, Baetens describes Flemish readers' love of gossip magazines, cookbooks and detective stories. “At the annual Book Fair in Antwerp, for example, you can clearly see how little interest there is in real literature. This clashes with the image of the highly educated and culturally interested Fleming that is so cherished and promoted.”

Of course, many of the cultural habits dissected in the book are not just “typically Flemish”, but can be observed in many parts of the world. Baetens says that was also something they wanted to highlight.

“Many of the elements that are often considered particular to the Flemish character are in reality common in many regions,” he explains. “One of our main messages, therefore, is that self-confidence is a good quality, but it's just as important to remain modest and keep an open-minded view of the world.”

Baetens hopes the book will also inspire expats to write about their own perceptions of Flemings.

Alan Hope

\ WWW.VLAM.BE

## BITE O sole mio

It's a well-known fact in culinary circles that we're not a very adventurous lot in Flanders when it comes to eating fish. We have certain favourite varieties we like to stick to, but unlike the Spanish, for example, we tend not to go for anything that's too bony, spiny, chewy or, frankly, just too ugly.

Still, it's a surprise to find that the new Fish of the Year, just announced by the Flemish agricultural and fisheries marketing agency Vlam, is only coming around for a second run after 23 years. That fish is sole, called *zeetong* in Dutch (from the shape of the fish, which some over-imaginative fisherman must have once thought resembled a tongue). In economic terms, it's Flanders' most important fish. After plaice

(last year's Fish of the Year) it's the one landed at Flemish ports in the largest quantities (2,492 tonnes last year). However because of the price difference, sole is the most valuable catch, worth €23.5 million last year, or 42% of total fish value.

Sole is a flat fish that lives in the sand on the sea floor, and if you're looking for a crazy fact, how about this: The baby sole is born like other fish with an eye on each side of its head, but both eyes migrate to one side when the fish is about 1cm long; the adult fish can measure 70cm.

In the kitchen, it's remarkably easy to get right. Dryness is the biggest problem, caused by cooking



© Vlam

for too long. Bite tip: Get the fishmonger to skin the fish and cut off the head if you don't want to do it yourself. Cut off the fringe of bones around the edge with a pair of scissors. Leave the flesh on the bones:

This will help prevent it drying out. The classic *sole meunière* requires only a fine dusting of seasoned flour. Then simply pan-fry in hot butter (which should be bubbling and turning hazelnut brown but not burning). Cook on one side for two to three minutes while spooning butter over the fish, then turn over and repeat, cooking for one to two minutes. Serve with a lemon wedge.

If you're feeling slightly more adventurous, Michael Vrijmoed, the former sous-chef to Peter Goossens at Hof Van Cleve and now chef of Vrijmoed in Ghent, has put together some recipes, which you can download from the Vlam website (in Dutch).

# How we used to shop

## A new book peeks inside beautiful old stores around Flanders



Toon Lambrechts

More articles by Toon \ flanderstoday.eu

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/WINKELINTERIEURS

It's instant nostalgia: For this new book on historical shop interiors, Flemish author Katherine Ennekens travelled through Flanders in search of unusual old stores. But time is running out for this vulnerable heritage.

"I've not been to every village in Flanders, but I've come close." Katherine Ennekens, author of *Goed bewaarde winkelinterieurs, sinds 1875* (Well-Preserved Shop Interiors, Since 1875) has obviously put her heart and soul into this publication. Without that kind of dedication, it would have been impossible to track down all these old shops, where time seems to stand still.

"It's an early interest," she explains. "I've always been fascinated by what goes on behind those shop windows and in the living rooms behind the shops. In that respect, a shop is a special place. It's a private space, but anyone can just walk in and out – preferably to buy something, but not necessarily. Just looking around and absorbing the atmosphere is also an option. In that sense, it touches the thin line between public and private."

Forty shop interiors are featured in the book, all of them at least 50 years old. The oldest dates back to 1875.

And it's not just the interiors themselves that are special: The stories that accumulate over time in such a place are equally fascinating.

"Everywhere I asked, the shopkeepers were immediately willing to co-operate," says Ennekens. "They are usually very proud of their stores and are caring people, with love for the craft and the interior."

In Sint-Niklaas, for example, there used to be a drugstore, De Walvis," continues Ennekens, who worked closely with photographer Evy Raes on the book. "Eight years ago, the store closed, and the manager is now 93. But everything in the store remains as it was then, and every week, the whole shop is cleaned. The store is still part of this woman's everyday life."

As would be expected, many of the shopkeepers are older people, which was a bonus for Ennekens. "The older the shopkeepers, the more stories, of course."

"The shopkeepers are usually very proud of their stores and are caring people, with love for the craft and the interior"

There's not always a happy, well-preserved ending for these old interiors once the shops close, though, as Ennekens explains. "In 2006 and 2008, I worked with the project *Verhalen-bazaar* (Stories Bazaar), and we brought stories and photos from the vicinity of the station in Antwerp to the public."

The exhibition was held in an old *primeurwinkel* from the 1960s, a shop where novelties were on sale for the first time. People came there to



© Mathias Schelfhout



© Evy Raes

marvel at all kinds of new products: the first kiwis, for example.

"The place had a beautiful interior, but it also tells us a lot about the history of how products have come on to the market. We wanted the place to be preserved, and Monumentenzorg, the agency responsible for the protection of heritage, was also thinking in that direction. But in the end it didn't work."

The shop was torn down, "and now there is an ordinary pita restaurant there," says Ennekens. "It's an irreparable loss because, to my knowledge, there were only two of these custom-made 1960s interiors in Flanders."

It illustrates how little the value of such interiors is taken into consideration, as heritage but also in commercial terms. Such decor is something unique and offers enormous potential, claims Ennekens. "I think the importance of preserving is starting to seep through quietly, though disasters like the *primeurwinkel* in Antwerp still happen."

The stores in the book are divided into three categories: Those that are still open, those that have been closed and those that now have another function. Ennekens considers this last category very important. "I want to show that it is possible to do something new with historic interiors," she says. "People still have a narrow view of it; an old pharmacy doesn't have to become another pharmacy but could serve equally well as an office space."

A good example is the butcher Crabbe in the Sint-Gillis district of Brussels. "When I was putting together the book, he was still in business," says Ennekens, "but now he has stopped, and there's a bar there, which has maintained



© Saskia Vanderstichele

De Walvis pharmacy remains as it was when it closed eight years ago (top); Brussels butcher Crabbe is now a wine bar, though the interior remains untouched (above left); author Katherine Ennekens

the interior. There are plenty of possibilities, but there's often a lack of creativity and a network where people with ideas can get to know these interiors."

This book is not an end, she insists, but rather a first attempt at creating awareness of these special pieces of heritage that are disappearing. Ennekens intends to continue to work on the preservation of these interiors. A database could be a next step, and an exhibition and theme walks are in the pipeline.

"I continue to collect new stores; a second book might be on its way," she says. "But time is running out, and valuable interiors are still disappearing. It's a sad thing because a place that carries such a history is irreplaceable."

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

### Circa wins Flemish Culture Prize

Ghent culture centre Circa has won this year's Flemish Culture Prize for Local Cultural Policy. Acting Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege announced the award last week, giving the centre €12,500 in prize money and a bronze sculpture by Antwerp artist Philip Aguirre. The jury cited the organisation's unique programme and flexibility – the organisation has no fixed venue but considers the whole of Ghent as their playing field. "A cultural centre is so much more than bricks," emphasised the minister, praising the staff members and their partners as an inspiration to think outside the box.

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

### The Loft release postponed again

While Antwerp-based director Eric Van Looy tried to stay positive, partly thanks to the winning mood of the Belgian football team in Brazil, another postponement of the international release date of his movie *The Loft*, shot three years ago in New Orleans, could just as well mean a definitive cancellation. Universal Pictures was set to release the American adaptation of Van Looy's record-breaking Dutch-language version at the end of August. But instead of releasing the film about a group of men discovering a dead body in the penthouse loft where they carry out their extra-marital affairs, they will use the slot for the psychological thriller *As Above/So Below*. This means that the 14 October screening on the opening night of the Ghent Film Festival will be the film's world premiere.

### High-end night in urban harmony

The owners of the restaurant, concept store and gallery housed in Graanmarkt 13, have now also opened a luxurious apartment for rent on the second floor of their chic Antwerp townhouse. After moving out of the neo-classical building themselves, Tim Van Geloven and Ilse Cornelissens wanted to refurbish the four-bedroom property into a B&B, but changed plans and just left the space, designed by architect Vincent Van Duysen, as it was, so it kept their personal touch: a mix of warm, minimalist harmony and urban peace. "I envisioned the apartment as a location that stimulates creativity," says the architect on the website. "It's the perfect getaway for a director working on a movie." Or anyone else prepared to spend €1,300 a night.

► [www.graanmarkt13.be](http://www.graanmarkt13.be)

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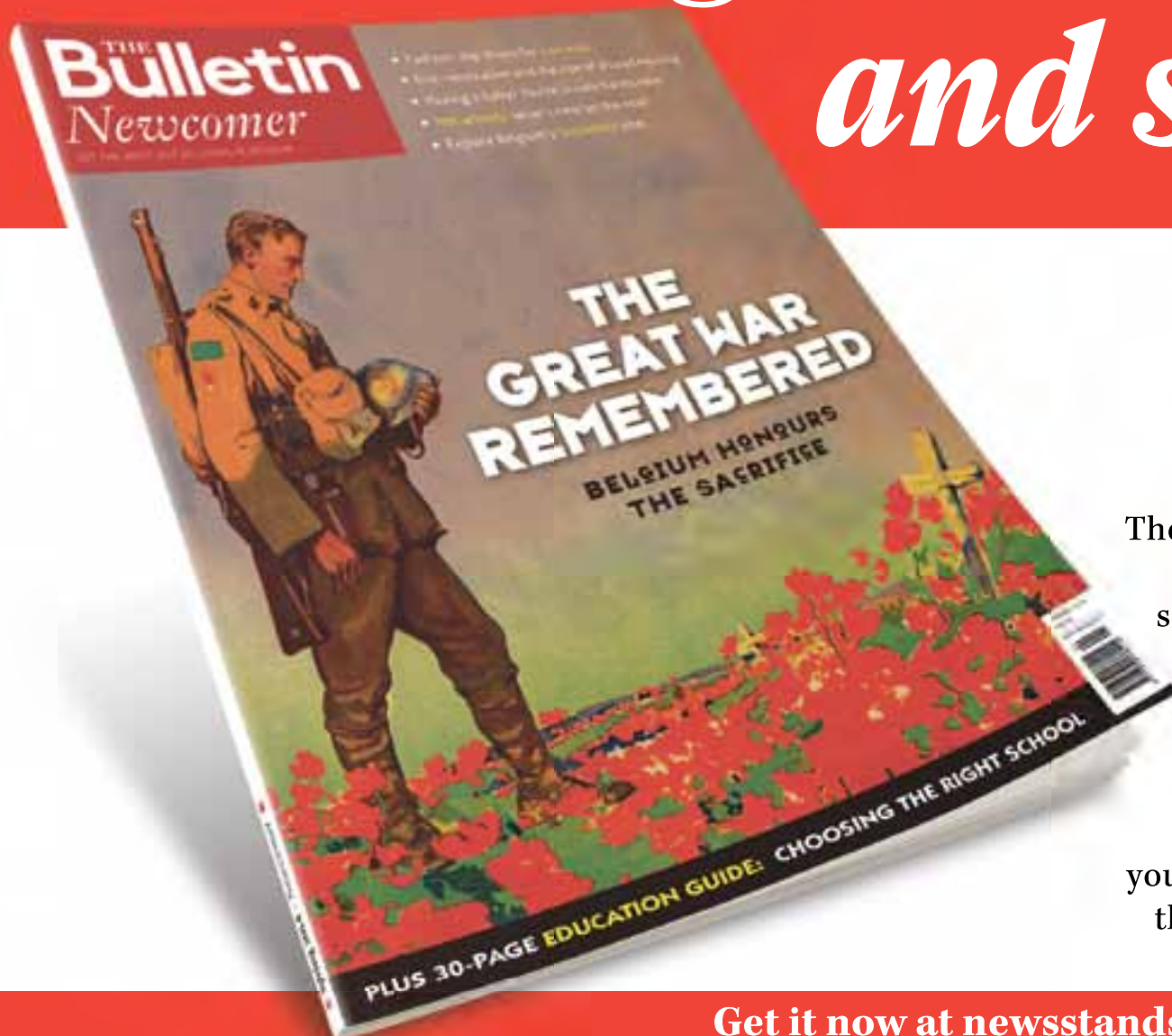
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# “Neither here nor there”

Artists look at the long trek many Belgians with migrant roots make every summer



Daan Bauwens

More articles by Daan \ flanderstoday.eu

It's a recurring event at the start of every summer. The caravan gets moving, and tens of thousands of Belgians, most of them with Moroccan and Turkish roots, get into minivans and cars heavy with bags to embark on the long trip back to their country of origin.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Turkish and Moroccan labour migration to Belgium and the accompanying half century's worth of back-and-forth travels, the Red Star Line Museum in Antwerp asked two artists with migrant origins based in the city to make the trek together with Turkish and Moroccan families and to document their impressions in works that are now on view in the *Home Sweet Home* exhibition.

Iranian-born photographer Mashid Mohadjerin and filmmaker Bülent Öztürk, from Turkish Kurdistan, both accepted the challenge, but opted for different approaches.

“From May until October, we slept under the open sky on the roofs of our houses

“I made the trip to Morocco myself instead of travelling together with a family,” Mohadjerin explains. “That’s a much more universal approach ... I wanted to depict the feeling of travelling itself instead of documenting how others experience the trip.”

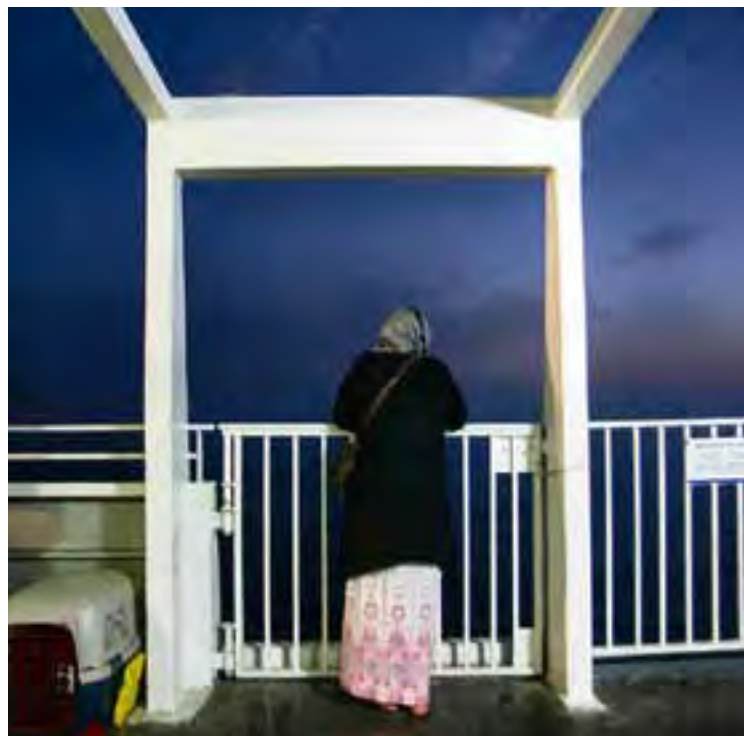
Mohadjerin – whose work usually focuses on themes of identity, the human condition, migration and

minority groups – also interviewed and shot portraits of migrants in Antwerp from different generations. While the portraits are on show in the museum, the interviews can only be read in the accompanying exhibition album. Filmmaker Öztürk was asked to travel to Turkey for the Red Line Museum show, but he couldn't. “I am not allowed back into Turkey,” he says. “But more than that: I cannot imagine how it feels to be born and raised here and to travel back every year. I wasn't born and raised here; I can't go back. This is not my story.”

Instead, the filmmaker chose to build a wooden *tahta*, a Turkish four-poster-bed and a reference to one of his most beautiful childhood memories of growing up in Turkey. “From May until October, we used to sleep under the open sky on the roofs of our houses, surrounded by the sounds of crickets and swallows,” he explains. “I want people to experience this, to read stories to their children or grandchildren, to rest and be calm.”

Although the artists' approaches are far apart, one element connects both works: “The feeling of detachment,” says Mohadjerin. “You can't feel at home in the new country, but after a while you lose the feeling of being at home in your old homeland. It is inevitable,” she says, adding that detachment was the central theme in each of her interviews with migrants in the city.

But according to Mohadjerin, an important difference exists between generations of migrants when it comes to feelings of detachment. “People from the first generation – those who moved out of their home countries – face the most difficulties,” the photographer says. “The more connected you feel to a certain place, the more difficult it is going to be.”



© Mashid Mohadjerin

Photographer Mashid Mohadjerin (left) and filmmaker Bülent Öztürk applied their own interpretations to the Red Star Line's request



Mohadjerin explains that migrants born in Turkey or Morocco typically speak the local language and still feel connected to their home village or city when they return to visit. But at a certain moment, their lives change, she says. “After awhile, they're not considered full members of the community anymore. That is painful.”

In Mohadjerin's view, it's a different story for second- and third-generation migrants. “I had the impression they still feel very

connected to the homeland, but it was as if they knew how to keep the correct amount of distance,” she says. “They travel back with feelings of curiosity and wonder. Also, they do not expect to be seen as members of the community.”

While shooting the photographs and writing the interviews for *Home Sweet Home*, Mohadjerin

drew heavily on her own experiences as a travelling migrant's daughter. “The feeling of detachment connects everyone who once left their homeland, although many of us don't realise that,” she says. “I also made summer trips as a child in the back of the car, back and forth to Norway, where my aunt and grandmother lived. While I was travelling to Morocco, I relived episodes from that period.”

In Öztürk's Turkish *tahta*, the feeling of detachment is symbolised by the sound of swallows. But unlike for Mohadjerin, in Öztürk's world feelings of detachment are not a negative. “The swallow symbolises the feeling of not belonging anywhere – or, better yet, the total absence of that feeling,” he says. Öztürk points out that the swallow is a migratory bird that flies from one place to the next. “Migratory birds can keep on travelling as long as the earth allows them to,” he says. “It's the same with people. As long as fascism and racism don't get the upper hand, we can keep on travelling and settle down anywhere. I feel like a swallow – just as free. Antwerp is my home now, and I can fly here as well as anywhere else. I don't feel detached.”

Still, Öztürk's *tahta* bed also refers to his lost childhood in Turkey, a period he remembers as warm and carefree. “Things quickly changed; I started thinking and asking questions,” he says, looking back. “There was a civil war going on, and I refused to serve in the army. Then I had to leave the country. With the *tahta*, I go back to the nights in the village of my childhood. I turn back to that sense of warmth.”

Until 14 September

Red Star Line Museum  
Montevideostraat 3, Antwerp

WWW.REDSTARLINE.BE

## MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

### Wilfredo Prieto: Speaking Badly about Stones

Cuban-born Wilfredo Prieto is often described as a “baroque minimalist” – his images are simple and light-hearted while packed with much meaning, narrative power and poetry. This exhibition is the artist's first retrospective and shows works made in the last 15 years, while focusing on the oft-neglected socio-critical elements in his art. Prieto is as critical of his native country of Cuba as he is of our Western consumerism.

Until 21 September, SMAK, Citadelpark, Ghent

► www.smak.be

### Birds of Paradise: Plumes and Feathers in Fashion

The refined elegance of feathers in *haute couture* is unmatched by any other accessory or fabric. Just think of Marlene Dietrich's iconic swan's down coat, the perfect combination of the black-and-white theme in an evening dress. Feathers may have lost the incredible appeal they had during the roaring '20s and at the end of the 19th century, but in this exhibition at MoMu, Flemish designer Ann Demeulemeester and British designer Alexander McQueen show that feathers will *never* go out of fashion. *Birds of Paradise* shows a mixture of 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century garments and couture dresses, highlighting sophistication and femininity throughout the years. Until 24 August, MoMu, Nationalestraat 28, Antwerp

► www.momu.be

### Cinema Joostens

The second instalment in a two-part exhibition on the life and work of the little-known Antwerp-born avant-garde painter Paul Joostens. After embracing Cubism and Dadaism during the 1920s, the artist developed his own signature style. While Joostens' approach continually evolved, his central themes were always showbiz and his female contemporaries. The first part of the exhibition focused on his drawings, this second episode puts the spotlight on his collages.

Until 28 September, Mu.ZEE, Romestraat 11, Ostend

► www.muzee.be

# Rebellious comics

Tumultuous history of Slavic cartoon tradition on show at Brussels comics museum



Tom Peeters

More articles by Tom \ flanderstoday.eu

In the last few months, numerous events and exhibitions have been staged to commemorate the start of the First World War in 1914, its effect on Europe in the ensuing four years and its decades-long destructive aftermath. But the immediate cause of the war has never been so succinctly and clearly explained as it is right now at the Belgian Comic Strip Center in Brussels. With just a few panels, the opening installation of *100 Years in the Balkans* tells the complex story behind the fatal visit of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie to the Serbian city of Sarajevo.

In *Twee schoten, tien miljoen doden* (Two Shots, Ten Million Dead), the late Belgian comic book scenarist Octave Joly illustrated why the assassination of Ferdinand and his wife by the Yugoslav nationalist student Gravilo Prinzip precipitated Austria-Hungary's declaration of war against Serbia, leading to more war declarations and a bloody conflict between two leading power blocks in Europe.

*Twee schoten* was published as part of the series *De spannende verhalen van oom Wim* (The Amazing Stories of Uncle Wim), a collection of comic books based on historical events, created by Joly between 1951 and 1976 and published in the local comic book magazine *Robbedoes*.

The series might seem an odd choice to open an exhibition that introduces visitors to the Slavic comics scene and its leading magazines and cartoonists, but it superbly illustrates the turbulent history of the region that extends from Ljubljana in Slovenia to Skopje in Macedonia.

"While World War I is the subject of many tributes and commemorations this year, we have chosen to take this opportunity to pay homage to a comic strip still in resistance – the production of the countries that were formerly part of Yugoslavia," explains Jean Auquier, the Belgian Comic Strip Center's general manager.

To get a better sense of this history, the museum took Slovenian comics expert Štefan Simončič on board as a curator. "Right from the start, comics were an art form frequently under threat, given little space in the newspapers because the publication of satirical magazines was banned by the ruling powers," says Simončič in a statement about the exhibition.

"One of the first authors of this combative comic strip was the



© Tomaz Lavric, Bosanske Bbasni - 1997

Cartoonists who put Yugoslavia on the comic strip map, like Tomaz Lavric, are spotlighted in the exhibition

Slovenian caricaturist Hinko Smrekar, who lampooned the Austro-Hungarian monarchy," Simončič continues. "Through his art, this ardent defender of pan-Slavism had found the ideal way to combat imperial propaganda."

After the 1917 October revolution in Russia, many artists emigrated west, to Yugoslavia especially, creating a fertile breeding ground for new satirical and niche magazines. During the

1930s, the comics scene flourished in cities such as Belgrade and Zagreb.

"This vitality was not diminished by World War II," explains Simončič. "Even during the occupation of Zagreb, the publication of an important magazine like *Zabavnik* continued. After the liberation, however, this trend was reversed because the new socialist ruling powers regarded comic strips as a product of Western capitalism and therefore ideologically undesirable." Later on, the tensions between then Yugoslavian president Josip Broz Tito and the Kremlin led to greater openness toward the Western world and a subsequent revival of comic books publication.

According to Simončič, 1977 marked a turning point for Yugoslavian comic books. "In Ljubljana, Kostja Gatnik published the underground comic strips he had drawn in the late 1960s," he says. "This marked a change of direction towards far less innocent and childish subject matter, in favour of urban culture and art."

Cartoonists whose works are still rooted in that tradition make Yugoslavia a reference on the world's comic strip map and are displayed in the exhibition, illustrating how caricature drawing is replaced by French new wave and American graphic novel influences.

Unfortunately, the 1990s civil war and disintegration of Yugoslavia brought the vibrant scene of local independent magazines to a standstill, pushing authors to increasingly publish their works abroad. The recent economic crisis hurt the comic book landscape even more.

"Publishers see the publication of comic strips as the first cutback to be made when times are hard," explains Simončič. But he remains hopeful. "If today's authors choose to take inspiration from Hinko Smrekar from 100 years ago, then perhaps there is still the chance of a renaissance of the independent comic strip in the Balkans."

Until 16 November

Belgian Comic Strip Center  
Zandstraat 20, Brussels

WWW.COMICSCENTER.NET

# Dansand! festival hits Ostend beach

From 4 to 6 July, a talented line-up of performance artists takes to the sands of Ostend for this year's Dansand! biennial. But in this fourth edition, performers won't just be hitting the beach. Along with its traditional sand stage by the sea, the festival is trying out a new formula this year, with Dansand! becoming Expedition Dansand!

With a mandate to create low-impact, interdisciplinary, site-specific and participatory performances, the artists' playground will also extend to Ostend's Groen Lint or "Green Belt", a connected ring of parklands encircling the city.

The expansion of Dansand! to the hinterlands of Ostend was a natural evolution of the festival, explains Merel Vercoutere, festival co-ordinator working alongside curator Katleen Van Langendonck of Brussels' Kaaaitheater.

At the time of its first edition, in 2008, Dansand! mostly offered adaptations of stage pieces.



© Tine Declercq

Many of the Dansand! performances were created specifically for the beach

Through the years, it has evolved from presenting modified versions of pieces, adapted to the beach setting, to pieces created precisely with the seashore in mind.

"Every edition we get more and more works that are created just for the beach, accommodating all the sand, the wind, the tourists passing by, the boats in the back,"

Vercoutere says.

To allow visitors to take in the full expanse of the programme, Dansand! has created a new programme, *Expeditie Groen* or Expedition Green. Instead of lying back on a beach chair and watching a single performance on a stage, Dansand! now gives visitors the chance to go on a safari

of performance art with a guided tour through the Green Belt.

At different spots along the route, which will be walked by theatre-goers over the course of an afternoon, artists have designed performances built into the landscape. "You can say that we are a landscape festival more and more, because we really have shows that are integrated into the environment," Vercoutere explains.

According to the Dansand! co-ordinator, this integration has become a criterion for being accepted to perform in the festival at all. "We ask artists to make shows that are really *in situ*, so all the conditions of a black box disappear. They really have to work with what there is," she says. "So if there is sunset, they use sunset; if they have noises in woods, then they use the noises in the woods."

The various performances in

the expedition use the sights, sounds, smells and sensations of the surrounding environment, whether that environment is coming from nature – such as in Karel Vandeweghe's piece *Badding* – or is person-made, like in Spanish choreographer Albert Quesada's *Slow Sports Outdoors*, which uses the surrounding playing fields as the setting.

To suit every visitor's taste, Expedition Groen comes in three sizes. The "small" version lasts just 2.5 hours, offering three performances and a walk through the Green Belt. The "large" one is mostly the same as the small, but is four hours long, tacking on two extra performances and a picnic. Finally, there is also a night-time expedition.

\ Katy Desmond

4-6 July

Sportstrand  
Wellington Hippodroom, Ostend

WWW.VRIJSTAAT-O.BE

Hot town, summer in the city

# Brussels Beach

July to August

4 > 10

Sainteletteplein, Brussels

Summer in the city can be a frustrating experience. On days when temperatures climb up to the high 20s, Brusselsaars who don't have a garden – that's 98% of us – tend to want to get as far as possible away from the city, the alarm-level smog and the smelly metros.

On those days, only the expansive feeling of being close to water and a cocktail made by a barkeep who knows what's up can offer mild relief.

You can get all that and the proverbial more at Brussels Beach, a pop-up beach the City of Brussels creates at the canal quays around the Saintelette area every summer

– sand, deckchairs, waving palm trees and all.

Think of Brussels Beach as an extension of the Couleur Café music festival, the difference being that most of the activities on offer are totally *gratis*, making it both one of the city's star annual fixtures and most accessible summer hangouts.

Sure, Brussels Beach offers the typical seaside animations with its pétanque cup, beach volleyball tournaments, rentable paddle boats and food stalls with dishes from around the world. But its singularity lies in all the things on offer you don't find at your typical beachfront.

Since the first edition in 2003, the



city has steadfastly chosen to partner with local institutions and associations so that the beach would showcase the diversity and broad cultural offerings of the capital at large.

This year, that means open-air screenings of recent opera productions in collaboration with De Munt, a "Let It Beach" festival that

pushes mostly unknown Brussels and Belgian bands into the quay limelight, a "Boatclub" for night-life lovers that hits the canal on weekends with local DJs like Lefto and Supafly behind the decks, and "Kidsgazette" art workshops with the local artist collective Patrimoine à Roulettes. And much, much more.

\ Linda A Thompson

## VISUAL ARTS

### Photo Event

Until August

24

De Garage and CC Mechelen, Mechelen

WWW.CULTUURCENTRUMMECHELEN.BE

Mechelen's Photo Event features the best of Belgian and international photography. The arts festival is the fruit of a collaboration between several of the city's cultural institutions. Contemporary arts space De Garage exhibits the work of Flemish artist Hans Op de Beeck, a rising star who has in the past 10 years developed a multidisciplinary practice that includes sculpture, installation, video, animation, drawing, painting and of course photography. Meanwhile, at CC Mechelen, you'll find the work of celebrated French photographers Antoine D'Agatha and William Ropp. Joining them are several up-and-coming Belgian



© Johanne Plein Pied

artists who contribute works around this year's theme: the human form. \ Georgio Valentino

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

### Gent Jazz Festival

July

10 > 19

De Bijloke, Ghent

WWW.GENTJAZZ.COM

Ghent's annual jazz festival aims to do more than just pack the genre's biggest names onto the main stage. Festival organisers also incorporate experimental acts and undiscovered talent on a smaller second stage. Fear not, though; this is *not* an aficionados-only affair. There are plenty of instantly recognisable headliners. At the top of this year's bill are renowned jazz duo Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke, minimalist composer Ludovico Einaudi, soul singer Charles Bradley and Bobby "Don't Worry, Be Happy" McFerrin (*pictured*). Beyond the two official stages, festival-goers can also enjoy a club programme and jazz lunches at the ritzy Grand Hotel Reylof. \ GV



## FILM

### Film op het strand

July to August

3 > 28

Zeebrugge beach, Zeebrugge

WWW.BRUGGEPLUS.BE

Every summer, Zeebrugge's waterfront becomes a vast, sandy open-air cinema. The city erects a giant screen in the middle of the beach and invites bathers to sit back, relax and take in a film (or three), for free. Screenings begin at 14.30 with two family-friendly selections daily, one Hollywood blockbuster and one independent European production. The feature presentations begin at 20.00. These are all Belgian films produced within the last decade, among them Stijn Coninx's 2013 award-winning Belgo-Italian odyssey *Marina* and Michaël R Roskam's 2011 Oscar-nominated *Rundskop* (*Bullhead*). \ GV



## SUMMER EVENT

### DOK

Until September

28

Ghent

WWW.DOKGENT.BE

Ghent has it all. Almost. History and culture in spades, museums, boutiques, restaurants, bars and nightclubs – it's one of Flanders' leading cities. But Ghent didn't have a beach – until now. Beginning a few years back, a few enterprising locals transform the disused dockyard along the river Leie near the port into an oasis of culture and leisure in the summer, complete with a patch of purpose-built beach. The DOK complex is a place-holder during the summer months until the Oude Dokken project transforms the surrounding post-industrial zone into Ghent's newest residential community. Until then, the folks behind the opera-



© Michiel Devijver

tion intend to fill the space with goings-on of all kinds. Alongside the daily bars and beach, DOK hosts its own football tournament, a circus and a host of concerts, markets, barbecues, parties and community events. \ GV

## VISUAL ARTS

Bilzen

**Bloed (Blood):** Intriguing encounters between established local artists and the schizophrenic artists of Genk-based workshop Artisit. Together, professionals and patients show the thin line between fantasy and delusion.

**5 July to 31 August, Commandery Alden Biesen, Kasteelstraat 6**

WWW.ALDEN-BIESEN.BE

Sint-Niklaas

**HANGA:** Contemporary Belgian and Japanese graphic artists meet up again, three years after the successful Belgo-Japanese graphic art exhibition in Kyoto. There's an authentic Japanese garden and the €5 entry fee includes a cup of green tea.

**Until 5 October across Sint-Niklaas**

WWW.MUSEA.SINTNIKLAAS.BE

## FESTIVAL

Brussels

**Plazey:** The cosy Brussels back garden festival finishes off with a children's party on Wednesday afternoon, concerts by local hip-hop crew Pang and rock bands MannGold and Gruppo Di Pawlowski on Friday, an open air screening of *Il Postino* on Saturday and a picnic with family entertainment on Sunday. **2, 4-6 July, Elisabeth Park, Koekelberg**

WWW.PLAZEY.BE

Lommel

**Gracias a la Vida:** Exotic rhythms from Galicia (Chotokoeu), Catalonia (La Pegatina) and Macedonia (Kiril Dzajkovski) among others, a separate DJ stage and a spectacular fire show all support charity projects in Haiti, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda. **5 July, Burgemeesters Park, Stationsstraat 1**

WWW.GRACIASALAVIDA.BE

## FAMILY

Brussels

**Family Funday:** Every first Sunday of the month, Wiels offers a free and interactive family tour of their exhibitions and their building, a former beer brewery and a rare example of modernist industrial architecture in Brussels. **5 July 15.00, WIELS, Van Volxemlaan 354**

WWW.WIELS.ORG

## CONCERT

Wachtebeke (East Flanders)

**Clouseau:** The popular Flemish band opens the summer season at Provincial Park Puyenbroeck. Opening up is *Belgium's Got Talent* winner Michael Lanzo. **6 July, Puyenbroeck, Puyenbrug 1a**

WWW.PUYENBROECK.BE

# Talking sports

## No repeat run for Flipkens at Wimbledon



Leo Cendrowicz  
More articles by Leo \ flanderstoday.eu

A repeat of last year's brilliant semi-final run at Wimbledon proved too much for Flemish tennis player Kirsten Flipkens (*pictured*) last Saturday, as she fell to Germany's Angelique Kerber in the third round.

Despite winning the first set in just 29 minutes against the No 9 seed, Flipkens faded, eventually losing the match 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. Kerber broke Flipkens' serve twice in the second set to draw level, and broke serve twice again in the third and decisive set to win a quarter-final place against Maria Sharapova.

Flipkens, 28, had hoped to once again defy the odds, having reached her first ever Grand Slam final at the tournament last year despite her low ranking at the time. However, the Geel-born player insisted afterwards that she was still enjoying her game, two years after the shocking near-death episode in Thailand when only prompt medical attention prevented a fatal bout of deep vein thrombosis.

Flanders' Yanina Wickmayer, meanwhile, fell out of Wimbledon last week, after losing her second round match to 16-year-old Croatian Ana Konjuh.

In **cycling at the weekend**, Jens Debusschere was the surprise winner of this year's Belgian championships in Wielsbeke. In a bunch sprint in front of the Quick-step headquarters, the 24-year-old from Roeselare held off Roy Jans from Bilzen and pre-race favourite Tom Boonen to grab his first win of the season, and his fourth professional victory.

"It's a cliché but this is a dream come true," Debusschere said. "I worked two or three months towards this race. I did altitude training and slept in a tent, which I cursed every night. Then it's magnificent to grab this title."



However, Boonen was fuming after the race about the lack of communication in his team, blaming team directors for "serious mistakes" in demanding work in the peloton six kilometres from the finish. "We closed the gap, but then they led out the sprint on the left while I was shouting to go on the right," he said.

The World Cup, meanwhile, is showcasing Belgian football beyond the Red Devils as a number of Jupiler Pro League players are making their mark for other countries in Brazil. One of the most notable is Club Brugge defender Óscar Duarte, with one of the tournament's revelations, Costa Rica: It was Duarte's header that put Costa Rica ahead in their shock opening match victory against Uruguay.

Others performing in Brazil include Lokeren's Boubacar "Copa" Barry of Ivory Coast; Cercle Brugge's Michael Okechukwu Uchebo of Nigeria; fellow Nigerian Reuben Gabriel, who plays for Waasland-Beveren; and Zulte Waregem's Fabrice Olinga Essono, of Cameroon.

*The Talking Dutch column is taking a holiday, but it will be back in this space on 23 July*

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



**Lorrgr** @GrinwisLaurens

Sorry @ussoccer, I supported you for the last 3 games... but now I need to support my own country first. Good luck. #BELvsUSA



**Morgan Carlston** @MorganCarlston

So you're saying there's a chance... Vincent Kompany and Thomas Vermaelen doubtful for #BELvsUSA #WorldCup #USA



**Wesley Coninckx** @Wesone01

First #summerfestival of the year #Antwerp #belgium #festival bring on the #madness [instagram.com/p/pyk9hXSxP/](https://www.instagram.com/p/pyk9hXSxP/)



**St. Stefanus** @StStefanus

This month we featured #Ghent, but where's your favourite beer city? #beertourism [po.st/BeerTourism](https://www.pinterest.com/BeerTourism)



**Ross** @Ross2503

#Belgium have been very average so far in this #WorldCup ... they're going to have to up their game if they're to go far #Belgiumvskorea



**Bart Van de Vel** @bartvandavel

Another strike of the Belgian railways. Already 92 times in 5 years or one day and a half per month. Sigh. #nmbs #annoyed



**Rob Schäfer** @GERArmyResearch Jun 27

A humble, tiny bronze plaque near Menin gate - "To the soldiers of the Imperial German Army missing in Flanders" ....#WW1



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## Poll

Rival TV channels have expressed concern at Telenet acquiring a stake in TV channels VIER and VIJF. What do you think?

**a. Telenet has a virtual digital TV monopoly in Flanders. They don't need to own networks, too. Alert the competition authority**

70%

**b. Flanders has a government-run broadcaster, so potential conflicts of interest are not all with Telenet. Let the sale go ahead**

30%

The question may be a tricky one, but the answer is straightforward: a large majority of you, more than two to one, think Telenet's acquisition of a share of De Vijver Media should be referred to the competition authorities. But why? Well, the competition agrees, in the form of VTM, but then they

would, wouldn't they? Outgoing media minister Ingrid Lieten is cautiously suspicious but won't call for a referral. The authorities should, though, watch like a hawk to make sure Telenet doesn't get up to anything uncompetitive. That's the point: every company has the right to go about its busi-

ness without hindrance, up until the point where it does something against the rules, and so far Telenet has done nothing wrong. The case will most likely not be referred to the competition authorities because, for the moment, there's simply no case to answer.

## \ Next week's question:

Schools are planning to charge parents up to €270 a year for looking after children while they eat their packed lunches. What do you think?

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

## THE LAST WORD

### End of an era

"These days only 6% of smokers swear by Belga, although that accounts for 630 million cigarettes a year." Pierre Durinck of British American Tobacco, producer of Belgian brand Belga, which has been retired after 91 years

### Jailhouse hawk

"The scope of the trafficking was as large as drugs or arms dealing. You committed an attack on biodiversity out of pure lust for money." A judge sentenced a Sint-Laureins man to eight years in jail and fined him €800,000 for selling more than 500 stolen rare birds of prey

### Hero worship

"Dries Mertens is Belgium's hero at the moment. He just runs through the defenders; he's so quick and he dribbles so fast! And when he's angry, he does that cool Italian thing with his hand in the air and the thumb behind the other fingers. That's totally swag." Rayane Kbir, 13, from Antwerp is the voice of street-football Flanders, in *Het Laatste Nieuws*

### Citizen chef

"When I got the letter from the mayor, I sat there blubbing like a baby." Flemish celebrity chef Piet Huysentruyt was named an honorary citizen of Wortegem-Petegem, East Flanders, where his culinary career started

