



### PATIENT FASHION

A start-up in Flemish Brabant is designing a line of clothes for patients undergoing regular treatment so they can avoid hospital garb

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### THREE'S COMPANY

Planckendael animal park in Mechelen has announced that not one, not two, but three of its elephants are expecting

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### BACK IN TWO WEEKS

You won't find Flanders Today in your post box for a couple of weeks, but never fear, we'll be back on 11 January. In the meantime, visit [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)!



## A year to remember

2016 is set to go down in history as a year of remarkable events in Belgium



Alan Hope  
Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

As the year draws to a close, we look back at the people, places, achievements and controversies that made the news over the past 12 months.

Let's face it: There was a lot to dislike about 2016. Aside from the loss of some of the world's greatest musicians, there was Brexit and a US Election upset, both of which came as less-than-pleasant surprises for Belgium's international community. But in Flanders, we've had as much good as bad across the spectrum, from business to culture. We lost seminal figures like musician Toots Thielemans and cartoonist Marc Sleen, but we saw Flanders and the Netherlands take their co-operation to a higher level. Antwerp's Boekenbeurs book festival turned 80, and the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology celebrated 20 years of success. Even before the year had started, after the terror attacks in Paris and the subsequent lockdown in Brussels, one thought loomed large in people's minds: Could it happen here? And then, in March, it did.

### Terrorism comes to Belgium

On 22 March, shortly before 8.00, two suicide bombers detonated bombs in the departures hall at Brussels Airport in Zaventem. Just over an hour later, a bomb went off in a metro train at Maalbeek station in Brussels' European quarter. The attacks killed 32 members of the public and the three bombers, and injured more than 300. The bombers were linked to a terrorist cell headquartered in the Brussels municipality of Molenbeek, which had been under scrutiny since the Paris attacks the previous November. One of the leaders of that cell, Salah Abdeslam, was arrested in a shootout in Molenbeek four days before the attacks, which may have provided a trigger. The attacks have had a lasting effect on the country, in particular on Brussels. As we end the year, armed soldiers are still patrolling the streets and the transport system, while shoppers are searched as they enter shopping centres. A parliamentary commission is investigating the circumstances surrounding the attacks.

### Faster, higher, stronger

The 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in August ended in disappointment for the Red Lions, the Belgian men's hockey team, who were beaten by Argentina in a close final. Swimmer Pieter Timmers won silver in the 100m freestyle, while Dirk Van Tichelt took bronze in the lightweight judo. But top honour went to cyclist Greg Van Avermaet in the road race, the first Belgian to take gold in the event since 1952. Nafissatou Thiam from Wallonia won gold in the heptathlon. The Paralympics the following month saw the youngest gold medallist Belgium has ever produced: Laurens Devos, 16, in the men's table tennis.



# Antwerp launches call for urban designs to cover ring road

‘Transformation of Antwerp’ open to creative ideas from international design firms



Alan Hope  
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Alexander D’Hooghe, the consultant hired to look into the possibility of enclosing the Antwerp ring road as part of the Oosterweel project, has issued an international invitation to urban design teams to submit their own ideas. Covering the extension of the ring road, creating a tunnel and open space above, was originally floated by civil activist group Ringland and is closer to becoming a reality with the call for designs. The idea follows the principles of the Rebuild By Design movement, influential in architec-

ture and urban planning circles, which holds that cities have evolved as a piecemeal solution to the problems of the past, and are no longer suitable for the challenges of the future. This is the first time the principles would be applied in Flanders. The project involves splitting the ring into five sections, with the design teams for each section to be announced following a contest. The government has a number of conditions to ensure that the final results form a coherent whole, but other than that, the teams will be free to come up with their own designs,



© Ringland  
A drawing of what open space above the ring road extension could look like

in co-operation with civil action groups and local residents. “The challenges are not negligible,” said D’Hooghe, an associate professor at MIT and a founding partner of the think tank Organization for Permanent Modernity. “The teams selected will form the basis for the transformation of Antwerp. The spaces designed by the teams will add green and high-quality public space to the city, bring neighbourhoods back together and provide space for public transport and soft mobility – cyclists and pedestrians.”

## Leuven and Ghent honour German chancellor Merkel

The universities of Ghent and Leuven are awarding a joint honorary doctorate to German chancellor Angela Merkel in the new year. The award is for Merkel’s “diplomatic efforts to develop the political strength of Europe and defend the values that allow our continent to find unity in diversity”. The ceremony will be held in The Egg in Brussels on 12 January, in the presence of prime minister Charles Michel and Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois. Leuven rector Rik Torfs and his Ghent counterpart, Anne De Paepe, will make the presentation. “Merkel is currently the pre-eminent politician who represents the values of the western, democratic constitutional state,” Torfs told *Knack*. “She is an example of generosity and humanitarianism in times of right- and left-wing trends.” Torfs also praised her non-populist, realistic methods. It’s the first time the universities have joined forces to give an honorary doctorate. “We are sometimes competitors, but it’s nice to show that we can also do this together,” said Torfs. In September, Merkel will try to become chancellor for the fourth time. For supporters, her statement “*wir schaffen das*” – “we can handle it” – is an example of how to deal with the refugee crisis. Critics, however, say it has inspired hundreds of thousands of refugees to make the dangerous passage to Europe from the Middle East and Africa. \ Andy Furniere

## Fines in future for not declaring solar panels

The government of Flanders is introducing fines starting next June for anyone who fails to declare their solar panels in an effort to avoid paying the levy due. According to figures from energy minister Bart Tommelein, about one in six homeowners who have installed solar panels have not declared them. The levy has been in force since 1 July of this year and is intended to compensate for the panels being connected to the electricity grid. The amount is dependent on the capacity of the installation and differs slightly between network managers. This year more than 20,000 new installations were fitted by individual families, of whom 3,043 failed to register with their network managers, such as Eandis or Infrax. Even if the company that fits the panels knows about the obligation, a spokesperson for Tommelein said, the responsibility remains with the homeowner. “A lot of people just don’t realise that they have to register their solar power installations,” Tommelein said in a statement. “However, it is important – for the safety of the network, for the achievement of our European targets and, of course, because everyone should contribute to the costs of using the network.” The solar panel fines are part of a decree concerning energy fraud that Tommelein plans to present soon. The money raised from the fines will go into the Energy Fund set up to reduce energy-related debt from the past. \ AH

## Cassation court rules that fines based on speed cameras are illegal


The Cassation Court has declared all traffic fines handed out on the basis of number plate identification alone unlawful. The ruling last week plunged the federal government into confusion, as home affairs minister Jan Jambon admitted that it was unclear how the government would proceed. According to the court, the problem is that police turn to the national vehicle database, where the names and addresses of all car owners are gathered, to identify the number plates being photographed. That is a breach of privacy laws, the court said. Fines administered by police who pull the



car over and personally identify the driver are, of course, still legal.

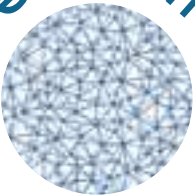
The home affairs ministry said it was busy examining the full content of the court’s ruling, but at the moment the impact is not clear. One possibility is that paid fines will be regarded as recognition of guilt, and not affected by the ruling. Cases that go to court, however, could be reviewed, though no one currently has any idea how many cases are concerned. The ruling has already been ignored by one magistrate in a police court in Leuven, who rejected an appeal from the defence to drop charges against a man caught by speed camera, given the Cassation ruling.

“The importance of road safety weighs proportionally much heavier than any possible breach of the right to privacy,” judge Kathleen Stinckens said. The federal police have now applied for permission to consult the database for identification purposes, which, when granted, will cover all future cases. The customs service has had such a document for years, as have several other government services and even private companies, such as those that hand out parking fines. But the police have never asked for permission before. \ AH




2,500

jobs lost every year in Brussels as a result of traffic jams, according to a study carried out for the regions. The jobs tended to move to Flanders, where the traffic problem is less serious




€3 billion

to be invested over the next 10 years by Proximus in super-fast glass-fibre internet connections to homes and businesses. The project begins next year in larger cities, including Antwerp and Brussels




4.464

reports of animal abuse in Flanders this year, compared to 3,580 last year. The increase, a spokesperson said, is mainly due to better public awareness of reporting mechanisms



27.4%

of the academic staff at KU Leuven are women, up from 24% four years ago. This year men made up 85% of all lecturers, but the number of new appointments was 50-50 for the first time ever



406,000

Belgian employees were given a grant to buy a bicycle from their employer in 2015, allowing them to cycle to work. The measure cost the treasury €93 million in tax breaks for companies



## WEEK IN BRIEF

The number of **road traffic deaths** in Belgium in the first nine months of this year was down 12% compared to the same period last year, according to the National Institute for Road Safety. That translates to 26 fewer deaths in Flanders and five fewer in the Brussels-Capital Region. Flanders and especially Brussels (+18%) saw more accidents involving injuries to cyclists, however.

Keyware Smart Card Division, the company that rents payment terminals to retailers, has been **fined €720,000 by a court** in Brussels for breaches of commercial law. The court heard how representatives from Keyware would visit shops that had a contract with competitor Atos and pretend to carry out a minor update, then have the client unknowingly sign an agreement to switch their service to Keyware. Often the new contract tied the client for five years at much more expensive conditions. Keyware could face tens of thousands more in damages claims.

Alain Courtois, Brussels-City councillor for civil status, has announced he will refuse to carry out a marriage of any couple that **refuse to shake his hand** on religious grounds. Courtois and colleagues have been confronted with candidates for marriage who refuse either to shake hands with a female official in the case of male civilians or with male officials in the case of women – among them Muslims, Jews and Christians. “I was shocked; this is totally unacceptable,” he said. “It’s a question of the principle of courtesy.”

Nine media groups represent **80% to 100% of traditional media** in Flanders, according to the Flemish media regulator’s annual report. Since the creation of Mediahuis (publisher of *Flanders Today*) in 2013, the newspaper market has been dominated by two publishers: Mediahuis and De Persgroep. Telenet is the largest distributor

of TV and online media, while new entrants like Netflix made their presence felt in digital media.

Antwerp province governor Cathy Berx has cancelled a contract to turn the **management of a shelter for homeless people** over to private security company G4S because the project, she said, should have had the approval of the city’s council for social aid agencies, OCMW. Applicants will now have to present their applications all over again, with or without amendments.

Asse, Flemish Brabant, has been named the **best municipality in Flanders** in which to do business by *Trends* magazine, taking over from last year’s winner, Aalst. Asse’s largest employer is Delhaize, with a distribution centre employing 2,000 people, followed by Eddy Merckx Cycles, publishers Roularta and logistics company Dandoy. The town benefits from its close proximity to Brussels and its position at the confluence of two major roads, the magazine said.

Brussels public transport authority MIVB has **no plans to index its fares** in the coming year to take account of inflation, according to the region’s mobility ministry. The region is freezing prices to make access to public transport as simple as possible. Stable prices are intended to facilitate the growth in passenger numbers. The MIVB also kept its fares unchanged in 2016.

The national union of pigeon-fanciers has called on its members to **keep their prize birds indoors** from 17 December to 9 January, with the arrival of a special hunting season on feral pigeons. Those birds – in contrast to naturally wild pigeons – are former pet birds who have become a pest to wild species and other birds. But hunters could easily confuse the feral birds with valuable racing pigeons if owners

do not take precautions, the union said.

Four candidates have emerged to **take over the Brussels Sheraton Hotel**, which declared bankruptcy in October. All four candidates would reduce the capacity of the hotel from 511 at present to around 250, with rental apartments on the upper floors and shops on the ground-floor gallery, according to industry federation Horeca Brussel.

Antwerp came out on top for **cocaine use per capita** in a study of sewer water carried out by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon. In tests of sewer water in 50 cities in 18 countries, Antwerp was ahead of cities like London and Barcelona.

Fashion legend **Diane von Fürstenberg**, born in Brussels in 1946, is on the list of recipients of an honorary degree from Antwerp University this year, rector Herman Van Goethem has announced. Also listed are Paris-based literary philosopher Almuth Grésillon, Austrian behavioural economist Ernst Fehr and Jan Rabaey of West Flanders, a professor of applied engineering at the University of California, Berkeley.

Two family members of a victim of the 22 March bomb attacks in Brussels and Zaventem have started a non-profit organisation to **bring other relatives of victims together**. The pair say such an organisation is necessary because of the administrative confusion surrounding the aftermath of the attacks. The husband and brother of Fabienne Vansteenkiste, who died in the attack on Brussels Airport, say that their lives are still dominated by red tape. “Each time you have to fill in forms and tick boxes, and each time you have to go through the same pain,” he told *Bruzz*.

## FACE OF FLANDERS



© Filip Naudts/Bozar

### Paul Dujardin

Paul Dujardin, CEO and artistic director of Bozar in Brussels, has been awarded the first Leader of the Year prize by *Lobby* magazine. Since being appointed director of the fine arts centre, Dujardin has, the magazine said, turned it into “an unmissable multidisciplinary cultural institution at both national and international level”. Dujardin was born in Brussels in 1963 and recalls playing on the exercise terrain of the army barracks in Etterbeek, a piece of land that would later become the campus of the Dutch-speaking Free University of Brussels (VUB). He would later return to study there to get a degree in art history. He also earned a diploma in policy science from the former Vlekho University-College. Following further studies in Oviedo, Spain, the Goethe Institute in Brussels and the Free University of Berlin, Dujardin returned to Brussels to begin a career in arts administration, setting up the contemporary music festival Ars Musica in 1988 and remaining its co-ordinator until 1993. By then he was also director-general of the Philharmonic Society of Brussels and in charge of programming for the National Orchestra. On arriving at the Centre for

Fine Arts on Ravensteinstraat in 2002, he found a dusty, old-fashioned institution living off its former glories. One of his first moves was to re-christen the institution Bozar (from the French Palais des Beaux-Arts). Later came the restoration of the building to the magnificence imagined by its architect, Victor Horta. “He dragged the Centre for Fine Arts out of the cobwebs and turned it into a prestigious house of culture with no barriers,” wrote VUB’s newspaper later. Bozar is now one of the jewels of Brussels’ arts scene, with concerts, exhibitions, readings and lectures, a bookshop and a Michelin-starred restaurant. “I am truly honoured to receive this award,” Dujardin said. “Since it was founded, the Centre for Fine Arts has aimed to be inclusive, a city within the city, and has always worked to remain, now more than ever, a link between the various neighbourhoods of Brussels, the Belgian communities and the international communities.” The Lobby Awards are given out annually by *Lobby* magazine. They cover a variety of categories, including Woman of the Year, Business Circle, Business Leader and now Leader of the Year. \ Alan Hope

## FLANDERTODAY Flanders State of the Art

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## OFFSIDE Putting it out there

Brussels public transport authority MIVB has been asked to start a campaign aimed at raising the awareness of male passengers to the horrors of “manspreading”. You may be in the need of some elucidation, or “mansplaining”. It goes like this: When seated on a bus or tram seat intended for one, men have a tendency to spread their legs and take up part of the space attributed to the person next to them. Even worse is the two-person seat, where the hapless fellow passengers risks being swallowed up entirely as the man’s knees, thighs and goodness knows what else



© Twitter @Miranda19c

expand to fill all space available. Women, it should be noted, don’t do this. A campaign against manspreading, which, needless to say, also affects male passengers, has been carried out on the New York subway. Céline Deforge, a member of the Brussels parliament, says that’s what’s needed for Brussels.

MIVB says it has yet to receive a complaint from passengers about manspreading, which since the phenomenon is an act of at least passive intimidation, isn’t all that surprising. Passengers on public transport put up with an awful lot without saying much, which is why the absence of complaints doesn’t necessarily signify the lack of a problem. The authority did spread the news of the New York campaign via social media, and it does have an annual campaign on the need for politeness towards our fellow passenger, a spokesperson said.

\ AH



## 5TH COLUMN

### Inside job

The federal government has appointed Sophie Dutordoir as CEO of NMBS, the national railway authority. Everyone agrees she is the right woman for the job, but her appointment still took months, due to the culture of political appointments.

This culture has its roots in a deep distrust between political parties and also between politics and government concerns. Appointing people with a political affiliation to top positions in government-controlled companies gives parties a clear advantage. These inside men and women provide them with inside information.

In the past, this has not always led to the “right person for the job”. For this reason, N-VA has always spoken out against politically affiliated appointments.

As a relatively new party in the early 2000s, the nationalists were never in a position to push through political appointments. But their objections are also more fundamental: They believe in the primacy of politics. It is up to politicians to make decisions, not government enterprises.

Putting an end to political appointments was a key issue in the change N-VA promised in its election campaigns. The party saw political affiliations as typical of PS, the French-speaking socialists whom they held responsible for everything that went wrong in this country.

With the socialists in opposition and N-VA the most powerful party in government, things have changed. N-VA felt they were owed appointments, as real change could only be brought about “from within”. Having worked for Christian-democrat cabinets, Dutordoir is seen as having a CD&V stamp of approval.

This has been compensated for by appointing Herman De Bode, who bears an N-VA stamp of approval, as CFO of rail infrastructure company Infrabel. Moreover, the NMBS board is being enlarged and reshuffled to allow three N-VA-appointed members.

The Flemish socialists, too, have had a change of heart. In the past, SPA was a great champion of political appointments. Jannie Haek, one of Dutordoir’s predecessors, moved straight from being the cabinet leader of an SPA vice-prime minister to the NMBS. Ironically, SPA is now turning its back on politically affiliated appointments. SPA leader John Crombez stated that extra seats should be created on trains, not on the NMBS board. \ Anja Otte

# €30 million a year for scientific research projects

## Excellence of Science programme will be hoping for ‘breakthroughs’



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

The government of Flanders and the French-speaking community have established the Excellence of Science programme (Eos), which will invest €30 million in scientific research collaborations annually. The programme and first call for project submissions was launched last week by Flemish minister for science policy Philippe Muyters and his French-speaking counterpart Jean-Claude Marcourt. The programme will be managed by the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research and the French-speaking Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique.

The funding will support projects submitted by universities in Belgium. Regional, federal and



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foreign research institutions can also be part of a consortium submitting a proposal. A maximum of eight research groups can participate in any one project.

Applications for the first call have to be in by 4 April 2017. The first Eos projects will start on 1 January 2018. A total of 35 Eos projects will be awarded between €450,000 and €1 million per year, for a period of four years. A panel of international experts will select the projects.

The new programme replaces the former federal Inter-University Attraction Poles. Minister Muyters said that he hopes to see interdisciplinary collaborations. “It’s on the borders between disciplines that you get breakthroughs,” he said.

## Government earmarks €700,000 for projects focused on green vehicles

Flemish energy minister Bart Tommelein has announced grants worth €700,000 for seven projects designed to make vehicles more environmentally friendly and to expand the infrastructure for clean vehicles. In Flanders, 10-18 December was the Week of the Environmentally Friendly Vehicle.

As part of his Clean Power for Transport action plan, Tommelein put out a call for applications for grants, with a ceiling of €150,000 per project. There were 28 ideas submitted, of which seven were selected for funding.

Six of the seven are aimed at one specific fleet of vehicles, such as taxis and car-sharing. In one project, the car-sharing service Cambio will use its fleet to inform the public of the value of clean vehicles, with a grant of €60,347.

Other projects include putting 180 electric taxis on the roads by 2020 and cleaner fleets of company cars, a project spearheaded by auto sector association Traxio.

“I’m very happy to be able to announce these fine projects during the Week of the Environmentally Friendly Vehicle,” Tommelein said. “They will help Flanders in the greening of our vehicles, the extension of our charging infrastructure and in raising the awareness among our people.” \ Alan Hope



© Internationaal Vlaanderen

Front row, from left: Koen Verlaeck, UNWTO secretary-general Taleb Rifai, minister Ben Weyts

## Flanders develops ethical tourism framework for war sites

Flemish tourism minister Ben Weyts has signed a co-operation agreement with the secretary-general of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) concerning a policy framework for ethical tourism on historical war sites. The agreement was also signed by Koen Verlaeck, secretary-general of Flanders’ department of foreign affairs. The agreement is intended to serve as a guide for other countries developing peace-based tourism policies, and builds on Flanders’ many years of experience in the area – culminating in the 2014-2018 centenary of the First World War. The government of Flanders took the initiative

in proposing the agreement, which it will implement together with the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland and the Basque Unesco Centre in Bilbao.

The goal of the agreement is to promote peace through tourism while also using tourism to contribute to the economic growth of a region. UNWTO is one of the United Nations’ specialised agencies; it promotes responsible, sustainable and accessible tourism, particularly in developing countries.

Flanders has been a member of UNWTO since 1997 and is a non-voting member of the steering committee. \ AH

## First Maurits Coppieters Prize goes to Scottish politician Alex Salmond

The first Maurits Coppieters Award has been given to Alex Salmond, the former first minister of Scotland who now sits for the Scottish Nationalist Party in the House of Commons. The Brussels-based Maurits Coppieters Centre founded the award to “honour individuals and organisations that, like Maurits Coppieters himself did, stand out in defence of cultural and linguistic diversity, inter-cultural dialogue, self-determination, rights of minorities, peace, democracy and a united Europe”.

Coppieters was a Flemish politician and member of the then political party Volksunie. He was known for being committed to progressive issues. He died in 2005, and the centre that bears his name was founded by the European Free Alliance. Coppieters himself helped found the European political party in the early 1980s.

The choice of Salmond as the first recipient of the award recognises,

the jury said, his “dedication and advocacy for Scotland’s right to redefine its political future among a European family of nations. His contribution to advancing Scotland’s democratic case for devolution and independence has re-energised the people of Scotland, Europe and beyond”.

Salmond was one of the prime forces in the growth of the SNP in Scotland, the first nationalist to become First Minister, in which position he led the campaign for Scottish independence. Following the narrow defeat of the campaign in 2014, he stepped down as first minister and last year became part of the SNP landslide of 56 members elected to the British parliament. He represents the party on foreign affairs.

Salmond embodies, said the jury, “a respect for cultural diversity, peace, democracy, co-operation and a united Europe. Through his leadership, he has helped transform Scotland into a fair, open and democratic society”. \ AH

## Parliament unhappy with Turkey’s ‘dangerous’ portrayal of MP

The speaker of the federal parliament has called in the Turkish ambassador to formally object to the portrayal of a Flemish MP on a Turkish news channel as a supporter of the Kurdish independence movement PKK.

Siegfried Bracke said the statement has exposed MP Zuhail Demir to potential danger from supporters of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Demir has Kurdish roots and had expressed support for the rights of Kurdish people “but without violence”.

She has also clearly expressed her opposition to the separatist movement. “Just because you have Kurdish roots doesn’t mean you necessarily support the PKK,” she said.

Her depiction as a PKK supporter – coinciding with the Brussels trial of a number of PKK members accused of terrorist attacks – led to threats both here and in Turkey. Bracke, who is a party colleague but took his position as representative of the parliament as a whole, was due to put his case to the ambassador as *Flanders Today* went to press.

“This is a matter of common practice,” he said. “I see a lot of ambassadors, at their request or at mine.” He stressed he would do the same should the MP involved be from another party. \ AH



# A year to remember

The region looks back on a year of highs and lows, triumph and tragedy

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© John Thuys/BELGA

Florian Van Acker also won gold in table tennis, in Class 11 of the men's singles. Wheelchair athlete Marieke Vervoort won silver in the 400m, and another wheelchair racer, Peter Genyn, won gold in the 100m, setting a new Paralympic record of 21.15.

## Farewell Toots

Jean-Baptiste Frédéric Isidor Thielemans, better known to the world as Toots, was born in the Marollen district of Brussels, and he remained a man of the people to the end. He died in August at the age of 94.

The rarity of the instrument – the harmonica – and his impeccable technique meant he was much sought-after: He played with everyone from Ella Fitzgerald to Billy Joel to the cast of *Sesame Street*. But despite his fame, his two honorary degrees from the city's universities and his title of Baron granted by Albert II, he insisted he was still a *ketje* – the nickname for born-and-bred *Brusselaars*.

## The beer beneath our streets

The idea to pipe beer to the bottler three kilometres away so that lorries don't block traffic is so ingenious yet so simple, you wonder why brewers don't all do it. De Halve Maan, makers of Brugse Zot and Straffe Hendrik, pride themselves on being the last remaining brewery in Bruges' city centre. But there were logistical headaches in a city where the entire centre is Unesco-protected. After several years of planning, fundraising and construction, the €4 million underground pipeline opened in September. The story understandably drew international headlines.



© Courtesy Ian Simpson Architects

## Venue fit for a queen

In November, the Queen Elisabeth Hall opened in Antwerp, providing near-perfect acoustics and a permanent home to the Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra. The

complex, known as the Elisabeth Center, also includes the new Flanders Meeting and Convention Center. The renovation cost €60 million, including €57 million from the government of Flanders and €3 million from the city of Antwerp.

## A haven in Ghent

Arzoo Bahramand studied midwifery at Artevelde University College in Ghent, and the city chose her as its Student of the Year. It's a title given to a student who excels in their studies and contributes to the institution and the city as a whole.

Six years ago, Bahramand fled her homeland of Afghanistan, where she had been working as an assistant gynaecologist. Her work advising women about contraception aroused the ire of Islamic extremists, who made threats on her life. Now, she works to raise awareness among young Flemish people of the realities of the lives of refugees.



© Courtesy Port of Antwerp

## A big year for ports

The port of Antwerp had another successful year, with the announcement last month of a new tanker terminal at the Delwaide dock and a new container terminal at the Hansa dock. All for a value of €650 million, and the promise of jobs.

Also at the port, the giant Kieldrecht lock (pictured) opened in June, allowing better access for ships using the Waasland harbour on the left bank of the Scheldt. Antwerp also opened its new Port House, a stunning design by the late architect Zaha Hadid, which combines the original warehouse with a glass sculpture on the roof.

The port of Zeebrugge, meanwhile, started the year by losing a major Far East container contract, but bounced back with a joint mission with Antwerp to Japan as part of a state visit, making a positive impression on 800 entrepreneurs from the port of Nagoya. Zeebrugge also plans closer co-operation

with the Zeeland ports of Terneuzen and Vlissingen.

## Sadness and celebration

For Flemish theatre director Ivo Van Hove, 2016 was a bittersweet year. He picked up two Tony Awards in June for his Broadway production of Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge*. It had received five nominations, and his production of Miller's *The Crucible* had received four nominations. Van Hove went on to win this year's Flemish Culture Prize for overall services to culture.

But the year started with the shocking death of his collaborator David Bowie, just a month after Bowie's last public appearance in New York. That was at the premiere of the musical *Lazarus*, directed by Van Hove and with music by Bowie.

## Minister-president visits the world

One glance at the 2016 diary of Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois would be enough to make even the most avid Air Miles collector's head spin. In April, he took part in an economic mission to Cuba, along with 26 businesses from Flanders and Brussels. He went straight from there to Kurdistan, the autonomous region of northern Iraq, where he met the president and prime minister. He also visited a refugee camp and announced a grant of €200,000 to help refugee families.

Also in April, Flanders Investment & Trade (Fit) organised the region's biggest-ever trade mission, with a week-long visit to India, Flanders' second-biggest export market outside the EU. In May, Bourgeois was off to the Baltic states where he opened a new Fit office in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius.

In November he spent four days in Iran, leading a delegation of 70 Flemish business leaders. And, finally, this month he went to Texas as part of a royal economic mission.



© Courtesy BJO

## Music for a good cause

In June, the Brussels Jazz Orchestra got together with the Ancienne Belgique concert venue to organise the benefit concert Artists #withRefugees. All artists worked for free, with the proceeds going to the Music Fund. It collects second-hand instruments, repairs them if necessary and ships them to musicians in developing countries, conflict zones and refugee camps.

The concert bill also included the Brussels Vocal Collective, wind ensemble I Solisti del Vento and singers Tutu Pouane and David Linx, as well as five members of the Syrian Big

Band, all of whom are refugees. There will be a repeat performance at deSingel in Antwerp next month.



© Rob Stevens/KU Leuven

## Leuven leads on innovation

The University of Leuven (KU Leuven) was declared the "most innovative" in Europe, in news organisation Reuters' latest rankings, for its quantity of influential inventions. "Its researchers submit more patents than almost any other university in Europe, and outside researchers frequently cite KU Leuven inventions in their own patent applications," Reuters said. The university was also praised for its work in microelectronics, nanotechnology and ICT, for its virology and chemotherapy lab, and for its ground-breaking work on technology transfer.

## To be continued: Oosterweel

The Oosterweel connection, a massive road-bridge-tunnel project in Antwerp that will connect the city's ring road, has been in dispute since it was first proposed in 2000. However, 2016 ends on a pretty positive note, with the agreement by the Flemish government, the City of Antwerp and a number of neighbourhood protest groups to look into possible solutions to the biggest conflict: fine particulates and residents' health.

The aim of the project is to complete the circle of the Antwerp ring road and improve traffic coming from the port to the European hinterland. Protestors dispute the route used, the effect on city traffic and the environmental consequences.

The dispute led to a proposal to cover the ring road, which has gained widespread support. The city has now launched an urban design competition to see what form such a decision could take.

*Photos, p1: Terrorism/ John Thuys/BELGA, Olympics/Benoit Doppagne/BELGA, Toots/ Courtesy VRT, Beer pipeline/Teri Schulz, Elisabeth Center/Jesse Williams/deFilharmonie, Ivo Van Hove/Jasper Johns/BELGA, Geert Bourgeois/Dirk Waem/BELGA, Arzoo Bahramand/Artevelde university college, Port House/Courtesy Port of Antwerp, Researcher/ European Union/Ezequiel Scagnetti, Oosterweel/Courtesy Ringland, Musician/Courtesy BJO*



## WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Aluminium \ Corialis

The Lokeren-based producer of aluminium profiles for doors, windows and the building trade is being sold for €1 billion to the CVC Capital Partners fund. Corialis employs 1,900 workers in Belgium, France, Poland and the UK.

### Auctions \ Henri Godts

Brussels auction houses Henri Godts and The Romantic Agony, which specialise in rare books, maps, prints and photographs, are merging to create the largest business of their kind in the Benelux.

### Transport \ VDL

The Roeselare-based bus manufacturer has delivered 43 electric articulated buses to the public transport authority of Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

### Chemicals \ Solvay

The Brussels-based chemicals and composite materials group has sold its 59% stake in Vinythai PVC producer of Thailand to the Japanese Asahi Glass company for €273 million.

### Distribution \ Bpost

Belgium's postal operator is acquiring DynaGroup logistic services and software developer, based in the Netherlands.

### Brewing \ AB Inbev

The Leuven-based brewing giant has sold its eastern and central European beer brands to Japan's Asahi group for €7.3 billion. The deal, which includes Peroni and Grolsch, was made to meet demands from the EU competition authorities following AB Inbev's acquisition of SABMiller last year.

### Metals \ Nyrstar

The Brussels-based non-ferrous metals and smelting group has sold its Peruvian Contonga mine and assets in Quebec for a total of \$26 million (€25 million).

### Retail \ Hunkemöller

The Dutch lingerie chain, which operates more than 100 outlets in Belgium, has plans to open a further 10 shops in the coming years, including a new 500-square-metre flagship store in Brussels.

# NMBS names new CEO

## Former Electrabel chief Sophie Dutordoir appointed to top rail post



Alan Hope

Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

The new CEO of national rail authority NMBS is Sophie Dutordoir, 54, the former chief executive of Electrabel. Dutordoir left the energy giant three years ago to open a delicatessen in Overijse.

She was one of four candidates on the shortlist produced by head-hunters Odger Berndtson, brought in by the government to seek a replacement for Jo Cornu. She will remain on the board of BNP Paribas bank but will give up her seat on the board of Bpost, another majority state-owned enterprise.

Following studies in Ghent, Dutordoir (pictured) worked as spokesperson for a number of CVP (now CD&V) ministers in the 1980s. She joined Electrabel in 1990 and rose to become head of marketing and sales, taking over as boss of gas transport company Fluxys for two years before becoming CEO of the parent company in 2009. She stepped down unexpectedly in



© BNP Paribas Fortis

2013 to go in another direction.

Dutordoir opened and ran Poppeia in Overijse for the last three years. "I know that some people think it strange for a top manager to decide to become a small business owner, running an Italian delicatessen," she said at the time.

But those close to her, she said, were less surprised. "They know I've been dreaming of my own business since I was little and that I don't put off my plans forever."

## Lufthansa officially takes over Brussels Airlines

German airline Lufthansa has officially confirmed it will exercise its option to acquire 100% of Brussels Airlines. The Belgian airline will be folded into Lufthansa's low-cost Eurowings Group.

"We believe in the Brussels market and in Brussels Airlines and its staff," said Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr, before giving an assurance the name Brussels Airlines brand would be retained, at least for the next two years. "We have shown that we appreciate the strength of a local brand, with, for example, Swiss." Lufthansa took over the remains of Swissair in 2007.

The following year, Lufthansa took a 45% share in Brussels Airlines, effectively rescuing it from disaster. It simultaneously obtained an option to acquire the other 55% at a fixed price, with a deadline of this year. That allows Lufthansa to now take over the whole airline – valued at €200 million – for only €2.6 million.

The Eurowings Group to which Brussels Airlines will belong is a low-cost airline offering long- and short-haul flights, throughout Europe and in the US, Dominican Republic, Thailand and Cuba. It also has codeshare agreements with airlines in Canada, Japan, Austria and the US.

Lufthansa also announced it would invest €600 million in long-distance aircraft to replace some of Brussels Airlines' existing fleet, adding seven planes leased for a period of 20 years. And to stress the local character, star chef Yves Mattagne of Brussels' Seagrill will provide the meals, while brewery Brasserie de la Senne delivers the beer.

Brussels Airlines board chair Etienne Davignon stressed there would be no restructuring of the company and no loss of jobs. "The last eight years have proven the potential of our co-operation with Lufthansa for future opportunities and maintaining employment." \ AH

## Flemish media giant makes bid for Dutch Telegraaf Media

Mediahuis, the Flemish publishing house that produces *De Standaard*, *Flanders Today* and several other titles, has confirmed it has begun talks with the Dutch publishing group Telegraaf Media Groep (TMG), with a view to a possible takeover. The bid for TMG is in conjunction with Dutch investment company VP Exploitatie. Mediahuis, based in Groot-Bijgaarden just outside of Brussels, was created in 2013 when Corelio, publisher of *De Standaard* and *Het Nieuwsblad*, merged with Concentra, publisher of *Gazet van Antwerpen* and *Het Belang van Limburg*. TMG publishes the popular broadsheet *De Telegraaf*, the Netherlands' biggest-selling newspaper, with 450,000 copies a day. TMG also publishes the Dutch-language edition of *Metro* and the regional *Noordhollands Dagblad*.

An acquisition would considerably strengthen Mediahuis's posi-

tion in the Netherlands – where it already owns NRC Media and *De Limburger*.

The Dutch business daily *Financieele Dagblad* reports that Mediahuis is prepared to offer €5.25 per share for TMG, a premium of 50% over the current share price, valuing the group at €243 million. Mediahuis is not confirming the figures at this time. *Financieele Dagblad* reports that the Van Puijenbroek family, the major shareholder in TMG, was in favour of the bid.

TMG, which employs more than 2,000 people and is based in Amsterdam, made a loss last year of €23.6 million on sales of €482 million, making it prey for a takeover bid. It is the Netherlands' largest media company after De Persgroep, which is also Flemish. De Persgroep is based in Asse, Flemish Brabant, and publishes *De Morgen*, *Het Laatste Nieuws* and *De Tijd*. \ AH

## Flanders must be central to Brexit negotiations, says Voka

Flanders needs to work for a trade-friendly Brexit, which takes account of its own economic interests and makes sure its voice is heard in talks taking place in Belgium, according to the Flemish chamber of commerce Voka. The organisation held round-table discussions in Brussels last week, together with the government of Flanders.

Brexit is the process by which the British government will negotiate its exit from the European Union, which is due to start next spring. The UK is Belgium's fifth-largest trading partner: selling €15 billion and buying €27 billion in exports. Within Belgium, Flanders accounts for 86% of exports and 89% of imports; trade with the UK is therefore of paramount importance to the region.

"Nobody is going to gain from a political show of muscle-flexing," said Voka director-general Hans Maertens (pictured), questioned on the subject of the so-called soft or hard Brexit. "What we need to do now is ensure our positive trade relations with the UK remain in place."

The important thing is to avoid the creation of new import tariffs by the UK, which risk affecting Flemish businesses, he said, as well as



© Courtesy Syntra Flanders

adding administrative burdens on companies and customs agents and restrictions on the free movement of workers.

Flanders also has to ensure that its priorities within the Belgian representation to Europe are clear, said Maertens, to avoid the kind of confusion seen when the Walloon government temporarily blocked the Ceta agreement with Canada. "Flanders is the most important [Belgian] player in the Brexit story, and we take

it for granted that our voice will be listened to when official negotiations begin," he said.

"We have to make sure that there is a joint European approach, that there won't be partial agreements with large member states," Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois said following the meeting. "There are certain northern countries that have the same interest."

Meanwhile, according to the CEO of Febelfin, the federation representing Belgium's financial sector, Brussels needs to get ready to take over from London as a European financial centre. Speaking last week to a working group on the industrial consequences of Brexit, CEO Michel Vermaerke assumed the position of a hard Brexit – one where the UK is given as few concessions as possible – which would see the European financial centre shift out of the City of London.

Later, Vermaerke told VRT that Brussels needs to begin presenting its advantages, as a number of other European cities – including Paris and Frankfurt – jockey for the position. "Let's not be naïve," Vermaerke said. "Other countries also have things to sell." \ AH



# Fashioning a remedy

Flemish entrepreneurs give unsightly hospital gowns a stylish makeover



John Bean  
More articles by John \ flanderstoday.eu

INGAWELLBEING.COM

Have you ever found yourself in the doctor's surgery – feeling sick and vulnerable – only to have to change into an ill-fitting hospital gown that made you feel even worse? For millions of people suffering from chronic conditions, including cancer, renal failure and cardiovascular disease, frequent and regular visits to the doctor are a fact of life. On top of all the discomforts, however, patients frequently find that their own clothes are inconvenient for medical check-ups. From simply being a nuisance to take off to lacking accommodation for IV lines and drains, clothes can be an immense source of frustration for patients. It affects how they see themselves in the hospital or clinic and limits their ability and willingness to socialise. But Inga Wellbeing is changing all that. The company, based in Lubbeek, Flemish Brabant, is designing a line of clothing specifically suited for patients with long-term illnesses.



Inga Wellbeing is the result of a collaboration between Fiona McGreal, Claire Robinson and Nikla Lanckswert, whose mother – and the company's namesake – went through years of cancer therapy. The designs provide a well-needed

fashion remedy for patients with a wide variety of illnesses, say the founders. Thanks to easy access to arms, chest, abdomen and the back, it also makes life easier for caregivers, especially in home and palliative-care settings. The designs of the shirts, trousers and dresses for men and women allow medical staff to insert an IV line or a wound drain. There are also designs that include convenient access to a catheter. During treatment, patients can remain dressed, giving their self-esteem a much needed boost. Lanckswert's experience with her mother showed her firsthand the frustration of trying to find clothes to wear while undergoing medical treatment. When she met Robinson, whose mother had also had cancer treatment, she found a partner equally determined to remedy the situation.

Robinson, armed with a background in public relations and project management, set her sights on building a business that would help change the status quo and ensure that the person, rather than the patient, was front and centre during treatment. "What sets Inga Wellbeing apart, however, is that our clothing is not just functional, it's also fashionable, thanks to Fiona's talent," says Robinson. McGreal, an internationally successful designer who's worked with the Brussels fashion house Natan, had a vision of attractive, comfortable and functional clothing for patients. Her aim was to design garments that could help break the stigma often associated with illness. The results speak for themselves. Inga Wellbeing's pieces, some of which are already available, have many discreet openings that allow access to the body. McGreal has even incorporated interior pocket



© Courtesy Inga Wellbeing

ets that provide space for drains or pumps. The stretchable fabric is comfortable and forgiving of lumps and bumps and changes in weight. It's all affordable – pieces range from €40 to €90 – and can be washed in a regular washing machine. "All of our clothing was designed with the advice of medical professionals," says Robinson, "so it's all completely acceptable for hospital wear. Medical staff can easily examine and even treat patients without having to fully undress them." This is, she continues, "a big step in helping patients maintain their dignity and comfort, while also saving valuable time for nurses who attend to them". The innovative garments could also help patients regain their independence more quickly, says Robinson. The snap openings, for example, enable many patients to dress themselves. The line also includes evening wear for patients

to wear overnight in hospital or at home. Inga Wellbeing was awarded the 2016 PRoF Award for innovation in health-care products. PRoF, an international consortium of health-care professionals, bases its annual award on a set of core values that include comfort, privacy, flexibility and respect. The award recognises products that are inter-generational, non-stigmatising and help patients feel more secure in social situations. The company has also been nominated for a Henry Van de Velde design award, sponsored by Design Flanders. Members of the public can vote for their favourite; winners will be announced next month. Once all the designs are available and word gets out, demand for Inga Wellbeing's outfits could be brisk. A limited number of items are already available to order from the website.

## Flemish brain expert to lead UK Dementia Research Institute

TINYURL.COM/UKDRI

Flemish neuroscientist Bart De Strooper of life sciences research institute VIB and the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), has been appointed as head of the new UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI) at the University College of London. De Strooper, 56, is head of the laboratory for the research of neurodegenerative diseases at KU Leuven. He focuses on the genetic mechanisms that cause Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

He was selected as head of UK DRI after an international search. De Strooper (pictured) will continue working for the VIB and KU Leuven as well. UK DRI was established through an investment of £250 million (€297 million), allocated by the UK government and Alzheimer's charities, principally to carry out research on better ways to diagnose, treat and prevent dementia. The researchers will also work on other brain-associated conditions,



© Courtesy VIB

like Huntington's and Parkinson's disease. The institution will open next month and provide a new work-

ing space to about 50 professors and 400 researchers. According to De Strooper, it has the potential to bring dementia research up to the same level as cancer research. He is optimistic, he says, that a cure for Alzheimer's disease will be found during his lifetime. "But we shouldn't keep thinking that one harmful protein causes dementia," he told *De Morgen*. "We also have to take into account other processes in the brain." \ Andy Furniere

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

Start-up delivers energy to remote areas

Tiger Power, from Destelbergen in East Flanders, has developed the Sunfold and Storer technologies for the production and storage of green energy. The start-up's eco-friendly alternatives can improve access to energy in remote areas without a reliable grid. They could, for instance, be an alternative to polluting diesel generators that provide most of the energy to areas of rural Africa and India. Sunfold produces energy through solar panels and stores the energy in integrated batteries. Storer converts rain- or groundwater into hydrogen, which can be stored for a long period of time. Both systems are compact, easy to transport and built to last more than 20 years.

Antarctic ice melting faster than thought

The East Antarctic ice sheet, considered the coldest part of the South Pole, is more vulnerable to climate change than was once thought, according to a discovery by researchers at the University of Leuven and the Dutch universities of Utrecht and Delft. Through field work, satellite data and a climate model, the researchers found that ice shelves in a certain area of East Antarctica are melting faster than scientists had assumed. That's because a strong wind is transporting warm, dry air to the area and blowing away the snow. This darkens the surface, which then absorbs more of the sun's heat. The discoveries were published in the science journal *Nature*.

MRI can help diagnose Alzheimer's

A large-scale study has revealed that an MRI scan of the brain can show if a patient has Alzheimer's disease. Doctors have traditionally used MRI scans to detect other causes of memory loss such as bleeding or tumours, but they haven't used an MRI scan to determine Alzheimer's itself because the measurements involved must be done by hand in a labour-intensive process. A new software that automatically takes these specific measurements, developed by the Leuven company Icometrix, has enabled researchers to compare the measurements of healthy brains with those of brains of Alzheimer's patients. According to the results, the brain volume of Alzheimer patients was much lower than that of the healthy group. \ AF

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# Don't cram for exams

## New brochure helps UGent students get a grip on their studies



Andy Furniere  
More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

\ UGENT.BE

With the first-semester final exams in full swing, Ghent University (UGent) has launched a new brochure to help its students study more efficiently. Among other things, the guide advises students to adapt their study schedule to their personality and lifestyle, to help them overcome procrastination. Putting off studying is one of the most common issues that get students in trouble during exam periods. In secondary education, students often embark on long, last-minute study stints to pass their final exams, but at university level, with a lot more required study material, this endeavour becomes much riskier. "Also, social media and TV shows can easily distract students from their work, costing them a lot of time," explains Annick Eelbode, psychologist at UGent's counselling office. "We want to help them take more control over their lives, discover more about themselves and adapt their study behaviour



accordingly." The brochure *Efficiënter Studeren* (Studying More Efficiently) advises students to observe during which hours of the week they are the most productive. On the basis of these insights, they can set aside some time for when they will only do preparatory work, which doesn't require full concentration, and leave the rest devoted completely to studying. The brochure also deals with other common problems like fear of failure and perfectionism. A general advice is to set concrete learning

goals. Aiming to understand a certain issue, for example, is better than attempting to study as many pages as possible. "A goal for a biology student could be, for example, to understand how an enzyme works," explains Eelbode. "Such concrete accomplishments are also more satisfying." More and more students study in groups – in libraries, for example – because the social control helps them to focus. While Eelbode is not against this trend, she warns of the risks.

"It becomes a problem when a student's success depends completely on this method," she says. "You should keep on working on your weaknesses, by also studying independently at home, because you might get in trouble when the conditions are not optimal." In addition to the brochure, the UGent study advice department also provides individual counselling and group training sessions. There are sessions dealing with procrastination, fear of failure, public speaking anxiety, sleeping problems and more. Eelbode notices increasing interest in the training sessions. "Thankfully, students are looking for support more quickly," she says. "Studying efficiently will also help them to have more fun as students, with more quality free time." The brochure is currently only available in Dutch, but an English-language version for international students should be ready for the second exam period, at the end of the academic year.

## Flanders ramps up vocational training as answer to youth unemployment

Last week, Flanders' education minister Hilde Crevits said that what the region needed now more than ever are people who can put good ideas into practice through strong vocational training. The minister was speaking at the Maritime Academy in Antwerp for the launch of European Vocational Skills Week. "By strengthening learning and working," she said, "we can narrow the gap with the labour market and increase opportunities for young people." That's why, she continued, "we are modernising our secondary schools, building our adult education as a real 'education of opportunities', and why we value higher vocational education as an integral part of higher education". The government of Flanders has recently agreed to sweeping reforms of secondary school educa-

tion, giving students a broader subject offering. It also published a concept note earlier this year, proposing reforms of the adult education sector. In a recent report about education and training in Belgium, the European Commission said that adult participation in life-long learning was low, declining to 7% in 2015, "well below" the EU average of 10.7%. The Vocational Skills Week is the first event of its kind in Europe. The Commission's goal is to give a boost to vocational education and training and improve its image. In Flanders, for example, vocational school is widely seen as lower in status than a general, academic education. During a host of activities across Brussels and in other European cities, adult education centres showcased their programmes, while stakehold-

ers discussed how to support skills development and better communicate the opportunities of adult learning to the public. According to the Commission, about 40% of European employers cannot find people with the right skills for growth and innovation. It said that up-skilling and re-training throughout life is key to improved job opportunities and better integration in society. The Commission also launched a mobility scoreboard to assess the progress made by European countries in creating an environment that fosters learner mobility in line with an EU goal set in 2011, which stipulates that at least 6% of students on vocational courses and at least 20 % of higher education students should spend some of their time studying abroad. \ Emma Portier Davis

## Q&A

**Lisa Maree Bentley (pictured left) is Belgium's ambassador for the International Positive Education Network, a global organisation that advocates for the use of positive psychology in schools. She is implementing a new programme at Antwerp International School that emphasises students' strengths**

**How does positive education work?**  
A teacher changes their whole pedagogy. You can tell the difference between a teacher who is inspired and those who are burnt out or were not inspired in the first place. It's the way they teach that makes the difference. The teachers engage with the students and start to care, focusing on what the students do well rather than what they are not doing well. Children can reach their potential with the right mindset. Positive psychology teaches them that they all have strengths.

**What does this mean in practice in the classroom?**  
A teacher might, for example, use a text in class and focus on the strengths in that text. In Antwerp International School's after-school Young Happy Minds programme there will be group sessions where we will also teach mindfulness, as well as techniques to calm and control emotions.

**Why do you think this is lacking in schools?**  
Different people have different strengths. Schools focus too much on academic knowledge. That's why students come



out of school disillusioned. With positive psychology, they might discover they have strong creativity and leadership skills, for example, instead of thinking, 'I'm a failure because I'm no good at maths'. The problem with schools is that

they put all children in the same batch. We are born individually and have our own identities. As for parents, as much as they think they can help, the majority of time, their children are at school.

**How successful are these programmes?**  
The success I've seen is that students recognise that they're not stupid and their confidence grows. Children with anxiety also cope better by using mindfulness exercises. My hope is that the Belgian education ministers will embrace this as an initiative. Children here are judged at the age of 11 as to who they will be when they are older. Young people have the potential to be whoever they want to be. I will absolutely do everything in my power to get this into schools. \ Interview by EPD

\ IPOSITIVE-EDUCATION.NET

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### Limburg teacher up for Global Teacher Prize

A teacher from Hasselt is one of 50 from around the world selected for the Global Teacher Prize shortlist. Koen Timmers, who is the first teacher from Belgium to make it on to the shortlist of the competition, has been an ICT teacher at a centre for adult education in Heusden-Zolder, Limburg, for the past 17 years. The prize jury was charmed by his project in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Via the non-profit Project Kakuma, he found 100 teachers from 30 countries willing to give daily lessons to children in the camp via Skype. For Flemish pupils, Timmers founded zelfstudie.be, a platform that provides about 60 education programmes.

### Secondary students to volunteer more

The Catholic education network (VSKO) is planning to integrate social projects into secondary school curricula. The Community Service Learning programme will help students participate in volunteer initiatives such as assisting the elderly, people with a disability or refugees. The goal, said VSKO, is to teach youngsters to engage in initiatives that contribute to society, that take into account the different needs of residents and that help develop social skills. VSKO is working on an action plan that takes into account training for teachers. The first schools interested in participating will probably be ready by the start of the 2017 academic year.

### Universities plan academic year reforms

The universities of Ghent (UGent) and Leuven (KU Leuven) are looking into a thorough reform of the organisation of their academic years, *Het Laatste Nieuws* has reported. Currently, most students at UGent and KU Leuven start the year at the end of September, have two semesters of lessons and exams in January and June. UGent has developed four reform options, all including starting the academic year on 1 September. The option with the least change suggests organising exams in December and May and re-sits in June. The option offering the most change is the introduction of lesson modules of five weeks, each followed by exams. KU Leuven has less concrete plans but is also setting up a working group.

\ AF



## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Christmas Parade

You'd better watch out! The JoeFM Christmas Parade is coming to town, with decorated floats, sparkling lights, music, giant snowmen, elves and Santa Claus himself. Check website for street closures and changes to public bus routes. *23 December 18.00-20.00, Mechelen city centre; free* \ [mechelenhoudtjewarm.be](http://mechelenhoudtjewarm.be)

### Christmas Candlelight

On Christmas Eve, the historic begijnhof in Turnhout will be illuminated by hundreds of candles for one magical evening. Take this opportunity to discover one of Flanders' lesser-known begijnhofs, and visit the other holiday attractions in town like the nativity scene and Christmas wish tree. *24 December 17.30-21.00, Begijnhof, Turnhout; free* \ [uitinturnhout.be/winterinturnhout](http://uitinturnhout.be/winterinturnhout)

### Family Museum Circuit

Looking for something fun and educational to do with the kids during the winter break? The newly renovated BELvue Museum has three circuits aimed at different age groups, with activities and assignments (in English, French, Dutch and German). The circuit costs €1 per child, but under-18s get into the museum free. *24 December to 8 January, Paleizenplein 8, Brussels; €1* \ [belvue.be](http://belvue.be)

### De warmste week

Studio Brussel's annual De Warmste Week (The Warmest Week) fundraising initiative offers plenty of ways to get involved. Post your money-raising goal on the website, run in one of the multiple marathons for pledges or join the trio of DJs at the Schorre site in Boom for the live broadcast, a big wheel, food and drink and more. *Until 24 December, across Flanders and Brussels* \ [dewarmsteweek.stubru.be](http://dewarmsteweek.stubru.be)

### Cold Nose Walk

After the excesses (and stresses) of Christmas Day, clear your head and burn off some calories with a walk in the country. Your knowledgeable guide will regale you with stories and local insights. Fee includes a glass of Voeren coffee liqueur (or apple juice for the kids). *26 December 14.00-16.00, Voerstreek Visitors' Center, Pley 13, s'Gravenvoeren; €5* \ [toerismevoerstreek.blogspot.be](http://toerismevoerstreek.blogspot.be)

# Power nap

## EU quarter wellness centre Pauz offers a midday pick-me-up



Benas Gerdziunas

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

\ PAUZ.BE

The rush-hour mania dissolves as you enter the brightly lit waiting room. As the doors to the street close, the noise of the city subsides and gentle music takes over. A weary-eyed woman disappears into a relaxation room.

"It's not unusual for people to take a nap during office hours, but before they had to go to the toilet, or to their cars during their lunch break, which isn't very peaceful," says Gaetan Oversacq. He's the co-owner of Pauz, Belgium's only nap bar, in Brussels' European quarter.

Asked if Pauz can increase the EU institutions' efficiency, Oversacq says with a smile: "Scientific studies show that even naps of less than 15 minutes increase vigilance and concentration by 40 and 60% respectively. It's good for your work and for your health."

Despite positioning itself as a nap bar, Pauz doesn't look much different from any other

spa or massage salon. What distinguishes it are mechanical massages – with no human contact – procedures where the clients are fully dressed, and no need to book appointments.

Pauz offers five relaxation options – a nap chair with optional light therapy, hydrojet and Shiatsu beds, and full-body and stretch massage chairs. Currently, the cheapest option is a simple nap – €7 for 15 minutes, with others costing up to €1 a minute.

The prices seem steep, but that's not because of the location, says Oversacq. "When we open more places, the prices will be the same."

Even though Pauz attracts mostly 40- to 55-year-olds working in the nearby EU institutions, various people pop in for a getaway. "We had a father come in for a nap; he was exhausted by his kids and just wanted a place to rest."

A middle-aged woman, slumped on a chair in the waiting area,



says that she's "here for a short rest, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life." She works in the European Commission – "like most of the people here," she says.

Similar innovative concepts have met with criticism due to their

exclusive price structure and allegations that they contribute to gentrification. But Oversacq insists Pauz is different. "It's true everyone around here has money," he says, "but anyone is welcome. Pauz isn't only for the EU and the Commission."

## Three Planckendael elephants are expecting

The Planckendael animal park in Mechelen has confirmed that not only is elephant Kai-Mook pregnant, so is her big sister, May Tagu, and her mother, Phyto Phyto. All three elephants are well known in Belgium because Kai-Mook, now aged seven, was the first elephant ever born in the country.

She was the focus of much media attention and responsible for record visitor figures at Antwerp Zoo, where the elephants were then housed. Now that she is old enough to have her own baby, she was put together with Chang, a steer who arrived in Mechelen in 2012.

Planckendael staff were convinced



© Jonas Verhulst

From left: Phyto Phyto, Kai-Mook and May Tagu all have a bun in the oven

that that the mating had been unsuccessful, but later tests showed that Kai-Mook was pregnant after all. If all goes well, she should give birth by the end of next year.

May Tagu, Kai-Mook's sister, is also expecting. The nine-year-old gave birth last year, but the baby's health was poor, and it died after a month.

Finally, the mother of both elephants, Phyto Phyto, is also pregnant. Phyto Phyto is 35 years old. Planckendael has not yet revealed the fathers or the due dates involved with May Tagu or Phyto Phyto. \ Alan Hope

## BITE

### Bumper new book puts beer cafes in the spotlight

You know how it is: You're in some strange town in Flanders, your train isn't for another 45 minutes, and you have no idea where to go for a quiet drink while you wait. That's where the new book by Sofie Vanraefelghem will be a life-saver. *Op café in Vlaanderen* (In Flanders' Bars) provides addresses, descriptions and photos of 200 top bars in the region, including Brussels.

Vanraefelghem is a Flemish beer sommelier and advocate of more involvement for women in the world of beer. She's in demand everywhere from the US to the UAE. Even though the book sticks

to Flanders, she ended up with a shortlist of 450 places worth a visit, to be whittled down to 200. The work might sound like a dream job: She and her researchers were obliged to visit hundreds of cafes, some of them multiple times.

"Even though we have a huge number of very good beers, breweries and cafes, there are a great many we still have to discover," she says. "This is an inspirational guidebook, a do-book: discover the beer, discover the region."

Although the photos themselves are an inspiration – so many of the bars look as if they would be



© Courtesy Lannoo

worth the trip just for the warmth and atmosphere – the book mostly pays attention to the quality of the beer list.

It's of prime importance to beer

connoisseurs what beers are on offer, what variety and in what manner. Unesco recently recognised Belgium's entire beer tradition – from brewing to drinking – as intangible cultural heritage. So the book comes at the perfect time because this is what beer culture is: what beer you drink, how you drink it and in what surroundings. *Op café* is a great way to get to know the local beer culture. But do your prep in advance: The book is as big as a church bible, so you won't be taking it on the road. \ AH

*Op café in Vlaanderen* is published by Lannoo (€25)



# Christmas in Flanders?

## Six last-minute ideas for the perfect holiday getaway



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

It's a wonderful time of the year – but also one of the most stressful. With all the gift-giving, cooking and family get-togethers, Christmas can seem more like work than a vacation.

But once it's over, you might find yourself with a week or more free from the office. Those of you without long-haul flights will find many short trips in Flanders perfect for this time of year. Check out this handy list of getaway destinations.

### Castle spa

There's no better way to chase away winter's chill than with a day at the sauna. Thermae Boetfort, just outside Brussels, is located in a 400-year-old castle complete with stone turrets. The various saunas, hot baths and swimming pools are installed in and around the castle buildings, including the brick-vaulted cellars and old stables, and many have panoramic views of the castle and grounds. The facilities are divided into a nude bathing area and an area where bathing suits are required. There's also a restaurant and hotel, in case you want to extend your stay. *Sellaerstraat 42, Melsbroek* \ [thermae.com/boetfort](http://thermae.com/boetfort)

### Weekend at the sea

De Haan is perhaps the only spot on the Flemish coast that preserves its original old-world charm, with a historic town centre, Belle Epoque hotels and many Art Deco cottages. During the week between Christmas and New Year's, there are several holiday events to brighten your visit, including a Christmas Village on 26-27 December in nearby Wenduine, a winter food truck festival in De Haan from the 28th to the 30th, and of course an on-going Christmas market and ice rink. Grand Hotel Belle Vue, on



© Courtesy Thermae Boetfort

the main square, offers Christmas and New Year's packages. \ [visitdehaan.be](http://visitdehaan.be)

### Culture in Genk

The month of December is a fine time to visit one of Flanders' most modern cities. Stop by C-Mine, one of the main exhibition spaces for the Hasselt-Genk City Triennale, an art project based around trademarks. In the city centre, Molenstraat has turned into a Temporary Lane, an entire street's worth of pop-up shops featuring local design talent.

Finally, Bokrijk Winter Nights (select evenings in December and January) features retro carnival rides, street artists, fire performers and more, on the grounds of the open-air museum. Both Carbon Sense and M Hotel, in the centre of Genk, have special Christmas promotions; check website for details. \ [differenthotels.com](http://differenthotels.com)

### Winter in Ypres

The tourism office in Ypres is offer-

ing guests at participating hotels a coupon book with great deals on attractions, food and drink during their stay (until 31 March). Benefits include a free guided tour of the historic city centre with the Night Watch, a welcome drink with appetizer at your lodging, reductions to In Flanders Fields and other museums, shopping discounts and more. Of course, during the holiday period you'll also enjoy the Christmas market, light displays and ice-skating rink on Grote Markt. \ [kerstmarkt-ieper.be](http://kerstmarkt-ieper.be)

### Begijnhof Hotel

Leuven's Groot Begijnhof is one of the largest in the Low Countries and is listed as a Unesco World Heritage site. But did you know that it also contains a modern, 69-room hotel within its historic walls? During the holiday period, the Begijnhof Hotel is offering a fantastic Christmas Special: For only €95 per person, you get one night in a double room, a five-course dinner, access to the

on-site sauna, breakfast in the 13th-century coach house and the use of bicycles. What's more, you'll be within walking distance of Leuven's Christmas markets and the historic city centre. *Groot Begijnhof, Leuven* \ [bchotel.be](http://bchotel.be)

### English hospitality

The King's Head Inn gets its name from an original signboard that the Anglophone owners found in a Scottish antique shop. Located in the beautiful Voerstreek, known for its rolling hills, lush landscape and charming villages, the 12-room hotel is the perfect base for a wintery weekend in the country. You're also well situated to visit the Christmas markets in nearby Aachen, Maastricht and Liège. Send an email to [info@tkhi.be](mailto:info@tkhi.be) with the subject "winter actie" and get a two-person room with full English breakfast for only €75 per night instead of €95 (until 29 March). *Teuven-Dorp 66, Teuven-Voerstreek (Limburg)* \ [thekingsheadinn.be](http://thekingsheadinn.be)

## Take a tour of medieval Bruges without leaving your sofa

Historium, the tourist attraction that brings 15th-century Bruges to life through a series of immersive vignettes, has been venturing further into interactive "edutainment" using virtual reality. Its latest innovation is *Historium VR: Relive the History of Bruges*, an app that takes the virtual-reality experience into the territory of first-person gameplay.

"The app makes use of the very latest technology, not only to experience our historical content in the best possible way, but also to interact with that content," says Christopher Roose, Historium's general manager. "Because you can choose



© Courtesy Historium

and influence your experience, each time you will enjoy a different and personalised voyage of discovery through medieval Bruges."

The game app is available to purchase via the HTC Vive online store. However, the Vive headset needed to use the app costs €899. For now, the app is geared at early adopters and industry pioneers, but the hope is to expand its reach to a wider audience.

The game is an extended version of the Historium's on-site VR Experience. Since last year, visitors to the attraction have been able to enter a "virtual-reality lab" that allows them, for an additional fee, to explore medieval Bruges further with the help of VR headsets. This Historium VR Experience has now been upgraded with greater

detail and the addition of player-operated virtual hands. The experience has proved so popular, especially with school groups, that the original number of user cabins has been doubled to 10, with plans to add an additional 10 early next year.

A third virtual-reality product, introduced by Historium at the end of 2015, is called City VR and uses Google Cardboard, an inexpensive viewer that works with any smartphone. The free City VR app allows the user to walk to six historic locations in Bruges and see them as they appeared in the 15th century. \ [DG](http://DG)

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

### Ballet Flanders gets rights to Bausch masterpiece

Royal Ballet Flanders has been awarded the rights to perform *Café Müller* by the late German choreographer Philippina "Pina" Bausch. It is the only dance company in the world to be given the rights to the production outside of Bausch's company Tanztheater Wuppertal. *Café Müller* features six dancers on a set decorated with tables, chairs and a revolving glass door. They dance to arias from the Henry Purcell operas *The Fairy-Queen* and *Dido and Aeneas*. The work will be performed next May in Ghent and Antwerp as part of the production *Hope*, which features three female choreographers: Bausch, Martha Graham and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

### Season two of The Missing premieres on Eén

The second season of *The Missing*, a Flemish-British co-production, will premiere on channel Eén on 27 December. The eight-part series is unrelated to the first season, aside from the return of police detective Julien Baptiste. In season two, the young woman Alice Webster turns up 11 years after she was kidnapped. Detective Baptiste sees similarities with another missing girl and comes out of retirement to investigate. While the first season followed a British couple losing a child in France, the second season takes place in Germany. As in the first season, several Flemish actors feature in the second, including Filip Peeters (*Salamanca*) and Anemone Valcke (*Bevergem*).

### Young Belgian Art Prize gets revamp

The biennial Young Belgian Art Prize is expanding its scope and dropping the term "young" from the title. The revamped BelgianArtPrize is now open to artists of any age resident in Belgium. A jury will choose four nominees. The finalists for 2017 are installation artist Edith Dekyndt, who was born in Ypres and now works between Berlin and Tournai; Italian-Flemish artist duo Simona Denicolai and Ivo Provoost, who work in installations and video; Antwerp-based illustrator and photographer Otobong Nkanga; and Flemish installation artist Maarten Vanden Eynde. Works by all the artists will be on show at Bozar, and the winners will be announced in April. \ [Lisa Bradshaw](http://Lisa Bradshaw)





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# This was Belgium

Shots of days gone by is highlight of Bruges photography festival



Ian Mundell  
follow Ian on Twitter \ @IanMundell

BRUGGEFOTO.BE

**F**ight your way through the thick tide of Christmas tourists, and you'll find a city-wide photography festival under way in Bruges. Ranging from classic documentary photography and portraiture to found images and multimedia, there is something here for every taste.

The highlight of the Brugge Photo Festival is the joint exhibition of work by Ian Berry and John Vink, both veterans of the prestigious Magnum Photos agency. Their images of by-gone England and Belgium wrap around the cloister of the Carmelite church on Ezelstraat. Berry made his name in the 1960s as a photojournalist, most notably documenting the Sharpeville massacre in apartheid South Africa. On returning to the UK in the 1970s, he set out to explore his homeland with fresh eyes. He photographed people on the streets, in their homes and in social situations.

As well as commenting on issues such as the British class system, its racial mix and the generation gap, Berry's multi-layered photographs also contain mysterious personal stories that we can only guess at. Where, for example, is a young Londoner going with a kitten clutched in one hand and his daughter in another?

Vink acknowledges Berry as an inspiration, and his series *This Was Belgium* takes a similar view of events such as carnivals, bicycle racing and farming. Where Berry's images are mysterious, Vink's are more open and playful. In one, a sleeping dog owner at a show is watched over by a vast white poodle, while in another a gibbon appears to balance with one foot on



© John Vink

John's Vink's candids pair beautifully with his contemporary Ian Berry

the Atomium.

The Carmelite cloister is an excellent setting for these photographs, but other venues in the festival require a bit more work. A few doors down, Klaartje Lambrechts' portraits of Antwerp asylum seekers are displayed awkwardly in the bar of the Snuffel youth hostel.

If the idea was to bring out a sense of people in transit, then it is undercut by the contrast between the holidaying Eurokids checking in and the pictures of people presumably driven out of their homelands by war and other hardships.

The detail of their stories remains obscure, since no information beyond the image is provided, not even their names. Most wear characteristic ethnic or national dress

for these three-quarter-length studio photographs, and Lambrechts puts each in the same pose, a dignified half-turn to the right. The images are beautiful, but distant. Another tricky location is De Werf, open only on selected days, where photographs by Bruges native Jelle Van Hulle are squeezed into the arts venue's compact cafe. The photos are small and dark, dream images in black and white, such as a tiny pistol resting in an overturned espresso cup, a man in a bear suit with his arm around a woman, or the shadow of a crooked tree unwinding sinuously down a country road. The otherworldly feeling is heightened by a light show that casts strange shadows over the photographs. Paper strips stream out

from a fan hung from the ceiling, adding sound effects.

Walk on to the docks, and you will find Daniil Lavrovski's pictures of Russian youth culture pasted onto the walls of a stairwell in Het Entrepot. This rough treatment lends itself to the Brussels-based photographer's gritty, grainy images of skateboarders, swimmers and young people smoking and hanging out.

There are more conventional displays, such as portraits by Jenny Boot, Rob Mellink and Luc Rabaey at De Schipperskapel. Danielle van Zadelhoff's portraits influenced by

old master paintings are placed in the suitably mediaeval context of the Broederklooster of Sint-Jans Hospital. And the results of the Fotonale Brugge competition can be seen at Hal Cultuur.

The festival also includes art where photography is only a part of the story. At the Bogardenkapel on Katelijnestraat, for example, Young Belgian Art Prize winner Jasper Rigole dips into his collection of found objects, known as the International Institute for the Conservation, Archiving and Distribution of Other People's Memories.

His most photographic installation gathers found images of children sitting between the humps of a camel, pressed into service to promote a brand of macaroni. In a small room spread with sand, a whispered soundtrack imagines the camel's journey, while a Super 8 film shows a camel wandering the wind-swept dunes of the Flemish coast.

Finally, the group exhibition *So Many Steps, So Little Time* at De Bond explores visual art emerging from the contemporary dance scene in the UK. Most of the work here is video, from Dick Jewell's films about British club culture to Gina Czarnecki's startling meditations on the strangeness of bodies. But there is also a generous selection of photographs by Maria Falconer, some snatching images from dance performances, others composing more enigmatic scenes into series dealing with domestic abuse and the pressures of fashion on body image.

Until 8 January

Across Bruges

## Art centres in Bruges and Ostend merge to create Kaap

On Friday, an unusual wedding ceremony took place at Ostend city hall. The happy couple comprised two arts centres, De Werf from Bruges and Vrijstaat O of Ostend. This private ceremony was followed by a public party in Bruges on Saturday.

Being a thoroughly modern marriage, the couple have been cohabiting for a while. They joined together in the administrative sense last year and began planning a combined programme of activities, to begin next month, under their married name of Kaap.

"In Dutch *kaap* is a cape, an area where the land ends and touches the sea, which is also the case for us," explains Mieke Dumont, who is in charge of communication and public engagement.

But *kaap* can also be an action, from the verb *kapen*, which means to hijack or to take over. "We want

artists to take that action – to use this region to work, think and create."

Kaap is positioning itself as the first regional arts centre in Flanders. Activities in the performing arts, jazz, literature and the visual arts will be distributed between four workspaces: De Werf and Groenplaats in Bruges, Vrijstaat O on the seafront in Ostend and the new site Freestate Raversyde, a little way down the coast towards Middelkerke.

In some cases, Kaap will combine similar activities carried out by De Werf and Vrijstaat O, such as the jazz festivals they ran in alternate years. Now there will be an annual festival that switches between the cities, complemented by a year-long programme of concerts and jams. De Werf's jazz label, W.E.R.F. Records, will continue operations and retain its old identity.



In other areas the two organisations are complementary. Vrijstaat O, for example, worked more on literature and debate than De Werf, and these activities will now get a higher profile in Bruges. In particular, Kaap will help develop the city's new literature festival,

Brutaal, the first edition of which will take place next May.

Meanwhile, the occasional interest both centres showed in the visual arts will be strengthened, with Freestate Raversyde being developed for artistic residencies. "We've already used the Raversyde

park for modern art exhibitions, the last being *Private Tag*, where we asked artists to work *in situ*. But now they will be able to stay and work there," Dumont explains. Beginning in 2018, residencies will last for between two weeks and three months, with up to three artist residents at any one time. A large exhibition of resident artists' work will be presented every two years in Raversyde, with smaller exhibitions in between in Ostend and Bruges.

Finally, the collective Lucinda Ra has been selected as Kaap's in-house performing artists, along with six "focus artists" who will work with Kaap for a minimum of two years. These are Hans Beckers, Vera Tussing, Heike Langsdorf, Dolores Bouckaert, Silke Huysmans and Hannes Dereere, and Tuning People/Wannes Deneer.

\ Ian Mundell

KAAPBE



# Better late than never

Ostend exhibition shines light on forgotten Flemish artist Jules Schmalzigaug



Christophe Verbiest  
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

MUZEE.BE

Antwerp-born Jules Schmalzigaug failed to gain recognition during his lifetime, or in a centenary retrospective of the futurist movement he embraced, but an exhibition in Ostend is putting that right.

Sunday, 13 May 1917 was a sun-drenched day, but it didn't stop Flemish artist Jules Schmalzigaug from taking his own life at his studio in The Hague. His exact reasoning remains unknown, but it may have been related in part to a lack of recognition and to artistic misgivings about his future. Though his death shocked people in the art world, it wasn't a big mainstream news item. Schmalzigaug never had an exhibition in his native country, and after his death he sank into almost complete oblivion.

A re-evaluation of Schmalzigaug has been going on for a while now, though, a collaborative effort by various players in the local art world. Antwerp gallerist Ronny Van de Velde might have been the first to draw attention to him again.

Then, two years ago, Schmalzigaug was one of the six key figures in *The Moderns: Art During the Great War*, an exhibition organised by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp in the Koninklijk Fabiolazaal.

But Mu.Zee in Ostend beats it all with *Jules Schmalzigaug en het kookboek van het futurisme* (Jules Schmalzigaug and the Futurist Cookbook). This exhibition serves as a lucid overview of the artist's career, placing his work in a Belgian and international context. It's no easy task, but Mu.Zee pulls it off.

Schmalzigaug's German grandfather settled in Antwerp in the



© Cédric Verhelst

"Gold, Banners & Parasols, Piazza San Marco" by Jules Schmalzigaug

19th century and built the family fortune as a coffee merchant. He studied in Germany and Antwerp, tackling various techniques but is remembered best now for his paintings.

While his early work shows a technically able if somewhat conservative painter, two trips abroad would radically change his vision. In 1905, he went on a grand tour of Italy. He discovered many painters, but it was Venice that touched him, inspiring him to create countless works depicting the city's palaces, bridges, squares and churches.

But the main subject of these

mainly (post) impressionist canvases seems to be the light that touches the city in an almost magical way.

A second decisive moment in Schmalzigaug's career came in 1912. In the Bernheim-Jeune gallery in Paris he visited *Les peintres futuristes italiens* (The Futurist Italian Painters), an exhibition in which he was confronted with futurism. He was well acquainted with the new art tendencies and knew the works of the cubists and fauvists. Some of it influenced his work, but this was nothing compared to futurism.

The artistic movement had

started three years earlier with the publication of the *Futurist Manifesto* by Filippo Marinetti. At the beginning of the 20th century, new technologies such as telephones, trains, aeroplanes, electric lights and sound recording were revolutionising modern life. By trying to capture movement in a two-dimensional artwork, the futurists tried to express the thrills of those changes.

The dynamism of the movement appealed to Schmalzigaug, and

he communicated with futurists like Marinetti and Umberto Boccioni. In 1912, he moved to Venice.

His output changed, though not overnight; the exhibition in Ostend shows this evolution nicely. By the end of 1913, Schmalzigaug's work had become an explosion of light and colour.

He was undeniably influenced by the Italian futurists – Marinetti and Boccioni, as well as Gino Severini and Giacomo Balla. But in his use of saturated primary colours combined with black and white, he found a unique style.

It was no surprise, then, that in the spring of 1914 he exhibited six paintings in the group exhibition *Esposizione Libera Futurista Internazionale* in Rome. Undoubtedly, it was the highlight of his career.

The First World War shattered the futurists' absolute belief in progress, and the movement would quickly peter out. Schmalzigaug returned home and his family went into exile in The Hague.

He kept working ferociously, searching for a new language beyond futurism. Though he developed a new colour theory, he became more and more isolated artistically, reaching his nadir on that May Sunday in 1917.

There was no trace of Schmalzigaug during the big *Futurism* exhibition that travelled to Paris, Rome and London in 2008 and 2009, on the 100th anniversary of the *Futurist Manifesto*. But it would seem historically inaccurate not to include the Antwerp painter in the next commemorative show.

Until 5 March

Mu.ZEE  
Romestraat 11, Ostend

## RELATED EXHIBITION: B.LAST

The Schmalzigaug exhibition runs simultaneously with *B.LAST: Three Generations of Belgian Abstract Art* at the Venetian Galleries on Ostend's dyke. The title is self-explanatory, though the show itself could have done with a bit more explanation. In total, 130 works are lumped together, seemingly without any logic. The works range from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, but they aren't hung chronologically.

There are other ways to group such a wide variety of works, of course: thematically, according to geometrical patterns or, for all I know,

based on their dominating colour. Instead, you get the impression that they were just put up in the order they arrived in Ostend.

It's a pity, because there are some amazing works here, covering three generations of abstract artists who have graced this kingdom. First there were the contemporaries of Schmalzigaug, like Joseph Lacasse, Jozef Peeters or Georges Vantongerloo – each of them hunting for their own version of geometrical abstraction.

After the Second World War, Belgium saw a new surge of abstract art, albeit in two voices. One group



© Steven Decroos

"Carrière abandonnée" by Joseph Lacasse

continued on the path of geometrical abstraction. Paul Van Hoeydonck, Dan Van Severen and Guy Vandenbranden are among the highlights in *B.LAST*.

A second was christened lyrical

abstraction: their patterns were freer and they experimented more easily with colours. Think Roger Raveel, Walter Leblanc (currently part of a double exhibition at Brussels' Museum van Elsene) or the amazing Antoine Mortier.

In recent years, a new group of painters has embraced abstraction. Ilse D'Hollander, who killed herself in 1997 at the age of 28, is the most remarkable voice; her fragile works surprise time and again.

Until 14 February

But *B.LAST* also reveals some relatively new names, like Walter Lecompte and Wim De Pauw. And rest assured, Belgium's most prominent abstract master, the unclassifiable Raoul De Keyser, is present with some dazzling works.

While you might have to read the essays in the excellent catalogue to understand what the exhibition wants to put across, you will at least get some clues about the history of abstract art in Belgium.

Venetiaanse Gaanderijen  
Zeedijk, Ostend



Party like it's almost 2017

# New Year's Eve

Still have no plans for New Year's Eve? There are plenty of options, from dance floor boogie to firework fun. In **Antwerp**, you can watch the fireworks over the Scheldt from anywhere along the Kaaïen. Afterwards, make sparks fly on the dance floor created by moving the tables aside at Mercado, the city's new deluxe food hall on Groenplaats. You'll also find a boudoir full of burlesque dancers, magicians and a brass band. If you think New Year's Eve is a synonym for overpriced, head to Millie Vanillie in **Ghent** (Sint-Niklaasstraat 2), where the entrance is free, as always. The groovy cellar opens its doors at 23.45 for a mix of old-school and contemporary tunes. Foodies may prefer an evening at Volta (Nieuwe-wandeling 2), where the menu for the buffet dinner (€85) looks sublime. Why only fit in one party when you can combine three? A ticket to NYE Deluxe in **Ostend's Kursaal** (Kursaal-Westhelling 12) grants you access to three rooms, each with completely different vibes.



To cure your hangover the next day, just join the traditional New Year's Dive into the North Sea. \ [nieuwjaarsduik.be](#)

The irreverently titled FCKNYE Festival in Paleis 12 at Heizel in Brussels wins the award for the biggest NYE event in Belgium. More than 10,000 revellers will be dancing to the pounding techno of Adam Beyer and other headliners. Don't feel like settling in one spot? The Happy Brussels party pass (€60) includes entry to ... wait for it ... 15 clubs, from hip-hop heaven Bloody Louis to cosy jazz joint Sounds. \ [happybrussels.com](#)

The Winterland festivities on Hasselt's Dusart-plein offer fun for the whole family. The Grand Café has a buffet formula with special children's menu (€45 for adults, €30 for kids), and the ice skating rink is open until 22.00. At midnight, young and old can enjoy the fireworks together. \ Catherine Kusters

## VISUAL ARTS

### The Art of Law

Until 5 February  
Groeningemuseum, Bruges  
\ [VISITBRUGES.BE](#)

When *Pulp Fiction's* vengeful crime boss Marsellus Wallace announced he was about to "get medieval" on his erstwhile captor, cinema-goers understood that Zed was in for a particularly painful comeuppance. The middle ages and their Renaissance sequel were times of cartoonishly savage punishment. This exhibition collects dozens of authentic *exempla iustitiae* ("examples of fair justice"), the paintings that adorned Flemish courtrooms hundreds of years ago. Whether depicting Biblical scenes of retribution or state-sanctioned torture, these tableaux were meant to remind magistrates of their duty to make a bloody example of anyone who stepped out of line. \ Georgio Valentino



## FESTIVAL

### Be Film Festival

22-30 December  
Bozar & Cinematek, Brussels  
\ [BEFILMFESTIVAL.BE](#)

You know how you're always watching trailers of films you'd like to see but then don't get back to the cinema on time? Well, if those trailers were for Belgian films, we have good news for you. The annual Be Film Festival features just about every Belgian film made this year. Keep your eyes peeled for

the latest Dardenne brothers flick *La fille inconnue* (*The Unknown Girl*, pictured), the lovely animated family film *La tortue rouge* (*The Red Turtle*) and *King of the Belgians*, a road movie that provides a shot in the arm of hope at the end of one distressing year. \ Lisa Bradshaw



## CLASSICAL

### Europa viert Kerst

23 December, 20.00  
Amuz, Antwerp  
\ [AMUZ.BE](#)

Europe celebrates Christmas with this concert by Beveren city choir Acantus and early music ensemble Ishtar. The two-part programme showcases traditional holiday music from across Europe in an event-appropriate setting: Augustinus Muziekcentrum Amuz is in fact a church. This isn't just holiday escapism, though. The concert doubles as a fundraiser for cancer research at GZA Ziekenhuizen. The Antwerp medical centre's Translational Cancer Research Unit is currently targeting inflammatory breast cancer, a rare and aggressive form of cancer that generally afflicts younger women and men. \ GV



## CONCERT

### Het Zesde Metaal

4 February to 17 March  
Across Flanders  
\ [HETZESDEMETAAL.BE](#)

For the past decade, Wannes Cappelle has led Flemish pop/rock group Het Zesde Metaal from strength to strength by combining modern production values with good old local flavour. Cappelle (*pictured left*) sings in his native West Flemish dialect and writes about everyday life in his neighbourhood. The band's 2012 break-

through single "Ploegsteert" was written about ill-fated local cycling legend Frank Vanderbroucke and has just been named the best Belgian song of all time by Radio 1. The band are set to celebrate the release of their fourth album *Calais* with a winter tour across Flanders. Many dates are already sold out, so buy now. \ GV



## CONCERT

### Antwerp

**Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike:** Tomorrowland presents hometown heroes Dimitri and Mike, brothers whose love of dance music has taken them to the top of their field. German DJ Felix Jaehn opens. 22-23 December, *Sportpaleis*, Schijnpoortweg 119  
\ [sportpaleis.be](#)

GET TICKETS NOW

### Brussels

**Loïc Nottet:** After distinguishing himself on *The Voice Belgique*, Eurovision and *Danse Avec Les Stars*, the young Belgian singer is now a bona-fide headliner. This concert is 11 months away, but you should buy now if you want a ticket. 25 November 2017, 20.00, *Vorst Nationaal*, Victor Rousseaulaan 208  
\ [vorst-nationaal.be](#)

## PERFORMANCE

### Brussels

**The Golden Cockerel:** Incoming music director Alain Altinoglu directs his first opera for De Munt, composed by Russian nationalist Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov. (In Russian with Dutch and French surtitles) Until 30 December, *Muntpaleis*, Havenlaan 86C  
\ [demunt.be](#)

## VISUAL ARTS

### Brussels

**Sébastien van Malleghem:** **North Road:** Young Belgian photojournalist presents a series of photos taken across Scandinavia, with his signature documentary style often giving way to poetic reverie. Until 15 January, *Botanique*, Koningsstraat 236  
\ [botanique.be](#)

### Ghent

**Paintshop Portrait Gallery:** Smak continues its collaboration with vocational school Centrum Leren en Werken with this delightful exhibition of self-portraits painted by students as they responded to questions like, "How do you see yourself?" Until 8 January, *SMAK*, Jan Hoetplein 1  
\ [smak.be](#)

## FAMILY

### Brussels

**Brussels Bookswappers Christmas party:** Exchange books in various languages for adults and kids, plus toy swap, raffle, live music, readings and mini Christmas market. 21 December, *Chapelier Fou*, Terhulpensteeweg 190, Brussels  
\ [tinyurl.com/brussels-bookswap](#)



# Talking Dutch

## Blame it on the boogie



Derek Blyth  
More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

You might think they're making a song and dance about nothing. But the owners of the popular Brussels music cafe Bonnefooi are not happy with an unexpected tax they have to pay – for dancing customers. *De uitbaters van Bonnefooi keken verbaasd op* – The owners of Bonnefooi were gobsmacked, *toen een controleur van de Stad Brussel* – when an inspector from Brussels city council *hen aanmaande om de 'danstaks' te betalen* – ordered them to pay a “dance tax”, reported the Brussels newspaper *Bruzz*. You mean you can't even dance in Brussels without a visit from the taxman? *De controleur legde ons uit* – The inspector explained to us *dat de taks gebaseerd is op het aantal mensen dat danst* – that the tax is based on the number of people who are dancing, said Nicolas Boochie, who is in charge of Bonnefooi's music programme. *Ze bedraagt 40 eurocent per persoon, per nacht* – It comes to 40 cents per person, per night. *Ik dacht eerst dat het om een grap ging* – At first I thought it was a joke, Boochie said, *maar dat bestaat dus blijkbaar echt* – but it appears that



© Facebook/Bonnefooi

it really does exist. *Het blijkt om een al lang bestaande taks te gaan* – It seems to be a tax that has existed for a long time, *die in het verleden blijkbaar niet consequent werd toegepast* – but which apparently wasn't really enforced in the past. So how did the city find out about the tax-dodging dancers? *De Stad is meerdere malen incognito langsgekomen* – The city paid several incognito visits *om het aantal dansers te komen tellen* – to count the number of people dancing. *Ze zijn uitgegaan van een gemid-*

*delde van 50 mensen op een weekendavond* – They counted an average of 50 people on a weekend night. *Dat betekent 20 euro per avond* – That comes to €20 per night, *en dus 160 euro per maand* – and so €160 a month. The people at Bonnefooi are frankly baffled by the boogie tax. *Ik wil gerust aannemen dat er een goeie reden voor bestaat* – I'd like to think that there was a good reason for it, Boochie said, *maar ik heb geen flauw idee wat die dan wel zou kunnen zijn* – but I don't have the slightest idea what that could be. And how do you decide if someone in the bar is dancing. *Is je handen in de lucht gooien* – Is waving your hands in the air *ook voldoende om als danser beschouwd te worden?* – enough to count as dancing? No one knows. But as a precaution the cafe has put up a poster in the window warning patrons that dancing is forbidden. And it has a message for the capital: *De Stad zou het nachtleven als een meerwaarde* – The city should recognise the value of nightlife *in plaats van een last moeten beschouwen* – rather than seeing it as a burden.

### PHOTO OF THE WEEK



© PHILIPPE BUISSIN/BELGA PHOTO POOL

**EYES ON THE PRIZE** Cyclist Greg Van Avermaet was named sportsman of the year at a gala event this weekend in Brussels. The 31-year-old from Lokeren won the men's road race at this summer's Olympics in Rio, one of Belgium's two gold medals at the games.

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

**f** In response to Talking Dutch: Blame it on the boogie  
**Joao Costa:** I want to say something, but I'm afraid they'll tax me for this post too!

**f** In response to Three Planckendaal elephants, including Kai-Mook, are expecting  
**Maria Vekemans:** Looks like Chang has been busy ;P

**f** In response to Flemish designers give unsightly hospital gowns a stylish makeover  
**Rita De Vocht Fenner:** It's about time!

**t** **Mister Griffin @UltramisterG**  
Nice sunny morning so time to go bargain hunting. I have a tip, there's a place in Dendermonde. Where?!!!!

**t** **Donikë Qerimi @DonikeQ**  
You know you love a place when, after five months away, it feels like you never left. #Ghent

**t** **Taras Grescoe @grescoe**  
\*This\* is the way to arrive in a city. #Antwerp's central train station.

**f** LIKE US

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## THE LAST WORD

### Church and state

“We had received a number of complaints from people who thought it was inappropriate. No, the complaints were not from Muslims.” The municipality of Holsbeek in Flemish Brabant removed its Nativity scene from town hall property following complaints, mayor Hans Eyssen has confirmed

### Stille Nacht

“That's something of a sensitive issue. There's just not enough Dutch-language Christmas music.” The carols on Flanders' Catholic radio station, Radio Maria, are mainly in English

### To infinity and beyond

“If all pupils moved 100 minutes more a week, we could cover the distance to the sun.” Top sports coach Paul Van Den Bosch joins the Flemish government's campaign for more exercise for kids

### You're hired

“Unbelievable really. I've been looking for a job for 13 months, then Marc Coucke sends out one tweet and in 40 minutes I can go back to work!!!” Twitter user DDTremeri appealed to the colourful Flemish entrepreneur Marc Coucke for help, and got it

