



Belgian Events - March 2016

Newsletter of the Embassy of Belgium in London

Dear readers,

This first issue for 2016 reports on the ministerial visit of Charles Michel to London and the latest business, cultural and academic events at the Ambassador's Residence. You can also read an interview with the Belgian Tottenham footballer Mousa Dembélé. The '*Did you know?*' section contains short articles on how our country is perceived internationally. As always, the *cultural calendar* lists upcoming Belgian events in the UK.

Finally, if you have any news or suggestions, do not hesitate to share them with us via belgianevents.uk@diplobel.fed.be. New subscribers can provide their details via the [Embassy's website](#).

Ministerial Visit



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Prime Minister **Charles Michel** attended the “**Supporting Syria and the Region Conference**” in London on 4th February which was co-hosted by the UK, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the UN. Belgium’s Premier announced that our country will contribute 75 million euros in the next two years. In total, more than 70 nations pledged 10 billion dollars to provide humanitarian aid and education to Syrians affected by the conflict in their country.

Premier Michel also had bilateral talks with **Prime Minister Cameron** and H.M. **King Abdullah of Jordan**.



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Click [here](#) for a press release from the PM's office.

According to a new report by the international aid organization **Oxfam** on support for Syrian refugees, Belgium has contributed significantly. Oxfam worked out the logical share each country

should give relative to the size of its economy. The analysis was published ahead of The Syria conference in London.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the Oxfam report.

Events at the Ambassador's Residence

During the past few weeks, the Ambassador's Residence in Belgrave Square has again been the venue for various business, cultural and academic events.

Business Event

Lecture by Dr Gertjan Vlieghe (9 February)



On this occasion, **Dr Gertjan Vlieghe**, who joined the Monetary Policy Committee of the **Bank of England** in September last year, described his views on developments in the UK and world economy that affect his current post of setting monetary policy in the UK. He addressed high level Belgian professionals active in the economic and financial sectors in the UK.

Dr Vlieghe's published research has largely focused on the importance of money, balance sheets and asset prices in the economy. He holds a doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Cultural Events

Jan Fabre (11 February)

On 12 February, **Jan Fabre's** first UK solo exhibition '**Knight of the Night**', featuring work spanning from 1992 to 2013 opened at London's [Ronchini Gallery](#). The [exhibition](#) runs until 19th March. Fabre is one of Belgium's most significant contemporary artists. For over 35 years, the Antwerp artist and author has created work across theatre and visual arts.



The exhibition and the artist were celebrated with a dinner at the residence of the Ambassador following a preview at the Ronchini Gallery.

A.F. Vandevorst - live performance by Ruben Block (22 February)

Belgian fashion designer [A.F.VANDEVORST](#) showcased its new collection at the [London Fashion Week](#) for the first time after 18 years presence at Paris Fashion Week.



Later that day, the occasion was celebrated by a press event at the residence of the Ambassador, with a live performance by [Ruben Block](#), lead singer and guitarist of the Belgian band [Triggerfinger](#).



Art Brussels (23 February)



A reception was held to promote the 34th edition of [Art Brussels](#), a contemporary art fair based in Brussels running from 22 until 24 April 2016. Art Brussels has grown into one of the most valued art fairs in Europe in terms of discovery of emerging artists and young talents. This year's move to a new location, Tour & Taxis, will reduce the number of galleries from 191 to 140. This will somewhat change the profile of the fair, making it more acute in discovery, and raising the quality level of participating galleries.

The major artistic project of this year's fair is an exhibition devoted to the late internationally recognised Belgian curator Jan Hoet, founder and director of the SMAK in Ghent, and director of Documenta IX. This edition will also focus on a special 'Rediscovery' section, aimed at presenting works produced between 1917 and 1987 by artists who are under-estimated, overlooked and unduly forgotten.

Book launch 'Fearless' by Patrick Vanleene (29 February)



The book "**Fearless – Dorothe Feilding's War in Flanders 1914-1917**" by the Belgian historian **Patrick Vanleene** (who was also the coordinator of the memorial "Nieuwpoort 1914-1918") was launched at the Residence. 'Fearless' is based on historical research of unpublished documents and war journals, and is illustrated by photographs taken by Dorothe Feilding herself. It tells the story of an English lady, daughter of the Warwickshire Earl of Denbigh, who operated as an ambulance driver for the French marine fusiliers from Brittany who fought at Nieuwpoort during World War 1 and saved hundreds of lives.

Academic Events

Lunch with Professor Sven Bishop (4 February)



Prof. Dr. Sven Biscop is Director of the Europe in the World Programme at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels, a think tank associated with Belgian Foreign Affairs. He was in London for the launch of his book "**Peace without money, war without Americans. Can European strategy cope?**" at the [IISS](#). His research focuses on the foreign, security and defense policies of the EU, NATO and its Member States. Professor Biscop also lectures at several Belgian institutions and abroad. He completed his degree in political science/public administration at Ghent University in 1998, winning the best thesis award for his work on European defence.

KULAK visit (19 February)



50 law students from the **KULAK-University** (Catholic University Leuven/Kortrijk) were received by the Ambassador and the Consul on 19 February. The aim of the reception was to give the students insight into the role of a diplomatic mission, the working of an embassy and the activities of diplomats.

Belgian students at the London International Model United Nations (25 February)



Last month, the [London International Model United Nations \(LIMUN\)](#) conference, the largest MUN in Europe, took place in the UK capital. On the eve before the start of the conference, three groups of participants from Belgium were welcomed at the Ambassador's residence. The students were given the opportunity to put questions to the Ambassador and network among each other. The participants were representatives from the **VVN Youth** (the Flemish Branch of the United Nations Association) and delegations from **Université Saint-Louis** and **Institut Saint-André**.



Opening Ceremony at Westminster Central Hall

Award ceremony

Yves Lemarchand, Honorary Consul in Edinburgh (19 February)



The medal of **Knight in the Order of King Leopold** was bestowed upon Belgium's Honorary Consul in Edinburgh by Ambassador Trouveroy. Yves Lemarchand received the honour for the dedication and enthusiasm with which he has been carrying out his consular duties for the past 20 years.

Events Calendar

In our [listing of upcoming events](#) you can find details on exhibitions, lectures, concerts, films and sports activities with a Belgian touch. The list is constantly updated.

Interview with a Belgian in the UK

Footballer Mousa Dembélé



Belgian football has become a brand and has reached an unprecedented level of national and international fame. No less than 18 Belgian footballers are regularly in action in the English Premier League. The majority of them also play in the Belgian national squad. Among them is **Mousa Dembélé** whose contract with Tottenham Hotspur has just been extended until 2019. He has achieved over 60 caps with the Red Devils.

Dembélé, who has a Malinese father and a Belgian mother, first moved to London in 2010 to join Fulham FC. Two years later he signed a contract with the north London Club. We recently met up with Mousa in North London. Click [here](#) to read the interview.

Credits Stefan D Xavier

Did you know...?

Annual "Diplomatic days" in Brussels and Launch of Website "Focus on Belgium"

From 25th to 29th January 2016, 86 Ambassadors, 21 Consuls-General and 8 Permanent Representatives to international organisations met in Brussels for the annual "diplomatic days". The Belgian heads of diplomatic missions had the opportunity to develop contacts within political, business and academic circles as well as with civil society.

In his opening address of the yearly meeting, Minister [Didier Reynders](#) launched a new website 'Focus on Belgium' which highlights what is happening in Belgium and what our country has to offer. Have a look at the new site in [Dutch](#), [French](#) or [English](#)!

Belgian passports

There is good news if you have a Belgian passport. According to the latest **Visa Restrictions Index** published by the British immigration and citizenship firm [Henley & Partners](#), Belgium shares 4th place with Denmark, The Netherlands and the US. The Index ranks 199 countries based on the number of nations where residents can go without purchasing a visa in advance or on arrival. Holders of a Belgian passport have visa-free access to 174 countries (out of 218). Germans hold the strongest passports, giving them visa-free access to 177 countries. British passports are in 3rd place.

Justice for Belgian children

Children in Belgium have more access to the justice system than anywhere else in the world. That's the outcome of the first global study ever by the [Child Rights International Network](#) (CRIN). The study ranks countries according to how effectively minors can use the law to challenge violations to their rights. Belgium stands out in its child friendliness of family courts where children are heard in divorce cases and the provision of free youth attorneys.

Wallonia selected by Europe to develop green chemistry

The European Commission has selected **Wallonia** among the six regions (out of 28 European applicants) it will support more actively over the next two years to develop green chemistry, circular economy and biomass projects. The other winners are Andalusia (Spain), Scotland (United

Kingdom), the Dutch provinces of Groningen and Drenthe, the Irish county of Tipperary and the Slovak region of Kosice.

Vice-Minister-President and Minister of Economy and Foreign Affairs of the [Walloon Government](#) Jean-Claude Marcourt welcomed the EU decision, declaring that "*this kind of good news has the potential to trigger a virtuous circle.*" To win this label, the Region was able to draw on its [GreenWin](#) and [Wagralim](#) competitive clusters, its [DGO6](#) administration, programmes such as **Next** (strengthening of industrial policy) and [Essenscia](#) (chemical and life sciences sector, the second industrial activity in Wallonia) and the not-for-profit association [ValBiom](#) (biomass conversion).

Best restaurants in the world

Belgian's great international food reputation was confirmed once again by the renowned culinary blog [WBP Stars](#) which named [Hof Van Cleve](#), the three-star restaurant of top chef Peter Goossens in Kruishoutem, best restaurant in the world.



Antwerp among Europe's happiest cities

Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders, is home to some 500,000 people. Over half of them claim to be "very satisfied" with their lives, making it the **happiest** city in Belgium.

Last month, the European Commission published its yearly Flash Eurobarometer of quality of life in European cities, a huge survey of how happy people in hundreds of cities across Europe are. The survey asks people to rank their satisfaction with everything from the sports facilities available in their area to how good the public transport system is.

[The Independent](#) newspaper took the European Commission's data and chose those cities where the highest percentage of citizens said they were "very satisfied with the life they lead" and ranked them. Antwerp came 15th in the ranking. The citizens of the Danish city of Aalborg are the most satisfied in Europe.

Belgian cities of the future

Every two years, the FT publishes a list of 'European Cities of the Future'. Among this year's 55 selected smaller cities, **Mechelen** appears 3 times in the top 10: 9th place Overall and for Economic Potential, 3rd place for Connectivity. Gent takes 9th place for Strategy in the same category. Brussels features in 7th position among the biggest European cities for Connectivity while Antwerp is placed 8th among the big cities for its Economic Potential.



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Brussels does well in "Quality of Life List"

Consulting company [Mercer](#) published its 18th annual list of best cities for quality of life in which **Brussels** was placed 21st out of a total of 230 cities, outperforming Paris (37), London (39) and New York (44). Vienna topped the list.

The annual study looks at the best places for multinational companies to send expats, taking into account personal safety, based on internal stability, crime figures, performance of local law enforcement, and the home country's relationship with other countries.

Roularta prints "The Economist"

Since January, Belgium's Media group **Roularta** prints about half of the European edition of the British weekly publication '**The Economist**'. A total of 112,000 copies distributed in France, the Benelux, Spain, Italy and Sweden are printed every week at [Roularta Printing](#) in the West Flemish town of Roeselare. Together with a German printing company, Roularta takes over the contract from the Dutch firm Roto Smeets.

"This contract with a turnover of over 80 million is a nice business card," said William Metsu, director of Roularta Printing. "*The Economist*" is a quality British magazine and obtaining this contract may well attract other clients."

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