Belgian Events

March 2012

Mercator Year celebrations
Belgian Foreign Minister in London

On 9th January, Belgium’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders met Foreign Secretary William Hague and Minister for Europe David Lidington in London. It was Mr Reynders’ first official visit outside Belgium since taking up his new ministerial responsibilities in December last year.

Mr Lidington and Mr Reynders discussed a number of EU and European issues including the Eurozone, the European Court of Human Rights and the current political situation in Hungary.

Over lunch Mr Hague and Mr Reynders had a fruitful discussion on a range of foreign policy issues including the Eurozone, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Syria, Iran, the Arab Spring and MEPP. The Foreign Secretary also discussed his recent visit to Burma.

As former Belgian Finance Minister for over 11 years, Reynders paid a farewell call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne.

Belgium shines as fourth most international economy

Belgium has moved up two places on the consultancy Ernst & Young’s annual globalisation index, positioning the country as the fourth most open economy in the world. The three countries to beat Belgium in the race are Hong Kong, Ireland and Singapore. An open economy refers to the relative lack of obstacles businesses face when doing trade with a country.

According to Ernst & Young spokesperson Christophe Balleeger, Belgium is the perfect example of an export-driven, open economy which is attractive to foreign investors. Capital movement, trade and technology scored well, and Belgium’s performance was further backed by the fact that Germany, its most crucial trading partner, managed to weather the Eurocrisis. It’s no coincidence that smaller countries like Belgium, Ireland and Singapore scored well on this index. Says Balleeger: “A small country has almost no other option than to export. With a limited domestic market, the focus then falls further afield.” But Belgium’s fourth place is also due to its telecoms and transport infrastructure, its quality of life, the competence of Belgian employees and the country’s central location in Europe; which was what impressed foreign investors the most. According to Balleeger, many foreign investors view Belgium as a test market. “With a small playing field and a multilingual population, they benefit from running trial projects here. During the first phase businesses establish one sales and marketing office in the country, followed by expansion during the second phase.” ‘Open’ also refers to the fact that the country is dependent on other countries as far as wealth creation is concerned. If the international economy slows down, Belgium will also feel the pinch.

2011 FIRST Award for Ecover

In December 2011, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne presented the 2011 FIRST Award for Responsible Capitalism to Michaël Bremans, Chairman of Ecover International at Marlborough House in London. The Ceremony was attended by over 300 prominent business leaders, Parliamentarians and Ambassadors. Michaël Bremans was the twelfth head of an international organisation to receive the award.

When making the Award, the Judges are looking for a business leader who has consistently demonstrated social responsibility as an integral part of commercial success, examining in particular the manner in which their businesses interact both with the environment and the social communities in which they operate.

In making the Award to Michaël Bremans, Lord Woolf, Chairman of The FIRST Judging Panel said "Michaël Bremans has, through sensitive and positive leadership of Ecover International, demonstrated what can be achieved through innovation and research, based on sustainability."

On receiving the Award for Responsible Capitalism, Michaël Bremans said, "I am deeply honoured and grateful to accept the award on behalf of Ecover. When the Belgium based company started more than 30 years ago in the town of Malle, we would never have imagined being where we are today. From an artisan activity in the early eighties, Ecover has become a producer of sustainable household products and a leader in sustainable practices. Ecover is about our customers: As a company we deeply care about the needs of our customers. We are passionate about improving people’s lives by offering sustainable and healthy ways of living."

Golden Bridge Awards 2011

The Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Great-Britain (BLCC) awards each year Belgian companies with the best export performance to the United Kingdom. The prestigious fifteenth GOLDEN BRIDGE EXPORT AWARD 2011 went to sports surfaces expert Desso Sports Systems from Dendermonde. The award was officially presented by H.E. Ambassador Johan Verbeke on 16th November in London.

Desso Sports Systems is a pioneering company, internationally known for its innovative artificial grass pitches for rugby, tennis, football and hockey and is one of the market leaders in the UK. The Desso Grassmaster system, a system whereby a completely natural grass pitch is reinforced by artificial fibers, can be found at some 450 training centres and stadia worldwide, including ten Premier League football clubs in Great-Britain (such as Manchester City, Arsenal, Bolton Wanderers, Liverpool and Wembley).

"This company is a typical example of how Belgian expertise can solve problems, discretely but convincingly, and hence create long term business in the British market. This, together with the professionalism and creativity of Desso Sports Systems, has truly impressed the Golden Bridge Jury. We look forward to following the continuation of this success, not only in the UK but worldwide", told BLCC chairman Michel Vanhoonacker.
THE BEST NEWCOMER AWARD, given to a company which has performed exceedingly well on the UK market within a period of 2 years, was won by Dredging International NV. The company increased its UK turnover from £300,000 to £77 million between 2008 and 2010 by developing a consistent and long term strategy for Great Britain which resulted in a series of mega contracts, including the London Gateway Deep Sea Container Terminal.

In the SME category, the award was handed over to Buzon Pedestal International SA from Braine-l’Alleud, Europe’s leading manufacturer of screw jack polypropylene pedestals. This Belgian SME exports no less than 92% of its production to over 56 countries and has a market share of 12% in a very competitive UK market. Prestigious UK projects to have chosen this ‘Made in Belgium’ product include Canterbury University, the Excel Exhibition Centre in London and the Athletes Village in the Olympic Park.

www.blcc.co.uk/pages/goldenbridgeawards

Scientific news

Belgium in top five list of innovators in Europe

The European Commission is keeping a close eye on the innovation efforts of its 27 member states. Belgium is a strong performer in the field of innovation. It currently ranks 5th, behind Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Finland but before the UK, France and 20 other EU member states.

The ranking is based on various criteria. Our country scores well with regard to scientific publications and the level of education. Belgian SMEs in particular score well above the European average in respect of innovation. Another significant achievement is the availability of venture capital. The Commission is also satisfied with the way scientific research is organised and structured in Belgium, especially as far as transparency is concerned.


Louvain Technology Transfer Office spin-offs

Leuven Research & Development (LRD) of the Louvain University will mark 2012 as an exceptional year. Forty years after its predecessor the Louvain Technology Transfer Office was established, its 100th spin-off business will see the light this year. The university already counts 98 businesses that have been launched with the research results by LRD and has five to ten new projects in the pipeline.

CEO of LRD, Koenraad Debackere, stresses the LRD’s strict definition of a spin-off company which means that there is always a transfer of knowledge resulting from university research. Says general director of LRD, Paul Van Dun: “It’s not that difficult to start a new business, but maintaining a sustainable business within the economy is a different story. In 2008, which was a difficult year for financing, we raised funding for five new spin-offs in the market. The fact that we managed to raise this money is partially due to the ‘spin-off KU Leuven’ stamp, which guarantees quality.

“Globally speaking, Europe is still less entrepreneurial than America,” remarks Debackere. He states that financial investments in research and innovation in our country still takes mostly place on a national or regional level. Therefore he believes clusters should be extended outside the country’s borders to allow Europe to compete with American clusters such as Silicon Valley or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A number of crucial fields such as nanotechnology and biotechnology do currently enjoy considerable focus.
Debackere believes the government has a sensible policy, but because the country is relatively small, the size of investments is limited. Responds Van Dun: “The small domestic market may be a handicap, as it is and does remain easier to secure a few orders at home than to try and do so at the other side of the Atlantic”. As far as university research budgets are concerned, the government had to follow other departments and incur cuts in recent years, but in 2011 the stage was set for an upswing again. “It now seems that clearer choices have been made and that research and innovation will be one of the domains that will not be exposed to cutbacks. If that becomes a regular policy, there is no reason why the number of spin-offs should drop,” Debackere maintains.

On 22 February, Ambassador Verbeke organised a networking dinner for Belgian academics in the UK. The former President (Rector) of Louvain University, Professor André Oosterlinck as well as his colleague Professor Koenraad Debackere, General Manager of Louvain University and CEO of LRD, came over from Belgium for this occasion. The event was attended by some 40 UK-based Belgian academics.

Landmark for fuel cells in Antwerp

Last month, two Belgian industrial companies, the chemical group Solvay and the materials technology group Umicore, presented the biggest artificial membrane fuel cell in the world at an Antwerp chemical plant. The installation, which converts hydrogen into electricity, acts like a mini power station and generates enough electricity for 1,370 households.

The installation of the pilot device in this chemical plant that is jointly owned by Solvay and the German chemical concern BASF comes as no coincidence, as hydrogen is one of the plant’s by-products. The large fuel cell, built at a cost of 5 million euros, currently processes some of the unused hydrogen into electricity at the chemical installation. The Solvay-Umicore joint venture Solvicore covered some of the costs with subsidies. They view this project as a trial project and hope to position themselves among the world top as a key European player in the development and production of high-performance fuel cells within the next few years, says Leopold Demiddeleer, who leads future-based activities at Solvay.

The current leader in the field of fuel cells is Japan, where the government and carmakers Toyota and Honda invest heavily in fuel cell technology. One of the biggest advantages of the hydrogen-powered cells is that they only produce electricity and water, making it possible for cars, buses, ships, forklift trucks and CHP plants to be rendered free of or low in CO2, which is highly beneficial to the environment.

’BlueCall Phone’ catches on

The concept of the BlueCall Phone, launched last year by the Belgian non-profit organisation Ithaka, is both a simple and revolutionary innovation. This iPhone with its adapted software and recognisable blue screen was designed to ensure that users who are mentally challenged can enjoy a more independent life within society. When in need of assistance, the user simply shows a passer-by the blue screen displaying the question appropriate to his need, for example how to catch a bus or train or run errands. The passer-by recognises the ‘BlueAssist’ symbol and can then assist by either dialling the displayed number of the counsellor (known to the help seeker) or call up the data previously entered by the counsellor. BlueAssist should become an internationally recognised symbol just like a white walking stick. “One cannot always visually determine the mental limitations of these people and it is often unclear to what extent they require assistance. The BlueCall Phone should facilitate this change,” says Geert Vandewalle of Ithaka.
Two years after the introduction of the project, the BlueCall Phone is ready for its launch throughout Belgium. Interest has also been shown in other parts of the world. “2012 will be a crucial year. Partners such as the bus and tram company De Lijn have come on board, and have included the BlueCall Phone in their training programmes. Next year will see pilot projects in the Netherlands and Finland, and so far organisations in England, Denmark, Ireland and Australia have enquired about the project. We started small, but thanks to recognition from the government we can finally launch the system,” Vandewalle concludes. For the time being the software is iPhone compatible, but it will soon be possible to use it on other systems like Android. *Ithaka* hopes the system will one day become a household name throughout the world.

www.bluecallphone.be

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**Olympic news**

**London 2012 Paralympic Games**

August 12th 2012 will be the final day of the Olympic Games in London. But the Games won’t end there, on the contrary! Two weeks later (29 August – 9 September), the Paralympic Games will get under way at the same venues and will attract over 4,200 athletes competing in 20 different disciplines. Since Seoul 1988, the Paralympic Games are hosted in the same city as the Olympic Games. The London 2012 Paralympic Games will be a pioneer in Paralympic history since it is the first time that the Olympic and Paralympic organising committees are one and the same. Furthermore, with the Games being hosted in the United Kingdom, the Paralympic Games are going back to their roots. In 1948, Sir Ludwig Guttman organised a sports competition involving World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries in Stoke Mandeville (England) which went down in history as the Stoke Mandeville Games. To honour the birth place of the Paralympics, the London 2012 Paralympic mascot was named Mandeville. Since then, the Paralympic movement has undergone a gigantic evolution, not only in size and numbers, but more importantly in professionalism. Today, the Paralympics are the elite sport event for athletes with a disability, emphasising the participants’ athletic achievements rather than their disability. Just like the Olympics, the Paralympics are the pinnacle of every athlete’s career.

Belgium is one of the first countries to develop sports for people with a disability thanks to the visionary work of Dr. Albert Tricot and Dr. Pierre Houssa at the Brugmann hospital in Brussels. In 1960, they founded the predecessor of the Belgian Paralympic Committee, the Belgian sports federation for people with a disability, with the support of Victor Boin, president of the BOIC at the time. Since the very beginning, Belgium has been well represented at the Games and has been taking home a bunch of medals. However, due to the enormous increase in the professionalisation of Paralympic sports, which began around the millennium change, Belgium has experienced a setback and is since then trying to catch up. Beijing 2008 was an historical low for our country with 21 athletes participating and only 1 bronze medal in Para-cycling. Coming home from Beijing, the Paralympic high level sports landscape was redesigned and professionalised. This took a lot of effort and work, both from the Belgian Paralympic Committee at a national level as well as from the two regional federations, the Vlaamse Liga Gehandicaptensport and their Walloon counterpart, the Ligue Handisport Francophone.

After 4 years of tough labour, the Belgian Paralympic Committee, with the support of the Olympic Committee, is looking at sending a delegation of 35 to 40 athletes to the London Games. These athletes will represent our country in 9 sports. The final selection will be made public in a couple of months, but we can already give you a glance at some of the athletes under reserve.

One of the sports in which Belgium has a legacy to defend is Para table tennis. With Mathieu Loiqc and Marc Ledoux (photo left) we have a world champion in singles and vice-world champions in team in our delegation.
In athletics Belgium will be represented by our own living Paralympic legend, Gino De Keersmaeker. For Gino, the London 2012 Games will be his 6th Paralympic Games. He will defend the Belgian colours in the discus throw. With 1 gold (Atlanta) and 2 silver (Sydney and Athens) medals on his record, it is obvious that Gino is one of our medal contenders.

We, Belgians, do not only have to uphold a reputation in Olympic cycling but also in Para-cycling. In London, all eyes will be on handbiker Wim Decler, (photo left) Belgian Paralympian of the year 2011 and vice-world champion 2011 and also on cyclist Kris Bosmans, world champion 2011. The latter will compete in both road and track events. Expectations for Para-cycling are high!

Similar to our Olympic side, the Belgian Para-equestrian team is of world class status. It will be the first time that a Belgian team of 4 riders qualifies in this discipline. The names that will make up the team will not be known for some time as multiple riders are still in the running for selection. One of the Paralympic ambassadors for London 2012 is rider Michèle George (photo right), vice-world champion 2010 at the World equestrian Games in Kentucky.

Other sports in which Belgium hopes to excel are swimming, boccia, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair tennis and goalball. Our ambitious but realistic objective is to return from London with 10 top 5 performances of which 5 medals. For the first time in history, more than a billion tickets have already been sold for the Paralympic Games. We hereby wish to invite all Belgians in London and surroundings to come and be part of the Paralympic atmosphere, because, to put it in the words of the President of the International Paralympic Movement: “The signs are that London 2012 has the potential to match and potentially surpass what we achieved in Beijing. I am looking forward to witnessing athletes at the very top of their game delivering some memorable performances to sold out stadia and to TV audiences all over the world.”

The Belgian Paralympic Committee and its two member federations hope you will all be present to give us a warm welcome and to cheer our athletes on and help them realise their ultimate dream.

Ellen Volckaert, Chef de Mission, Belgian Paralympic Team
It's a little-known fact that the games industry as a whole is larger than both the music and films industries combined. According to analyst *Gartner Inc*, videogames grossed 74 billion dollars in 2011, and it is heading to $115 billion by 2015. Within the industry itself many sub-divisions exist, such as mobiles, consoles, PCs and, most recently, social games played on social networks like Facebook. These games are enjoyed by over 400 million people every month, and have driven Silicon Valley's developer Zynga to a recent IPO which raised around one billion dollars. While the US is currently the leading force in social games development, Europe is slowly closing the gap thanks to British and German studios.

One of these is *Bossa Studios* in London, headed by Belgian national Henrique Olifiers. We meet up with Olifiers to find out what makes social games so special, how his London studio came about and why Rupert Murdoch has invested in his company.

**What brought you to the UK?**

I came to this country back in 2006 to join Europe's largest independent game studio based in Cambridge which created some of the most successful online games at the time. By 2009, it was obvious that social games, especially those on Facebook, had a bright future. I therefore joined *Playfish* in London as a Studio Director. We had several big successes on Facebook, so much so that soon the company got acquired by US giant Electronic Arts for a $400 million deal. By the end of 2010, the time was right to start my own business. I wanted to take social games into a different direction, and *Bossa Studios* was born. As you can see from the time-frames I just described, this industry moves incredibly fast, and it’s fundamental to stay ahead of the curve, innovating in order to succeed.

**Why do social games attract millions of players around the world? What's the appeal?**

Before computers came along in the 70s, all games were social; you always needed someone else to play games with, like Chess, Poker, Risk or Monopoly. Table-top games were a social activity you shared with friends and family. Their appeal wasn’t in the games’ rules as such, but in the interactions between people while playing.

Computers and consoles changed all that. Friends were replaced with artificial opponents controlled by the computer. Game playing became a solitary activity and remained so during most of the 80s and 90s, until the internet came along and enabled multiplayer games. However, these games were quite hard-core and alienated most people who weren’t tech savvy. It was very difficult for gamers to play with, say, their parents.

Then social networks came along and people started joining in large numbers for various reasons, connected directly to family and friends. These networks are based on human relationships and sharing of emotions. Therefore, games seemed like a perfect fit to enhance the whole experience. Social games were born, with particular traits such as being easy to play, free to try out and with features that allowed players to invite their friends to play with them, creating a ‘word-of-mouth’ effect that turned them very popular overnight.

Games became social once again, and hugely so. It all happened very quickly because it’s far more fun to play with family and friends than against machines or random people.
Less than a year after it was founded, Bossa launched its first game, Monstermind, and on the same day joined the News Corporation Group. How did that happen?

That was all very fast indeed, even by the games industry’s standards! We always knew Monstermind would be launched within this time-frame, as we had a cracking team capable of pulling it off. In the world of games, you’re only as good as the people you work with!

But the partnership with the *Shine Group* (famous for great TV shows like Masterchef, Merlin, Spooks, One Born Every Minute…) was a wonderful surprise. From early on we were in contact with them because social networks form an integral part of their long term strategy as a media group.

When it became clear that our studio was viable, the *Shine Group* offered to fund us in exchange for our expertise, projects and ideas. It was a match made in heaven: instead of relying on short-term venture capital, we found a partner who wanted us to grow with them in a long-term strategic partnership, enabling us to be creative today and think about tomorrow without losing focus on trying to grow our studio too fast, aiming to sell it to another party which usually is the case with venture capital.

By the time we concluded our deal, *Shine* was acquired by *News Corporation*. The result is that we not only have the experience and creativity of people at Shine to help us which is fundamental for a startup like Bossa, but we also have access to a wealth of brands from the parent *News Corporation*, which we can turn into future social games.

*Bossa Studios is located in Shoreditch, nicknamed ‘Silicon Roundabout’ in allusion to Silicon Valley in the US. What was it like to start a company in the UK, and did the ‘Silicon Roundabout’ movement help you at all?*

Shoreditch is a vibrant area, it’s a great place to go out and experience its gastronomy, nightlife, arts and music. In turn, it attracts creative minds, precisely the kind of people we need to staff cutting-edge companies, such as games or any other tech-based enterprise driven by innovation. That’s why the likes of *Google*, *Cisco* and *Microsoft* are setting up offices in the area, and why more than 200 tech startups are born and based here: to seek talent. In this regard, the area has helped the studio immensely, we found great minds to join *Bossa*, people from all over the world, from the US to Japan, who flocked to Shoreditch seeking opportunities in the field of technology and creativity. That’s a big, big help to any startup!

What’s next in 2012 for you and your studio?

The trend for 2012 is for social networks to migrate from PCs to touch devices, such as the iPad, iPhone and Android smart phones. People have ditched desktop machines for laptops in recent years, and are now moving in huge numbers from laptops to tablets. We must go where people take us, so they can have fun with their friends using the current platform of their choice. Things move fast, so we must keep on moving too!

www.bossastudios.com
The man who put the world on the map

Gerard Mercator, the famous cartographer, was born in Rupelmonde in 1512. His city of birth is celebrating his five hundredth birthday in style with exhibitions and other activities.

The cartographer’s real name was Gerard Kremer or De Cremer, but true to the tradition of his time, he gave his name a Latin twist to suit his field of study. He studied at Louvain University where the founder of anatomy, Vesalius, was a fellow student. Following his studies and apprenticeship, Mercator embarked on a career as independent instrument maker and established himself as geographer and globe maker, commissioned by important clients such as Emperor Charles V. During his studies he often faced conflicts and struggled to reconcile his empirical observations with the Bible. In 1544, he was incarcerated in the Earl’s Tower in his hometown on suspicions of heresy, in particular of being a follower of the Protestant faith and Luther.

After seven months in prison he was released, but eventually left Flanders to settle in Duisburg, where a new university was established. There he published his most important works, including the groundbreaking first ever map of Europe. Mercator’s most crucial innovation to this day is the so-called ‘Mercator projection’. With his world map published in 1569 he presented a new method to portray the globe on a two-dimensional, angle-preserving map whereby angles between the different directions on the map correspond to the directions on the earth’s surface. As it is impossible to project the spherical surface of the earth on a flat surface without distortion, Mercator’s cylindrical map projection uses these distortions to render them user-friendly for nautical purposes. Mercator was also the first to coin the word ‘atlas’ for a collection of maps in book form. Unfortunately, he did not see the completion of his first atlas which was completed by his son Rumold in 1595, one year after Mercator’s death.

One of the eye-catchers of this year’s celebration is the exhibition ‘Mercator Digitaal’ (Mercator Digitally) at the SteM, the urban museum of Sint-Niklaas. It exhibits the Sint-Niklaas museum’s collection of wall maps, atlases and globes in a digital presentation with computer animation and video reports, 3D technology and interactive touch screens. Visitors will also be given the opportunity to digitally scroll through three Mercator atlases dating back to 1584, 1595 and 1607. But there is much more to the Mercator year celebrations, including an exhibit of his own library, touristic walks, a Kinetic Art Project ‘Homo Universalis’ and an international cartographic conference organised in collaboration with the SteM and the University of Ghent.

www.mercator2012.be

Both the British Library in London and the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford are organising special events to commemorate Mercator. More information can be found on the websites of these museums.
Belgian Film Success

The Brussels Philharmonic won both the Golden Globe and Oscar for best motion picture score. The ensemble won the award for Ludovic Bource’s soundtrack for the silent movie The Artist. Following their international recognition for Howard Shore’s score for The Aviator, the Brussels Philharmonic focused on performing and recording other soundtracks, standing their ground against competitors from London and Eastern Europe, says general manager Gunther Broucke who intends to further develop the ensemble’s activities in the film industry.

What made the soundtrack for The Artist so exceptional was the fact that it was composed and performed for a silent movie. It makes the role of music much more prominent than in a talking film; almost like the voice of one of the actors, Broucke believes. What makes it even more remarkable and unique is that to obtain the dramatic effects it left the typical Hollywood box of tricks untouched. Thanks to the Ghent Film Festival, with its focus on film soundtracks, the ensemble has managed to build up a considerable network in the field. However, working for the film industry has required significant changes within the organisation. “On several occasions we have had to decline offers,” explains Broucke, “as the structure of a traditional orchestra does not always fit in with the way the film industry operates, where everything has to be rushed within a period of two to three months. We are currently in talks with the government to create a spin-off company that could operate under the name of Brussels ‘Film’ harmonic. This business will then commission the orchestra for specific productions and will be able to sign agreements for technical support.”

The film ‘Rundskop’ (Bullhead) by Belgian director Michaël Roskam was among the five films nominated for the Best Foreign-Language Academy Award at the Oscars and Jean-Loup Felicioli and Alain Gagnol’s Une Vie de Chat (A Cat in Paris) received a nomination in the Best Animated Feature category. However, neither was awarded with an Oscar.

www.brusselsphilharmonic.be

Prestigious BBC series filmed in Belgium

Belgium was chosen by the BBC as the perfect location to film part of a new 5-part mini-series set during the First World War. Parade’s End will be screened by late 2012. Together with the American cable channel HBO, the BBC selected several locations in Flanders, like the castle town of Vorselaar, water lock De Borrekens and Villa Hurlebis in Nieuwpoort. Some of the trench scenes were shot in Wallonia. The series tells the story of a young British aristocrat who falls in love with a young member of the suffrage movement, with the First World War and a changing society as the backdrop. 35 of a total of 84 days on location, were spent in Belgium at the end of 2011. Other non-British scenes were mainly shot in Rouen in France.

The Anglo-Flemish-American production is written by Tom Stoppard and is based on Madox Ford’s novel. The cast includes known Belgian actors, like Hilde Heijnen and Jurgen Delnaet, together with British actors Rebecca Hall (Vicky Cristina Barcelona) and Benedict Cumberbatch (Atonement).

www.een.be
www.bbc.co.uk/tv/comingup/parades-end
European Capital of Culture

The Belgian city of Mons will share the title of ‘European Capital of Culture’ in 2015 with the Czech city of Plzen.

Starting from the premise that art, creativity and culture were as important as technology, trade, and the economy, the European Capitals of Culture were created by the European Community Ministers of Culture in 1985. The event makes it possible to display the cultural wealth of Europe and the links binding the peoples of Europe together.

Being designated European Capital of Culture is an outstanding opportunity to affirm a city’s position on the European chessboard and to benefit from considerable returns in economic, cultural, tourist and media terms.

There are two elements inherent in every European Capital of Culture, the ‘arts programme’ combining international artistic content with the wealth arising from ‘local diversity’. Each city designated tries to make the event accessible to local and European publics alike.

In Belgium, the cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Bruges have held the title of European Capital of Culture previously.

The theme running through the Mons 2015 event is “Mons, where technology meets culture”. This will form a link between the city’s heritage and cultural past and its development as a centre for the digital technologies and arts.

www.mons2015.eu

Léon de Bruxelles opens flagship London restaurant

On Monday 23rd January 2012 one of Belgium’s oldest and much loved restaurants, Chez Léon, famed for its exceptional moules frites and hearty Flemish classics, opened the first International branch of its Léon de Bruxelles franchise. Léon de Bruxelles is situated in the heart of London’s West End at 24 Cambridge Circus.

Entrepreneur Léon Vanlanker first opened Chez Léon back in 1893 in the centre of Brussels, a stone’s throw from the Grand Palace. Chez Léon was an overnight success. The restaurant is to this day owned and run by his descendents.

Over the last 100 years the Vanlanker family have not rested on their laurels and nowadays Chez Léon is extended to nine restaurants with more than a thousand meals served every day from the almost original menu. Its ever-growing European franchise, Léon de Bruxelles now has 67 French sites with a flagship restaurant on the Champs Elysee.

The restaurant seats 220 people and is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner with an exceptional afternoon tea launching later in 2012.

www.leon-de-bruxelles.co.uk
International Day of La Francophonie – “Le Français j’adore!”

Saturday 17 March, 12.30 pm - 7.30 pm
Trafalgar Square

The annual “Journée Internationale de la Francophonie” (International Day of La Francophonie) will be celebrated on 17 March in London, host city of the 2012 Olympics, in the presence of Abdou Diouf, General Secretary of La Francophonie.

The “le Français j’adore!” event which will invade Trafalgar Square is organised by the International Organisation of la Francophonie (OIF) in partnership with the French-speaking Embassies of London and the Institut Français.

The Belgian Embassy in London is an enthusiastic supporter of the initiative and thanks to the cooperation of the Belgian Tourism Office Brussels-Wallonia, the Presidency of the COCOF (Commission communautaire francophone) and of Wallonie-Bruxelles International, French speaking Belgian culture will take pride of place.

More than 50,000 spectators are expected to attend a series of concerts performed by French speaking artists: Emel Mathlouti (Tunisia), Mélissa Laveaux (Haïti), Naby (Senegal), Alfa Rococo (Canada, Québec, Féloche (France), Rayess Bek (Lebanon), Claudine Muno & The Luna boots (Luxembourg), Jali (Belgium) and Noga (Switzerland).

Who Is Jali?

Jali is a 22-year-old self-taught Belgian musician. The rediscovery of his country of origin, Rwanda, 15 years after leaving it, led to a growing thirst for music. His first album ‘Des jours et des lunes’ takes us from folk to soul, reggae and ‘chanson’. The young artist has been a guest of the Tiken Jah Fakoly and Bernard Lavilliers tours. Bon Voyage!

www.lefrancaisjadore.com

www.myspace.com/jalismusic/music

www.institut-francais.org.uk/musicenfrancais
The European Business Summit is Europe’s key meeting place for business leaders and decision-makers in the EU. In 2012 the 10th edition of the EBS will take place on 26 April 2012 in Brussels.

The European Business Summit offers a wide range of networking opportunities such as interactive meeting spaces (for private luncheons, round table discussions, board meetings,...), private meeting rooms (for one-to-one meetings which request some privacy), general networking areas (for coffee breaks and lunches),... The gala evening is the perfect opportunity to continue networking, invite stakeholders and enjoy a 3 course dinner.

For more information and registration: [www.ebsummit.eu](http://www.ebsummit.eu)

**Researching Belgian emigration**

Dr Jean-Michel LAFLEUR from the University of Liège is interviewing Belgians who have been residing in London for at least one year. The purpose of these interviews is to discuss Belgian citizens’ experiences of living abroad and their perception of the home country after departure. People who commute on a regular basis between London and Belgium are also encouraged to get in touch with him. Dr Lafleur can meet you at his office at the City University of London (Islington near the Angel tube) or at any other place that suits you better. Interviews usually last between 60 and 90 minutes and can be conducted in French, Dutch or English. Full confidentiality is obviously guaranteed.

This research project is financed by the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (FRS-FNRS) and seeks to contribute to a better understanding of contemporary Belgian emigration. Its results will be made available in the form of an academic publication in 2013.

If you are interested in contributing to the project, please get in touch with Jean-Michel Lafleur at the following e-mail address: JM.Lafleur@ulg.ac.be; UK Mobile phone: 07909 043522 ; Website of the University of Liège, Migration Research Centre: [http://www.cedem.ulg.ac.be](http://www.cedem.ulg.ac.be)

Professional address in London: City University of London, Social Sciences Building, Whiskin Street, London, EC1R 0JD

**Belgian Ball**

The Anglo-Belgian Club is organising ‘The Belgian Ball – 2012 Roses’ on 17 March 2012. The ball is organised for the benefit of the Royal Belgian Benevolent Society, under the patronage of H.E. the Ambassador of Belgium and Mrs Johan Verbeke.

All details are available on [www.belgianball.com](http://www.belgianball.com)
The Anglo-Belgian Society (ABS) promotes Anglo-Belgian friendship and culture. Membership is not expensive and application forms can be obtained, with all enquiries, from the Hon. Secretary, Mr Patrick Bresnan, www.anglo-belgiansoc.co.uk, secretary@anglo-belgiansoc.co.uk

The Anglo-Belgian Club (ABC), situated in the heart of London, is an ideal meeting place for Belgians living in or traveling to London, as well as for British with Belgian connections. Visit www.anglobelgianclub.com for more information or contact Philippe Sauvage at secretary@anglobelgianclub.com for ABC, 8 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BY, tel. 0207 839 4732,

The Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce (BLCC) Your one-stop shop for doing business in UK since 1890. Visit www.blcc.co.uk for a list of our business services and our busy calendar. Alternatively, contact Michel Vanhoonacker at info@blcc.co.uk; BLCC, Westwood House, Annie Med Lane, South Cave, HU15 2HG, tel. 0207 127 4292, fax 0870 429 2148

The Young Chamber. Contact: Aurelien Huynen. All Belgians welcome to meet in informal atmosphere. www.theyoungchamber.com, info@theyoungchamber.com

Brussels Capital Region, François De Vrije, Economic and Commercial Attaché
tel. 0207 235 8949, fax 020/7235 8650, info@brusseltrade.co.uk

The Walloon Region of Belgium, Didier Denayer, Economic and Commercial Attaché
tel. 0207 235 0903, fax 020/7235 0585, www.wallonia.co.uk, london@awex.co.uk

tel: 0121 616 1962, Birmingham@awex.co.uk

Belgian Tourist Office, Brussels-Wallonia, 217 Marsh Wall, London E14 9FJ, tel. 0207 531 0391, www.belgiumtheplaceto.be, info@belgiumtheplaceto.be

Flanders House, 1A Cavendish Square, London W1G OLD
It houses the services
of the Representative of the Flemish Government, Geert De Proost, Tel: 0207 299 3592, geert.de.proost@flandershouse.co.uk
of Flanders Investment and Trade, Ben De Smit, Economic and Commercial Attaché
Tel: 0207 307 7710, fitlondon@fitlondon.org
and Tourism Flanders-Brussels
Tel: 0207 307 7730, info@visitflanders.co.uk

Flanders Investment and Trade (Scotland Branch) / AWEX / Brussels Export, Cathy Grieve, Economic & Commercial Representative, Conference House, 152 Morrison Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8EB, tel: 0131 200 6080
Edinburgh@fitagency.com

Vlaamse Club in Londen (VCL), organises activities for Flemish and Dutch-speaking people in the London area, thus creating a meeting place and a network opportunity for the many Flemings in the UK, www.vlaamseclublonden.com, info@vlaamseclublondon.com

Vlamingen in de Wereld, representative in UK: Mr David Vermyen, davidvermylen@yahoo.co.uk

Union Francophone des Belges à l’Etranger, representative in the UK: Mr Didier Denayer, 20 West Heath Close, London NW3 7NJ, ufbe_uk@yahoo.co.uk

Vlamingen in Surrey organise meetings and events for Flemish people living in the Surrey area. Contact: Brit Deckers-Beckers, Chase Manor, Kingfield Road, Woking, GU22 9AA, tel. 01483 726 760, Britbeckers@yahoo.co.uk, www.vlamingenin surrey.co.uk

Orde Van den Prince promotes the unity of the Dutch language and culture, stimulating cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands. Bimonthly meetings in London. Enquiries: Bruno Stalmans at brunostalmans@aol.com, tel. 01483 893522
### BELFAST
Consul Jacques VANDEVYVER  
47 Gilnahirk Park, Belfast  
County Down BT5 7DY, Northern Ireland  
Tel: (028) 9050.8992  
Mobile: 07505914910  
E-mail: vdv@ntlworld.com

### BIRMINGHAM
Mr William Thomas COOPER  
1429 Pershore Road, Stirchley, Birmingham B30 2JL  
Tel: (0121) 433.3056  
Fax: (0121) 458.5360  
E-mail: nlconsulate.bham@btconnect.com

### DOVER
Consul Peter ALEXANDER  
Serendipity, Collingwood Road, St. Margarets at Cliffe, Dover CT15 6EX  
Tel: (01304) 852 217  
E-mail: alexander2000@screaming.net

### EDINBURGH
Consul Yves LEMARCHAND  
c/o Experience Scotland Travel Services, 2 West Street, Penicuik EH26 9DL  
Tel: (01968) 679.969  
Fax: (01968) 677.638  
Mob: 07970463917  
E-mail: consulbelgiumscotland@gmail.com

### GIBRALTAR
Consul Paul L. IMOSSI  
47 Irish Town, Gibraltar, Postal address: P.O. Box 185  
Fax: (00) 350 200.77838  
Tel: (00) 350 200.78353/78646  
Private: (00) 350 200.42403  
E-mail: pimossi@smith-imossi.gi

### JERSEY
Consul Alan BINNINGTON  
22 Grenville Street, St. Helier, Jersey JE4 8PX  
Assistant: Peter MOURANT  
All correspondence to: P.O. Box 87  
Tel.: (01534) 602.401  
Fax.: (01534) 501.922  
Private: (01534) 481.473  
E-mail: Alan.Binnington@rbc.com

### KINGSTON-UPON-HULL
Consul Michel VANHOONACKER  
Westwood House, Annie Med Lane, South Cave, HU15 2HG  
Tel: (01430) 471.928  
Fax: (0870) 429.2148  
E-mail: consulbelgium@blcc.co.uk

### MANCHESTER
Consul John MEEUS  
76 Moss Lane, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 1EJ  
Tel: (0161) 439.5999  
Mobile: 07710/694.419  
E-mail: john@imeeus.co.uk

### NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE
Consul David L.M. BRADSHAW  
30 Cloth Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 1EE  
Assistant: Mrs. Alison MAXWELL  
Tel.: (0191) 232.8345  
Fax: (0191) 261.7704  
Private: (0191) 227.6710  
E-mail: david.bradshaw@hay-kilner.co.uk

### SOUTHAMPTON
Consul Peter GREEN  
C/o IMCS UK Ltd, Suite 106, 151 High Street, Southampton SO14 2BT  
Tel: (023)8077.7422  
Fax: (023) 8005.1333  
Mobile: (07703) 359.326  
E-mail: petergreen@imcsuk.biz
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>ABC: First Tuesday Drinks, 6pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>The Belgian Ball at the Anglo-Belgian Club, 8 Northumberland Av, London</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme ‘2012 Roses’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.belgianball.com">www.belgianball.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>International Day of La Francophonie, Trafalgar Square, 12.30 – 7.30pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Belgian participant: Jali</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.lefrancaisjadore.com">www.lefrancaisjadore.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>25 March</td>
<td>VIS: Easter Walk, Easter eggs and High Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 March</td>
<td>VIS: Hatchlands Bluebell walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Brussels Philharmonic performs at Cliffs Pavilion, South End</td>
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<td><a href="https://southendtheatres.org.uk">https://southendtheatres.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 April</td>
<td>Brussels Philharmonic performs at Cadogan Hall, London</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.cadoganhall.com">www.cadoganhall.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>ABC: First Tuesday Drinks, 6pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 April-5 May</td>
<td>Solo show of Ostend born painter</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.studio1.1.co.uk">Yves Beaumont</a> at the gallery Studio 1.1, Shoreditch</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-21 April</td>
<td>Royal Ballet of Flanders performs Artifact at Sadler’s Wells, London</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.sadlerswells.com">www.sadlerswells.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 April</td>
<td>ABS: Diamond Jubilee Concert</td>
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<td>Venue: Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road, London SW7, 7pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>ABC: First Tuesday Drinks, 6pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>VIS: Ladies night in Silvermere Inn on the Lake</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 May</td>
<td>VIS: Spring walk in Loseley Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 May</td>
<td>Belgian/Congolese artist Baloji plays an exclusive headlining show at London’s Village Underground</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>ABC: Visit to Chelsea Flower Show, 3pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>ABC: Cross-Channel Sailing weekend, Hamble-le-rice</td>
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</tbody>
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