



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

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Belgium on the international stage

Belgium candidate for seat on UN Human Rights Council

Belgium has put itself forward as a candidate for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2009–2012. The elections will take place in May 2009 during the 63rd session of the General Assembly.

Human rights are a priority for Belgium. They are, after all, an indispensable part of respect for human dignity. It is essential to promote and defend them to achieve peace, safety and development in the world. Our country wants to contribute actively to international efforts towards greater respect for human rights. It is in this context that Belgium wishes to become a member of the Human Rights Council in Geneva

Belgium wants to

- give special attention to the victims of human rights violations, particularly children, women, human rights activists and victims of all forms of discrimination, torture, sexual violence and human trafficking.
- pursue a policy aimed at the establishment of the rule of law and the fight against impunity, especially in the area of sexual violence.
- continue to give priority to the fight against all forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.
- continue to work for respect of human rights in the international fight against terrorism.

Finally, Belgium will pursue objective, constructive and transparent dialogue between states. Our country will continue to include civil society in the Council's activities.

Civil rights, political rights, economic, social and cultural rights are universal and interdependent. Belgium will advocate that the Human Rights Council deal with all these rights equally and that it should be able to function effectively to promote human rights and to expose human rights violations.

<http://www.diplomatie.be>



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Belgium continues to be an important actor in international development



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The Minister of Development Cooperation, Charles Michel, wants to stress the huge efforts Belgium made in terms of Development Cooperation in 2008. With an increase of more than 13% this was one of the steepest rises of all the OECD-DAC countries. (*Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee*).

Charles Michel is pleased that even in times of crisis Belgium continues to fight against extreme poverty and to stand by the developing countries.

<http://www.diplomatie.be>
http://www.oecd.org/document/35/0,3343,en_2649_34487_42458595_1111_1,00.html

Belgian judge at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon

The Belgian Daniel Fransen, a former examining magistrate, was sworn in as a judge at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague on 24 March 2009. The Tribunal will try the defendants in the case of the murder of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri.



<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30286&Cr=lebanon&Cr1=tribunal>
<http://cidh-tribunal-liban.blogspot.com/>



Training for commandos and military engineers in the Democratic Republic of Congo

On 15 March 2009, 120 military personnel returned to Belgium after a mission of a few months in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They were taking part there in training new units of the national Congolese armed forces.

The majority were from the 1st Battalion Parachutists from Diest. They trained commandos from the 1st Battalion of the future rapid intervention force (RRF) of the *Forces armées de la RDC* (FARDC). By 2010 the FARDC should have twelve of these RRF battalions.



© DGIPR – Daniel Orban



© DGIPR–Malek Azoug

Seventeen military personnel from the 4th Battalion Engineers from Amay have also returned to Belgium. They were participating in the ongoing training of military engineers, or *Formation continuee du genie* (FCG) in French. The engineers supervised Congolese instructors who were training 250 specialists of various types: foremen, electricians, carpenters, bricklayers and plumbers. After training, the specialists were sent to the eleven military regions of DRC.

Since 2004 Belgium has supported the formation of the new Congolese army following the two civil wars in 1996-1997 and 1998-2003. The Belgian detachment was relieved by some 40 military personnel charged with rounding off the mission at the end of March 2009.



<http://www.mil.be>

New Belgian contribution to Afghanistan

Belgium supports a balanced vision between civil and military action in Afghanistan. Our approach is aimed at finding a balance between Defence, Diplomacy and Development. Belgium hopes this will be a positive contribution to the new strategic vision for Afghanistan proposed by the US administration and supported by the Allies during the NATO summit in Strasbourg-Kehl (3-4 April 2009). This new approach aims in particular to confirm support for the Afghans in the stabilisation and reconstruction of their country, but in a much more consultative fashion. Before they reviewed their strategy the US did indeed hold consultations, not only with their NATO allies, contributors to *ISAF* (*International Security Assistance Force*) and the Afghan government, but also with various countries interested in the stabilisation of Afghanistan. With this in view a major conference was held under the UN flag in The Hague on 31 March, in which more than 70 countries and international organisations took part. The objective of the conference was to improve the co-ordination and complementarity of policy on Afghanistan.



© DGIPR –Christian Decloedt

Belgium will send an extra 60 military personnel and two F-16 fighter-bombers to Afghanistan. This increased contribution to the ISAF mission will bring the Belgian contingent from 500 up to 560 strong and increase the Belgian air fleet from four to six F-16s.

The two F-16s, as well as a detachment of 25 military personnel will join the Belgian contingent that has been in Kandahar since September 2008. The other 35, a group of instructors who will supervise the training of the national Afghan army, will form a second *Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team*. The additional troops will take up their posts in the coming weeks in three rotations. Training the Afghan army is important, in view of the fact that the Allies have made "Afghanisation" of the country a priority.

Belgian humanitarian aid to Afghanistan will also be increased by 5 million euro per annum.

Originally Belgium had committed itself to finance projects for 6 million euros in 2009 and 2010. In September 2008 Minister Michel announced an increase of 1 million euro. Now, with the increase of 5 million per annum, the aid originally budgeted will be doubled, reaching a total of 24 million euro in two years.

This commitment is to increase Belgian financing for, amongst other things, election support and development projects for education and rural environments. These should in the long term improve Afghans' living conditions and increase the chances of peace, thereby contributing to a safer world.

Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2010: 7 seminars for consultation with civil society

During its Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2010, Belgium has decided to make a special effort to bring the European project closer to its citizens and make it tangible.

As part of a wide-ranging exercise to involve civil society in preparations for the presidency, which the government has entrusted to him, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Olivier Chastel inaugurated a series of seminars on 2 March 2009. The purpose of these seminars is to confer with the consultative bodies, the social partners, the NGOs and other actors in our society in order to debate the major European themes.

There will be seven seminars on seven themes at the Egmont Palace in Brussels:



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1. Economic and financial crisis, 2 March;
2. Energy, environment and climate change, 16 March;
3. Education, culture and European citizenship, 30 March;
4. Justice, safety and judicial cooperation – asylum and immigration, 4 May;
5. Conflict management and prevention (ESDP) – development cooperation, 19 May;
6. Expansion, neighbourliness policy, borders of the European Union, 27 May;

Each of the seminars lasts half a day and is organised by the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs and the Egmont Institute.

These seminars are an expression of the importance Belgium attaches to dialogue with actors from the civil society and the contribution they can make. Relevant questions and remarks dealt with during these seminars can then be taken into consideration when the programme for the Belgian EU presidency is drawn up.

<http://www.diplomatie.be>

Belgium renews military cooperation agreement with the Democratic Republic of Congo



© DGPIR-Daniel Orban

On 27 March 2009 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Minister of Defence Pieter De Crem and his Congolese counterpart Mwando Nsimba signed a declaration of intent that is to form the basis of a military technical cooperation agreement. The agreement includes the training of officers from the Congolese Army, the FARDC, by Belgian military personnel in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some specific training will take place in Belgium, too. The training and coaching of the rapid intervention troops in RDC will also be continued. Special attention will be given to increasing the capacities of the FARDC in terms of schooling, training, discipline and fundamental respect for human rights.



© DGPIR - Malek Azoug

Over the past year around a hundred Belgian military personnel have been involved in training 300 construction engineering soldiers and a battalion of rapid intervention troops for the FARDC in Kananga.

In the coming months this rapid intervention battalion will move to its permanent station at the Lwama army camp near Kindu (Maniema). Belgian military personnel will continue to provide support for the battalion. A trained, well equipped and disciplined Congolese army should contribute to the creation of a stable society in the RDC.

<http://www.mil.be>

The economy & business

Bayer CropScience centralises European research in Ghent

Bayer CropScience is one of the three divisions of the chemical company *Bayer* and is specialised in the protection of crops and biotechnology related to plants. It wants to centralise its biotechnology research in Ghent, where research is currently being carried out into making plants stress resistant and increasing their yield. Following this decision *Bayer CropScience* is closing its research department in Potsdam, in Germany.



© Bayer BioScience

There the research is focused mainly on food additives, an activity which *Bayer* wants to divest. *Bayer CropScience* wants to concentrate mainly on the development of plants with valuable new characteristics, by using modern techniques for genetic enhancement of plants. It will noticeably increase investments in this activity. *Bayer* says this will bring it into line with the general trend in agriculture, especially the increasing demand for food, animal feed and renewable energy.

http://www.bayercropscience.com/BCSWeb/CropProtection.nsf/id/EN_20090403_2?open&l=EN&ccm=500020

South Korea's chemical company Songwon invests in Antwerp

The South Korean chemical company *Songwon Industrial* is to invest in Antwerp in an expansion of its storage capacity and the development of a European distribution centre. Their partner in this will be *Antwerp Distribution & Products Operations (ADPO)*, a group specialised in setting up integrated distribution systems for the chemical industry. *Songwon* also has the option of expanding its new distribution centre even further in the future, for both solid and fluid products. According to *Songwon* this will optimise supply and production planning. The chemical company calls Antwerp a logical choice for its European headquarters since the region is one of the most important distribution centres.

<http://www.songwonind.com/>
<http://www.rubberworld.com/newsweek.asp?date=search&id=12401>

Company can be set up in just 4 days in Belgium

As was confirmed in the most recent *Global Information Technology Report* by the *World Economic Forum* and previously in the World Bank's report, *Doing Business 2009*, it is possible to set up a business in just 4 days in Belgium. Belgium is one of the only countries in the world where it can be done so quickly. Moreover there are on average only 3 procedures required to start a business.

<http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Globa%20Information%20Technology%20Report/index.htm>
http://www.doingbusiness.org/Documents/FullReport/2009/DB_2009_English.pdf?bcsi_scan_2zDC9279E1547BF6=0&bcsi_scan_filename=DB_2009_English.pdf

Foreign company leaders to be exempted from compulsory employment card in future

The Council of Ministers has decided to amend the royal decree on the employment of foreign workers (*), so that foreigners who receive a residence permit on the grounds of exceptional circumstances or illness, can claim an employment card C (**). Minister for Employment Joëlle Milquet has submitted a draft royal decree to the Council of Ministers.

Moreover, in the draft royal decree people defined as senior managers have been added to the categories of employees who do not need an employment card to work in Belgium. A number of foreign workers, such as executives and researchers, do not need an employment card to work in Belgium, because they travel a lot and do not intend to settle in Belgium permanently.

However the existing definition of executives excluded CEOs from this exemption. To simplify the procedures senior managers will now be exempt from the necessity of having an employment card.

(*) Royal Decree of 9 June 1999 that brought into force the law of 30 April 1999.
(**) article 9 bis and 9 ter of the law of 15 December 1980 on foreign workers' residence.

© Communication Service of the Federal Council of Ministers
General Directorate External Communications - Chancellery of the Prime Minister

Belgian at the head of Swiss staffing company Adecco



© Adecco

After nearly seven years at the head of the Swiss chocolate manufacturer *Barry Callebaut* the Belgian, Patrick De Maeseneire, will leave it to head the 34,000 strong Swiss staffing company *Adecco* on 1 June 2009. At the request of the Jacobs family, the main shareholder behind both *Adecco* and *Barry Callebaut*, he will remain in Switzerland to lead the world's biggest staffing company. He succeeds the German, Dieter Scheiff.

The Belgian has worked for the staffing group before, between 1998 and 2002, first in Belgium and later at the group level, in charge of specialised staffing activities. Prior to that De Maeseneire already had a varied career behind him. He has worked as a consultant at *Arthur Andersen*, marketing director at *Wang* Belgium, general director at *Apple* Belux, director of the tourism group *Sun International*, and as commercial director of the Flemish television channel *VTM*.

<http://www.adecco.com/MediaRelations/MediaReleases/Pages/News.aspx?newsURL=http://cws.huginonline.com/A/100102/PR/200904/1302747.xml>

New Ariane contract for Techspace Aero

Techspace Aero in Herstal designs, develops and produces components for motors for air and space travel. The company, whose ambition is to become the world leader in this sector, is a subsidiary of the *Safran* group.

On 09 March 2009 *Techspace Aero* got an order from its parent company *Safran* for the production of components for 35 Ariane 5 launchers, which were ordered by Arianespace at the end of January. The total value of the contract is approximately € 18 million.

<http://www.techspace-aero.be/>
http://www.safran-group.com/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=45
<http://www.arianespace.com/index/index.asp>

American company Steelgate establishes itself in Liege

The American company *Steelgate*, which is active in the storage and management of biomedical specimens, has chosen Liege as the location for its European headquarters. Initially this will be at Sart-Tilman, on the campus of the University of Liege. Five people, mainly technicians, will be employed there. *Steelgate*, whose home base is in Florida, has chosen Liege as the base from which to conquer the European market because of its proximity to various large European cities and a cargo airport serving destinations including Asia.

<http://www.logisticsinwallonia.be/index.php?page=38&display=340&lng=en>

Bank services in Belgium amongst the cheapest in Europe

In Belgium a package of basic bank services costs an average of 63 euros in bank charges. This is lower than the European average of 71.10 euro. In Europe only the Netherlands do better, according to the most recent comparative study by the consultant *CapGemini*, the *World Retail Banking Report 2009*.

http://www.capgemini.com/resources/thought_leadership/world_retail_banking_report_2009/

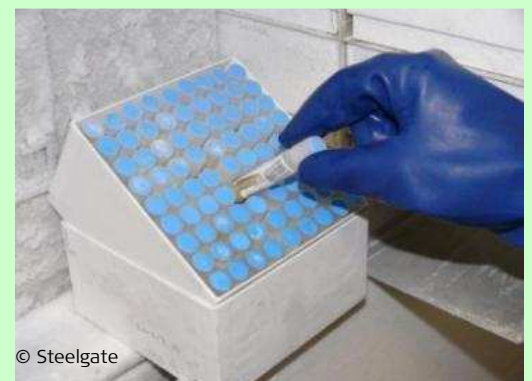
Road sign manufacturer Cosign carries off contract to supply house numbers for Kuwait

Cosign a company from Diest, in the Province of Flemish Brabant, that produces road signs has just carried off an impressive contract to deliver house numbers for all 2.5 million inhabitants of Kuwait, spread over several hundred thousand houses.

These are no ordinary house numbers - these are square plates in anodised aluminium, on which the number, street and district are engraved. Adhesive letters and figures were excluded because these would soon be damaged by desert sand carried on the wind.

Cosign is specialised in road signs and is active in around seventy countries. The company has recently supplied the complete signalization for the airports in Brussels, Prague, Belgrade and Buenos Aires, as well as for hospitals in Singapore, Hong Kong and Riyadh.

<http://www.cosign.be/>



© Steelgate

Biggest Airbus order ever for Belgium

On 12 March 2009 the consortium *Belairbus* signed an agreement with aircraft manufacturer *Airbus* for the design, development, production and delivery of components for the A350 XWB, a new twin-engine plane for long distances.

Belairbus was founded in 1979. It is responsible for the commercial, financial and administrative handling of the *Airbus* contracts for the three companies, *Asco* (Zaventem), *Sonaca* (Charleroi) and *BMT* (Oostkamp).

Sonaca will design and produce the leading edges (front part of the wings), *Asco* will manufacture the corresponding drive mechanisms and *BMT* will supply the gearboxes and the transmission systems.

<http://www.belairbus.be>

<http://www.asco.be>

<http://www.bmtgroup.com/pages/aerospace.asp>

<http://www.sonaca.com>

<http://www.sabca.com>

American pharmaceuticals group Baxter invests in Lessines

The American pharmaceuticals group *Baxter* has been active in Belgium since 1954. The group carries out research and development in Nivelles, has a production plant and distribution centre in Lessines, administrative services in Brussels and is still building in Braine-l'Alleud. Altogether more than 2200 people are employed at *Baxter* in Belgium.

Baxter has decided to expand its activities in Lessines, in the Province of Hainaut, and is investing 70 million euro there. This is the group's sixth investment plan in Belgium in the space of ten years and Robert Parkinson, the Chairman of *Baxter*, does not exclude more investments in the region.



© Baxter

Baxter has only two research and development centres outside the US and they are located in Belgium and Austria. In addition the two countries also have large production sites.

http://www.baxter.be/en/about_baxter/manufacturing/index.html

http://marcourt.wallonie.be/apps/spip2_wolwin/spip.php?article976

New Chinese contracts for Barco

Barco, a company with its headquarters in Kortrijk (West Flanders) that designs and develops visualisation products, has concluded a contract with the *China Film Group Corporation (CFGC)* for the installation of 100 digital cinema projectors in various Chinese cities, including Shanghai, Peking, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Kunming, Xiamen and Fuzhou. This will be done in partnership with the *GDC Technology group*.

Since 2002 *Barco* has been the most important supplier of digital cinema systems to *China Film Group Corporation*. As a result of its continued investment in new projector technology, its digital cinema products, its personnel, and its support and business partners in China, *Barco* has more than 80% of the market share there. In the last seven years more than 500 of *Barco's* digital cinema projectors have been installed in *CFGC* cinemas all over China.

Barco and *GDC Technology* will also equip 120 cinemas of the Chinese company *Hengdian Entertainment* with digital projection.

<http://www.barco.com/>



© Barco

Education



Belgian students win World Championship Diplomacy

A group of Belgian students has won first prize in the unofficial world championship in diplomacy, the *World MUN 2009* (*Model United Nations 2009*, 22-27 March 2009). The *Model United Nations* is a simulation of the United Nations. Participants are assigned a country whose diplomatic interests they have to defend according to official UN rules. This prestigious competition, in which students from various countries take part in real-life negotiations, is organised by the American University Harvard. Thanks to their knowledge of languages and the dossiers the Belgian students won with a convincing score from top favourites like Princeton, the Sorbonne and Oxford.

<http://www.worldmun2009.org/page/worldmun-2009>

Belgian education scores high worldwide

In the *World Economic Forum's* most recent *Global Information Technology Report* the Belgian education system scores high. In fact Belgium is ranked 4th in the world. As far as the quality of its maths and science education is concerned our country even comes in 3rd. For the quality of its scientific research centres Belgium ranks 5th and our management schools also get 5th place. And, finally, university-industry research collaboration in Belgium also gets good points, coming 8th in the ranking.

<http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Global%20Information%20Technology%20Report/index.htm>

University of Liege ninth 'best place to work' for postdoctoral scholars

The University of Liege (ULG) ranks ninth on an international list of best places for postdocs, according to a poll by the American scientific journal *The Scientist*. *The Scientist's* poll was carried out between October and December 2008 and collected opinions from 3,438 researchers from all over the world. They evaluated the quality of their postdoctoral research at the various institutions based on 43 criteria. These included opportunities for building a career, the quality and international value of the research, the infrastructure and quality of life.

<http://www.the-scientist.com/bptw/>



© Nicolas Petterle

ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles) in Charleroi founds Biopark Charleroi Brussels South

In 2009 ULB will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its presence at the *Aéropole* in Charleroi as the *Institute of Biology and Molecular Medicine* (IBMM) was inaugurated there in 1999.

Now, 10 years later, ULB is to open *Biopark Charleroi Brussels South* there, a scientific park that will be dedicated to the biomedical sector. It will provide employment for more than 500 people, spread across institutes and laboratories linked to ULB, research centres and spin-offs.

Research, innovation, production, training and education will be carried out at *Biopark Charleroi Brussels South*. As of September 2010 a Master's in biochemistry and molecular and cellular biology will be offered there, too. A course in medical imaging is also been considered.

Parallel to the developments at the *Aéropole*, ULB is also focusing on Charleroi city centre, where it will launch two new courses – a Bachelor's in human and social sciences and a Master's in employment science – probably by the start of the academic year 2009/2010.

Finally, ULB is looking for synergies with various establishments of higher education as well.



© ULB

<http://www.biopark.be>
<http://www.spow.be/en/aeropole.pdf>

Culture

Destinations Delvaux (Liège, 28 November 2008 – 28 June 2009)

To celebrate the opening of the new museum (spring 2009) "Le Grand Curtius" (Liège) and the inauguration of the Guillemins Train Station designed by the Catalan architect Santiago Calatrava, the city of Liège has chosen to focus on Paul Delvaux, the Liège "painter of train stations" (1897-1994).

Discover from November 2008 to September 2008 "Destinations Delvaux", an important year full of exhibitions and events around the city's new face.

The historic heart of Liège will also host a foot trail mixing the city's history with different exhibitions and animations.

Discover the exhibitions:

[DESTINATIONS DELVAUX - DE DEMAIN À DELVAUX \(LIEGE\)](#)

[DESTINATIONS DELVAUX - MINUTES D'ARRÊT, PHOTOGRAPHIES DE PHILIPPE LAVANDY \(LIEGE\)](#)

[DESTINATIONS DELVAUX - JOHAN MUYLE : "ICI C'EST AILLEURS" \(LIEGE\)](#)

[DESTINATIONS DELVAUX - "VOYAGE À SUIVRE..." \(LIEGE\)](#)

[http:// www.destinationsdelvaux.be](http://www.destinationsdelvaux.be)

<http://www.grandcurtiusliege.be>



Musée Curtius © Marc Verpoorten



© Paul Delvaux Foundation, St.Idesbald, Belgium



Exhibition "Charles the Bold - The Splendour of Burgundy." (Bruges, Groeninge Museum, 27 March – 21 July 2009)

Charles the Bold (1433–1477), the duke who would be king, was an ambitious man. Bold in thought and bold in action, he dreamt that his Burgundian territories would one day stretch from Bruges to Dijon. With this aim in mind, he took part in war after war, but soon fell victim to his own ambition, dying at a relatively early age on the battlefield at Nancy. During his short life, he became one of the richest princes in Europe, the living embodiment of the pomp and pageantry of the Burgundian court and a generous patron of the fine arts.

For the very first time, this fascinating and important historical figure has been made the subject of an international exhibition. The Groeninge museum in Bruges will turn the spotlight on the glittering pomp and pageantry of medieval Burgundy, using not only its own collection of Flemish Primitive masterpieces but also a number of exceptional artefacts on loan from some of the greatest museum collections in the world: paintings, suits of armour, tapestries, manuscripts, fine gold and silverware, etc. For the first time in 500 years, the famous Burgunderbeute (Burgundy Booty) will be allowed to leave Switzerland, a treasure trove of unparalleled artistic beauty, which Charles the Bold lost to the Swiss shortly before his death.

The Groeninge museum forms the perfect scene for this prestigious exhibition. Not only is it the home port of the Flemish Primitives, but just around the corner, in the Church of Our Lady, are the tombs of Charles the Bold and his daughter Mary of Burgundy located.

The exhibition will be held under the High Patronage of Their Majesties King Albert II and Queen Paola of Belgium, His Excellency the President of Switzerland and His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Karl from Austria.

This project is organised with the collaboration of Historisches Museum Bern.

<http://www.kareldestoute.info/en/homepage.html>



© Photography desk city of Bruges

Exhibition "Goya, Redon, Ensor. Grotesque paintings and drawings."

(Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, 14 March – 14 June 2009)

In this exceptional spring exhibition, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp is displaying a unique collection of grotesque paintings, drawings and prints by Goya, Redon and Ensor.

The show highlights the similarities as well as the differences between the three masters and features works from Belgian museums and private collections, complemented with loans from, among other museums, MoMA in New York, Musée d'Orsay in Paris, Museo del Prado in Madrid, the National Gallery in London and the Städel Museum in Frankfurt..



Francisco Goya (1746-1828), *Self-Portrait. Los caprichos p 1* (1799), etching, aquatint and drypoint, 21.7 x 15.2 cm, Antwerp, Coll. Ceuleers – Van de Velde Antwerp

His art was influenced by the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. On the face of it, the three artists seem worlds apart, but the deeper one explores their work, the more obvious the similarities become.

For the occasion of this exhibition, the museum has created an original setting to bring the visitors in the right mood. This is, moreover, the largest ensemble of work by Ensor to be displayed at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp since 1983, so that the show provides the perfect run up to the 2010 Ensor Year, marking the 150th anniversary of the artist's birth.



Odilon Redon (1840-1916), *Silence* (ca. 1911), oil on paper, 54.6 x 54 cm, MoMA New York

Moreover, the museum itself possesses one of the largest Ensor collections in the world as well as a rare series of etchings by Goya. Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746 – 1828) produced numerous paintings and drawings of demons, witches and fools, portraying them with a combination of pity, amusement and dread. The Belgian artist James Ensor (1860 – 1949), who is best known as the painter of masks, liked to mock everyone and everything in his grotesque and somewhat disconcerting creations. His paintings feature wonderfully cynical caricatures in expressionistic or sometimes plainly hilarious settings. While the work of Odilon Redon (1840 – 1916) seems rather stern and symbolic, he too had a predilection for bizarre subject matter, like amoebae with human heads, embryos, and large staring eyes.



James Ensor (1860-1949), *The Skeleton Painter* (1895 or 96), oil on panel, 38.5 x 45.5 cm, KMSKA Antwerp © Sabam

"Ashes", a new creation from the dance company "les ballets C de la B"

On 19 February 2009 the world premiere of the most recent creation by Koen Augustijnen, the Belgian choreographer of *Les Ballets C de la B*, took place at the *Theaterhaus Gessner Allee* in Zurich (Switzerland).

Les ballets C de la B has been considered for a while to be one of the three most important dance companies in Flanders, along with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's company, *Rosas*, and *Ultima Vez*, the international group round Wim Vandekeybus.

The central theme of "Ashes" is transience and the question of how you deal with this irrevocable transience as a person, as well as the constant duality in everyone's life between hanging on and letting go...



© Chris Van der Burght

Following "bâche" (2004) and "IMPORT/EXPORT" (2006), "Ashes" is the final part of a trilogy. This new production, a mixture of different styles of dance, theatre, acrobatics, music and plastic art, is again typical of Koen Augustijnen's style. A fascinating interaction has been created between a classical music repertoire (G.F. Handel) and contemporary staging. Composer Wim Selles ensures an intriguing mixture of classical music and acoustic soundscapes. The surprising grey decor – a colourless environment in sharp contrast to the colourful performers on the stage – was designed by the artist Jean Bernard Koeman, who was also responsible for the design of "bâche" and "IMPORT/EXPORT".

After the world premiere two more performances were given in Zurich. The company will be on tour in Europe until January 2010

<http://www.lesballetscdela.be/>

Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival and International Festival of Detective Films Liege



The **International Festival of Fantastic Film** took place in Brussels from 9 to 21 April 2009. 25 editions of this Brussels festival have provided the most complete panorama possible of fantastic film production on a world scale. BIFFF (*Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival*) has a soft spot for independent films and an eye for up-and-coming talent, as the qualitatively high-class competition and the programming of directors' films proves.

As they do every year, tens of thousands of visitors came to enjoy a total immersion in fantastic film: science fiction, horror and other creations by the most visionary directors. For two whole weeks fans of the genre could revel in more than 150 films, most of which were previewed here. There were scores of original fringe events too: a make-up and body painting competition, Festiv'Art, the Japanimation Day, a Manga, SF & Fantasy market, the Belgian Fantastic Film day, the Vampire ball and the Fantastic Film night.

From 15 to 19 April 2009 fans of detective films get their turn during the **International Festival of Detective Films** in Liege. The festival is organised by the *Festival International du Film Policier de Liège asbl* in cooperation with the local and federal police.

In addition to showings of both short and full-length films about all kinds of detective stories there was also a variety of fringe events. Some of the most popular actors and actresses in Europe were billed in the best detective films from days gone by and now.

Films from many different countries competed for one of the five prizes awarded by a professional jury.

<http://www.biff.org/>
<http://www.festivaliege.be/>



© Nicolas Petterle

Exhibition « Emile Claus and rural life ». (Ghent, Museum of Fine Arts, 21 March – 21 June 2009)



Emile Claus, Les patineurs, 1890-1891 © MSK Gent

Emile Claus was the most important representative of the impressionist movement in Belgium. He was an admirer of French impressionism and applied this style in the realistic depiction of his familiar countryside environment. Claus was idolized by the writers and painters of his time. His optimistic and cheerful art is also still popular with the public today. This exhibition brings together the best of Emile Claus' work and highlights its central themes: the work in the fields, village life, river life and pure landscape. His work will be on display alongside that of such Belgian contemporaries as Alfred William Finch, Léon Frederic, Constant Permeke, Constantin Meunier and Henry Van de Velde.

Alongside this exhibition, the Museum of Deinze and the Leie region will exhibit 100 works by Emile Claus from the museum's unique collection: an overview of the artist's graphic work, a varied group of sketches, preliminary studies and finished drawings.

<http://www.mskgent.be/>
<http://www.museumdeinze.be/>

Science

IMEC develops clever medical implants

IMEC (Leuven) is an independent research centre specialised in nanoelectronics and nanotechnology. IMEC's research builds bridges between basic research at universities and technological developments in industry.



© IMEC

IMEC has presented a new prototype neuroprobe at the European conference *Smart Systems Integration* in Brussels. The probe can be used in brain implants to measure and interpret the brain's electrical signals. The probe can also be used for electrical stimulation of brain cells, for example for the treatment of brain disorders such as epilepsy.

There are already brain probes on the market, but the existing probes take up too much space to be implanted and are very difficult to position at the correct depth in the brain. IMEC's new 3D brain probe has a very thin base, so it can be implanted beneath the skull and move with the brain. IMEC's new brain probe also has far more electrodes per probe needle and is equipped with electronic depth control in addition. This means that those electrodes in the probe needle that make best contact with the neurons, and are therefore most suitable for detecting brain signals, will be activated. IMEC's new probe is therefore much more accurate.

IMEC develops integrated electronic systems based on standard silicon chips. This allows for very tiny systems with high functionality to be developed, while at the same time guaranteeing low production costs.

The new neuroprobe was developed in collaboration with various research institutions and industrial partners as part of the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme.

http://www2.imec.be/imec.com/imec.com_homepage.php

Sleep apnoea treatment a world first for Doctors at Antwerp University Hospital

Doctors at the University Hospital in Antwerp (UZA), led by Professor Paul Van de Heyning and Professor Wilfried De Backer, have scored a world first in the treatment of sleep apnoea. Patients suffering from apnoea do not breathe normally during sleep because the throat closes completely or partially. When that occurs the lack of oxygen causes sleep to be interrupted. UZA's new method was developed in cooperation with *Inspire Medical Systems*. It stimulates the nerve that goes to the tongue and the back part of the throat and keeps the throat open. Doctors have already treated a first patient successfully.



© Inspire Medical System

As part of this project UZA also develops and uses innovative imaging techniques that can possibly predict the therapeutic result of the intervention and give very precise indicators for the diagnosis. This new technology, which was recently granted a patent in the US, is developed by a spin-off company named *FluidDA*.

<http://www.uza.be>

<http://anet.ua.ac.be/acadbib/uae/03192>

<http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/08-21-2007/0004649019&EDATE=>

<http://www.fluidda.com>

Belgian physicist wins Descartes-Huygens Prize

Stefan Vandoren, a physicist from Bilzen in the Province of Limburg, has received the prestigious Descartes-Huygens Prize in Amsterdam for his research into the origins of the universe, Einstein's theory of gravity and the so-called string theory in relation to the elementary particle theory.

Since 1995 the French and Dutch governments have awarded the Descartes-Huygens Prize for scientists' research projects and their contributions to scientific cooperation between France and the Netherlands.

Stefan Vandoren studied at KUL in Belgium and got his postdoctoral experience at the University of Wales and New York University. He is currently senior lecturer at the Institute for Theoretical Physics and the Spinoza Centre at the University of Utrecht.



© Henk Thomas

http://www.knaw.nl/cfdata/prizes/prizes_detail.cfm?orgid=626

<http://www.maisondescartes.com/site/sciences-et-universite/rencontres-et-colloques.html>

http://www.ambafrance-nl.org/france_paysbas/spip.php?article960

Belgian healthcare second best in Europe

Eurofound, the *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*, has carried out a study into the quality of life in Europe. 35,000 people from 31 countries were interviewed for the study during the period November 2007 – February 2008. The results show amongst other things that 66 percent of Belgians consider their health to be good or very good. Moreover the quality of Belgian healthcare was felt to be above averagely good. Only Austria scores better. The study also indicates that Belgians feel rather contented. They give themselves an average score of 7.8 out of 10 for happiness.



<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/qualityoflife/eqls/2007/index.htm>

Mobile Belgian lab detects Ebola and monkeypox virus

Minister of Defence Pieter De Crem visited the military academic and technological platform on the UCL site at Louvain-La-Neuve on 18 March 2009. Benoît Cerexhe, the Minister of Scientific Research, Employment and Economy for the Brussels Capital Region, accompanied him.

This platform has put the finishing touches to a mobile laboratory that can discover deadly viruses like Ebola and monkeypox fast in the field. This is a first and a big step forward for Belgian medical research. The DLD-Bio/UCL platform collaborates with the Ministry of Defence laboratories and the Centre for Applied Molecular Technology at UCL.

Professor Dr. Med. Lt. Col. Jean-Luc Gala, the director of the platform, travelled to Kananga in the Democratic Republic of Congo with the mobile laboratory in April. This visit took a year's preparation in cooperation with the health authorities of the DRC. The intention is to see what is needed on the spot and to provide training in the field.



© DGIPR – Jürgen Braekevelt

At the end of the mission the participants will make an assessment and evaluate the project. Then they could deploy the laboratory in other places where there is danger of an epidemic.

There was another outbreak of Ebola in November 2008, in the Province of East Kasai in Central Congo.

<http://www.mil.be>

Research at the University of Ghent offers new insight in the fight against asthma

For a long time it was thought that house dust mites directly affected the white blood cells of the immune system, causing symptoms of asthma, hay fever and eczema.

Researchers from the University of Ghent (department of Internal Diseases, led by Dr. Hamida Hammad and Professor Bart Lambrecht) have shown that house dust mites are also recognised by the epithelium cells located on the insides of the lungs, which are in direct contact with the inhaled air. This mechanism had never been found in the lungs before. The cells on the insides of the lungs activate the white blood cells, which in their turn activate the immune system, which eventually leads to asthma symptoms.

The research shows that eliminating a specific recognition system in these cells on the inside of the lungs ensures that allergens (elements of a substance that may cause allergic reactions) no longer cause an inflammatory reaction and that therefore asthma symptoms no longer occur.

In the future it will be possible to use drugs which by-pass this recognition system in the fight against asthma. One striking conclusion is that the same mechanism by which allergens are recognised is also involved in the recognition of bacteria in just about all animal species and has withstood evolution.

The results of this research were published in the leading journal *Nature Medicine*.

<http://www.ugent.be/nl/nieuwsagenda/nieuws/persberichten/astma.htm>



Bart Lambrecht © UGent

Miscellaneous

Brussels Airlines one of the safest airlines

Brussels Airlines continues to be one of the safest airlines in the world, according to a ranking of the 65 biggest airline operators drawn up annually by the German evaluation centre *Jacdec*.

Jacdec's list compares the number of incidents and fatalities since 1973 with passenger/kilometres realised. Including *Sabena's* history, *Brussels Airlines* gets the best possible score – an index of 0.00.



<http://www.jacdec.de/>

Antwerp second best city in the world to live in

ECA International, a specialist in the management and support of expatriate personnel in the whole world, provides companies with tailor-made information, software and support. Every year *ECA* carries out a survey of the quality of life in cities worldwide. Based on this annual ranking, companies who are clients of *ECA International* determine the size of the allowance they pay to expats and their families to compensate for difficulties in relocation.

The complete list numbers 254 cities. *ECA* judged all the cities on a number of criteria, including infrastructure, climate, opportunities for integration, access to healthcare, air quality, public services, free time, social life, accommodation, political tensions and security etc. Copenhagen came out on top in the survey, followed by Antwerp, Brussels and Bern.



© Elisabeth Broekaert

<http://www.eca-international.com/>
<http://www.eca-international.com/showpressrelease.aspx?ArticleID=6835>

Belgium second best recycler of household waste in the EU

Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, has published figures on household waste production and processing in EU countries for 2007. These show that with 39% Belgium is the next but one best recycler in the Union, outdone only by Germany.

Each EU member state produced on average 522 kg of household waste per inhabitant. In Belgium that was 492 kg.

Household waste can be processed in various ways – by using it as landfill, incineration, recycling or composting. In 2007 the distribution in the EU was on average 40 % landfill, 20 % incineration, 22 % recycling and 17 % composting. In Belgium however there was 4 % landfill, 34 % incineration, 39 % recycling and 23 % composting. Taking recycling and composting together (62 %) Belgium comes next to top of the class.



http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2009/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2009_MONTH_03/8-09032009-EN-BP.PDF

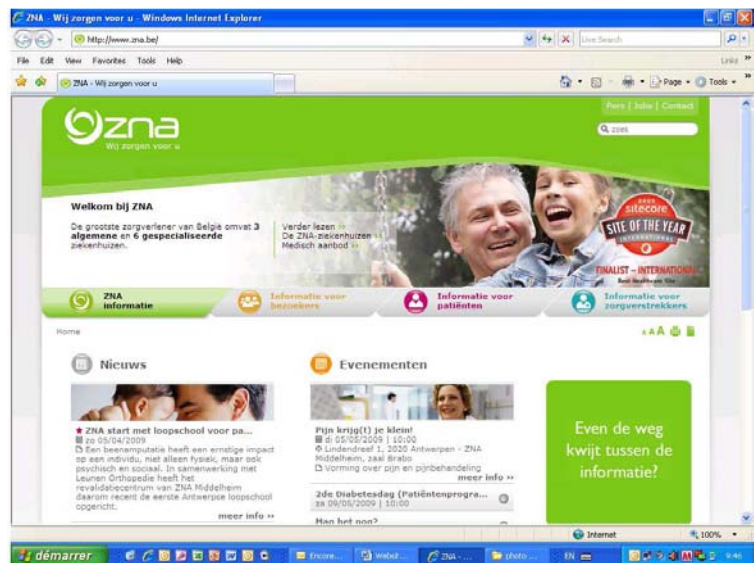
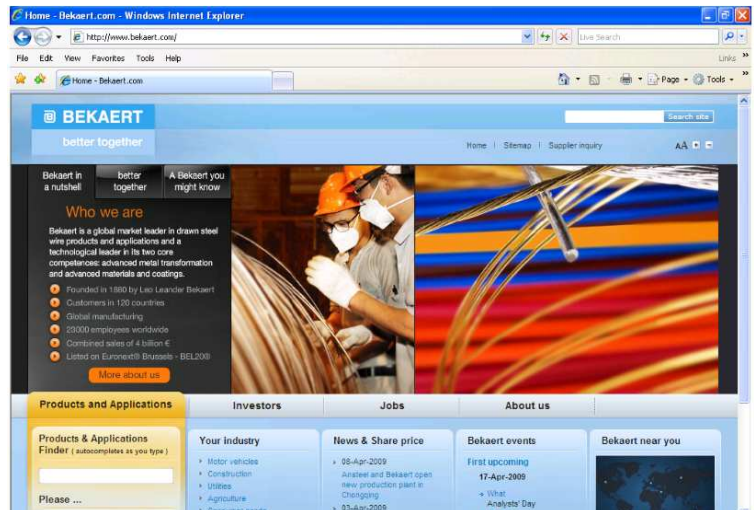
Websites Antwerp Hospital Network and Bekaert named best in the world

Sitecore, an international company active in website creation and management, annually names a couple of websites "most outstanding website" worldwide. Candidates are judged on the basis of criteria such as creativity in presentation, applications, user friendliness, capacity for providing information and for motivating action etc.

The *Antwerp hospital network ZNA's* website took first prize in the category *Best Healthcare site* in the world. *Sitecore* praised ZNA's site in particular for the convenient way it is presented and its comprehensive content. The site was revamped in January and draws 30,000 surfers per month. It is now possible to consult all the doctors' agendas online and visitors can save specific parts of the website in a personal folder. ZNA's goal is to make the site even more interactive. Later this year there will also be an English language version.

Bekaert's website won first prize as *Best Manufacturing site* in the world. The company recently produced a new website that presents its complex portfolio in a transparent and uniform manner. The site is available in 120 countries and has replaced more than 30 old sites worldwide.

<http://www.sitecore.com/en/Customers/SiteOfTheYear/Finalists-2009-International.aspx>
<http://www.zna.be/>
<http://www.bekaert.com>



Antwerp diamond cutter produces most dazzling diamond in the world

Diamond cutter Louis Verelst from Pulle/Zandhoven in the Province of Antwerp has produced the most dazzling diamond in the world. The gem, baptised the "Brilliant Lady", was developed using a new cutting method which allows it to catch more light. It has 221 facets, whereas an ordinary diamond only has 57. Verelst is known as one of the most respected master cutters in Antwerp's diamond milieu.

<http://www.brilliant-lady21.com/>
<http://www.eurostardiamond.com/eurostar/images/stories/Eurostar.Diamonds.Antwerp.Facets.May.2004.pdf>



© Verbo BVBA

Agenda

AGENDA

EVENTS IN BELGIUM

For general touristic information about Belgium:

<http://www.visitbelgium.com/>
<http://www.agenda.be>
<http://www.opt.be/accueil/fr/index.html>
http://www.wallonie-tourisme.be/contenus/agenda_culture/fr/181.html
http://www.cfwb.be/index.php?id=portail_theme_culture
<http://www.visitflanders.com>
<http://www.cultuurweb.be/CNETPortal/Home2.aspx>
<http://www.opbrussel.be/>

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

From Van Dyck to Bellotto.

20 February – 24 May 2009
Brussels, Bozar
<http://www.bozar.be>

Stadsvisioenen (City visions).

21 March – 21 June 2009
Mechelen (Malines)
<http://www.stadsvisioenen.be>

Survivors of the X-TREME.

15 October 2008 – 30 August 2009
Brussels, Museum for Natural Sciences
<http://www.naturalsciences.be>

Omo: people and design.

7 November 2008 – 31 August 2009
Tervueren, Royal Museum for Central Africa
<http://www.africamuseum.be/omo>

Beaufort 03 – Art by the sea

Beaufort Inside & Beaufort Outside, Triennial for Contemporary Art
28 March – 4 October 2009
Different locations
<http://www.beaufort03.be>

2009, year of the comic strip.

28 February 2008 – 31 December 2009
Brussels
<http://www.brusselscomics.be>

UPCOMING EVENTS 2009

Kunstenfestivaldesarts (*performing arts and visual arts*)

30 April – 23 May 2009
Brussels, several theaters and art houses
<http://www.kfda.be>

Re-opening of the renovated Gallo-Roman museum

21 May 2009
Tongeren
<http://www.galloromeinsmuseum.be>

Opening Museum René Magritte

2 June 2009
Brussels
www.fine-arts-museum.be

Re-enactment of the Battle of Waterloo

18 – 21 June 2009
Waterloo
<http://www.culturespaces-minisite.com/waterloo1815/>

Opening M Leuven (*renovated Museum of Leuven*)

& Exhibition Rogier van der Weyden
"1400|1464 – Master of Passions"
20 September – 6 December 2009
Leuven
<http://www.mleuven.be> and
<http://www.rogiervanderweyden.be>

Europalia China

October 2009 – February 2010
Brussels and other Belgian cities
<http://www.europalia.be>

MUSIC

Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition - violin

4 – 30 May 2009
Brussels, Conservatoire Royal – Palais des Beaux-Arts
<http://www.cmireb.be/>

Brussels Jazz Marathon

29 – 31 May 2009
Brussels, different locations
<http://www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be/home/>

FAIRS

<http://www.beurskalender.be>
<http://mineco.fgov.be/enterprises/fairs/home.nl.htm>

CONFERENCES

<http://www.conferencealerts.com/belgium.htm>
<http://www.conference-service.com/conferences/be/index.html>
<http://www.epsilonevents.com>

FILM FESTIVALS

<http://www.insidefilm.com/europe.html>

FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation



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www.diplomatie.be
www.dgcd.be
www.belgium.be
www.invest.belgium.be

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