

wallonia and brussels

spring 2017

wab
magazine

Discover a region that combines
technical knowhow with quality of life

SMASH HIT

LOCAL BOY GOFFIN MAKES WORLD TOP 10

- Walloon companies pioneer green energy
- High-tech start-ups return from Vegas with rich rewards





Editorial

For our spring issue, what better subject than chocolate? Belgium is the chocolate capital of the world and Wallonia's artisans are at the vanguard of the craft. Jean Galler from Liège is a perfect ambassador. Since buying a chocolate factory in 1976, he has grown his business into a globally recognised brand. With more than 40 years in the trade, he tells us why he is still passionate about the dark stuff.

From a revolution in the chocolate world we move to innovation in the relatively new industry of green energy, an area where Wallonia is already proving itself to be a world leader. Discover how the region is developing renewable energy solutions in our special focus. We return to the subject of food to celebrate Wallonia's chosen tourism theme for 2017, and raise a glass to Unesco's recognition of beer as an essential part of Belgium's cultural heritage.

Wallonia and Brussels - Contact

AWEX Wallonia Export-Investment Agency
www.awex.be

WBI Wallonie-Bruxelles International
www.wbi.be

Welcome Offices
www.investinwallonia.be



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Cover: Patrick Hamilton/Belga

BRIEFS

A Mons English-language school for pilots has signed partnerships for two training centres in the French Caribbean. The **Aviation English Private School (AEPS)** will be teaching and evaluating pilots in Guadeloupe and in Martinique. It is the first English school for aircraft pilots in Europe that has been registered as an operator for the language tests for private and professional pilots working in the Caribbean under European licences. The school was set up in 2010 and since 2016 has been training pilots flying for companies such as Emirates, Ryanair, Brussels Airlines and Air France. An increasing number of pilot schools in France, Germany and Lithuania, among others, could potentially offer their students AEPS courses and tests.

Gosselies company **Venyo** has developed a flight simulator for the Boeing 737NG that has been certified for commercialisation. The simulator is operated at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport. Certification should allow the current workforce of 23 to double in the next five years.

Namur restaurateur **Benoît Gersdorff** presented his vision of a riverside hotel and restaurant at the Mipim professional real estate fair in Cannes. He plans to rebuild his current restaurant, **Plage d'Amée**, to include floating hotel rooms; they would be attached to a jetty at night and free to navigate the river Meuse for breakfast by day. Each solar energy-powered catamaran would consist of a bedroom, shower and indoor and outdoor lounge areas. The project, currently called O, would replace the current riverbank restaurant. Designed by Barcelona-based Namur architect Patrick Genard, it would be an eco-friendly and self-sufficient construction, featuring a greenhouse, rooftop bar and urban cafe. Gersdorff is also the owner of the Ne5t hotel at the citadel in Namur.



© Koen Blanckaert/Belga

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO EU

People gathered in Place du Luxembourg in Brussels' European Quarter last month to take part in a March for Europe. The rally was held on 25 March, the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, with similar events taking place simultaneously in Rome, Berlin, London, Edinburgh, Düsseldorf and elsewhere. The 1957 agreement, signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany, led to the creation of the European Economic Community, now known as the European Union.

WELCOME TO WALLONIA

The latest Wallonie week-ends Bienvenue tourist campaign invites the public to discover the region with help from local citizens and associations. They will serve as ambassadors, sharing their passions and artisan know-how, often in unusual and offbeat places. Six weekends will be held throughout the year, until mid-November. Since the launch of the project, 15,000 projects have been presented to the public.

walloniebienvenue.be

INTRODUCING THE LOUISA POTATO

After 10 years of research, local researchers have developed a new potato that's ideal for making crisps. The Walloon Agricultural Research Centre (CRA-W) has created the Louisa, a hybrid of the Gasoré and Victoria potatoes. The small, round potato lends itself to industrial processing, provides a good yield and, most importantly, is resistant to mildew. Louisa is the first new registration since 1996 in the Belgian catalogue of varieties of agriculture plant and vegetable species, and the CRA-W is now testing other crossbreeds with industry partners.





Rive Gauche breathes new life into Charleroi

Charleroi is celebrating the opening of its long-awaited Rive Gauche shopping centre. The 10-year project is at the heart of a major urban regeneration project. Comprising 90 shops, a four-star hotel to open in the summer, restaurants, apartments and underground parking, the 39,000m² mall has been integrated into the urban fabric. It has seven entrances, bay windows and skylights, and incorporates the listed Neoclassic Passage de la Bourse. Olivier Callebaut from architect firm DDS Architects said the aim was to be in dialogue with the town: "The idea was not to mimic the surrounding architecture. We used various materials: local brick, metal, copper and aluminium," he said.

charloirivegauche.info

SCIENCE BRIEFS

A Liège University astrophysicist working with Nasa has discovered seven planets that could support life. **Dr Michaël Gillon** leads the EU-funded Speculoos project, which spotted the planet cluster orbiting a Jupiter-sized star, 40 light years from Earth. Named Trappist-1, three of the cluster's planets orbit in the habitable zone where temperatures allow water to be liquid, a fundamental condition for life.

Senior members of Namur company **VolitionRX Limited** rang the New York Stock Exchange closing bell in March, after the company's colorectal cancer screening test was awarded the CE mark. Its R&D activities are based in Wallonia, with additional offices in London, New York and Singapore. Its diagnostic products are being brought to market in Europe before the US and the rest of the world.

Australian biotech Clarity is setting up a European base in Liège. **Clarity Pharmaceuticals Europe SA** is investing €150,000 in its first year of activity, increasing the amount over five years to eventually create 10 to 15 jobs. The Sydney-based company, active in the treatment of serious illnesses, plans to develop its network from Liège.

Liège University spin-off **ProFish** has been selected by Franco-German TV network Arte and National Geographic magazine to study the behaviour of sharks. The Namur company specialises in technological solutions for protecting fish. Its expertise will help renowned marine biologist Laurent Ballesta make a documentary in Polynesia.

A **UCL** research team working with Trinity College Dublin has discovered a new molecule that can stop the spread of superbugs in hospital. In Belgium, potentially deadly infections affect 6% of patients. The discovery prevents the development of bacterial biofilm infections.

MOROCCAN DEAL FOR NAMUR COMPANY

Probiotic specialist Vésale Pharma has signed a partnership agreement with Moroccan pharmaceutical company Bottu, which is present in 15 African countries. The agreement involves the distribution, marketing and scientific promotion of four of the Namur-based company's products, used in the treatment of obesity and cardiovascular diseases. An initial sum of €600,000 is being paid to the Moroccan company. The launch of the first Vésale products by Bottu is expected at the end of the year. "This agreement represents a wonderful opportunity for Vésale Pharma and a major first on the African continent," said founder and CEO Johan Liénart. "Until now, we haven't really been present there in a structured way. With this contract, it's not only the Moroccan market that will be opening up to us, but also later on, the whole sub-Saharan market." The company, which invests intensively in research and development, holds worldwide patents. It recently discovered, along with the Pasteur Institute of Lille, that one of its probiotic strains could dramatically reduce the risk of severe weight gain.

vesalepharma.com



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jean Galler

The Liège chocolate maestro has spent more than 40 years developing his brand worldwide. He was named best apprentice pastry chef at 16, has worked in kitchens around Europe and set up his own chocolate workshop aged just 21. Today his company employs 190 people and has a turnover of €29 million



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I realised my future was in chocolate and everything followed on from that

With parents and grandparents in the business, did you ever consider another career?

I spent two years at catering college in Liège and I thought about becoming a chef, but it didn't inspire me with the same passion as chocolate. I think you need passion in whatever job you do, but it's probably easier to say that when you work with chocolate. I'm tasting every single day and am never tired of it.

How do you explain your precocious start?

I was lucky: I realised that my future was in chocolate, and everything followed on from that. When you commit yourself and work hard, opportunities arise. When I took over the workshop, I found this artisan mini chocolate bar that had been created by the

owner's grandfather. It was a great idea. My objective was simply to wake up happy and go to bed happy.

How important is a distinctive brand in the world of Belgian chocolate?

Obviously, this is important, otherwise you're a dwarf in a land of giants. If you don't stand out you have no reason to be there. Mini bars make up 50% of our turnover and we are the second-biggest producer in Belgium. Overall, we are the fourth-biggest chocolate company in Belgium and we wouldn't have achieved this if we'd just produced the same as the others. It's always been our strategy to offer affordable products. We have stores across the country and two boutique restaurants, in Brussels and Namur. There is also some diversification; my daughter and I have an organic vineyard called Septem Triones. That's another product it's easy to get passionate about!

After mini bars, what are your other leading products?

We are the second-biggest supplier of chocolate eggs in the country. Since 1995 we have produced Chocolats du Chat with cartoonist Philippe Geluck, combining two excellent Belgian products. In mini bars, we are number three. For the tablets, we are continually finding new flavours, such as white chocolate and raspberry. A

recent success is dark chocolate with mint and lime. We use mint leaves that don't dominate the other elements.

How have you raised investment?

We needed investment and were unable to raise money in Belgium. Qatari princes invested heavily in the company but all operations remain in the Liège area. Last year we opened boutiques in Antwerp and Ghent and also joined the street food wave, selling praline-filled waffles, hot chocolate and ice cream at the Dockx shopping complex in Brussels, as well as in Liège, and we are planning others. Foreign sales are important. We started in Harrods in London in 1981 and now have outlets in Japan, France, the Middle East, Spain... and our intention is to further expand.

Can you explain Belgium's love affair with chocolate ?

It's a question of history, which has evolved since the beginning of the 20th century. Callebaut has been supplying quality couverture chocolate which has enabled brands such as Leonidas, Neuhaus and Godiva to develop. We have quality chocolate at a very good price and Belgians don't always realise how lucky they are.

galler.com

From the Ardennes to outer space

Galaxia park prepares to host Galileo support centre

By Leo Cendrowicz





Wallonia's Space Valley received the royal seal of approval when King Philippe and Queen Mathilde visited the Galaxia business centre in the Ardennes town of Transinne at the end of last year. It was a timely visit: just a few weeks later, ground was officially broken at the site as construction began on a new tracking station for Europe's Galileo satellite programme. By the end of this summer, the new Galileo Integrated Logistics Support Centre will be up and running, helping ensure that the sophisticated satellite data system operates smoothly from any point around the planet.

This is just the latest development in a business scheme aimed at clustering space technologies in Wallonia in the Galaxia business park. Construction is moving at a steady pace, according to Fabian Collard, CEO of Idelux, the Luxembourg province's economic development agency that is responsible for building Galaxia. "We started the works in October last year, and our schedule is for 300 working days of construction, which means the end of August," he says. "We will give the keys to the operator at start of September."

Even the winter weather barely slowed the project. "We had a couple of weeks where we had to suspend work because of frost, but then we worked two shifts and managed to catch up on the delay," Collard says.

The Galileo system currently has 18 satellites in orbit. Last December, after 17 years of development, it went live with early operational capability. Aiming to supply the world's most accurate satellite navigation technology, officials hope the system will

eventually provide greater location accuracy than either the US or Russian military services. They say Galileo will boost geo-location precision tenfold, to within one metre compared to the current US-controlled Global Positioning System (GPS), which is accurate only to within several metres. It is expected to reach full operational capability in 2019, and the complete 30-satellite Galileo system – with 24 operational and six active spares – is expected by 2020.

One of the keys to this ambitious project is its logistics centre at Galaxia. The 2,300m² building currently under construction ensures that all the Galileo ground stations can communicate with the satellites, providing effective maintenance and repair work and the managing supplies for all the programme's key sites. The Wallonia region is financing the €8.6 million Galileo logistics building, which should generate about 30 jobs, while boosting local companies working in the field of satellites and on-board equipment. These include Thales, Samtech, Amos, Spacebel and Ateliers de la Meuse, some of which are already subcontractors for the Ariane rocket programme.

The 30-hectare Galaxia site already hosts a centre to nurture entrepreneurs with novel spin-off ideas for the wealth of technologies and systems developed under Europe's space programmes. The venture, Business Incubation Centre Redu, has been set up with the European Space Agency (ESA). It provides an array of business support resources and services, and will promote more activities including cyber-security and microsatellites. The centre aims to promote investment in space programmes and make

an impact in the broadest possible way: not only through science, telecommunications, navigation and other benefits to Europe's citizens, but also by creating enterprises and jobs at a local level. The aim is to support and encourage the spin-off from space technology research and development activities.

The entire Galaxia site in Transinne is linked by optical fibres to ESA's former Redu Centre, 4km away. Built in 1968, it hosts 43 steerable antennas and is responsible for controlling and testing satellites as part of ESA's ground station network.

There are further plans to refurbish the Euro Space Centre, the science museum and educational centre, introducing visitors to space-flight, the planets and the stars, as well as running space adventure camps and space classes for schools. Collard says the planned €10 million revamp will overhaul the building, and turn the focus more to European rather than American space activities.

Collard says Galaxia reflects the new image of Wallonia: once dominated by coal and steel, the region is now showcasing cutting-edge technologies, from space to web services, and biotechnology to aerospace. Belgium is one of the world's leading countries in devoting GDP resources to space. And last year, Libin, where Galaxia is based, was named Wallonia's top district for business by Trends-Tendance magazine. "Wallonian companies have a good reputation, and this project is a great example," Collard says. "We think positively, and Galaxia really helps Wallonia build an image of the future."

galaxia-park.en

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“Galaxia really helps Wallonia build an image of the future”

Fabian Collard



Viva Las Vegas

Walloon innovation shines at world's largest high-tech trade show

By Andy Furniere

Seven Walloon start-ups presented their innovative creations earlier this year at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, the world's most prestigious trade show for developers of electronics and digital devices.

Getting a place at the show – which brings together 165,000 visitors and 3,800 exhibitors – is a big achievement in itself, because candidates are chosen on the basis of a dossier that must demonstrate their product's innovative potential. Not only did the Walloon businesses take part in the show, some of them even brought home awards.

Four of the local exhibitors came from the Liège-based business incubator The Faktory: Altostratus, Kanopy Technologies, P-Heal and Riio Labs. According to Simon Alexan-

dre, general manager of The Faktory, the CES isn't just a unique opportunity for start-ups to gain attention on the global stage. "It's also a perfect place to exchange ideas, develop new partnerships and get to know the needs of the international market," he says.

Riio Labs impressed visitors with Blue, its smart pool analyser which constantly analyses a pool's water quality – temperature, pH, salinity and chlorine level – and sends this essential data to an app, so the person maintaining the pool can monitor water quality via their phone. The company is targeting pool owners around the world and provides professional solutions to pool dealers and maintenance companies.

The Las Vegas event was a success for Riio Labs, as the company won an Innovation

Award in the 'smart home' category. "The CES helped us to position our product in the world press and spread the word," says CEO Benjamin Stévens. While already attracting interest in Europe, Riio Labs now plans to target markets on other continents, and is also working on new products.

riiolabs.com

Altostratus presented Pioupiou, a connected weather station that doesn't require electricity or internet access. The compact and lightweight device measures wind speed and direction as well as the intensity of gusts. "All the sensors and the solar panels are integrated," says founder Nicolas Baldeck. "Even if you're on top of a mountain, all you have to do to make it work is to set it up." The data can be easily consulted through an app.



• Kanopy25



• Riio Labs

Altostratus targets two kinds of clients. The first is associations of sports activities that depend on the wind, such as kitesurfing and paragliding. The second market is event organisers and those in charge of industrial sites. “If you set up a tent for events, you need to monitor the wind, in case extreme conditions make an evacuation necessary,” explains Baldeck. “And data on the wind is also essential when working with a crane on an industrial site.”

A second version of Pioupiou, with even higher-quality technology, should be available by the summer.

pioupiou.fr

Plant lovers at CES will have stopped in their tracks at the stand of Kanopy Technologies, which has developed an intelligent dish – to be

placed under a plant pot – to optimise the watering of potted plants. Kanopy25 has integrated sensors which, based on the plant’s weight, send data about changes in the soil humidity to the owner’s smartphone, allowing them to adapt the watering and monitor the plant’s health. The system includes a pump that ensures optimal watering, even during absences.

“It helps people understand the plant’s needs by recording its water consumption and guarantees that it will always be watered perfectly,” explains Jonathan Gross, founder of Kanopy Technologies. He says the experience at CES was very fruitful. “Everybody felt Kanopy25 solved a problem that they or someone in their family has,” he says. “We made contacts with a lot of distributors from around the world, including from the US, Canada, Japan, China and Latin America.”

The start-up is already developing a new, smaller version of Kanopy: the Kanopy15, with a diameter of 15cm.

kanopy25.com

P-Heal, the fourth initiative from The Faktory, is still in the project phase and should be officially launched by the summer: a connected pillbox that reminds people to take their medicine. Equipped with scales that detect changes in weight, P-Heal will constantly monitor changes in the quantity of pills and determine whether users have taken their medication. A light indicator will serve as a reminder, and if people still forget to take their medicine, P-Heal will warn them by text message.

p-heal.com



• Lix Pen



• Calyos

Much attention in Las Vegas also went to the innovative 3D printing pen, called Lix, created by start-up Lix Pen, based in Braine-l'Alleud, south of Brussels. A functioning 3D printer, it is the shape and size of a regular pen, and allows users to produce 3D objects in just a few minutes, not with ink but with plastic. Heated to a temperature of about 230°C, the melted plastic solidifies when it cools. The pen is powered by standard USB ports or electrical mains. The main target group are professional users such as architects, designers and jewellery makers.

lixpen.com

Charleroi-based company Calyos, a specialist in fan-free cooling systems for high-performance computers, also made the most of the trip to Las Vegas. It won an Innovation Award in the 'gaming' category with its NSG-S0 Fanless PC concept.

The product will be of interest to gamers who need a high-performing computer and regular users looking for a silent computer. "But we also receive many requests from the music and design sector," says marketing officer Elisa Wolf. Thanks to its innovative cooling solution, which doesn't require fans and active pumping, its technology can provide high power and save energy. The version presented in Las Vegas was just a prototype. At the time of writing, Calyos is transforming it into a product and launching a campaign on Kickstarter to give people the chance to buy the technology for between €500 and €600.

calyos-tm.com

Bloom Technologies, co-founded by Liège-born Julien Penders, has a base in Flanders as well as in San Francisco. In Las Vegas, it won an award in the 'wearable technologies' category, with Bloomlife: a connected sensor that

analyses the contractions of pregnant women in real time without communicating radio waves to the unborn child.

"Bloomlife gives pregnant women information which until now they could only get through their obstetrician," say the Bloom Technologies team. "It also gives them peace of mind by showing them what they're feeling and giving them a more concrete way to share information about their contractions with their partner and midwife."

All pregnant women can benefit from the innovation but it can be particularly interesting for women who run an increased risk of pre-term labour. In the long term, the enterprise wants to help create the most extensive dataset on maternal and prenatal health, so researchers and doctors can predict and manage pregnancy complications better.

bloomlife.com



Cheers to beer

Belgian beer is added to world cultural heritage list

By Alan Hope

Belgian beer is known around the world, but not every aspect of beer culture in Belgium is as famous. Now, however, Unesco has decided to add the whole of Belgian beer culture to its prestigious Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The application for recognition was drawn up by the culture ministers of the three language communities – French-speaking, Flemish and German-speaking – and the process was led by German-speaking East Belgium minister Isabelle Weykmans. “This will give Belgian beer culture even more gloss and attitude around the world,” she said. “I am particularly pleased that the German-speaking community, despite being the smallest community in the country, was able to make such an important contribution to the recognition of a culture that is a part of our identity and of which we all should be and are proud.”

Alda Greoli, minister for culture in the French-speaking community, stressed the fact that it's not only beer being recognised, but the whole beer culture. “Beer culture means so much more than just appreciating the product in all its varieties,”



she said. "It includes the social habits, rituals, traditions and the special knowledge and skills of individuals, groups of people, and even entire communities. What is exceptional is that this culture has been handed down from generation to generation since time immemorial, and contributes to a communal identity. This has resulted in a beer culture that is characterised by an explosion of artisanal creativity and love for the brewing craft."

The broad spectrum of aspects of beer culture, Unesco said, includes the variety of beer styles; regional varieties particular to one area of the country; Trappist beers brewed by monks to raise income for charity works; beer gastronomy and other food presentations such as beer-washed cheese; and the sheer number of beer festivals of all sizes.

The approval of Belgian beer culture as world intangible heritage took more than four years to be won, explains Jérôme Hardy, an adviser to Greoli. "The three communities individually had to recognise beer culture as part of their immaterial heritage," he said. Custom then saw to it that one community – the German-speak-

ers in this case – led the process. "It was simply their turn," he said. "But in fact the three communities were equivalent in creating the dossier. After that there was a huge amount of work carried out by the German-speaking community – physical work, too, because the application had to be argued in front of Unesco."

Krishan Maudgal is a consultant to brewers, and helped draft the initial application. The first meeting to talk about applying was held in 2012. "Things were still uncertain and unclear and a result seemed very far off in the distance," he says. "Our government structure obliged us to get the approval on the level of the communities and their respective culture departments. We were only then able to go to Unesco with one integrated and federal application."

While some of Wallonia's brewers are unsure that inclusion in the list will result in extra sales, they welcome the recognition and hope it will boost exports. Dominique Friart is managing director of the St-Feuillien brewery in Le Rœulx in Hainaut. "I don't know if there's going to be a big impact, for example if sales are going

to grow. I think it's good for our image, for the reputation of our beer culture – it is the beer culture that's being recognised, not just the brewing industry, though it will be good for us as well. But I don't think that will translate into sales."

Jérôme Goffinet, product manager for Trappist brewery Chimay, also in Hainaut, feels the same. "I don't think it will fundamentally change things for us, but we are happy to receive such recognition, especially at international level," he says. "It shows that Belgium has a living beer culture. This is more of a confirmation than anything new."

"There will be no effect on sales in Belgium; we won't sell more or less," says Catherine Minne, one of the partners in Brasserie de Bastogne in Vaux-sur-Sûre, Luxembourg province. "For exports, though, the effect will be positive. It's a good thing for us to be able to remind the world that Belgium really is le pays de la bière (beer country). Especially in those new markets like China, Japan and Brazil, which are now discovering special beers. A reward like this, supreme and global, is good news for all Belgian brewers."

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A reward like this, supreme and global, is good news for all Belgian brewers

Catherine Minne



MEET THE BRUSSELS EXPAT

Gareth Harding, writer, professor, media trainer and communications analyst was born in Wales and studied history and politics at the London School of Economics. He is director of the Brussels programme of the University of Missouri School of Journalism



“I came to Belgium in 1993 for an internship, and I’ve lived here ever since, with a couple of breaks to travel around the world and teach in the US. I’ve been interested in journalism since I was a kid and I was features editor of my university newspaper. But I was also a political animal, and still am. I’ve worked in the House of Commons and European Parliament and as an intern in the European Commission. Later, I became a speechwriter for an MEP.

It was only when I realised I wasn’t going to become an elected politician that I went back to my original love, which was writing. I wouldn’t consider myself a journalist now and I say that with a heavy heart, because ideologically I still think of myself as a jour-

nalist. I’m an adjunct professor, running the University of Missouri’s Brussels programme, but I dabble in academia, just as I dabble in communications and journalism. I still primarily define myself as a freelancer, because my interests are much wider than any one profession.

I started working with the University of Missouri in 2008 to create the Brussels internship programme. The primary focus for the students is how to do journalism in the EU. Even when students are given the option to go to London, Buenos Aires, Boston or New York, they pick Brussels, which may surprise some people. I think it’s because students are interested in Europe and knowing what’s going on in Europe and, let’s be honest, rampag-

ing around the continent. But also, I think, it’s due to the quality of the internships we can find for them. It has been really gratifying watching students grow. In the words of one, “You go from a child to an adult in the space of four months.”

Working in Brussels has been constantly interesting, even if it is a bit of a one-horse town. Once you stop being obsessed by the EU you need to get out of the city. But I’ve always found different things to do to keep myself out of the tiny little bubble of EU politics and press. I made films for the European Commission around the world for a couple of years, I go back and forth to Missouri to teach, and I’ve got a company that does work all around the world.”

Green giants

Wallonia's energy industry is reinventing itself as a world leader in renewable power

By Emma Portier Davis

Once a heavy industry powerhouse full of heavily polluting steel plants and coal slag heaps, Wallonia is fast developing a renewable energy sector with world-class companies reaping market share in new technologies. Such success is prompting hopes for more ambitious targets.

Smart grid technology, wind turbine maintenance, biomass, electric cars and ener-

gy-efficient swimming pools are just some of the fields in which the region has developed expertise in recent years, and it's paying off in terms of meeting EU targets.

By 2020, the bloc as a whole has pledged to generate 20% of its energy from renewable sources. Each member state, or in Belgium's case region (the regions have competence for environment and energy), has its own target.

KEEPING THE TURBINES TURNING

When a Walloon company was asked by a Spanish firm to fix three gear boxes, it had no idea that they belonged to wind turbines. Three years later, Maintenance Partners Belgium is a European leader in the industry, not only in repairs but also in the crucial field of predictive maintenance. “We didn’t know where these gearboxes came from until we went to visit the company,” says business development director Jean-Louis Counet. “We then did a market study and saw that the business could fit very well with our strategy.” The company embarked on a research and development programme, supported by the regional government and in conjunction with the universities of Liège and Mons. Its goal was to find out as much as possible about the original equipment. By examining factors such as weather and the power curve, and with their knowledge of the individual turbines, the researchers found that they could develop accurate forecasts as frequently as every 15 minutes or over a period of three days.

“We found that we could have a good idea of the behaviour of the turbines, better even than the original equipment manufacturers themselves. We could give operators a good idea of what would happen to their machine and when they would see a failure,” says Counet. “As soon as you see a deviation in output, we drill down into the data to find the cause of the problem. The point is to know then why there is such a problem.” The company can also provide palliative maintenance to extend the lifetime of a turbine. As renewables make up a larger percentage of the EU’s total consumption, it becomes ever more important to make them reliable – an issue that has frequently been used by opponents against such technologies. The market for renewables is also changing. Counet says many manufacturers have been acquired, there has been a reduction in revenues for wind farms, and the grid operators are increasingly in control. Companies like Maintenance Partners will be essential to continued profitability. “If we can see what will happen and make predictions, owners will have a better idea of what their costs will be. I think the changes in the market conditions will be more interesting for us.”



Cedric Brüll, director of the Walloon government's renewable energy cluster, Tweed, says the region is already at between 10 and 11%, putting it firmly on track to meet its 13% target for 2020. In terms of terawatt hours, annual production is 13 TW compared with just 6 TW 10 years ago.

There have been lulls along the way. In 2014, after a boom in photovoltaic panels thanks to generous government subsidies, the solar industry growth eased off as the government pulled back on its grants. Brüll says that with these changes he expects more sustainable growth. "Now we are seeing that the cost of panels is lower and it's competitive. The subsidies are now more related to the market." For wind turbines, localised opposition has also caused a levelling off as there are fewer spaces where residents are not ready to protest against installations. But Brüll is again confident of an upswing.

In Wallonia, the wind industry is setting up co-operative systems where groups of individuals can invest in a wind farm and enjoy its benefits. "I think the mentality will change as a result of this, and that the potential for wind energy is great." He adds that internationally, the wind sector is "totally booming", notably in countries like the US and China, and that the technology is becoming competitive with traditional fossil fuel energies such as oil and gas. "The market is very ready," says Brüll.

The growth in the region's competence in renewables has been carefully managed, with the government carrying out surveys to see where expertise truly lies. "We are not good all along the value chain," he says, "but in wind power, for example, we are good at software, monitoring and optimisation."

For the smart grid – an EU-wide electricity network that aims to smooth out peaks

and troughs in renewables production, making overall production reliable – the region is also able to offer a high degree of expertise. "When it comes to ICT solutions, we have a lot of companies that are very strong."

Integrating electric vehicles is an important element in reducing pollution through particulate matter, and it's a step that the region is ready for. N-SIDE (see box) is busy providing ICT solutions to ensure optimisation of electric car fleets.

Managing director Olivier Devolder says the market is on its way up. "We already see it growing quite quickly. More and more companies are installing charging points, and we will see a big shift in the next two to three years. Charging the vehicle when electricity is green and cheap will become more and more important and that is what our solution facilitates."



Aside from the obvious proximity to regulators in Brussels who are pushing the renewables market, Brüll attributes the strong growth in the region's green industry to its research capabilities, particularly in the academic sector. "We have been investing a lot in renewable projects with universities in this field." One example is the plan to cut energy use in the steel industry by 15%, he explains. "We have engineering companies searching for solutions such as insulation. The government is helping these companies to finance studies, and with the results they will invest in these technologies."

Looking ahead, Brüll believes the region is ready to produce yet more of its energy from renewable sources. "To be honest, we need more ambitious targets," he says, adding that the European Commission is now looking at developing 2030 targets. But nothing is on the table just yet.

THE POWER OF MATHS

Integrating and optimising renewables across the 28 member states of the EU is as complex as it sounds, but it's also necessary if they are to be seriously taken up. While opponents say fluctuations in production put a question mark over its reliability, one solution is the European Smart Grid – an EU-wide energy network. The intelligence powering the grid's development is provided by N-SIDE.

The dream scenario is that when renewable energy production peaks in one area – perhaps in solar energy due to a heatwave in the South – this would smooth out troughs elsewhere, say, when winds are calm in the North Sea and the turbines cannot produce enough. The result should be smooth and reliable production across the EU to rival traditional fuels such as fossil fuels and nuclear.

Unlocking the enormous value of the smart grid requires detailed insight into the fluctuations. N-SIDE, essentially a software company, is producing endless algorithms based on artificial intelligence and maths to help energy providers and grid operators make the best decisions and to best adapt to the introduction of renewables.

Taking into account several factors, including the weather, historical prices and import and export prices, N-SIDE, based in Louvain-la-Neuve, can provide the tools to make crucial forecasts for energy traders, allowing them to leverage prices. "If you want to succeed in the energy transition you have to be smart. That is what we want to add: smartness," says N-SIDE director Olivier Devolder.

And as renewable energy sources increase, the calculations get more complex. "The markets are growing and more and more electricity is being traded on the market," says Devolder. "The electricity markets are growing with more and more European integration. Our smart grid solution facilitates trading across Europe while managing the network challenges in the smartest way. We always need to be innovative."

For energy markets, N-SIDE works in three main areas: assisting the market operators who manage the grid; providing information to energy industrial partners who trade electricity; and on centralised distributed energy systems, local networks where consumption happens at the moment of production, such as via photovoltaic panels or electric vehicle charging networks.

N-SIDE's primary goal is to use its expertise in software to provide its consumers with savings. "We are not only a software company; we provide the services to ensure our customers capture maximum value and savings," explains Devolder. Its expertise is also a boon for EU regulators, whose target is for the bloc to produce 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020.

For N-SIDE, regulatory developments are clearly on its side, along with its relationships with major research institutes, allowing it to provide the most up-to-the-minute solutions. In the last two years, the company has doubled in size and now generates revenues of €5 million, about 70% of which comes from outside Belgium. In the next five years, its plan is to increase in size by 200%.



A big impetus for renewables will be the legally required phase-out of Belgium's nuclear power stations. "We have talks at the federal level about an energy transition pact. We have to find a plan to make the phase-out viable."

The question is which forms of energy will replace nuclear power, which made up more than a third of energy output in 2016, according to the World Nuclear Association. "Renewables will be the ones because they are the most competitive," says Brüll.

While the region is still strong in certain heavy industry such as steel and glass, Brüll says that even there, renewables have a strong role to play in their energy use; for example, fitting turbines at a plant or photovoltaic panels on the roof. "What we are seeing right now is that we are really in the middle of an energy revolution. I am very optimistic."

MAKING RENEWABLE BEAUTIFUL

In the early days of a new product, how it looks is rarely the priority. But a Walloon company is taking the latest developments in pellet stoves technology and turning these once rather functional items into energy-efficient design pieces.

With pellets sourced from sustainable forestry and condensed in a way that gives off the lowest possible particulate matter pollution (something that's a problem in traditional stoves), Stûv, headquartered near Namur, provides a reliable, storable source of renewable energy.

The technology behind the stoves (pictured) has been developed with research centres in the region and funded in part by local government. With scientists, Stûv has created pellets that are shaped like a flower, or the motor of a Boeing 787, giving a high flame and high combustion. The stoves are designed to provide for easy loading of the pellets and they rotate 45 degrees from left to right. The company was the recent winner of the Red Dot Award for product design in Germany.

Marketing manager Thomas Duquesne explains that pellet stoves have traditionally had a very harsh, cold flame and have fallen short when it comes to design of the unit. "This is one of the first products that combines interest in renewable energy with a product that you'd like to have in your living room."

For the future, the company has big plans, and wants to develop central heating and hot water systems. "A big part of energy use comes from its conversion to hot water," says Duquesne. "With one fire each day, you could have all the comfort of central heating. We want to be a first-level actor in Europe and eventually in the US."

Stûv is also targeting zero-emission pellets to make its offer even more attractive. But always with a focus on product design. "With zero emissions you have all the arguments you need for energy efficiency," says Duquesne. "And there's also what you generate in terms of wellness by looking at this beautiful flame."

Food, fabulous food

Gastronomy is the essential ingredient for tourism in Wallonia in 2017

By Mari Eccles



• Gourmet walk, Namur province

Following 2016's successful focus on bike tourism, Wallonia is now shining a light on the region's rich and diverse gastronomy. In choosing food and drink as this year's tourism theme, the region aims to boost local producers and businesses.

From beer tastings to culinary conferences, the calendar is jam-packed with gourmet events. And it's not just the big cities getting involved. "For a tourism theme to be

a success, it must encompass everything" says René Collin, the Wallonia minister for tourism and agriculture. "From Mouscron to Virton, markets and festivals are celebrating local gastronomic traditions, and culinary activities will be organised throughout the year."

Food festivities are already under way, such as a night-time market selling its wares in Gesves, outside Namur, and a

charcuterie workshop in Viroinval, in the Ardennes. In June, beer is in the spotlight at the Mons festival *Bière en Fête*, with representatives from 23 breweries across the country offering tastings of more than 80 brews. In August, scenic Harzé castle in Liège province is hosting the annual cheese festival *Fête du Fromage*. Visitors can sample some of Wallonia's 500 cheeses in historic surroundings, serenaded by brass bands.

The highlight of a busy year is likely to be the W food festival at Namur's citadel, a new three-day event at the start of July. It's organised by chef collective Generation W, an ambitious group of gastronomic chefs from fine dining establishments across Wallonia. Their aim is to promote the myriad producers who supply their restaurants, publicise the region's cooking abroad and foster budding chefs. The long-awaited festival embodies the collective's mission statement and is its flagship event this year.

Visitors will have the chance to mingle with local and international Michelin-starred chefs, enjoy tastings and meet producers. The first two days are aimed at the general public, part of an attempt to make gastronomy accessible to all. In its quest to attract as many people as possible, the organisers have chosen beer, "a true Belgian emblem", as the focus of the festival's inaugural year. The final day will welcome students keen to kick-start a career in catering and professionals looking to sharpen their skills.

Local authorities are co-ordinating various industries, particularly those in the agricultural, tourism and catering sectors. Collin says he hopes the range of events will combine tradition, authenticity and innovation. And he believes it's a fitting theme for the region. "Wallonia is known for its sense of welcome and conviviality as well as the quality of its products," he says. He hopes the celebrations will cement Wallonia's reputation as the land of wellbeing, and get people thinking of the region as "an obvious destination for food lovers".

For Collin, tourism was a natural follow-on to its predecessor, cycling, and while attention turns to the table in 2017, last year's focus has not been forgotten. "We won't be putting away our bikes, and work will continue to cement Wallonia as a destination for cycling," he says. On the agenda are a number of events that combine cycling trips with local tastings. The new velogourmand.be website promotes regular cycling tours around the Namur region, which include a meal at a local restaurant.

The summer will see a return of RAVeL BBQ, a mini festival with guided walks and cycle trails with food provided by local producers. Last year, that meant skewers of blood sausages, raisins and figs, plates of smoked trout and ham from the local butcher, all washed down with elderberry wine, made just outside Bièvre. Reservations for this year's event can be made from April at ravelbbq.be

As part of last year's tourism theme, 117 projects were granted a share of an investment scheme, La Wallonie à vélo, worth more than €1 million, providing more cycling activities in the years to come. With provisional studies showing an increase of 3% in overnight stays in 2016 compared to the previous year, tourism authorities are expecting to see a similar boost from the gastronomy theme. For locals and visitors alike, it's proving a tasty year to explore Wallonia.

belgique-tourisme.be

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From Mouscron to Virton, markets and festivals are celebrating local gastronomic traditions

RENÉ COLLIN

Medieval jewel

Lessines wins major subsidy to complete restoration of Hôpital Notre-Dame à la Rose

By Sarah Crew



• The cloisters

It's a modern-day miracle. The Hôpital Notre-Dame à la Rose, one of Europe's longest running hospitals, was facing possible demolition before a group of local volunteers campaigned to save it. Since 2000, the building has been undergoing resurrection, being listed as an exceptional heritage building; now, thanks to a subsidy of €521,815 from the Walloon region, its rehabilitation can be completed.

The museum in Lessines, near Tournai, has become an important tourist attraction, as one of the finest examples of a complete and self-sufficient community from the Middle Ages. The rare architectural ensemble includes a Baroque chapel, 16th-century cloisters, gardens with medicinal plants,

convent, hospital wards, farm and ice house. It was built in 1242 as a hospital for the poor by French princess Alix de Rosoit in honour of her late husband, lord of Lessines Arnould IV d'Oudenaarde. A religious community was also founded here, and the hospital continued as a geriatric service until 1980.

Today, it provides a fascinating insight into medieval life and the evolution of medicine. One exhibition explains the history of medicine and pharmacy from the 15th to 19th century; a second, From Ambroise Paré to Louis Pasteur, is a long-running show that features a large cabinet of scientific curiosities.

notredamealarose.com

Sweet music

Fête de la Musique promotes francophone artists and sends a message of unity

By Sarah Schug

Belgium's summer festival season is just around the corner, and is traditionally kicked off by the Fête de la Musique. Every year at the summer solstice, the music bash takes over Brussels and cities across Wallonia with an eclectic musical programme that is completely free.

This 32nd edition, taking place from 21 to 25 June, will stage hundreds of concerts in more than 40 towns, celebrating the region's rich musical creativity and variety. Open to all musical styles and featuring amateurs as well as professional bands and musicians, it's a family-friendly, inclusive cultural happening that has something for all tastes.

"Fête de la Musique is a unifying event. It assembles artists of all genres, ages and career levels and an equally diverse public, bringing together children, teenagers and adults," says Claire Monville, director of Conseil de la Musique, an institution aimed at promoting music from French-speaking Belgium that oversees the organisation of the festivities.

Based on the goal of making culture accessible to everyone, the concept hasn't changed since it was launched in France in 1982 by French minister of culture Jack Lang. He took up the idea from American musician and radio presenter Joel Cohen who worked for Radio France in the 70s. Neighbouring Belgium soon followed with its first edition in 1985, and since then Fête

de la Musique has been a success story that has spread to more than 120 countries all around the globe.

Unlike other places, Belgium doesn't impose a theme when it comes to the programming – music is the only one. Accordingly, each town is free to shape its local agenda as it sees fit. "Every organiser decides on their own," Monville explains. "The Conseil de la Musique is only responsible for organising the main event in Cinquantenaire Park in Brussels."

Wallonia's capital, Namur, for example, places an emphasis on connecting the music scene with other cultural entities, bringing music closer to the people and waking up the city centre by organising concerts in unlikely places from museums to hairdressers. "This approach is much more in the spirit of Fête de la Musique than focusing on big stages and famous names, which we've done in the past," says Philippe Gayet, who is responsible for Namur's festival programme.

But how do the musicians themselves feel about the event, which might have a hard time competing with the high number of renowned festivals in Belgium such as Dour or Couleur Café? "I like that Fête de la Musique doesn't only attract the usual concert-goers, but a wider public who might be less familiar with what we do," says Gordon Delacroix, frontman of Brussels indie pop band Recorders. "We love playing live, and here we get the chance to perform for a part

of the population that maybe wouldn't have come to see us play otherwise. It's a great opportunity."

Auréli Mattern (Sonnfjord, Lucy Lucy, Paon) agrees: "It's really important for the promotion of a band to play in front of a crowd that doesn't know it yet. You're forced to convince your audience in just 45 minutes."

With its relaxed, non-profit attitude, Fête de la Musique is also an ideal opportunity for newbies to prove themselves on stage. "It's a great way to put forward our young talents and present them to a wider public. We always try to programme a maximum of groups," says Emy Dehez, booker at Belgian agency Progress Booking. Mattern confirms: "My favourite memory from Fête de la Musique is when we played there with Lucy Lucy at Parvis de Saint-Gilles. It was at the beginning of our career and I was so excited to play in front of such a big crowd."

As well as bringing a lot of musicians out of the shadows while enabling the public to discover all kinds of musical genres, there is also a political message attached to the event, one that advocates participation and democratisation. "Open-mindedness, respect and understanding are created by seeing and hearing things that are new and different. The Fête de la Musique is a way of reaffirming culture's importance for bringing people together," Monville says.

fetedelamusique.be



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The Fete de la Musique is a way of reaffirming culture's importance for bringing people together

CLAIRE MONVILLE

Fashioning the future

The region remodels its support for Belgium's brightest fashion talent

By Clodagh Kinsella



Launched in 2006 to support upcoming brands and designers from Wallonia and Brussels, Wallonie-Bruxelles Design Mode (WBDM) has kicked off 2017 with a dynamic new fashion programme. It's designed to enable talents and labels from the region to speed up their commercial development and polish their brand's image.

The big news is that WBDM is now offering two annual financial awards to provide designers with made-to-measure help. To qualify, brands must have an original voice and a professional outlook, and demonstrate clear potential for international expansion. They must also have shown eight collections to date, and have had five sales points for the past three seasons – with foreign outlets considered an asset.

The awards were judged last autumn by a panel of industry experts, working with WBDM. The first grant, worth €35,000, was awarded to Filles A Papa to develop its communication abroad. Launched in 2012 by Liège-based sisters Carol and Sarah Piron, the label's rock'n'roll street couture soon made waves, proving that young designers can juggle creativity with the kind of business nous necessary for sales growth and building a global reputation.

The second grant of €15,000 was awarded to bonjour maurice. Founded in 2016, the brand's environmentally minded, 100% Belgian collections are aimed at babies and children. This choice marks a broadening of WBDM's selection criteria: no longer limited to women's ready-to-wear and accessories, the programme instead targets a broader selection of

A designer's perspective

A graduate of renowned fashion school La Cambre Mode[s] in Brussels, Gioia Seghers is known for her intelligent, tactile clothes and modern silhouettes. The young designer has benefitted from WBDM's assistance for the past four years. She was recently voted one of Belgium's top talents to watch by leading fashion publication Vogue Italy. She explains how the fashion programme has shaped her label's rise.



"I got involved with WBDM in 2013, after they launched the call for proposals for Paris Fashion Week," she says. "I had finished my studies the year before and ended up being selected." Across the following seasons, WBDM has lent an ear to Seghers, while championing her work abroad. "Through them I've learnt a lot, presented my first six collections at Paris Fashion Week, and also shown at White in Milan," she explains.

Consultant Philippe Pourhashemi has been instrumental in helping her to work on her collection plans and to refine her brand's identity. "We've looked at the kinds of fabrics I choose for garments, pricing... This outsider's perspective on my collection was very important in my eyes, and helped me to make the right choices."

Seghers is clear about the scheme's strengths. "It's a really high-calibre programme offering young designers substantial follow-up; it deploys major resources to help your brand become better known on the international scene."

gioiaseghers.com

brands and designers that have already established a strong identity and business plan.

This year, six designers will also enjoy assistance from specialist consultants recruited by WBDM. These are bonjour maurice, women's ready-to-wear designers Gioia Seghers and Jean-Paul Lespagnard, accessories brands My-Elza and Passerin, and jewellery label Moutton Collet.

The consultancy will enable these brands to be better prepared for international markets, in terms of strategy, commercial positioning or image communication. The recipients will also undergo an audit of their export requirements and their degree of internationalisation. This bespoke attention is one of the new programme's major innovations.

To showcase the work of Walloon and Brussels labels and designers, the WBDM team brings together local talent around international design events such as the Salone del Mobile in Milan, Maison & Objet in Paris, and fashion events such as the Paris and Milan fashion weeks. The programme's goal was and remains about reaching and convincing opinion leaders and buyers with a selection of cutting-edge designers representing the very best of contemporary Belgian fashion.

To do so, it has formed several partnerships with renowned actors in the fashion industry: the showrooms No Season and Boon (Paris), the Parisian press agency Outlevel, and a consultant, Philippe Pourhashemi. WBDM has worked with these teams to develop collections and create gateways between the worlds of industry and design. In this vein, collections

by WBDM-supported labels were presented at Paris Fashion Week in March and September last year.

For the second year, the collective stand Showroom Les Belges was present at February's White trade show in Milan, a popular event for international buyers and press during the city's Fashion Week. Five designers represented Belgium at the trade show: women's sportswear brand 4254, women's ready-to-wear designers Annemie Verbeke and Léo, accessories designer Clio Goldbrenner, and Moutton Collet.

wbdbm.be





GO GOFFIN!

Tennis star David Goffin has become the first Belgian man to reach the ATP top 10. The Liège sportsman joined the elite ranks in February when he defeated Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov to reach the final of the Rotterdam Open. The 26-year-old is in the best form of his life as he tackles a busy season that included the Davis Cup quarter-final against Italy at the Spiroudrome in Charleroi this spring. Two decisive singles victory by Goffin earned his country a place in the semi-final showdown against Australia. Set to take place in Belgium in September, it will be the fifth Davis Cup meeting between the two countries. Meanwhile, Goffin will be looking for further success in the season's upcoming Grand Slam competitions: the French Open at Roland Garros, starting 22 May, and Wimbledon on 3 July.



© Luc Schrobiltgen, Brussels



MUSIC

LES NUITS BOTANIQUE

1

The annual city-centre festival at French-community cultural complex Botanique lays on a musical feast of up-and-coming artists from home and abroad. While there's an array of styles and genres, the focus is on discovering new talent and reinforcing established musical talent. A party atmosphere reigns.

• 11-24 MAY, BOTANIQUE, BRUSSELS

botanique.be



EXHIBITION

POL BURY: TIME IN MOTION

2

The late Belgian artist Pol Bury was disdained by his home country for much of his career. It was only when recognition came from abroad that Belgium woke up to his extraordinary talent and innovative sculpture. Since his death in 2005, Bury has again been overlooked; one reason why Bozar is staging this major retrospective of 120 works. In this chronological study, discover Bury's early Surrealist paintings and his progression to pioneering mechanical sculptures. Pictured left is his 49 boules sur un plan incliné mais surélevé.

• UNTIL 4 JUNE, BOZAR
BRUSSELS

bozar.be

EVENT

CULTURES: THE WORLD ARTS FAIR

3

Brussels' Sablon district cements its reputation for collectible non-European art and antiques with Cultures: The World Arts Fair. The event is the super-group of art fairs, combining the energies of three already established events: Asian Art in Brussels, the Brussels Ancient Art Fair and the Brussels Non-European Art Fair. Dozens of galleries form a walking circuit through the streets of the Sablon. The programme also includes lectures by international experts on ethnic art.

• 7-11 JUNE, SABLON, BRUSSELS
CULTURES.BRUSSELS

FESTIVAL

NAMUR EN MAI

4

The quirky street theatre festival fills the streets of the Wallonia capital for three days of fun and colourful capers. Carousels, mime artists, jesters, clowns, buskers and performers fill theatres, streets and impromptu spaces. As night falls, a musical cabaret occupies the festival hub in Place Maurice Servais. Fun guaranteed for all the family. Many shows are free, others require tickets.

• 26-28 MAY, NAMUR

namurenmai.org

MUSICAL MAGIC

Paul-Henri Wauters is the artistic director of Les Nuits 2017 at Brussels concert hall Botanique. The annual event kicks off the festival season with a sneak preview of up-and-coming musical acts, as Wauters explains.

"It's a very special kind of festival. First of all we have five indoor venues, including one which is a marquee in the Botanique gardens and resembles a music club, complete with curtains, nice lighting, a good sound system and a fantastic view of the gardens. Each night, there are five shows performed at the same time, each in a different musical style. In total there are 60 concerts by more than 120 artists. The musicians have all day to rehearse so the quality is great. People have to choose one concert, but they don't have to move from one venue to another, so it's a much more comfortable experience.

"It's also a discovery festival; around half of the artists will be appearing on festival stages over the following year. Among the highlights are four concerts at Cirque Royal: an exclusive work on 13 May by Bachar Mar-Khalifé initiated by Botanique, called The Water Wheel; British group Tindersticks present the film and music project Minute Bodies on 14 May; a trio of performers including Ásgeir from Iceland perform on 16 May; and there's a grand finale on 21 May with Belgians Arno, Girls in Hawaii and Mélanie De Biasio, accompanied by a string orchestra and a brass band for a magical effect. This festival in the centre of Brussels really is the place to be."

botanique.be



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