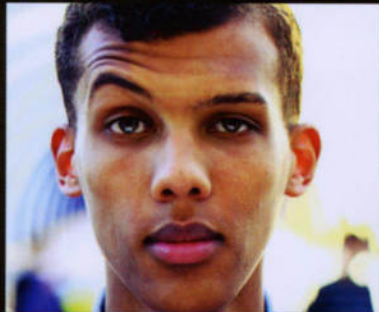


THE BULLETIN

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THE BELGIAN BUNCH



THE B LIST Belgians of the Year 2010

**PRIMITIVE
PASSIONS** Flemish art comes home
to Bruges

GET STUFFED Behind the scenes with
a Brussels taxidermist

PLUS

COLD COMFORT
Our warming guide
to winter bliss

HUNGARY SPECIAL
Meet the next
country to run the
EU presidency



IN YOUR FACE! CONFESSIONS OF A PIE THROWER



From top:
Hungarian
Prime Minister
Viktor Orbán
with European
Council
President
Herman Van
Rompuy;
Hungarian
Culture Brussels
(HCB); jazz
concert at HCB



couldn't believe our eyes when we saw civilians driving cars. We had been so isolated before, and this was all so new for us."

The refugees were inundated with job and study offers from all over the world. That show of international solidarity, says Péterfalvi, was incredibly moving. "We were allowed to choose the country and town we wanted to live in. There was this absolutely unique moment in history, when the doors of the best universities in the world opened up for us."

To top it off, most Hungarian refugees were not expected to pay tuition fees at universities. But even under these advantageous circumstances, it was difficult to start a new life. Ultimately, the final destination of those refugees wanting to go to university was dependent on whether a long-running scholarship could be offered.

Péterfalvi ended up in Belgium on a whim. After a few semesters in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, he decided to go to England. "I wanted to study in London," he explains, "but it was so rainy that I changed my mind. And when I visited Belgium, it happened to be lovely and sunny – so I stayed," he chuckles.

In the early 1960s, after Péterfalvi's time at the dorm, the wave of immigration subsided, and the Collegium Hungaricum moved back to the house on Blijde Inkomststraat. It has been there ever since.

A few years later, the University of Leuven split into separate Dutch- and French-speaking universities, the latter moving to Louvain-la-Neuve. Since the majority of Hungarian students had been studying in French, they also left, leaving the Collegium suddenly empty. But the late 1970s brought new opportunities. Muzsly invited students from Hungary who had previously studied in religious establishments and wanted to continue their education in Western Europe.

Today, the Collegium is owned by the Jesuits, and is run by the Hungarian Pázmány Péter Catholic University. "It's not a religious institution," director István Havas explains, "but it certainly represents Christian values." It celebrates Hungarian holidays, and organises lectures and events. "The dorm is very popular," Havas says, "all rooms are booked for the next semester." He couldn't be happier about this, and neither could the students. It seems that thanks to the current influx of Erasmus and PhD students, the dormitory is not only a nest of education, culture, and religion, but also of vibrant student life.

The organisation of cultural events accompanying the Hungarian presidency rests on the shoulders of Hungarian Culture Brussels (HCB), the cultural service of the Hungarian Embassy. Set up in December 2004, just a few months after Hungary's accession to the EU, the institute aims to create a permanent Hungarian cultural presence in the Low Countries, as well as bring Hungarian culture into mainstream European culture.

Hungary for culture

The HCB is based in the very heart of Brussels on Rue Treurenberg, just a stone's throw from the Saint Michael and Saint Gudula Cathedral. But the close proximity of must-see sights doesn't end here. A considerable chunk of the 12th-century city wall runs through the ground floor of HCB, juxtaposing medieval and modern architecture. And despite the tiny staff (there are currently only four full-time employees, plus volunteers), HCB somehow

manages to pull off a dazzling array of events. They organise exhibitions, concerts, plays, lectures and more – often in collaboration with other cultural institutes. They also claim to be one of the best jazz clubs in Brussels. For anyone interested in getting to grips with the Hungarian language, HCB is one of the only places in the city to offer weekly Hungarian language courses from beginners to advanced level.

These days, with the Hungarian presidency fast-approaching, HCB is busier than ever. Some related events have already started under the Spanish and Belgian presidencies, but they will proceed at full throttle from January onwards.

An event not to miss will be held between May 5 and June 30, 2011 at the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, where *Web of Europe*, a reinterpretation of an 18th-century Flemish tapestry called *Mercury Hands Over the Infant Bacchus to the Nymphs*, will be presented. Leading tapestry artists from the 27 EU member states have been asked to reimagine and re-weave a part of the original tapestry so that a new, contemporary joint composition can be put together.

Ibolya Hegyi, the Hungarian tapestry artist who is curating the project, says they have chosen this particular genre because weaving has a strong tradition in Europe. It is also hoped that by reviving this collective form of artistic creation, European artists will become closer. They have chosen the Flemish tapestry, Hegyi explains, because not only is it one of the finest examples of European tapestry art, but also its theme of cooperation and communication mirrors the work of the artists and the very idea of Europe.

www.hungarianculture.be



Above: an example of one of the new tapestries for the *Web of Europe* exhibition; right, the original, 18th-century piece



During the Hungarian presidency of the EU, be sure to check out the *Dialogue de Fauves* exhibition at Brussels City Hall, showing from December 2 to March 20, 2011. This will provide visitors with an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with the development of Fauvism in Hungary through a remarkable selection of some of the most prestigious public and private collections in the country.

Further into the presidency, keep an eye on the fences of Parc de Bruxelles between May and June 2011, as the travelling photo exhibition *Art Nouveau Barcelona-Brussels-Budapest* will show off the architecture of Gaudí, Horta, and Ödön Lechner.

Let's not forget food, an all-important part of Hungarian culture. Here are some places where you can enjoy the country's hearty cuisine.

Market stall: Valéria Teveli and László Gyebnár run a Hungarian market stall at Place Flagey on Saturdays and at Place Jourdan on Sundays between 9.00 and 13.00. They sell salami, honey, pasta, sweets, pastries and the Hungarian speciality *lángos* – a deep-fried flat bread served with sour cream, grated cheese or garlic butter. It's as delicious as it is sinful. The couple also provide catering for events and parties, specialising in Hungarian and Central European cuisine. For more information, contact Valéria on 0473.95.03.90.

Restaurant: The Gulyás Csárda restaurant is quite a find, and not just because it is the only Hungarian restaurant in Brussels. The food is tasty and extremely faithful to traditional Hungarian presentation – as is the country-style decor. We recommend the goulash soup, the stuffed cabbage and the chestnut mousse for dessert. The atmosphere is lively, especially on Saturdays, when the live folk music will get you on your feet to burn off some of those calories.

A three-course dinner for two plus drinks costs around €50. You can find Gulyás Csárda (Taverne Hongrois) at 180 Chaussée de Vleurgat, Brussels. Tel 02.649.79.27 or 0472.73.32.95. ●

All text and uncredited photos by Zsófia Gyori

Hungry for a taste of Hungary? Read on...

Below: Gulyás Csárda, Brussels' one and only Hungarian restaurant

