

DOING BUSINESS IN THE EUREGIO MEUSE-RHINE
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CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

VISIT TO PETER KRINGS

[COM: Stolberg, December 9]

The Limburg Export Society is to visit Peter Krings' Industrial Heavy-duty Packaging in Stolberg. This last visit by the Export Society in this calendar year will take place in cooperation with the Export Circle at the Aachen Chamber of Commerce. Peter Krings Industrial Heavy-duty Packaging business was established in 1860 as a sawmill and timber business. In the 1930s, boxes were produced for overseas shipping and, in 1950, the business was transformed from a sawmill and timber business to a box and packaging business. Currently the 5th generation of the Krings family is in the business and it manufactures in Germany and the Czech Republic, offering its customers warehousing and logistical facilities as part of the package. The company is ISO 9001 certified and has 20,000 m² of heated indoor space in the plant and 10,000 m² of external storage. It employs 40 and imports and exports to and from a range of countries. Register with the Secretariat Import and Export Societeit NL for the trip info@exportsocieteit.nl.
<http://www.exportsocieteit.nl>

THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

[COM: Eupen, November 25]

The Dutch Walloon Business Club will be visiting the Jacques Chocolate factory on December 15. The Chocolate Factory was established in 1896. Its basic products were chocolates, candies and gingerbread. Jacques had a patent on chocolate bars and this was registered February 8, 1936. In 1992, the company joined the Stollwerck Group and from that time sales have been rising steadily. As a result, old equipment had to be replaced and in 1987 production started up in a new production unit. In 1994, the factory expanded by 50% and, at that time, covered a total surface area of 6075 m². In the middle of 2002, the Stollwerck Group including Jacques was taken over by the Swiss group Barry-Callebaut. Chocolaterie Jacques currently employs 200 and achieves annual revenues of EUR 50m. It produces 22,000 tons of chocolate. Register for the trip with bpiette@maastricht.kvk.nl.
<http://www.maastricht.kvk.nl>

CeBIT 2005

[COM: Maastricht, November, 25]

On March 14 there will be a one day visit to the CeBIT fair in Hanover. CeBIT is the biggest IT fair and runs from March 10-16. The areas covered are IT equipment, telecommunications and networking, software and services, IT engineering, data capture, security and banking technology. Last year 700,000 people visited the fair. They were welcomed by 6,600 companies from 60 countries in a 350,000 m². exhibition facility. The trip by the Meuse-Rhine Chambers will leave Maastricht Aachen Airport at March 14 at 07.30 hrs in an Airbus A320 charter flight which will arrive in Hanover one and a half hours later. The visit ends at 20.00 hrs when the charter will return to Maastricht which allows for seven hours at the CeBIT. This enables a rapid and comfortable knowledge investment. The price is EUR 175. - per person, including flight, airport tax, and local transport and a guide. The entry ticket and catalogue are not included. Contact aassink@maastricht.kvk.nl.
<http://www.maastricht.kvk.nl>

CONSTRUCTION BIZ LUNCH

[COM: Eupen, November 25]

February 25, 2005, the Meuse-Rhine Chambers are proposing a construction/ real estate branch. The objective of this event, which will be held in Eupen, is not only to bring together business people from Meuse-Rhine, but also to provide information about how acquire a position in the public market and also to examine the legal field relating to temporary cross border company associations. Information from IHK Eupen or from your own Chamber of Commerce.

CONSTRUCTION SURVEY

[COM: Aachen/Euskirchen/Düren, October 10]

Stephan Johnen gives a survey of construction activity in the Aachen region in the latest issue of the Aachen Chamber's 'Wirtschaftliche Nachrichten'. He discusses projects like the Aachen Arcades, the EBV Carré in Aachen and the Q park garage (see elsewhere in this edition), but he also notes that a good deal is going on in Euskirchen in the station area, which will continue through March 2006. The property development company H.H. Götsch KG (GEG) and the Kreissparkasse (savings bank) Euskirchen, are giving the area a new look. GEG working on the Veybach shopping center in the downtown area and movement is also going ahead on the Kreissparkasse hotel. The pedestrian area is also being changed. Authorities point to the future orientation of Euskirchen. In Düren, too, work is going on at the city center and shopping center in the downtown area with 15,000m² of sales space, targeting customers from Cologne.

<http://www.aachen.ihk.de>

FOCUS ON CHINA

[BIZ: Maastricht, October 2]

There is a great deal of interest in the Meuse-Rhine mission to Hong Kong and the Chinese province of Guangdong in November. The information session at the Chamber of Commerce was very popular. The mission is being organized by Meuse-Rhine's cooperating Chambers, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Consulate Generals of Hong Kong and Guangzhou. All of the companies that participate will also take part in the SME Expo that will be held from November 16 through 18 in Hong Kong. There is extra interest in Hong Kong because of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) free trade agreement that will be extended from January 1, 2005 under the heading CEPA II. This means that thousands of products described will be able to be exported from Hong Kong to China without import duties under particular conditions. Eight service agencies will be eligible for new conditions. For future contacts:

Ardy Assink at aassink@maastricht.kvk.nl

<http://www.maastricht.kvk.nl>

Business and Industry

WALLOON PRIZE FOR IONIC

[BIZ: Liège, October 27]

The Liège Company Ionic Software has been awarded the Walloon Export Prize for this year. Ionic is a world market leader with the most advanced and most promising Internet web mapping technologies available on the market today. It was first to offer fully interoperable enterprise class products for the publishing, discovery, access, integration and application of special data in support of core business functions.

It includes among its clients NASA, the US army, the CIA, Siemens, Belgacom and the European Commission. It is the leader in interoperability and its new RedSpider Web 3.2 product included Web Terrain Service, allowing for the production and navigation of 3D scenes that can be dynamically built with data from multiple, distributed Web Map Services (for imagery), Web Feature Services (for building or other feature data), and Web Coverage Services (for Digital Elevation Models, and more).

<http://www.ionicsoft.com>

LIEGE AIRPORT IN CHINA

[BIZ/LOG: Liège, October 26]

A major delegation has gone to the Chinese province of Fujian to discuss various forms of cooperation. Accompanying the leader, Mr Georges Pire, are the representatives of SPI+, VP Pierre-Yves Jeholet; José Happart and Luc Partoune, the president and director general respectively of Liège Airport and also Michel Kempeneers from the AWEX Association.

The Province of Fujian, which has a population of 35 million, is developing projects in industry, energy and tourism. However, the focus of interest for the delegation from Liège is on logistics. There are two international ports in Fujian, moving 125 million tons in 2003 and two freight airports. The province of Fujian is experiencing annual growth in exports of 22 to 35%.

<http://www.prov-liege.be>

NEW EDC FOR QUANTA?

[BIZ/LOG: Aachen, October 25]

Consideration is currently being given to setting up a centralized EDC for Quanta computers in Aachen. This would mean 30 new jobs. The decision is due soon. Quanta Computer, a Taiwan-based company, set up in Aachen this year, has already provided 170 new jobs.

<http://www.wdr.de>

EXTREME ULTRAVIOLET (EUV)

[BIZ/SCI-TECH: Aachen, October 22]

Extreme ultraviolet lithography, a new production technology for computer microchips for a market estimated to be worth EUR 500m, will be used in a new production facility, scheduled to start up at the Rothe Erde site, Aachen, in 2009. The project will be a joint effort by the Fraunhofer Institute for Laser technology (ILT), the Department of Laser Technology at the RWTH (University) Aachen and two companies: AIXUV und Philips Extreme UV GmbH.

Using extreme-ultraviolet (EUV) light to carve transistors in silicon wafers will lead to microprocessors that are up to 100 times faster than today's most powerful chips; and to memory chips with similar increases in storage capacity.

<http://www.fraunhofer.de>

FRENCH LOTTERY USES EVS

[BIZ: Liège, October 19]

All French games of chance are administered by "La Française des Jeux", a state controlled organization. This institution includes its own television production division, "La Française D'Images", which ensures the necessary levels of security and confidentiality. The main television shows are the French National Lottery program and the new European lottery, Euro Millions. The Paris' subsidiary of EVS Broadcast Equipment recently packaged 2 DNF ST450 Shotbox controllers with an AirBox-XT production server to enable the rapid and accurate playout of pre-recorded clips in this extremely fast-paced production environment. The combination of DNF's control systems with EVS' server technology allows users to cope also with totally unpredictable circumstances.

<http://www.evs.tv>

CMI TEAMS WITH TEXTRON

[BIZ: Embourg/Liège, Wilmington, Mass., October 19]

Textron Marine & Land (TM&L), an operating unit of Textron Systems, and CMI Defence (CMI), based in Embourg, have announced that they have agreed to an exclusive Marketing and Manufacturing Teaming Agreement. Under this agreement, TM&L's Cadillac Gage Textron Inc. business unit will manufacture two lines of turret models at the company's facility in New Orleans, Louisiana for U.S. based customers, in addition to U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and U.S. Foreign Military Finance (FMF) programs. The turrets to be manufactured and marketed by TM&L include the CMI CT-CV 105 MM and the Cockerill Mk Series 90 MM LCTS Turrets.

The agreement will serve to enhance and expand TM&L's Cadillac Gage line of turret systems. It will offer CMI the opportunity to enter the U.S. market, as well as selected U.S. FMS and FMF overseas markets.

<http://www.cmigroupe.com>

TECHNOHOUSE HEERLEN EXPANDS

[BIZ/INFRA: Heerlen, October 19]

The LIOF Business Center's Technohouse at the Coriopolis business park in Heerlen is to expand by 2,200m², which will add a third wing in the form of a circle. Antoine Platen, director of the building, notes that this techno circle will complete the building, which is located opposite Hogeschool Zuyd. There will be a new space for business, a reception desk, meeting rooms and an atrium. Current and future tenants will have a professional environment in which to work.

LIOF Technohouse is an initiative by the Limburg development company, LIOF and the municipality of Heerlen that started in 1999. Soon afterwards, in 2000, a second phase of the building commenced. The building is intended for start-ups and re-starts, in particular in IT and the life sciences. Other companies have also chosen for a location at the Technohouse. The Hogeschool Zuyd has hired a number of offices to allow students to acquire practical business experience.

The expansion also means that 30m² units can also be offered, which is very attractive for business, said Mr. Platen. The potential for cross-fertilization between business and education is ever present here. The opening ceremony was held on October 22 2004. The current occupancy status is 90% with 18 tenants, a surface area of 7,500m² and 114 parking spaces.

<http://www.liofbedrijvencentra.nl>

LIEGE TOPS AIRPORT REALTY

[BIZ/INFRA: Liège, October 15]

DTZ Wallonia has just completed a survey of real estate in the vicinity of cargo airports which reveals that Liège, although eighth in terms of tonnage handled annually, is first in terms of attractive property prices. This should have considerable influence on inbound and other investments. Airport zone prices at Liège are EUR 100 per square meter per annum, as against EUR 560 at Heathrow and EUR 150 at Brussels - the next best. In terms of warehousing etc, prices are: Liège EUR 40, Brussels EUR 49 and Heathrow EUR 105. (Source of figures: Le Soir)

<http://www.dtz.be>

NEW FIXED LINE FOR LIMBURG

[BIZ: Lommel, October 14]

United Telecom, a Limburg (B) based telco, is going to provide a new fixed line telephone service for both Limburgs, starting end October. The company will have one zone, covering both provinces. Community feeling is part of their marketing strategy.

(Source: Zi-Biz)

<http://www.united-telecom.be>

PHILIPS, RWTH & AIXTRON

[BIZ: Aachen, October 13]

Philips, Aachen's RWTH University and AIXTRON AG, have announced the signing of a collaboration agreement for the joint development of novel large-area white Organic Light Emitting Diodes (OLED). The project not only targets the development of OLEDs for lighting applications, but will also focus on establishing new manufacturing processes using AIXTRON's innovative Organic Vapor Phase Deposition (OVPD®) technology. For this purpose, RWTH Aachen, a leading institution in the area of semiconductor technology, has ordered an OVPD® system, which will be installed at the Philips Lighting manufacturing plant in Aachen - Rothe Erde and be jointly operated by the project participants.

The cooperative project is largely funded by the European Interreg III program, the state of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) and the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

<http://www.aixtron.com>

Q-PARK AACHEN

[BIZ: Aachen, October 11]

A new parking garage has opened in downtown Aachen (041004). The new Q-Park garage is in the new EBV-Carré and has room for 480 cars. It is designed to make lady drivers feel safe; the parking garage is well lit and has no dark corners. Currently there are 12,000 parking spaces in Aachen, more than 7,000 of them in parking garages.

Nothing now stands in the way of the demolition of the Büchel parking garage, according to Michael Schultz of the Aachen SPF group.

<http://www.wdr.de>

LRM INVESTS IN LANGUAGE SCHOOL

[BIZ: Hasselt, October 10]

The Limburg Investment Company LRM is going to invest EUR 125,000 in the form of venture capital in ElaN languages to strengthen the company's financial structure. ElaN has been in the business for 14 years, teaches 250 language combinations and has translated many millions of lines. It has also provided 3000 language training sessions and interpreting services at national and international conferences, becoming an established language service provider for very many domestic and foreign SMEs and multinationals. Currently there are 5 partners with ElaN and 14 permanent staff and 1500 freelancers. On February 1, they moved from Beringen to Heusden-Zolder. Annual growth has been 10% over a 5-year period. They intend to be the leading language school brand in Belgium by 2007.

<http://www.elan.be>

3W BIZ PROPERTY TO MEEÛS

[BIZ: Maastricht, October 7]

MeeÛs Business Accommodation has recently reached an agreement with 3W real estate company on the take over of its business property department. This includes the entire portfolio and the staff of the 3W department. This agreement came into effect on October 1 and MeeÛs is operating from its office at Brusselsepoort 1 in Maastricht. The company intends to strengthen its position in the Limburg business property market and is keen to make use of the considerable expertise built up by 3W, Ruijters Commercial Property and Stienstra Business Property. MeeÛs has grown in recent years and employs 2,500 at 127 locations throughout the Netherlands and parts of Belgium.

Their focus is on quality service provision with core business in business property, housing, valuation, investment, insurance, pensions and mortgages. 3W will continue to further specialize in its core business of project development and real estate projects in the area of housing, working and shopping in Limburg and North/East Brabant. Meeùs offices in Limburg are in Maastricht, Heerlen, Kerkrade, Venlo and Roermond.

<http://www.meeus.com>

LUC LEADS CONTRACT RESEARCH

[BIZ/EDU: Diepenbeek, October 6]

LUC, the Limburg University Center in Diepenbeek, leads in Flanders in the area of contract research for business, in percentage terms, according to the LUC/tUL president Luc de Schepper in a speech at the opening of the new academic year. In 2003, the external contract portfolio was worth EUR 18.4m and government funding brought in EUR 25m, this means that the private funding was 73% of the government grant. For the universities of Ghent and Louvain the figures are 56 and 55% respectively.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

EUR 200M ON ALSDORF CENTER

[BIZ: Alsdorf, October 4]

EUR 200m will be spent in the reconversion of the Anna mine site in the Alsdorf area through the year 2012, according to a spokesperson of the State Development company in Aachen. The money involves sums from the state and private investment. The construction of the Anna Park has itself recently cost EUR 90m. The site is also to host a bus station and business park.

<http://www.wdr.de>

LVM INVESTS IN TESSENDERLO

[IND: Tessenderlo, October 4]

The Limburgse Vinyl Maatschappij (LVM), a Tessenderlo Group subsidiary, is investing EUR 20m in building a new facility, scheduled to start up in early 2006, for an annual production of 250,000 tonnes of ethylene dichloride (EDC). This is the basic raw material for the manufacture of vinyl chloride monomer (VCM), at its Tessenderlo (B) site.

The new facility will reduce energy consumption at the LVM site in keeping with the commitment LVM has made to be among the most energy-efficient manufacturing sites for VCM at a global level.

This facility is also one of the first to implement a new technology on an industrial scale. A new reactor principle and leading-edge process integration gives the new process significantly more energy efficiency than that of conventional technologies. The new unit also allows greater flexibility in the use of chlorine and hydrochloric acid in the manufacture of VCM, the basic raw material for PVC.

The investment is part of the plan to increase the production capacity for chlorine and lye (Ely 3) at Tessenderlo Chemie in Tessenderlo.

<http://tesscorpeng.tessenderlogroup.com>

STAALBOUW OVERPELT

[BIZ: Overpelt, October 1]

The Hyundai subsidiary Mobis (Hyundai and Kia brands), is entrusting construction of its new building to Staalbouw Overpelt, which employs 40, has produced revenues of EUR 12m and EUR 5m in its sister company Stahlbau Brehna GmbH in Leipzig, where it employs 20.

<http://www.kvklimburg.voka.be>

ECHO RUSSIAN DEAL

[BIZ: Houthalen, October 1]

A report dating from August notes that Echo Engineering in Houthalen has concluded two agreements in Russia, worth EUR 1.8m for the development and supply of machines for the production of concrete flooring systems. Since the start of 2004, EUR 5m in new contracts have been won by the company in the US, the United Arabian Emirates and New Zealand.

<http://www.kvklimburg.voka.be>

EWALS ORDERS 1200 TRAILERS

[BIZ: Genk, October 1]

Ewals Cargo Care has put in an order for 1,200 mega trailers. The Limburg company made the order with the trailer builders LAG in Bree and Van Hool in Koningshooikt in Belgium. Both trailer builders will each deliver 600 trailers to Ewals. They will be primarily used in the automotive sector. The Limburg logistics service provider expects that the greater part of the mega trailers will have been delivered by the summer of 2005. A part of the order is intended to replace existing material, which includes that taken over by Ewals from Acumen at the beginning of this year. The other part is required because of the demand for more trailers as the result of the company's autonomous growth. The trailer fleet will grow by 20% as a result of this order. If the trailers were all to be lined up one behind the other, there would be a tailback of 17 km.

<http://www.truck-business.com>

SVEN BECKER NEW TRIANEL BOSS

[BIZ: Aachen, October 1]

The partners of the Trianel European Energy Trading GmbH and Enetko GmbH-Partner in Trianel agreed at their meeting on September 29, to appoint Sven Becker as the successor to Dr. Christian Becker, who is going to the City Power Utility in Solingen as of January 1, 2005. A company's press release notes that Mr Becker has considerable experience in the liberalized electricity market and is expected to increase Trianel's growth. Mr Becker, who is an economist, has an MBA from the University of Chicago and is the general manager of Statkraft Markets GmbH of the continental subsidiary of Statkraft SF (Statkraft is Norway's largest producer of electric power and Norway's third largest company), and is responsible for the electricity business and marketing. He has also worked for Enron, Ruhrgas and BP.

<http://www.trianel.de>

FRIDAY EUROTECH GOES PRATO

[BIZ: Genk, October 1]

Genk-based HR specialists Prato have won a 3-year contract from the Dutch, skilled temporary construction worker agency, Friday Eurotech (FETC) which is entering the Belgian market. Prato, with SD Worx, is to provide back office facilities for FETC. Friday Eurotech is the market leader in its field and a subsidiary of Stork and Hertel.

(Source: Zi-Biz)

<http://www.prato.be>

NORBORD FINALIZES ON AGGLO

[BIZ: Genk/Toronto, Ont., October 1]

Norbord Inc. announced today it has completed a EUR 50m (USD 60m) acquisition of an oriented strand board (OSB) and particleboard facility, Agglo NV at Genk, Belgium.

The acquisition, announced on June 22 2004, will position Norbord as the second largest producer of OSB in Europe with about 20 per cent market share. Norbord is also the second largest producer of OSB in the United States.

The Genk plant will increase Norbord's annual European sales by 35 per cent. The operation will be integrated with Norbord's existing European panel business in the United Kingdom.

The mill is located about 100 kilometres east of Brussels and is well situated to serve and expand Norbord's panelboard customers in the Benelux countries, Germany and Scandinavia.

<http://www.nexfor.net>

Logistics and Infrastructure

SUPPLY CHAIN LIMBURG (NL)

[LOG/BIZ: Maasbracht, October 28]

Math Vestjens, the Deputy responsible for the logistical scene in Limburg, recently gave an update of the current status of the industry and proposals for future development. He noted that the supply chain would determine economic growth and that, between 2010 and 2020, there would be a twofold increase of the flow of goods. Two-thirds of this would be 'fine distribution' which means last mile logistics and value-added distribution. Annually, 1.5 bn tons of goods are transported in the Netherlands, 60% of which are for foreign markets. Total tonnage moved by road, rail and water through the Netherlands is 930m, of which 615m (two thirds) goes through the Southern Netherlands - the Incodelta area. The figures for Limburg are 200m tons (14%), including 70m tons in transit and 40m tons by road, rail and water.

The transit figures are 7m tons annually by water, 26m tons by road and by rail:

- Venlo: 10 m tons per year
- Geleen via Venlo: 2,2m tons
- Geleen via Eijsden: 930,000 tons
- Heerlen: 280,000 tons

Results of provincial plans in respect of the situation in 1995, are that:

- 140,000 more containers are being switched to rail and water, i.e.: a threefold increase and a reduction of 135,000 journeys by truck;
- There is strong growth in the number of scheduled services by water way and rail: Venlo and Born have doubled scheduled services to Rotterdam and Antwerp to 28;
- Bulk transport via the Meuse is stagnating;
- Employment has risen by 3,000 to 22,500.

A monitoring system for the supply chain will be set up to assess the results of the current policy.

<http://www.limburg.nl>

EUR 145M TGV TUNNEL

[INFRA: Soumagne, October 13]

Construction activities on the TGV Soumagne tunnel are approaching completion. The last dozen meters of subterranean rock will be blasted out of the way on October 20 in Vaux-sous-Chèvremont in front of 350 European guests. This will put the contractors three weeks ahead of schedule. They started in 2001; and, in June 2007, the two-track rail tunnel should be taken into service. The costs are EUR 145m.

<http://www.brf.be>

LIMBURG RAPID TRANSIT TRAM

[LOG: Brussels, October 12]

Plans by the Flemish government for a rapid transit streetcar network with three light rails and nine rapid transit bus lines in the province of Limburg (B) are still in an embryonic phase, according to a spokesperson. This Spartacus plan for the future opening up of Limburg has already been discussed with the Limburg Investment company (LRM) with the view to pre-financing of the project which will cost EUR 150m. A study will be carried out by LRM subsidiary Lisom. Although the Minister responsible for Mobility says that thus far there have been no talks with LRM in the context of advanced financing of the project.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

NL/BELGIUM LOGISTICS TOPPERS

[LOG: Utrecht, October 8]

The Netherlands and Belgium are a good market for logistical service providers. This is reported in a worldwide survey of 3PL logistics by Cap Gemini, Georgia Institute of Technology and FedEx Supply chain services.

Dutch and Belgian companies spent more on a wider spectrum of logistical outsourcing than their colleagues in the rest of Europe, Asia and the US and used a greater part of the total supply chain (70% as against 50% among their foreign colleagues). Logistical costs in the Netherlands and Belgium are 6.3% of the turnover. In Europe, as a whole, this is 10.3%, whereas worldwide this figure is 8.6%. There are some complaints about the lack of strategic vision, but things look encouraging for the Benelux. The sample comprises 700 users of logistical service provision, 11.5% of whom came from the Benelux.

<http://www.logistiekkrant.nl>

LIMBURG (NL) INFRASTRUCTURE

[INFRA: Maastricht, October 1]

In response to some contradictory reports in the press, the Limburg Provincial Government has made a clear statement on the current status of the major infrastructural projects in the Province. These are: Via Limburg, Bottleneck Infra, the Parkstad Outer Ring road and the A2 highway trajectory through Maastricht. These projects have been planned in terms of time, money and quality and are on schedule. As far as Via Limburg is concerned, the A73 South Highway (Venlo-Maasbracht) and the A74 (Venlo-Germany) and the provincial N280-East (Roermond-Germany) and N293 (Roermond) will be completed at the latest by end 2007. Bottleneck Infra, which provides an infrastructural solution around NedCar in Born, linking Central Limburg to Germany and raising the bridge over the Juliana canal making four-tier container traffic possible, is to be completed in mid 2007. This year a start has also been made on the Parkstad Outer Ring road. The ring road will link the metropolitan Parkstad Limburg with the A2 and A76 highways, improving general access. The ring road is to be completed in mid 2015. The A2 trajectory through Maastricht is also on schedule and problems are being solved in consultation with the municipality and the National Water Authorities.

<http://www.limburg.nl>

LIGHT ALERTS AT NIGHT

[LIFE-SCI: Liège, October 28]

A paper in the most recent issue of *Current Biology* by Fabien Perrin et al., from the Cyclotron Research Centre in Liège and elsewhere, looks at the effect of light on the sleeping brain.

The brain processes light information to visually represent the environment, but also to detect changes in ambient light level. The latter information induces non-image-forming responses and exerts powerful effects on physiology such as synchronization of the circadian clock and suppression of melatonin.

In rodents, irradiance information is transduced from a discrete subset of photosensitive retinal ganglion cells via the retinohypothalamic tract to various hypothalamic and brainstem regulatory structures including the hypothalamic suprachiasmatic nuclei, the master circadian pacemaker.

In humans, light also acutely modulates alertness, but the cerebral correlates of this effect are unknown.

We assessed regional cerebral blood flow in 13 subjects attending to auditory and visual stimuli in near darkness following light exposures (>8000 lux) of different durations (0.5, 17, 16.5, and 0 min) during the biological night. The bright broadband polychromatic light suppressed melatonin and enhanced alertness.

Functional imaging revealed that a large-scale occipito-parietal attention network, including the right intraparietal sulcus, was more active in proportion to the duration of light exposures preceding the scans. Activity in the hypothalamus decreased in proportion to previous illumination. These findings have important implications for understanding the effects of light on human behavior.

<http://www.current-biology.com/>

BIOFORUM IX LIEGE

[LIFE-SCI: Liège, October 10]

The 9th BIOFORUM on December 7 is a one-day meeting at the University of Liège between Bio-industries and young Life Sciences researchers. This event is an initiative of the Collège de Doctorat en Biochimie of the University of Liège, and is organised by BioLiège, the Interface Entreprises-Université de Liège and the euregional Interreg III project "Heartbeat of Life Sciences in Europe - Meuse-Rhine Triangle". 480 participants, including many from Bio-industries, and a session of about 120 posters led BIOFORUM 2003 to be a success.

<http://www.bioliège.ulg.ac.be/invitation.php>

GIGA NEWS

[LIFE/SCI: Liège, October 2]

The GIGA institute at the University of Liège has brought out its fifth newsletter, which covers a wide range of topics, including activities within the Sixth Framework Program (FP6) of the EU. The university of Liège is active in this program and also in the construction of the European Knowledge Transfer Area and, with the participation of its development unit Interface, with the launching of PROTON-Europe (Public Research Organization Technology Transfer Office Network), to which more than 200 universities belong. They, in turn, are becoming a partner in discussions with the EU and the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe (UNICE).

The newsletter also gives news from the facilities, including a transcriptomics facility, which is providing basic services, including high throughput analysis of gene expression.

<http://www.giga.ulg.ac.be>

RISK MANAGEMENT

[LIFE-SCI: Aachen, October 1]

The Steinbeis Transfer Center Risk Management consultancy in Aachen has published a booklet on risk management in the Life Sciences in German.

<http://www.steinbeis-edition.de>

CLEAN DRIVING FUEL CELLS

[SCI-TECH: Jülich, October 1]

Scientists from Jülich Research Center have equipped a commercial electric vehicle with a fuel cell that drives the conveyance via an electric motor. The chief attraction is that the fuel cell used is a direct methanol fuel cell (DMFC), which - in contrast to many other types of fuel cell - does not use gaseous hydrogen, but instead converts liquid methanol into electricity. The advantage is that liquid methanol is easier to handle and store than gaseous hydrogen; you can fill up the vehicle in the normal manner.

With the "JuMOVE" electric vehicle, the Jülich scientists have demonstrated a possible application for fuel cells in the mobile sector." The Ministry for Science and Research in NRW has supported the development of fuel cell technology at Research Centre Jülich in the past four years to the tune of € 1.5 million.

<http://www.fz-juelich.de>

ANALYSIS FOR ASTRONAUTS

[SCI-TECH: Jülich, October 1]

The "fluorescence tomography device" isn't quite as small as Mr Spock's tricorder. But it can do a lot more: it automatically creates a detailed picture of the distribution of chemical elements in a biological or mineral sample and enables us to look inside the samples without destroying them.

<http://www.fz-juelich.de/portal/angebote/pressemitteilungen>

GEOSPATIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

[SCI-TECH: Liège, October 1]

The GLOBE Program (www.globe.gov) has signed an agreement with IONIC for the purchase of geospatial products for deployment as part of the program's International Spatial Data Infrastructure. GLOBE, a worldwide hands-on, primary and secondary school-based education and science program, has selected IONIC's RedSpider Web and RedSpider Studio products for both development and production. Under the contract, millions of students will be able to access the GLOBE Program's site through standard OGC interfaces and report their findings, make maps or collaborate. GLOBE is supported by organizations such as NASA, United Nations and the National Science Foundation.

IONIC Enterprise's President, Christopher Tucker says, "IONIC's web-based products and best-of-breed OGC/ISO web services are ideally suited for the GLOBE Program's distributed information technology needs. IONIC has a long-standing commitment towards the education of standards-based interoperability and are proud to assist the GLOBE as their program continues to expand."

<http://www.ionicredspider.com>