



# REPORT TO SOCIETY

VUB - UNIVERSITY OF THE 21ST CENTURY

## COLOPHON

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# PREFACE



Rector Jan Danckaert

“As an urban engaged university, we are connected with our region and committed to a better world.”

In 2022, the VUB had to say goodbye to a well-loved figurehead: Rector Caroline Pauwels. Her successor, Jan Danckaert, maintains the VUB's position as an urban engaged university, but he also places new emphases: “The context in which we work has changed enormously in 2 years. As a knowledge institution, we have to be agile in that new world.”

**You took over from Caroline Pauwels as Rector of the VUB in 2022. In the meantime, you've established your own policy lines. Are they very different?**

**Jan Danckaert:** “The VUB launched 3 major focus points for our policy under Caroline Pauwels: sustainability, equality and well-being. That basis will be maintained in the future. In the new policy period, first and foremost we want to move forward. The transversal policy lines of sustainability, equality and well-being have been launched in the form of a temporary project in recent years. By anchoring them in our standard policy, we want to incorporate them into our operation.

That will be a big challenge because the context in which we work has changed enormously in the last 2 years. We live in a world political scientists call ‘VUCA’: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Issues such as the climate crisis, the war between Russia and Ukraine, the energy crisis and inflation greatly affect our operation and funding. Although that can't be an excuse: our goal remains to take steps forward.”

**In addition to the financial aspect, are you also working on substantive changes?**

**Jan Danckaert:** “Our basic vision for sustainability, equality and well-being remains unchanged, but we will be refining some matters. For example, the sustainable and inclusive approach of our education is not yet visible enough. Students decide on their study programmes differently from how their parents did: they are often looking for inclusive and sustainable study programmes where they feel at home and that can be used to make a difference. As an urban engaged university, we meet both those expectations: we are connected with our region and committed to a better world. And we want to make that known, through improved communication.

We also want to refine our research options. The VUB already strived for ‘science for the common good’ at the time of its founding: research that has a positive impact on society. We want to make that impact more visible, for example, by ascribing clear SDG labels (*the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations*, ed.) to our research projects. We are also preparing for our participation in an international impact ranking to compare our university to others. And we aim to improve the valorisation of our research, for example, by more often choosing interdisciplinary research.”

**As you said: the world has become less predictable. Does the VUB have an advantage in the area of agility, due to its character and vision?**

**Jan Danckaert:** “Some things, such as social engagement and the pursuit of a sustainable and humanistic society, are really in our DNA. We want to help solve societal problems through independent science. And that vision is more relevant than ever today. We aim to convey our knowledge on a large scale, for example through education and through open science which we use to share our scientific knowledge with society. The VUB has always been a forerunner in that respect.

In addition, we are influenced by the fact that we work in a metropolitan context. We have our roots in Brussels

**“To maintain the VUB as an inclusive, engaged and international university in an uncertain and fast-changing world – that’s the challenge we are facing.”**

and are genuinely committed to this city. Because we are really a part of Brussels, we experience new evolutions sooner and more keenly than other Flemish universities. For example, if students are finding it difficult to pay their bills, we notice that a year or two before most other universities.

Not only that, but the student population of the VUB is very international and diverse, particularly from the point of view of the Flemish higher education landscape. This academic year, we will be welcoming 25% international students. And a considerable number of our first-generation students have a non-Flemish background. As a whole, that’s a positive thing: we think it’s fantastic that such a diverse group of students feels at home with us. But it does come with challenges. For example, we make an extra effort to have the diversity in the students continue into our doctoral mandates and our teaching staff. There’s a good reason why the VUB positions itself as an urban engaged university: that is quite simply our reality.”

**Are values such as well-being and equality extra important for the VUB from that point of view?**

**Jan Danckaert:** In our context, striving for well-being and equality must be self-evident. We live in a diverse world, so we embrace that diversity. We recently signed the EUTOPIA Inclusion Manifesto: by doing so, we

connect with universities throughout Europe that are facing similar challenges so that we can search for solutions together.

Incidentally, well-being and equality are not only related to skin colour or background. For example, we discovered that we needed to review our policy lines on transgressive behaviour. We set up internal work groups and checked proposals with a focus group with external partners, including youth psychiatrist Peter Adriaenssens and lawyer Christine Mussche. Our new policy is called YANA, which stands for ‘You Are Not Alone’. We want to make it clear that victims of transgressive behaviour will receive better counselling from now on.”

**What does the VUB look like in 2023? Which direction do you definitely want to take?**

**Jan Danckaert:** “In the medium term, I see the VUB as the most inclusive, engaged and international university in Flanders. We also want to play a role in Europe and be a point of scientific reference for society. An agile university in an uncertain and fast-changing world: that’s what we have to achieve.”



# ABOUT THE VUB



# THE VUB IN NUMBERS

(2020-2021)



9,687  
students



2008  
2009

2009  
2010

2010  
2011

2011  
2012

2012  
2013

2013  
2014

2014  
2015

2015  
2016

2016  
2017

2017  
2018

2018  
2019

2019  
2020

2020  
2021

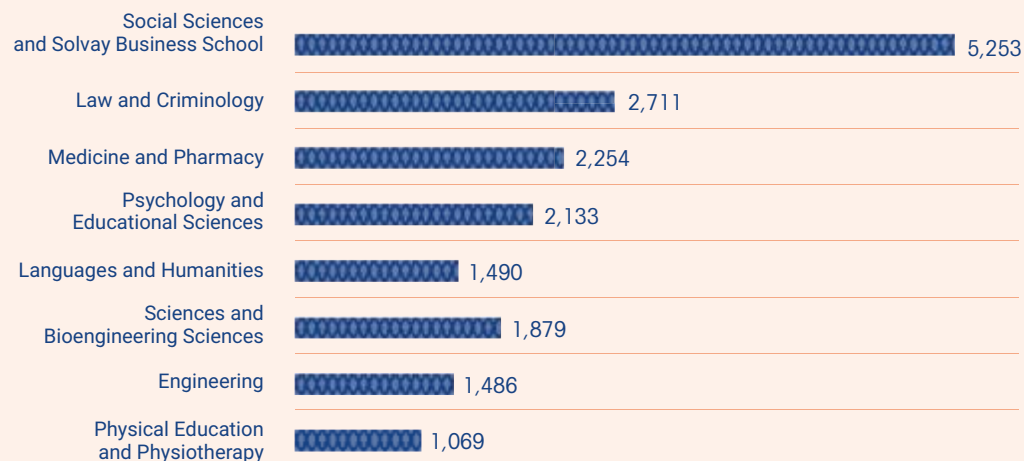
**new method of counting**  
(students counted once, including  
preparatory courses, PhDs and guest  
students)

19,156  
students

20,451  
students

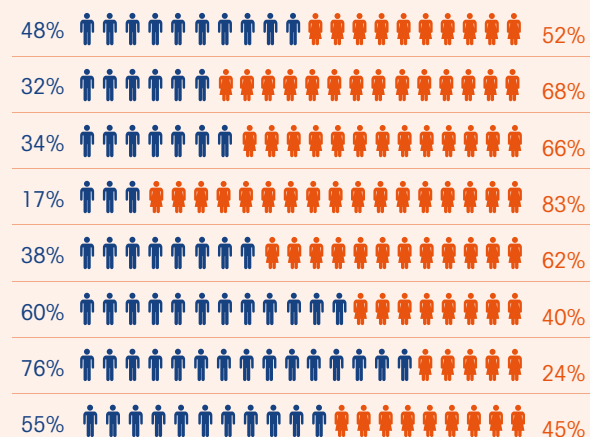
+6.48%

## NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER FACULTY



2020-2021

## GENDER BALANCE IN THE STUDENT POPULATION PER FACULTY



2021

## VUB staff

4,261 EMPLOYEES 2021

47.3%  
female

52.7%  
male

ACADEMIC STAFF  
2,916

1,173  
40.2%

1,743  
59.8%

844  
62.8%

501  
37.2%

1,345  
SUPPORT STAFF

## International students

international students  
4,668

147 nationalities

152

incoming students  
2020-2021 from  
35 countries

73

outgoing students 2020-2021  
to 22 countries

## VUB rooms

1,540 VUB rooms

## Doctorates

2,737  
publications

€148,232,239

total research budget 2021

1,977 doctoral students

48%  
female

52%  
male





## THE STRUCTURE OF OUR ORGANISATION

To be able to understand how we implement sustainability, equality and well-being, we will explain the general structure of the VUB organisation first. Our university consists of several levels of administration: the rector, 4 vice-rectorates, 8 faculties and the MILO (Multidisciplinary Institute for Teacher Education). To anchor sustainability, equality and well-being at every level, an academic coordinator has been appointed for each theme.

### **The rector and the 4 vice-rectorates**

The rector is responsible for the university's general management and the preparation and implementation of its policy. The rector is the face of the VUB and is elected on the basis of a vision paper describing their ambitions for the coming mandate. The rector's mandate begins at the start of the academic year and lasts for 4 years.

There are a total of 4 vice-rectorates. Each vice-rector is responsible for the implementation of their own policy domain and policy plan. This mandate also lasts for 4 years.

### **8 faculties and the MILO**

The VUB has 8 faculties. Each faculty is responsible for the coordination of several research groups and study programmes. Each faculty is headed by a dean who is in charge of the general management of

that faculty. Each dean ensures the preparation and implementation of the faculty policy. The MILO works in a multidisciplinary way on the future of teaching and trains future teaching staff.

### Administrative and supporting services

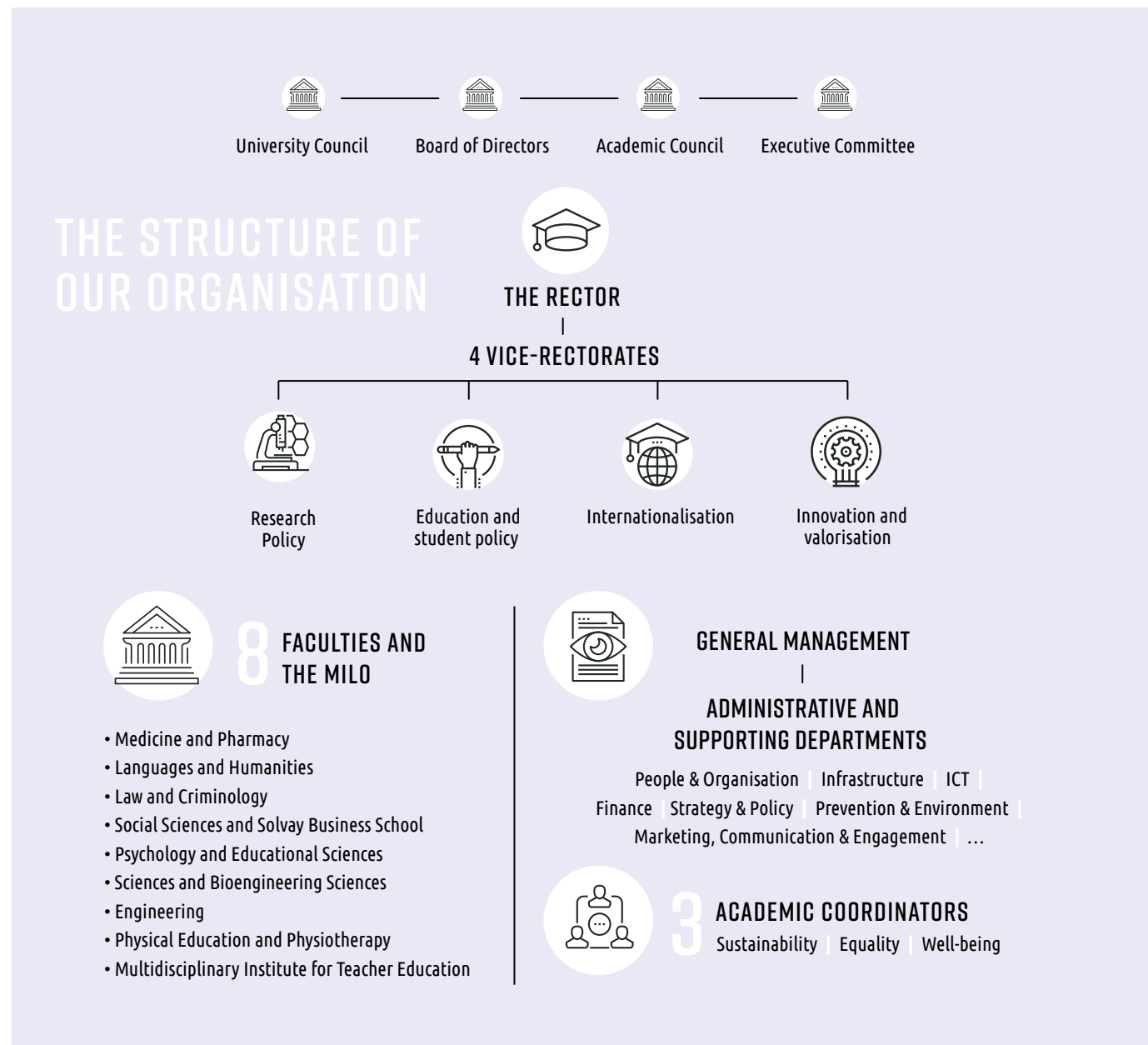
The administrative and supporting departments implement the policy by converting the operational and strategic objectives into practice-oriented actions. They are coordinated by the general manager and the Executive Committee.

### 3 academic coordinators

The 3 academic coordinators act as a bridge between the rector and the faculties, the vice-rectorates and the administrative departments. They ensure the anchoring of the transversal themes of sustainability, equality and well-being in all corners of the university.

### 4 central councils

The VUB is autonomous and is run democratically. The University Community – students and staff – can take part in the decision-making and its monitoring through one of the 4 central councils: the University Council, the Board of Directors, the Academic Council and the Executive Committee. The University Council determines the VUB's general strategic vision. The Board of Directors defines policies that are in line with that vision, and the Academic Council has an advisory role in this process. The Executive Committee is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the General Strategic Plan (ASP).



# OUR CAMPUSES

Our campuses are the physical translation of our vision: they are sustainable, diverse and digital. They are also internationally oriented while being anchored in the Brussels context. The amenities on our campuses are accessible to everyone.

## VUB Main Campus, Elsene

The green VUB Main Campus is situated next to our sister university, ULB, and is our largest campus. It is home to our Social Sciences and Solvay Business School faculty, and the faculties of Languages and Humanities, Physical Education and Physiotherapy, Psychology and Educational Sciences, Law and Criminology, Sciences and Bioengineering Sciences and Engineering. The building also houses the rectorate, social services, student accommodations, socio-cultural organisation, sports infrastructure and a restaurant.

## VUB Health Campus, Jette

You'll find our Health Campus next to the UZ Brussels hospital. It is home to the Medicine and Pharmacy faculty and a part of the Physical Education and Physiotherapy faculty. The campus is surrounded by nature and offers a wide range of amenities for students and researchers: student accommodation, sports infrastructure, a restaurant, a library, study guidance etc.

## VUB Usquare Campus, Elsene

The VUB Usquare Campus is a unique project in Brussels. In collaboration with the ULB and many other partners, we are transforming a military complex near the ULB and VUB Main Campuses into a lively international student district that is ready for the future. A meeting place for students, international students, researchers and professors on the one hand and Brussels residents on the other – a place where they can develop innovative ideas together.

## VUB Photonics Campus, Gooik

The VUB Photonics Campus in Gooik opened in 2013, and since 2018, has expanded to a total surface area of 3,000 square metres. The campus is home to the Photonics Research and Innovation Centre of the Brussels Photonics B-PHOT research group. There, you'll find high-tech platforms for micro-optic design in clean-room conditions and a fully equipped technology lab for advanced prototyping.

## VUB Konekt Campus, Brussels

Brussels is a dream lab for scientists, current and future, and a perfect learning place for students. We connect with our students in the capital through the weKONEKT.brussels initiative that has been developed and expanded in recent years. Conversely, we strengthen

the Brussels community by setting up education with, in and for Brussels with our diverse partners. Connection, collaboration and co-creation are our main focus points. Therefore, the VUB positions itself as an urban university that shoulders its responsibility and commitment to Brussels.

## De Oranjerie Diest, Coovi Anderlecht and Leuven Campuses

At these locations, we offer the abridged educational master's programme for master students wishing to gain their teaching diploma. The study programme consists of both face-to-face education and blended learning.







# URBAN ENGAGED UNIVERSITY

As an urban engaged university, the VUB is not only firmly anchored in Brussels, but also connected to the rest of Europe and the world. As an engaged community, we aim to make the world a better place at all levels and strive to be a leader in the areas of sustainable education, research and entrepreneurship.

## ANCHORED IN BRUSSELS

The word 'urban' in our description as urban engaged university refers to our location and strong anchoring in Brussels, the capital of Belgium and Europe. We are 'engaged' based on our principles of free research, humanism and critical thinking.

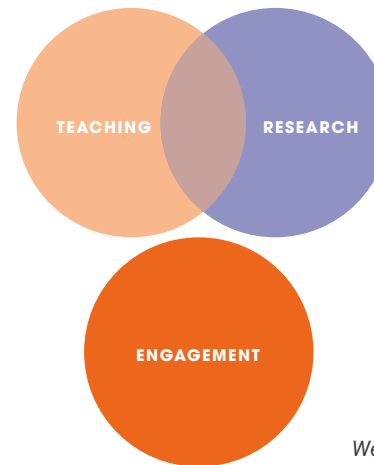
We position ourselves as a pioneering Flemish university and an open community in the diverse city of Brussels. We embrace diversity because we believe that an inclusive society enriches us, and that socially relevant knowledge and excellent science can only flourish in a diverse environment.

We unite the Brussels community with the VUB community of students, academic and administrative staff and partners. Together with the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), we contribute to the development of a free, connected and resilient urban community through [weKONEKT.brussels](https://weKONEKT.brussels).

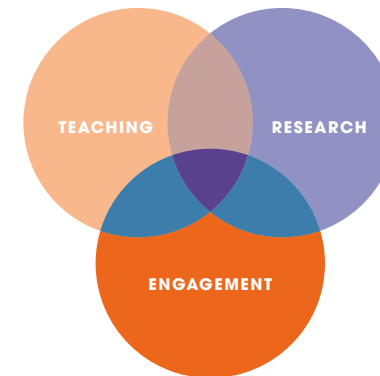


Thanks to its diversity and urban complexity, Brussels is the perfect subject for the research and education of our students and staff. That's called community-engaged research and learning. The 'Brussels experience' is the ultimate breeding ground for sustainability initiatives. One great example is the BXL Living Vechtsportlab: a living lab looking at martial arts as an emancipatory instrument for young people in a socially vulnerable situation, for which we collaborate with Brussels martial arts clubs. We make our engagement concrete in the numerous initiatives and projects we organise, facilitate and stimulate in the city.

## UNIVERSITY



## URBAN ENGAGED UNIVERSITY



*We are an urban engaged university thanks to our strong anchoring in Brussels and our engaged character.*



## Connected within Europe

Based in Brussels, we are connected with Belgium and the rest of Europe. We are developing a strategic plan to anchor our university even more strongly in the broader continent. We are a part of the EUTOPIA Network, together with 9 other European universities (including Lisbon, Gothenburg, Warwick, Paris, Barcelona, Ljubljana, Dresden and Hamburg). The goal of the network is to create an open and multicultural superuniversity by 2025, in which all the participating universities across all of Europe are connected with each other. We strengthen those contacts with our partner universities and set up new collaborations. That way, our students, academics and staff can move freely in the EUTOPIA network to take classes and participate in scientific research.

# HELPING TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Studying at the VUB means more than merely acquiring knowledge and learning to think independently and critically: at the VUB, we also want to help build a better world. We call on the entire VUB community to deploy their knowledge and talent through De Wereld Heeft Je Nodig (The World Needs You): for better living conditions, equal rights, peace, freedom of expression and a better environment. This can be done by using a researcher's expertise or the knowledge a student has acquired from a study programme, or through dozens of projects people can throw their weight behind. For example, there are the Edukado vzw construction projects in low-income countries such as India, Burkina Faso and Bangladesh, or Brutus, the project in which a student becomes a tutor in Brussels secondary schools. Everyone can commit and contribute to tackling the global challenges of today. There are 3 central values in De Wereld Heeft Je Nodig:

- > **Empathic solidarity:** we take the perspective of the world (and not the first person perspective) as our starting point, searching for that which connects.
- > **Self-assured:** we have something to offer the world, we think freely, without boundaries, and we approach the future with confidence.
- > **Activating:** we strive for and call for responsibility and engagement.

Our sources of inspiration are the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 5 Ps – People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnership. We have added a 6th P: the P for Poincaré. It stands for our humanist values, critical thinking and the philosophy of free research. It is inspired by the French philosopher of science, Henri Poincaré, from whom we have borrowed the motto 'thinking must never submit itself to anything other than the facts themselves'. The 6 Ps resonate perfectly with the ideas of our urban engaged university.

The 6 Ps are backed by numerous ideas, projects and programmes. We have collected them at [www.theworldneedsyou.be](http://www.theworldneedsyou.be). We invite everyone to search for their own purpose and commit to a project, in our engaged hub.

## Getting to work in our Ateliers

The ateliers are the co-creation testing grounds of De Wereld Heeft Je Nodig. There, you can brainstorm ideas for improving the VUB, the world and, of course, yourself in the fields of sustainability, well-being and equality. Subsequently, you can carry out your own ideas. By combining the wealth of scientific knowledge of the VUB with the practice of the Ateliers, we can take on our challenges judiciously. If you wish to commit to a specific theme close to your heart, you're sure to find the Ateliers of De Wereld Heeft Je Nodig to your liking.



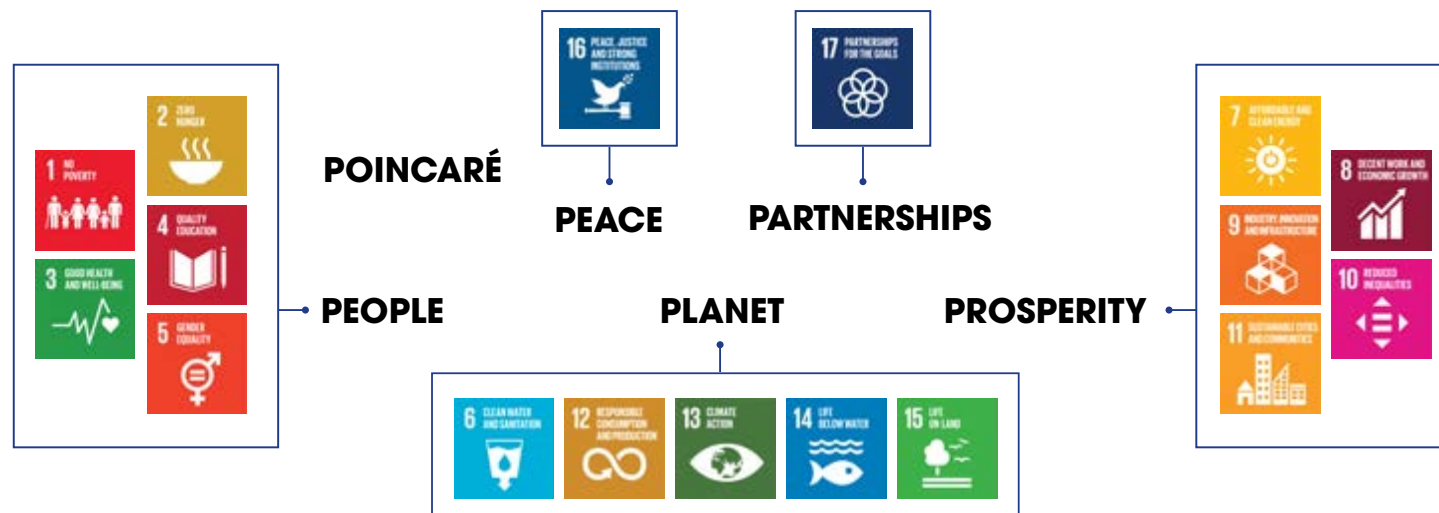
## The SDGs as a compass

We connect the VUB policy with the bigger picture with the aid of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, defined by the United Nations in 2015. We take on our responsibility to our stakeholders and the planet and use the SDGs as a compass.

In 2019, we asked our internal and external stakeholders on which domains the VUB can and should make an impact in the future. SDG 4 'Quality education' was the top priority in their answers. 'Good health and well-being (SDG 3),

'Partnerships' (SDG 17), 'Research' (SDG 4), 'Sustainable urban development with Brussels' (SDG 11), 'Climate action' (SDG 13), 'Renewable energy' (SDG 7), 'Energy-efficient buildings' (SDG 9) and 'Inequality' (SDGs 5 and 10) are priority topics for our university. These priority topics are all embodied in our policy and our daily operations.

Throughout the report, we show the logos of the SDGs that are impacted by the policy, and we indicate specific sub-targets where possible.







# MAKING THE VUB FUTURE-PROOF BY 2030

Rector Caroline Pauwels laid the foundation of the current VUB policy with various strategic plans and policy papers. Her goal was clear from the outset: to make the VUB future-proof by 2030. Sustainability, equality and well-being all play a central role in that. The current rector, Jan Danckaert, continues that policy but places new emphases too.

## SETTING OUR SIGHTS ON 2030

The foundation of our current policy was laid during Rector Caroline Pauwels' first mandate that began in 2016. In addition to the rectoral policy plan for 2018-2021, we also developed the General Strategic Plan 2030, which aims to make the VUB future-proof by 2030. That way, we are looking further than the rectoral policy plans, and long-term thinking becomes a component of our operations.

### 5 transversal themes

In the General Strategic Plan 2030, we defined 5 transversal themes that determine our policy:

- > humanism
  - > digitalisation
  - > equality
  - > democratisation
  - > sustainability
- well-being as  
'meta-transversal'



## POLICY PERIOD 2021-2023

With the current rectoral plan, the General Strategic Plan 2021-2024, we continue to build on the General Strategic Plan 2030. We maintain the course, continue the policy roll-out and anchor it in the VUB community.

Based on that vision, the vice-rectorates, faculties and departments have drawn up their own sub-policy plans, which we put into practice by linking concrete actions and projects to them. That way, our day-to-day management is closely linked to our strategy and policy.

## POLICY PERIOD 2023-2026

In the new policy framework, we continue to use our basic vision for sustainability, equality and well-being as a driving force. Some aspects will be refined. At present, the vice-rectorates are preparing the following policy period, which begins in the 2023-2024 academic year.

## 3 ACTION PLANS

As a university, we consciously take social responsibility. We strive for conformity with the legal requirements.

In order to convey sustainability, equality and well-being from the top down, these topics were given an essential place in each of the sub-policy plans. We also launched 3 separate action plans: the Sustainability Action Plan, the Equality Action Plan and the Well-being Framework, based on the transversal themes from the General Strategic Plan 2030. Sustainability is no longer only promoted bottom-up by ad hoc initiatives: it is now woven into our university's entire operations. We implement these overarching action plans and frameworks to further stimulate and connect those initiatives with each other. We regroup the initiatives, reinforce them and position them more prominently. The entire VUB conveys the policy and the accompanying initiatives.



### Policy in motion

We monitor the progress of our policy each year and make adjustments where necessary. We evaluate our achievements and the state of affairs of our strategic goals and projects based on quantitative indicators. We also monitor qualitative indicators closely. We measure the progress of our strategic objectives every 6 months using a dashboard.



# TOWARDS AN ETHICAL UNIVERSITY

Acting ethically and responsibly is inherent in the societal role of a university. Our whole operation starts with due diligence. In the context of sustainability, that means that we map our own negative impact on people and the environment and limit it as much as possible, both in our own actions and in those of our suppliers, our students and our staff. Although the VUB has no transversal theme concerning due diligence or ethical conduct, these topics are woven into all our activities and policy lines. We take an unequivocal position on ethical issues and make our voice heard about what is happening in the world.

## **Code of conduct for the VUB community**

The VUB wishes to be an inclusive university. We strive towards a good and productive working and studying environment and do not tolerate any discrimination, disadvantaging or transgressive behaviour on our campuses. For that reason, we drew up a code of conduct in which we explicitly describe our standards and values. That way, everyone at the VUB knows what is acceptable and what is not.

## **Hazing framework for students**

The new VUB hazing framework was approved in the summer of 2022. It's based on the Flemish hazing framework, but takes into account the uniqueness of VUB student life. The new, practical part of the framework clearly determines who is in charge of the



hazing, how the system works and who can impose sanctions in the event of violations. By including certain rights explicitly in the hazing framework, we want students who want to be hazed to be better protected against physical or mental excesses. For example, a student may refuse specific assignments or, during an activity, request a meeting with a confidential counsellor. The hazing framework is a guide for student associations to ban people who overstep their mark from the hazing, or to suspend their membership temporarily or permanently. It is a living document, drawn up in co-creation with the student associations and one that we regularly evaluate and adjust. You will find the hazing framework, together with other rules for students, in the Student Life Codex.

### Investing sustainably

We support the transition to a low-carbon society by managing our investment portfolios sustainably. We reoriented our investment to ethical and sustainable portfolios (known as ESG mandates) and asked our asset managers to report transparently in accordance with the Ethical Investment Charter. Every asset manager now reports annually about the CO<sub>2</sub> impact of the portfolios under their management.

The transition to ethical and climate-friendly investment portfolios began in 2016. We chose investments such as VUB infrastructure projects that have a major sustainability impact. We replaced investments in companies that harm the climate with sustainable, fossil-free alternatives.

To follow up on our efforts objectively, we set up a method of monitoring and reporting. Since 2016, we check annually whether our investment portfolios are still in accordance with the ESG standards. Since 2022, we have also been checking whether our investments meet the standards of the new European SFDR regulation (Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation). By staying within the framework of the SFDR, we support the climate goals and help realise the European Green Deal.

### Charter for suppliers

We ask our suppliers to take good care of their employees and subcontractors and to respect the law and human rights. That request is formalised in our 'Charter for suppliers'. In the case of infringements, the contract can be terminated. Important focus points are:

- > **Employees and/or subcontractors must always have legal residence.** The VUB reserves the right to cancel any contract or order immediately if it learns that

a supplier employs illegal residents. Other serious shortcomings can also lead to the annulment of the contract.

- > **Suppliers must pay their employees correctly and on time.** If they don't, the VUB has the right to have an order cancelled and the contract suspended until all wages have been paid correctly. The supplier will have to provide proof of that.
- > **Suppliers** – and by extension all their employees and subcontractors – **must respect human rights.** Any direct or indirect breach can be reason enough to cancel the order without entitlement to any remuneration.

### Ethical research

The VUB strives towards high-quality research that is conform to the broadly supported standards surrounding ethics and scientific integrity. For that reason, we created the 'Charter for researchers'. All our researchers must



[Read the Student Life Codex](#)

be up to date with our standards, acknowledge their importance and apply them in their research. During the preparation of a new study, our scientists use the 'Ethical code for the scientific researcher in Belgium' and the VUB's 'Charter for the researcher' to assess whether the research is ethically acceptable.

Are there doubts about the acceptability of a study? Or is advice desirable or compulsory (for example, for a project application or funding)? In those cases, the researcher can consult the VUB's authorised ethics committee. There are 4 ethics committees: the Ethics Committee Human Sciences, the Ethics Committee Animal Testing, the Medical Ethics Committee and the Ethics Committee Dual Technologies, Military Research and Misuse.

The Data Protection Office helps researchers safeguard the high standards in accuracy and ethical behaviour, and protect the fundamental right to privacy. Any suspicion of scientific misconduct in the VUB is dealt with by the CWI (Scientific Integrity Committee).

### **Checklist 'Ethics and international collaboration'**

Internationalisation is becoming increasingly important in university education. That can be seen in exchanges of staff and students, but also in joint education programmes, international networks, the bundling of research capacity and cross-border research collaboration. Respect for human rights is inherent in the societal role of a university.

The VLIR (Flemish inter-university council) recently published a report on human rights. Based on that report, a VUB work group created an implementation document that includes a checklist, which explains the

VUB human rights policy. Researchers and managers can use that 'human rights check' to identify any ethical or legal issues that could result from their international collaborative partnerships.

Since 2021, all new collaboration agreements managed by the International Relations Office (IRMO) contain a clause about the VUB's values and one explicitly about human rights. The VUB values and our vision for human rights have been brought up to date in existing collaboration agreements and Memoranda of Understanding.

In response to the human rights check and in line with the VLIR statement, we limited collaborations with some Russian research institutes after they had demonstrated support for the war in Ukraine. In China too, we don't renew contracts if we suspect that the institutes don't pass the human rights check. We always allow existing contracts to continue until the end date, so we don't affect individual researchers. It's important to remain focused on the individual: we don't curb individual contacts, but we do look closely at institutional ones.

### **Ethics communication and training**

Since the 2021-2022 academic year, PhD candidates must take introductory courses on scientific integrity, including the Ethics & Scientific Integrity Track. That learning path consists of several seminars and the use of the online training tool Good Academic Research Practices Tool (Mind the GAP). The e-learning module was developed by the VLIR (Flemish inter-university council) in collaboration with the 5 Flemish universities. It is an English-language tool that describes the various phases of the research cycle, from experimental design





and research data management to dealing with conflicts of interest and evaluating researchers. There is also a focus on the use of personal data (GDPR), the privacy act and ethics.

Each year in December, during the international 'Week of Ethics', the VUB organises its own Ethics Week. It's the perfect opportunity for the entire VUB community to reflect on research ethics in a changing world. During that week, we organise lectures and training sessions for students, researchers and everyone else. In 2022, we discussed the role of intellectual property in research and the work done by the various ethical committees of the VUB and the UZ.

### **Student Refugee Programme**

With the Student Refugee Programme, we aim to give candidate students from all over the world a fair chance of taking up or continuing their studies at the VUB, also if they come from war-torn areas, for example. We offer such students the necessary support and guidance both before and during their studies. For example, there are special welcoming programmes developed with and for refugees. We have also employed multiple staff members with a specific migration background to guide students from various regions.

The unique thing about our programme for refugees are the principles behind it: the individual monitoring of students, taking into account the complexity of their situations, with diversity and transparency as a core philosophy.

In past years, more than 700 refugees have contacted the VUB. About a third of them actually enrolled in a study programme. Many refugee students come from Syria, Palestine, Turkey and Iraq. Since the war in Ukraine broke out, many Ukrainian students found their way to the VUB. Refugee students generally choose English master's programmes in Engineering Sciences, Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences and Solvay Business School.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, 52 students in the refugee programme are enrolled for a full study

programme. A further 20 candidates are taking part in InCAMPUS, a preparatory programme that prepares refugees for official enrolment next academic year.



### **Preparatory programme for refugees**

Refugee students cannot always enrol straight away. For example, because they don't meet the language requirements for the study programme, or because they need help getting fully prepared for and accustomed to the Flemish educational system and student life at the VUB. In such cases, they are given the chance to take part in the InCAMPUS programme, a one-year programme that consists of language lessons, subjects from their future study programme, monitoring, psychological support and cultural orientation sessions.

There are 20 students enrolled in InCAMPUS in the 2022-2023 academic year: 17 from Ukraine and 3 from Syria.

# 3 ACTION PLANS

**T**o evolve resolutely into a future-proof university, we are implementing 3 action plans for the period 2021 to 2024: the Sustainability Action Plan, the Equality Action Plan and the Well-being Framework. These plans form our strategy to make a difference for people and planet, as VUB community.

At an operational level, the plans fall within 3 different policy areas at the VUB, with the corresponding mandates and responsibilities. We have also drafted an implementation structure for each action plan, so we can firmly anchor sustainability in all its aspects – environment, equality and well-being – in the future operations and organisation of our university.



If you'd like to find out more about the actions taking place at the VUB, go to [www.vub.be](https://www.vub.be).





### Our transversal themes for the future

The transversal themes of well-being, equality and sustainability will be the driving forces behind the development of the partial policy plans of the vice-rectorates. The prioritised policy lines of the academic policy group demonstrate how we will approach it:

- > **Learning education** naturally covers our educational offer but also the VUB's own learning attitude. That learning attitude ensures that our range of education and the support of our students and teaching staff stay agile in a rapidly changing environment. We offer our teaching staff enough support to keep their teaching both urban and engaged. We support the teaching and the student facilities, always bearing in mind the needs of our diverse student population. We strive towards equality for and inclusion of every student and staff member.
- > Engaged **research** must find its way into a broader society to support the VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous). Science must be **open, accessible, clear and easy to find** for policy makers, citizens and the new generation.





# ACTION PLAN N 1



## TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY



Waldo Galle,  
academic coordinator  
sustainability



**“A great many VUB community members have gathered knowledge about sustainability challenges and solutions based on their social engagement and through free research. They share that knowledge through education, and we, students and partners, become future-proof. But to build a better world, we, as an organisation and a community, also have to put that knowledge into practice. That will be a process of trial and error.”**

## OUR IMPACT

We aim to be a flourishing university and, at the same time, to organise our operations within the planet's boundaries. For that reason, we work actively on minimising our own contribution to the climate crisis. Our goal is to be a climate-neutral (net zero) organisation by 2050. With our research, through our study programmes and by anchoring care for the planet in our operations, we inspire our staff, students, partners and other social actors to join us in realising systemic change.

## OUR GOALS

We translate our ambitions for the planet into 3 strategic goals:

- > We accelerate our sustainability transition to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on which we have a material impact.
- > We will become a learning organisation where everyone acquires and shares knowledge and skills about and for the green transition.
- > We walk the talk: we do what we say and say what we'll do. By daring to anchor successes in the field of sustainability and, at the same time, offering room for learning and experimentation, we position ourselves as a university that commits, in our words and actions.

## IN PRACTICE

Our Sustainability Action Plan covers 4 domains:

- sustainable education
- sustainable research and valorisation
- partnerships and commitment
- sustainable and climate-friendly business operations



# SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Sustainable development will be an inseparable part of our range of education, by way of themed subjects or through integration of sustainable knowledge and skills in the rest of the curriculum (SDG 4.7). In order to achieve that, we work across the various disciplines (SDG 17). We aim to give all VUB students the chance of acquiring knowledge and competences with regard to sustainability and of actively committing to a sustainable society. The VUB campuses and the cosmopolitan city of Brussels form an excellent learning environment for that. We are also creating a programme on sustainable development for teaching staff.

## Sustainable development for every student

We are expanding our range of study programmes on sustainable development, making it more visible and improving accessibility. In a first stage, we map the existing subjects. We aim to make it easier for study programmes to incorporate sustainability subjects in their range of courses. Curriculum reform is an excellent place to start firmly anchoring the range of sustainable study programme components. We are also testing the effect of new learning paths about sustainability in existing study programmes. Sustainable development has many aspects, and we aim to offer that rich array of perspectives through our study programmes.

In the future, we intend to label our courses so that our students can more easily find sustainability courses. You will find the various sustainability subjects now on our VUB website.

## Interdisciplinary subject for tomorrow's changemakers

The major challenges of our time demand a thorough system change. With the subject 'Sustainability: an Interdisciplinary Approach', we are encouraging students to become tomorrow's changemakers. We give them the knowledge, tools and skills they need to think and act sustainably.

The subject contains inspiring lectures by guest lecturers, interactive workshops and practice-oriented group work. A total of 24 study programmes have already incorporated this subject into their list of electives, but every student can take it as an elective subject. By opening it up to all areas of study and focusing on collaboration, we create a diverse group with differing insights. That way, the students learn to consider different perspectives when searching for answers to the wicked problems of today and tomorrow.



[Read about our sustainability subjects](#)



### **Sustainability programmes for teaching staff**

We encourage our teaching staff to become more professional in dealing with sustainability. We do that by developing a specific selection with inspirational sessions, for example, sharing good practices. And teaching staff can also count on the Community Engaged Research and Learning expertise centre (CERL) to continue their development in urban engaged education. We encourage lifelong learning about sustainability by also offering subjects on sustainability in the form of micro-credentials, for example.

**“We encourage lifelong learning about sustainability. We encourage our teaching staff to become more professional in dealing with sustainability.”**



### **Online course ‘Teaching for and about sustainability’**

By incorporating sustainability in our selection of classes, teaching staff gain more insight into the solutions and acquire important skills to actively shape those solutions. The online learning module ‘Teaching for and about sustainability’ offers teaching staff a basis and raises the quality of our sustainable education. They can work through 3 chapters at their own pace: ‘Context and distinction of terms’, ‘Sustainability in teaching practice’ and ‘The educational institute as a

sustainable learning and living environment’. The content is based on scientific research and supplemented with examples from the professional field.

The learning module results from an intensive collaboration between the 5 Flemish universities and Duurzaam Educatiepunt (Sustainable Education Point), the Flemish government’s expertise centre for education on sustainability. We strive to have participation in CERL advisory groups of at least 30 lecturers and researchers and 50 social stakeholders by 2030.



# SUSTAINABLE RESEARCH AND VALORISATION



Our research into sustainability challenges will be expanded and elevated to a higher level. We deploy the results of our research projects optimally in preparing our society for a climate-neutral future. We are undertaking concrete actions: encouraging free and future-oriented research and focusing on specific sustainability research that contributes to achieving all SDGs. Our first challenge is to map all that research so we can interconnect the right actors.

## Measurable and dynamic sustainability research

High-level VUB scientists search at local and international levels for social and technical responses to systemic challenges such as climate change and damage to biodiversity. Our research projects provide us with knowledge,

expertise and tools to make the planet and our society more sustainable and resilient. On the campuses too, researchers and students carry out test projects, for example on the sustainable restoration of post-war heritage buildings or biodiversity and climate adaptation.

There are a great many researchers and research groups at the VUB working on aspects and sub-aspects of sustainability. By stimulating collaboration, we valorise that expertise and find solutions to systemic issues. We chart how we can tear down the partitions between the various research domains and try to accelerate the sustainability transition by applying interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research approaches. We also look at which research projects focus on the SDGs. That way, we can put researchers from various disciplines in contact with each other.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMITMENT

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



A sustainable university is created from within its community. By bringing together students, staff and other interested parties and giving them a voice, we accelerate and enrich our process of sustainable change (SDG 16.6). We encourage collaboration – both in the university and with external partners (SDG 17.7) – and closely monitor our Sustainability Action Plan (SDG 17.14).

### Working together for a sustainable world

We encourage participation, both to acquire knowledge and to generate enthusiasm for sustainable development in the VUB community. Through such projects as De Wereld Heeft Je Nodig (The World Needs You), students and researchers throw their weight behind creating a better environment, equal rights, improved living conditions and freedom of expression. DWHJN organises several think tanks titled 'Atelier Planeet' on the future of the VUB and our planet. In the Green Impact Project, students and staff commit to a more sustainable department or faculty. The GreenTeam, an alternating team of students that is part of a larger European network – The Green Office Movement – expands those operations.

We can only fully anchor our sustainability policy in our operations if we all pull together. The academic coordinator for sustainability, the Sustainability core group and the GreenTeam facilitate that anchoring and bridge the gap between the staff and student initiatives and the policymakers. To accelerate the transition to a sustainable university, they collaborate actively with external partners, including local authorities, such as Brussels and the municipalities, fellow universities, civil society and other organisations and the private sector. The various teams share their knowledge and exchange best practices.

### Monitoring and communicating

We monitor our policy, so we also monitor the Sustainability Action Plan. Based on concrete indicators or KPIs, such as our carbon footprint, we monitor the actions in the plan and make adjustments where necessary. And we strive to meet external standards of quality: take, for example, the Brussels Good Food Standard, or the MSC certification for our restaurants and catering. The student restaurant on the VUB Main Campus is the first MSC-certified institutional kitchen in Belgium. When there are building projects, we adhere to the Belgian standard for sustainable construction, GRO. And we assess the goals in our Climate Action Plan against science-based targets (see p. 75).



# SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Our business operations are driven more and more by data. This report is an excellent example of that. As well as existing environmental performance indicators, with data from the past 10 years, we also use new indicators to measure aspects such as sustainability and climate-friendliness.

2021 and 2022 were transitional years and this report is also a transitional one. We are giving an overview of the environmental performance indicators we have defined up till now for measuring the progress of our actions. We are still working hard on establishing ambitions and formulating extra KPIs.

## On the way to net zero

Year after year, we reduce our university's total emissions with, as final goal, net zero emissions. That means that we reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases as much as possible and compensate for those we still emit. That's our climate strategy in a nutshell.

In order to achieve that goal, we drew up a Climate Action Plan (SDGs 13.2, 13.3). It contains science-based targets and all ongoing and planned actions, with a reduction potential for each of them. The Climate Action Plan demonstrates that it is technically and

“With this Climate Action Plan, we are drawing up clear goals to limit global warming to 1.5°C. We are sticking to that threshold. In fact, with the efforts made by the entire VUB, the prioritising and additional funding, we were able to exceed our goals in our direct emissions.”

*Waldo Galle, academic coordinator sustainability*

operationally feasible to achieve the 1.5°C goal for Scopes 1 and 2 (see explanation p. 32). For Scope 3, we will be charting in 2023 which measures we can take to achieve our goal.

As a university, we are expected to set an example. So we hope our climate actions will also catch on with our stakeholders. For example, we make it clear to our suppliers that we expect them to strive for net zero too. That way, we reduce our indirect climate emissions at the source.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



[Climate Strategy](#) | [Climate Action Plan](#)

## Scope 1, 2 of 3?

In setting up our Climate Action Plan, we charted all the greenhouse gases we emit, both our direct emissions (Scope 1) and our indirect emissions (Scopes 2 and 3).



**Scope 1:**  
the **direct emissions** of greenhouse gases on our campuses through the use of fuels, gas and the release of refrigerant gases.



**Scope 2:**  
the **indirect emissions** of greenhouse gases through the consumption of purchased electricity that was produced elsewhere.



**Scope 3:**  
all **other indirect emissions**, mainly from:

- mobility, in particular, commuting and the international travel of staff and students;
- production of purchased materials such as equipment, ICT hardware, materials, chemicals, consumables, food for the student restaurants etc.;
- waste processing;
- construction and renovation of buildings and paved surfaces;
- investment portfolio.

The subdivision into scopes stems from the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.

# Belgian Alliance for Climate Action

## Belgian Alliance for Climate Action

Efforts by companies and organisations are crucial if we are to reduce the global emissions of greenhouse gases. So the VUB has affiliated itself with the Belgian Alliance for Climate Action (BACA), a national initiative that invites organisations to set up ambitious climate plans. The goal is to set science-based targets. Those are scientifically backed and measurable CO<sub>2</sub> reduction goals with which we bring our operations in line with the primary goal of the Paris Climate Agreement: restricting global warming to 1.5°C. For the VUB, that means that we measure our carbon footprint and subsequently take measures to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as much as possible.

## Where are we today?

In 2019 – the year before the COVID-19 pandemic and consequently our reference year – our climate footprint was 78,444 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. 80% of that falls within our scope 3 emissions. Investments, purchases, equipment and buildings are responsible for 22%, 21%, 9% and 29% of our emissions, respectively. We aim to realise a total reduction of 59,700 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2030, with a remainder of 23.9% compared to 2019. We hope to reduce our emissions (Scopes 1 and 2) by a minimum of 46.2% in small stages of 4.2% per year. That includes an expected 20% university growth between 2019 and 2030. For Scope 3, we strive to achieve a reduction of 18.4% by 2030. After 2030, we will close the remaining gap to reach net zero in 2050.

### KPIs

#### Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents:

- Scope 1, 2 en 3

source: Baseline 2019 and Climate Plan version 1

### On track

We are on track to reduce our own direct emissions (Scope 1 and 2) by more than 50% by 2030. Several of the most impactful energy guzzlers on the campus have already been renovated: the laboratories in Building G and our swimming pool, which is now one of

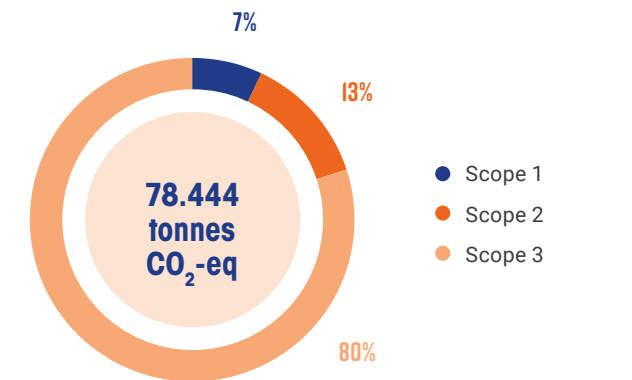
the most sustainable in Europe. Other buildings have also been renovated, which will result in savings and more comfort.

In addition, renovation of all techniques for heating and cooling and the underground heating grid is ongoing, and cogeneration will be installed in 2023. None of these measures are visible, but they do drastically reduce our emissions. We are phasing in the replacement of all lighting with LED lamps and installing solar panels on all the roofs stable enough to hold them. That has already significantly lowered our electricity consumption. Since 2020, we purchase green electricity to supply the remainder of our demand.

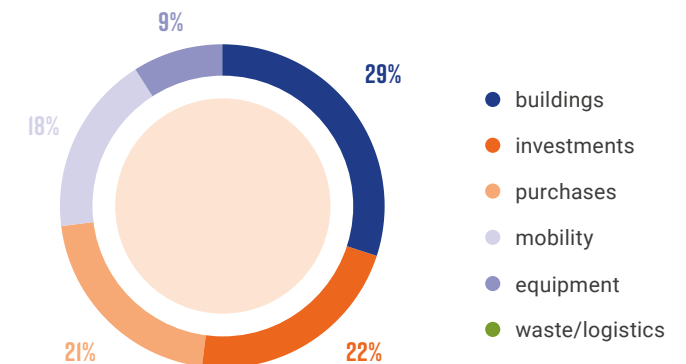
The emergency measures we are taking to tackle the energy crisis also contribute to an accelerated reduction of emissions. For example, we limit the temperature in our buildings to 19°C during the working week.

### Beyond the campus too

We still need to take significant steps regarding the emissions from activities that don't take place on our campuses but for which we are nonetheless responsible – such as air travel by staff, or the purchase of materials and services. The purchase of such items as ICT and laboratory materials has a large footprint. The first of those steps is to collect better data on our purchases so that we can take effective measures. We are also involving our suppliers by requiring sustainable and climate-friendly goods and services. More measures will follow in the future.



Our climate footprint (2019, tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-eq)



Our climate footprint broken down by source (2019)





3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



13 CLIMATE ACTION



## Mobility as a major challenge

The impact from commuting to and from our campuses must be reduced (SDG 13.2). The VUB mobility policy uses the STOP principle: the letters stand for the Dutch words for walking, cycling, public transport and only as a last resort, the car. The most important cornerstones of our mobility policy are promoting cycling, free public transport for staff and infrastructure measures (SDG 11.2). In addition, we lobby government and transport companies for easily accessible campuses, safe roads and high-performing public transport. We aim for safe, completely accessible, pleasant campuses tailored for every pedestrian and cyclist (SDG 3.6).

Since 2002, we have been drawing up a company mobility plan every 3 years, in accordance with federal and regional legislation. The aim of the company mobility plan is to reduce traffic and its impact on the environment. We set up transport plans for the Main Campus in Etterbeek and the Health Campus in Jette. A 3-yearly mobility survey charts the personal travel behaviour of staff and students.

A large part of our carbon footprint comes from passenger transport (18% in 2019). We're taking on the challenge with our Mobility Policy 2030 and our business travel policy, Travel ABC. We are working on creating accessible campuses with safe traffic, electric mobility, sustainable alternatives for cars and fewer journeys. Working independently of time and place is one of the most effective measures for drastically lowering emissions and keeping the work-life balance healthy. We are also reducing the impact of international trips, for example, by holding more online meetings, taking the

train instead of a plane and compensating for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the case of unavoidable plane journeys.

## Where are we today?

### KPIs

- Modal split of staff and students to the VUB Main Campus and VUB Health Campus
- % off-campus working by staff
- Number of staff injuries due to accidents during the commute

*source: mobility survey among staff in October 2021 and students in December 2019*

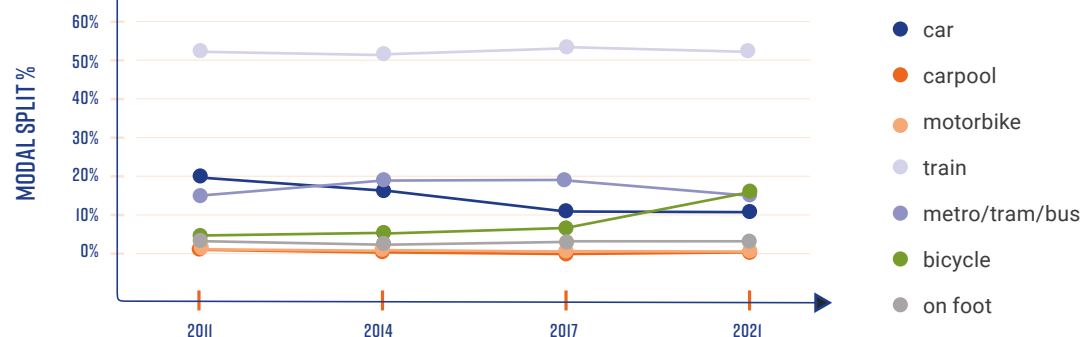
## Sustainable modal share

There must be a sustainable modal share at the VUB by 2030. So we encourage the use of bikes and introduce measures to lower the use of cars. We also facilitate the switch to electric vehicles in the vehicle fleet. We are currently working on a charging strategy for the VUB campuses, searching for a balance between charging needs and the charging capacity of the electricity grid.

The mobility surveys completed by our staff (2021) and students (2019) reveal that our actions are paying off. Both the Main Campus and the Health Campus score better in sustainable mobility than an average company in Brussels with comparable accessibility.



Modal split of staff (commuting) to the Main Campus (2021)



\*29% of staff at the VUB Main Campus (BMC) took part in the mobility survey.

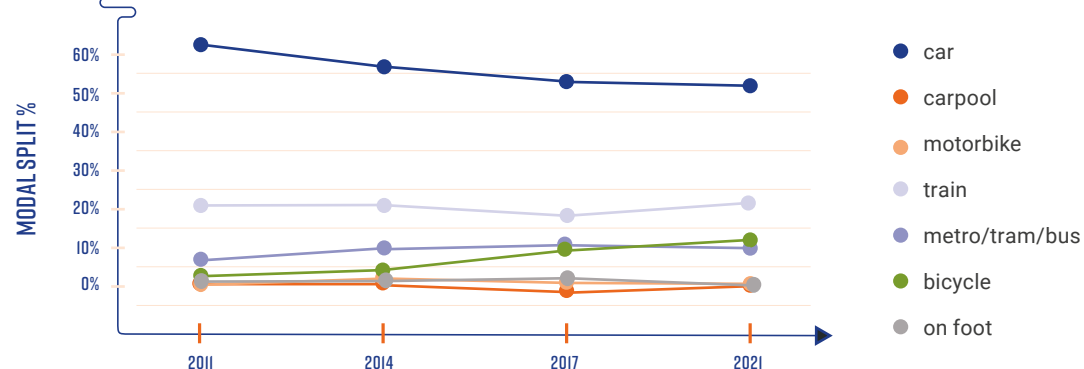
### How do our staff travel?

Only 11% of our staff travels to the Main Campus by car. That's roughly half the average at companies in a comparable accessibility zone (21%). The percentage travelling by train continues to fluctuate around 53%. That high number can be explained by Etterbeek Station being within walking distance of the campus. The number of cyclists has doubled in 4 years to 16%.

At the Health Campus, the share of cyclists has visibly increased. That's partly thanks to the improved infrastructure around the campus. We aim to decrease the percentage of staff members that comes by car from 53% to 42% by 2030. A third of staff members commutes by public transport, of which 22% mainly uses the train and 10% travels by metro, tram or bus.



Modal split of staff (commuting) to the Health Campus (2021)

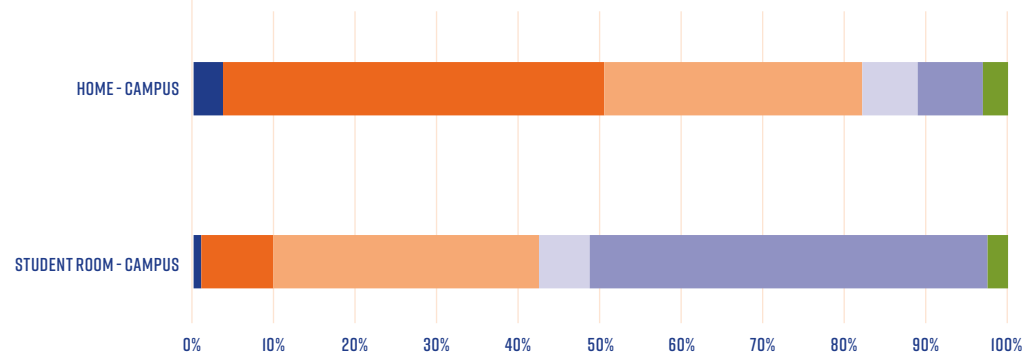


\*20% of staff at the VUB Health Campus took part in this survey (December 2021).

"Thanks to the improved infrastructure, the share of cyclists has increased."



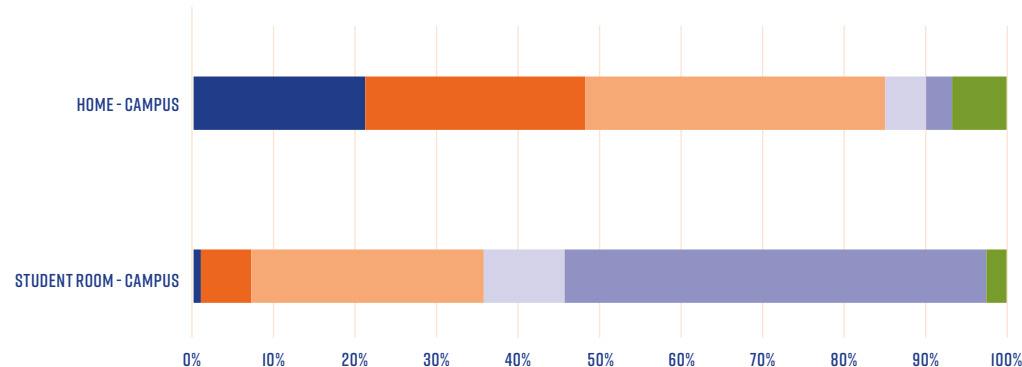
Modal split of students (student room-campus vs home-campus trips) to the Main Campus (2019)



- car
- train
- metro/tram/bus
- bicycle
- on foot
- other



Modal split of students (student room-campus vs home-campus trips) to the Health Campus (2019)



- car
- train
- metro/tram/bus
- bicycle
- on foot
- other

## How do our students travel?

In the results from the mobility survey among students, we differentiate between students in accommodation and those who commute, given that there is a significant difference in travel behaviour.

Among students in accommodation who take classes on the VUB Main Campus, there has been an evolution towards travelling more by metro, tram and bus and walking, compared to 2017. Half of the students in accommodation walk from their student rooms to the campus. Of course, much of the accommodation is on campus or in the vicinity. Another third comes by metro, tram or bus, 9% by train and 6% by bike – only 1% of students in accommodation come by car.

Among commuting students, we see a similar modal split to that of our staff.

There is also a similar pattern at the Health Campus. More than half the students in accommodation walk to the campus, where the student houses can be found. Only 1% of the students in accommodation comes by car; 35% comes by public transport, and 10% by bike.

Public transport is the most popular means of travel among commuting students. 27% comes by train and 37% by metro, tram or bus. The share of the car (21%) is significantly higher than in the survey about the Main Campus (7%) but still lower than among staff on the Health Campus (53%).





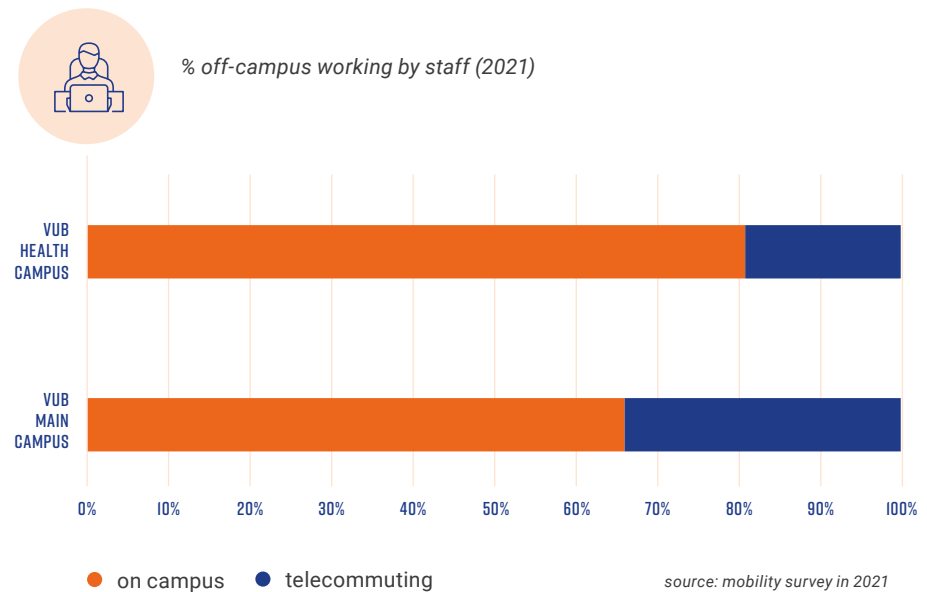
### Working from home and online education

The VUB is a commuting university: most of our staff and students live outside the Brussels-Capital Region. The long commute to the university is a challenge, in terms of both well-being and the environment.

During the general COVID lockdown, our university went fully digital. That resulted in an accelerated implementation of digital platforms for online education and remote working. The principle is to reinforce face-to-face instruction with digital support. That is why we are working on creating blended

learning: the integration of face-to-face and online education.

In 2021, VUB Health Campus staff worked on campus an average of 4 days a week. For the Main Campus, it is 65%. Remote working is permitted if the position or nature of your work allows it. Employees who do that structurally receive an allowance. Remote working is one of the most effective measures for lowering our emissions. Providing enough support remains essential, as does maintaining social contact and finding the right balance between working online and offline.



### Safe and accessible campuses

Promoting safe and active mobility – both to and on our campuses – is a priority. In 2021, 5 work-related accidents on and around our campuses resulted in injury. We want to get that number down to zero. Since 2022, we have also been keeping track of accidents involving injury on our campuses.

The VUB campuses of the future must be completely accessible, safe, pleasant and tailored to the needs of every pedestrian and cyclist. The circulation of various campus traffic flows must run safely and clearly. In order to design the campus traffic-calmed and traffic-safe, we are drawing up circulation plans as part of the broader campus master plans.

### Travel ABC

In addition to a number of classic mobility measures (working from home, more use of public transport, cycling etc.) we also encourage our staff to travel according to the Travel ABC:

- > **Avoid:** can you replace that business trip with a virtual meeting?
- > **Book an alternative:** travel by train if the journey will be less than 6 hours from Brussel-Zuid, and it's preferable to travel by train if the journey takes between 6 and 8 hours.
- > **Compensate for your emissions:** you are strongly advised to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by business trips.

The first statistics (still incomplete)<sup>1</sup> show that few flights are taken for short trips. Our staff chooses to travel by train when the journey takes less than 6 hours.

In 2021, we signed a framework contract with a travel agency that plans our business trips in line with our policy. In addition, we are consulting the travel sector about a good, clear overview of international train journeys.



<sup>1</sup> Post-COVID travel, monitoring only started in September 2022.





### Green and energy-efficient infrastructure

We are building the VUB campuses and buildings according to the latest regulations. And we're doing that as sustainably as possible (SDGs 11.3 and 9.1). That way, we reduce the impact of our energy consumption for heating and electricity on the climate and make ourselves less dependent on fossil fuel sources (SDG 13.2). We are taking energy-saving measures, scaling up our own generation of renewable energy (SDGs 7.2 and 12.2), and looking into the possibilities of thermal energy storage systems.

Just as with all other raw materials, we are careful with water and drinking water. For the VUB, sustainable water management means that from the design phase, we consider efficiency, track down leaks, replace tap water where possible with collected water and rainwater, and actively monitor the rainwater management plan (SDGs 6.4 and 6.5).

We have a targeted blue-green adaptation plan to prepare our campuses for extreme weather conditions – a consequence of climate change – and raise their ecological value. We're removing paving where possible and opting for suitable plants to temper the heat-island effect (SDGs 2.9, 13.1 and 15).



## Where are we today?

### Energy consumption

In 2021, we consumed 92.6 GWh of primary energy. In the summer (June, July and August) of 2022, we significantly reduced gas consumption by 47% compared to the summer of 2021. This is a saving of 880 MWh of natural gas or 180 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. We replaced some guzzlers with more energy-efficient alternatives or simply switched them off. We also carefully checked whether heating systems were 'active' due to poorly closing taps or heating loops.

Since 2020, we have been meeting our electricity needs with 100% green electricity. By 2030, we will generate 10% of that electricity with our own solar panels. In 2022, we generated roughly 450 MWh of electricity through our solar panels; that's approx. 3% of our total electricity consumption. We aim to double that amount in 2023.

In the coming years, we plan to place a CHP installation in the boiler room, cover all our roofs with solar panels,

### KPIs

- Primary energy consumption/m<sup>2</sup>
- Energy consumption versus own generation
- % green electricity
- m<sup>3</sup> tap water use
- The biotope surface factor
- The degree of paved surfaces
- The number of rare protected species that live on and near our campuses (5-yearly study)
- % rainwater compared to the total amount of water use

install energy-efficient LED lighting, replace our outdated ventilation system with modern and efficient installations and optimise our heating and electricity grids.

In 2022, we started with new energy monitoring, measuring more data and in more detail. It is therefore impossible to compare the statistics from 2021-2022 with the data of previous years.

### Water use

The statistics for 2021 reveal a big difference in use per m<sup>2</sup>, also between buildings with similar functions (student accommodation, for example). In total, 87,748 m<sup>3</sup> water was used at the VUB, an average of 341l/m<sup>2</sup>.

We completed the rollout of an installation for detecting leaks at the end of 2022. The system uses machine learning to signal abnormal consumption so we can trace leaks sooner.



### The university as living lab

The VUB also deploys its grounds as living labs: places for innovative research in close collaboration with various stakeholders. For example, the Willy Van Der Meeren student accommodations are used as a testing ground for developing renovation strategies for Brussels' post-war heritage. The emphasis is on energy, sustainability and cost-efficiency.

Our ambitions framework for water management and biodiversity is rooted in campus-wide living labs projects. A transdisciplinary team, with members from VUB INFRA, the Biology and Hydrology specialist groups and the core group of Sustainability, collaborated on the installation of rain gardens and promoting biodiversity. We also chalked out ambitious outlines to prepare our campuses

for the damaging consequences of climate change, such as more intense summer precipitation, more heatwaves and longer periods of drought. Brussels-Capital Region has many asphalt surfaces, with densely populated districts and a combined sewage system. So the green VUB campuses also offer much potential for buffering precipitation in extreme weather conditions.

At present, we are looking at ways of refining the data collection for the use of tap water. That makes it impossible to compare the statistics from 2021 with those of the previous years.

In the framework of our blue-green vision, we strive towards the use of 20% rainwater in the total amount of water used by 2030.

### Climate adaptation

Extreme weather conditions and natural disasters such as flooding occur increasingly frequently as a consequence of climate change. We have drawn up a blue-green vision with various goals to defend ourselves against the consequences of climate change. For example, we aim to raise the biotope surface factor – the proportion of our surface favourable to the ecosystem to the total surface area of our campuses – by 20% by 2030. We also intend to allow no more than 25% of impermeable asphalt. In addition, we will monitor the number of rare protected species every 5 years to gain insight into the evolution of biodiversity on our campuses.

“We have drawn up a blue-green vision containing various goals to defend ourselves against the consequences of climate change.”



### Zero-waste culture

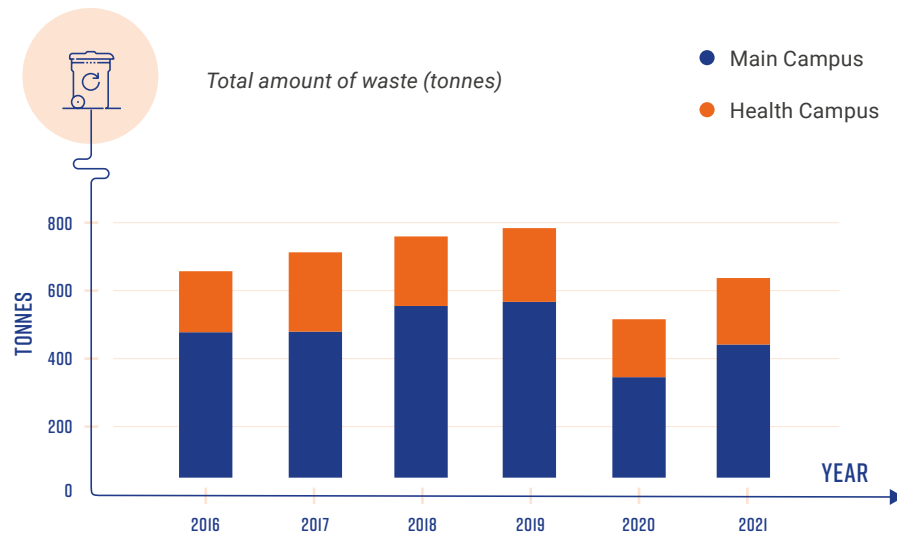
In the regional programme for a circular economy, the Brussels-Capital Region includes goals for waste. We adhere to the region's vision, so we are continually taking steps to raise the degree of separating waste (SDG 12.5) through modifications to the infrastructure and by means of communication (SDG 12.8). For example, we have placed additional waste sorting points. And in 2020, we communicated clearly the separating instructions for our staff and students and made them available in the form of waste separation lists. Any waste that cannot be separated on campus is collected in the VUB container parks.

### Where are we today?

#### KPIs

- Total amount of waste (tonnes)
- % separated waste compared to total amount of waste

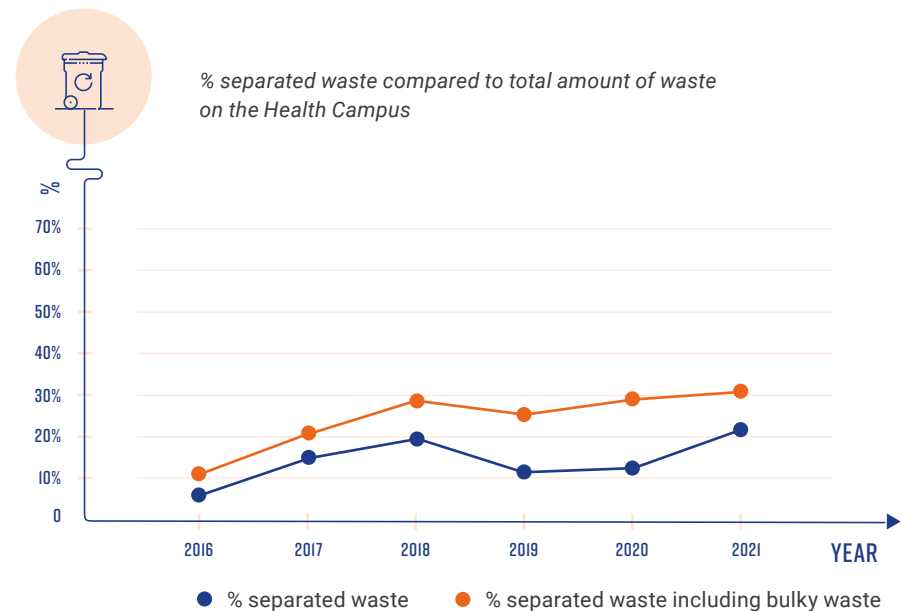
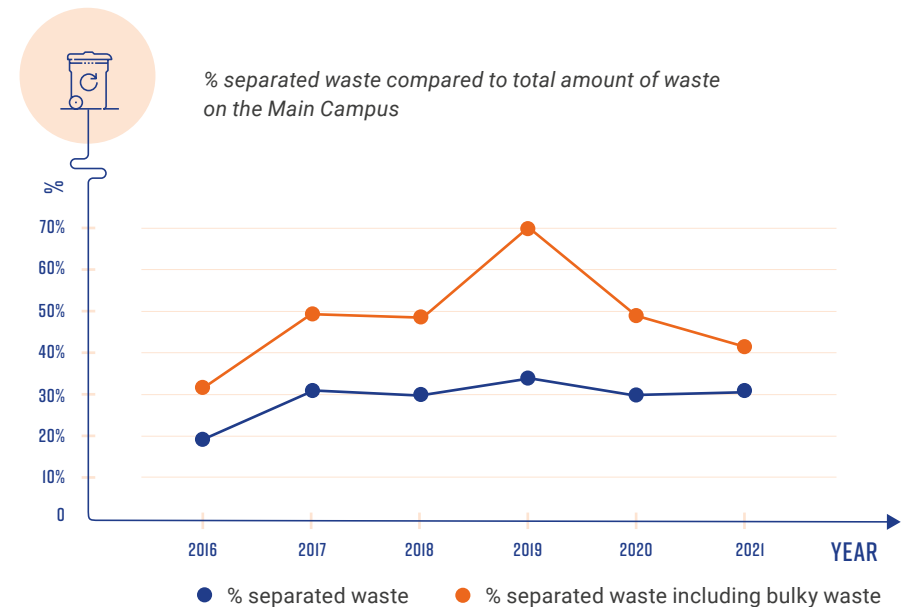
The total amount of waste remains relatively constant throughout the years, despite the university's growth. The sharp fall in 2020 resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic; there were far fewer staff and students on the campuses in that period. In 2020, we collected 443 tonnes on the VUB Main Campus and 187 tonnes on the VUB Health Campus. Although there are initiatives on reducing the total amount of waste (see case study p. 43), the priority in 2021 and 2022 was on streamlining waste separation.



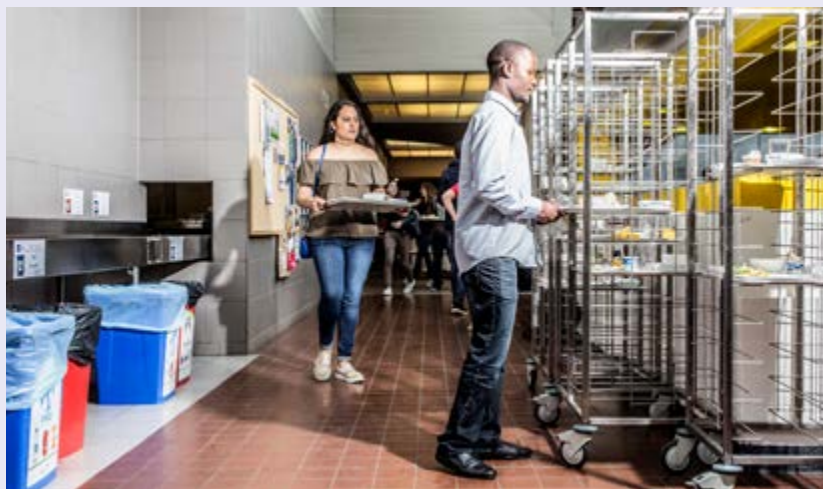
Brussels is striving towards 70% of waste being separated by 2030. We're taking on that target value.

As the separation share is lower on the VUB Health Campus (23%, not including bulky waste) than on the VUB Main Campus (31%, not including bulky waste), we are launching new initiatives there in particular. And that is paying off: the percentages of non-hazardous waste substances collected separately rose on the Health Campus from 5% in 2016 to 23% in 2021.

On the Main Campus, the share of separated waste has fluctuated around 30% since 2017. In 2019, we saw a peak of 69.8% for non-hazardous waste, including bulky waste. Renovation work was going on in that period, which led to more recycled bulky waste.







### Waste separation lists

To achieve the EU goals concerning waste, we are firmly committed to avoiding, separating and recycling waste flows. So the GreenTeam, the HSE and Infrastructure services joined forces to develop clear waste separation lists. They bundle all essential information concerning waste separation, per VUB campus, and also mention which waste flows are collected for good causes. Through an annual campaign by our GreenTeam, we continually encourage our staff to separate waste as their contribution to our goals.



### Zero-waste take-away

Disposable products such as plastic spoons and individually packaged cream for coffee have been phased out at all VUB restaurants. They were replaced by sustainable alternatives such as sauce dispensers, glass sugar pourers, milk jugs, stainless steel coffee spoons and china bowls. Hot drinks such as coffee, tea and soup are served in reusable Billie cups. You pay a small deposit for a Billie cup which you get back straight away when you hand it in. Of course, you can also keep the beaker and reuse it yourself. This way, we avoid around 40,000 disposable cups a year on the VUB Main Campus alone.

We banished disposable packaging for take-away meals too. The VUB on the Main Campus now offers meals 'to go' in reusable and fully recyclable Kio-Boxes, for which you pay a small deposit. On the Health Campus, take-away meals are still served in biodegradable packaging, but reusable containers are the next step.



## The place to be for sustainable food

For some time now, our largest student restaurant has been the place to be for sustainable food (SDGs 12.3 and 14.4). More than 20% of the customers choose vegetarian or vegan, and all takeaway meals are waste-free. We encourage all campus users and partners to warm to the idea of sustainable food (SDG 12.8). We are aware of our purchasing power as a university, so as many of our purchases as possible are ecological, climate-conscious and socially responsible (SDGs 12.1, 12.2 and 13.2).

### KPIs

- Number of restaurants at VUB with the Good Food label
- % of meals sold

## Where are we today?

The student restaurant on the Main Campus and one externally run bar, Bar Pilar, have been awarded the Good Food label. Our other restaurants and external partners are currently going through the process of applying for the label in 2023.

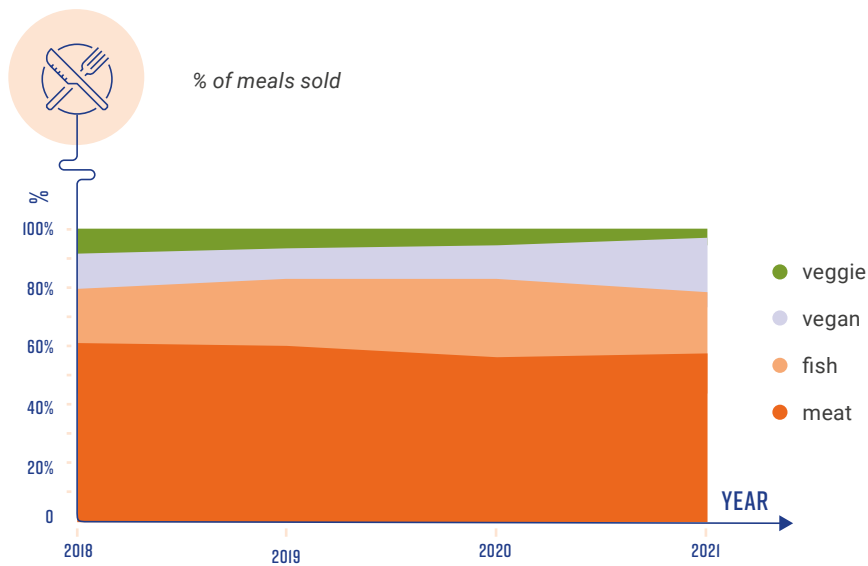
In 2021, 5% of meals sold were vegetarian and a good 20% vegan. During the Low Impact Weeks, that take place 3 times a year, the share of vegan and vegetarian meals rises to 66%. During such weeks, the standard menu is reversed: there is then one meat menu and all the other meals are vegan or vegetarian.





### Proud of our Good Food Canteen label

The student restaurant on the VUB Main Campus in Etterbeek was awarded the Good Food Canteen label twice. The label is awarded to commercial kitchens and canteens that consider sustainable production and consumption and the processing of food leftovers from meals sold. Using local ingredients, seasonal vegetables, products from fair agriculture and sustainable certified fish, the VUB restaurant conjures up varied and sustainable menus. The plant-based range has also grown considerably in recent years. Vegan meals are becoming increasingly popular; every meal contains at least 200 grams of vegetables.



### Investing in the future

By managing our investment portfolios sustainably, we support the transition to a low-carbon society. Since late 2022, 100% of our capital has been placed with ESG funds, in accordance with the Ethical Investment Charter. The dialogue on better CO<sub>2</sub> reporting on our asset managers' portfolios is ongoing. We invest in sustainable companies that are consistent with VUB values. We are replacing investments in companies that are harmful to people and planet with sustainable, fossil-free alternatives.







# ACTION PLAN N 2



WORKING  
ON INCLUSION



Karen Celis,  
academic coordinator for equality

“We want to continue working on diverse and inclusive curricula, creating opportunities for excellent students and staff, collect and distribute knowledge about disadvantage and inequality and make the university a place for study and work where everyone feels represented and respected and is able to flourish. The inclusive university is the university of the future.”

## OUR IMPACT

We strive for equality for and inclusion of every student and staff member, while respecting their unique differences. Each student and staff member, regardless of background, disability, gender or sexual preference, must feel equally involved in and supported by our university. Discrimination, disadvantaging and transgressive behaviour are not tolerated. That's how we attract talented students and staff from all over the world, with differing backgrounds and characteristics. That inclusive approach makes our education and research more valuable and socially relevant because we reflect society. Diversity in education and research ensures a broader view of the world. The future is inclusive.

## OUR GOALS

We summarise the ambitions of our Equality Action Plan in 6 strategic goals

- > We develop a bias-proof recruitment policy and strive for equal career opportunities, focusing on a healthy work-life balance.
- > Our classrooms and curricula offer room for diversity, anti-racism and decolonisation. We look closely at themes and voices that are now lacking.
- > We support students from under-represented groups on their journey to the academic world and the employment market.
- > We work on creating inclusive campuses with an accessible work and learning environment where everyone is treated with respect.
- > We build our community and participation within the VUB. We also collaborate with external partners on equality, equivalence and inclusion themes.
- > To measure is to know. We monitor multiple diversity parameters and are further expanding that monitoring.



## IN PRACTICE

Together with the academic coordinator, we are preparing our university for the future by putting cultural changes in motion. To achieve our inclusion goals, we translate them into practice-oriented actions, in which we involve the entire VUB community.

Our strategic actions for more equality are:

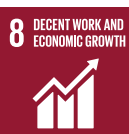
- > an inclusive staff policy
- > inclusive education
- > research on equality and inclusion
- > inclusive campuses and opportunities for all
- > community and engagement





# AN INCLUSIVE STAFF POLICY

Our recruitment policy must be objective and inclusive (SDGs 1.b, 5.1 and 5.5, 8.5, 10.2 and 10.3). We organise bias training courses to teach avoidance of prejudices, and to spread and anchor inclusive recruitment and promotion practices throughout the whole university. We developed training courses about professional recruitment procedures, with a checklist and practical examples to teach recognition of prejudices. Our HR equality advisor, affiliated with our personnel department, supports the faculties in this.



## KPIs

- Bias training in every faculty
- % women in faculty evaluation and promotion committees
- % women in central governing bodies
- % female (FTE) independent academic personnel (ZAP) in total and per faculty
- % female bachelor and master students per faculty
- Leaky pipeline
- % women (FTE) in the new ZAP recruitments
- % women (FTE) in independent academic personnel promotions
- % women's salary compared to that of men – pay gap

## Where are we today?

In order to follow up on the effectiveness of our actions and training courses, we monitor multiple diversity indicators. For example, we monitor the gender balance in our staff and the representation of women in the central administrative bodies, and we carry out a pay gap analysis every 2 years. In each of our 8 faculties, bias training sessions have taken place, organised by our HR equality advisor – one of the action points from the Equality Action Plan (2019). In addition, for the past few years, we have also achieved our target for every faculty's evaluation and promotion committees: a representation of at least 1/3 of the under-represented gender. It is important that women take on executive tasks and participate in the decision-making on such matters as the promotion of fellow professors. Diverse teams do ensure well-balanced decisions. In the future, we would like to monitor more diversity indicators, such as migration background.



### Focus on inclusive leadership

Managers can play a significant role in preventing implicit bias about a certain social group. Already, leadership programmes are focusing on interculturality and internationalisation, but there is still much to be gained in the areas of gender and other aspects of diversity. That is why the Flemish universities have decided to develop a common training module on diversity and bias, together with an external expert. The aim is to have the various institutes further integrate the 'Inclusive Leadership' module into their existing leadership programmes. Embedding the topic in the standard programmes should ensure that a broad group of future leaders will take the subject to heart. The initiative is currently being rolled out.

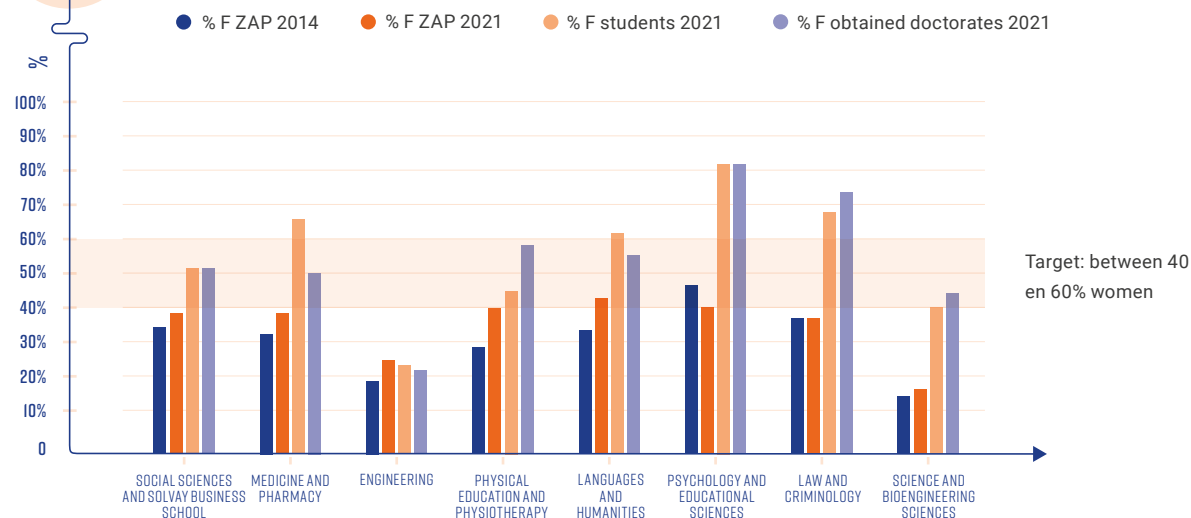
### Gender gap diminishes, but too slowly

There has been a positive evolution in the proportion of women among independent academic staff (ZAP). At the same time, there are big differences between the faculties. For example, the proportion of female ZAP in the hard sciences is clearly lower, and we saw little improvement there between 2014 and 2021. Ultimately, we would like to see between 40 and 60% of women in every faculty. In 2021, the humanities and social sciences reached the lower limit of 40% female (or very nearly).

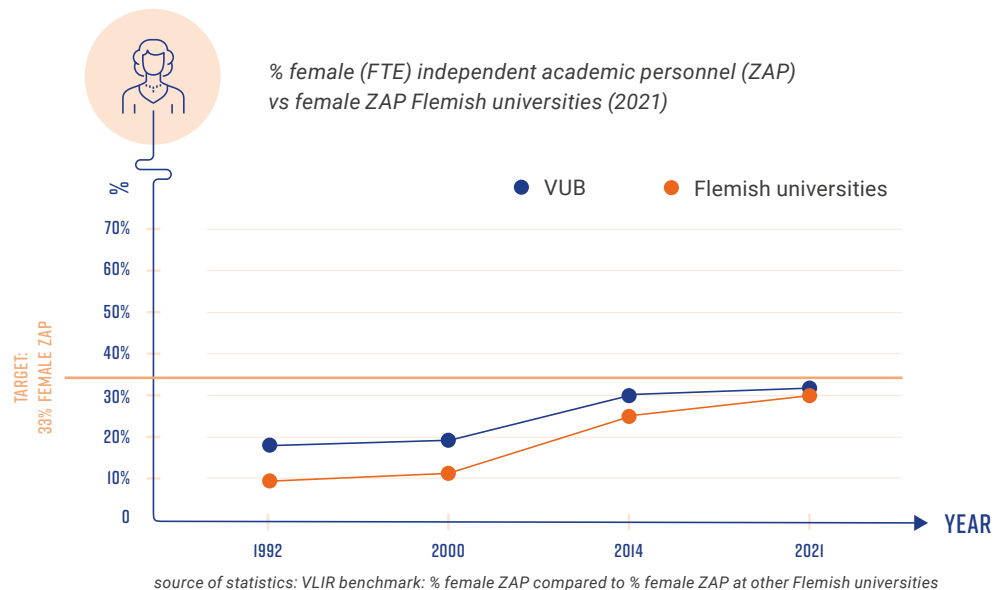
In some faculties, the low number of female professors is in stark contrast to the high percentage of female students and female doctoral students. We must ensure that women find their way into academic positions. In 2021, only 27% of the newly appointed independent academic staff was female (based on FTE). Also, only 3 women were appointed to a full-time tenure track, as opposed to 10 men. That number was slightly more in balance the years before.



% female independent academic personnel (ZAP, 2014 vs 2021), students (2021) en obtained doctorates (2021) per faculty



Historically, the VUB is a forerunner in this area, but we have seen a stronger increase in the numbers of female professors at the other Flemish institutes in recent years, thereby eliminating our lead. In the meantime, we have reached the minimum lower limit of 1/3 female ZAP but that is nowhere near the finishing line. It is still absolutely not a reflection of the proportion of women starting a PhD.



### The phenomenon of the leaky pipeline

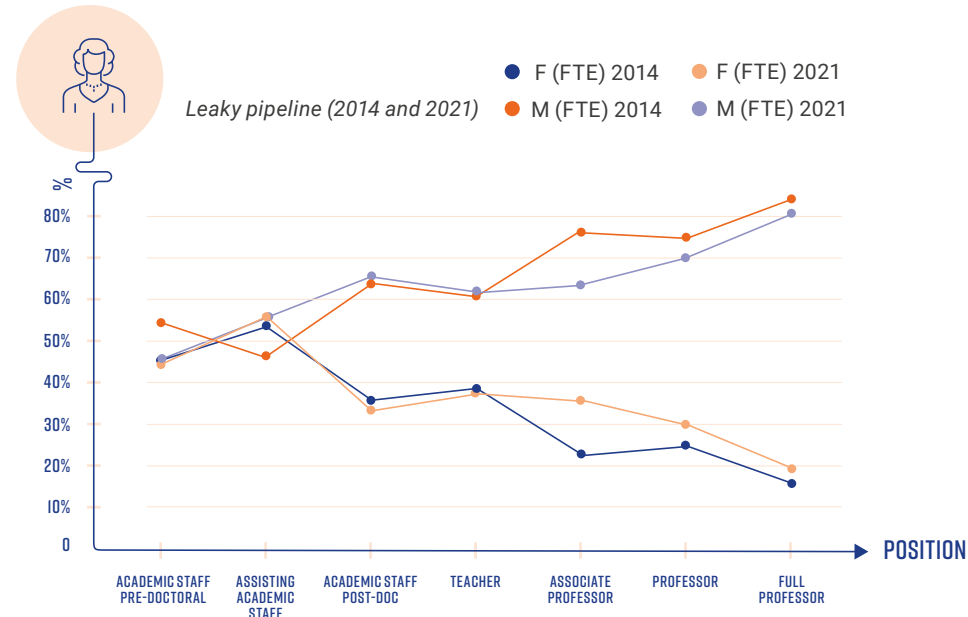
The leaky pipeline is a persistent phenomenon in the academic world: with each step up on the academic ladder, more women drop out to the advantage of their male colleagues. This is the case at the VUB too. A complex interplay of reasons, including bias, lies at the root of this. Our goal: to restore the balance. To achieve that, we need a policy on both the inflow and the through-flow. The Gender Action Plan in 2014 signified the start of a gender policy at the VUB.

Across the various grades (from associate professor to professor and onwards), 49% of promotions in 2021 went to women (based on FTE), which is positive. The principles of a new evaluation and promotion policy were also approved.

### No pay gap for the same position

In 2020, the average male earned roughly 13.8% more than the average female at the VUB. That can be mostly explained by the fact that men are better represented among the older staff members and the better paid positions. If you look at the salaries of men and women in the same positions, there was no indication of a significant pay gap in 2020 in none of the statutes. This remains true for 2022.

It's possible at the VUB to precisely determine the gross monthly salary based on the position, the grade (or pay scale) and seniority, ensuring that men and women in the same positions are treated equivalently in the case of promotion to a higher grade.





### Recruiting without bias

Implicit prejudices can lead to fewer professional opportunities for certain social groups. For that reason, the VUB drew up a guideline for a bias-free selection procedure. The guide offers tips for every step of the procedure, from putting together the vacancy notice to the job interview. For example, it advises to scan a vacancy notice for gender coding and inclusive language and to distribute vacancy notices through a variety of networks that appeal to diverse groups. The guideline also recommends keeping candidates anonymous, where possible, for an initial selection round and putting enough candidates from under-represented groups on the shortlist. If they are not found, it is worth to consider stopping the procedure and searching for more good candidates. Members of the selection committees are encouraged to support each other and call each other to account for possible instances of bias.





## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Decolonisation is a point of special interest in many educational institutes. The western, white and Eurocentric knowledge that is often central to education leads to distorted and one-sided interpretations of the world around us. Moreover, many students find themselves unable to identify with the subject matter because of that. By diversifying the content of our subjects, we hope our students will take away a broader range of insights (SDG 4.7).

The male, heteronormative perspective is also still standard in many places. There is a shortage of female, BAME and LGBTQIA+ insights at many universities, including the VUB, negatively affecting the commitment, performance and well-being of many students. That's another thing we want to change.

### Learning about equality

We want to have a broad enough range of subjects revolving around equality and inclusion in order to convey ideas on diversity and inclusion to as many students as possible. At present, students can take the 'Gender and Diversity', 'Gender and Islam' and 'Gender, Diversity and Politics' courses, and in 2014, we jointly set up the inter-university master's in 'Gender and Diversity'. In addition, we organised events such as a successful series of lectures on anti-racism and decolonisation with Dalilla Hermans, in 2021. And in academic year 2021-2022, the interdisciplinary elective subject 'Redelijk Eigenzinnig' (Reason and Engage) revolved around racism.





### **Writer Dalilla Hermans teaches about anti-racism**

Dalilla Hermans is a Belgian woman of Rwandan descent. She is a writer, theatre maker and VUB fellow and is known to be one of the most influential figures in the anti-racism debate. In the spring of 2021, Dalilla Hermans gave a series of lectures on anti-racism at the VUB for 5 weeks, all in English. And with that, she provided the first interdisciplinary series of classes on that theme at a Flemish university. In her well-attended lectures, she talked successively about safe spaces, representation, cultural appropriation, institutional racism and activism.



### **'Redelijk Eigenzinnig' (Reason and Engage) turns its attention to racism**

'Redelijk Eigenzinnig' is an interdisciplinary and institute-wide elective subject for VUB students. The students, from a variety of study programmes, reflect together on pressing societal issues and work for one year on a project in collaboration with a Brussels civil society organisation. In 2021, the theme was racism: what is everyday racism? How big is the problem these days? Can we distinguish between 'perpetrators' and 'victims'? And how can we eradicate racism?

During 4 evening lectures and debate moments, the theme of racism was explored from diverse perspectives, together with several internationally renowned speakers: Kehinde Andrews, the very first 'Black Studies' professor in England, Philomena Essed, Olivia Rutazibwa en Naima Charkaoui. In previous years, 'Redelijk Eigenzinnig' had themes such as poverty, the climate challenge, war/peace and migration, always referencing the SDGs, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.





### **Diversity in the curriculum and teaching practice**

In 2019, we worked with a curriculum scan for the first time. Researcher Christil Asamoah analysed the course material of 6 study programmes and engaged in dialogue with our teaching staff and students. The scan results are now being translated into an accessible tool kit for teaching staff to help them bring more diversity into their teaching material and practice. That's how we offer our teaching staff and educational teams support in switching to inclusive and future-proof education.

### **Curriculum scan: how diverse is the VUB course catalogue?**

For years, the curricula and the teaching material at Flemish universities took western, Eurocentric, male and heteronormative standpoints as the starting point. That led to tensions, given that the student population has become more diverse and gender-equal. Non-diverse curricula and teaching practices can have a negative impact: they preserve stereotypes and ensure that female students and students from marginalised groups have more difficulty identifying with the content of the courses.

Therefore, the VUB launched 'Yes We Scan', an exhaustive curriculum scan. The objective: to raise awareness and initiate dialogue about the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in the VUB curricula and teaching practices. The following study programmes took part in the pilot project: Political Sciences, Sociology, Communication Sciences, Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy, Philosophy and Applied Linguistics. Based on the results of the research project, we developed a tool kit that lecturers can use in practice.



# RESEARCH INTO EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

5  
GENDER  
EQUALITY



10  
REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



We want to tackle inequality not only at the individual level, but we are also looking to see what structural effect it has and which systemic changes are needed in society. We expose the structural patterns of disadvantage and privilege with interdisciplinary and intersectional research, and indicate which changes are necessary to achieve a fair and inclusive world (SDGs 5 and 10).

Various research groups at the VUB are working on diversity, equality and inclusion. For example, the RHEA expertise centre focuses on themes such as intersectionality: the importance of gender inequalities in relation to structural disadvantage on

the basis of ethnicity, sexuality, religion, class, age or disability. The BIRMM (Brussels Interdisciplinary Research centre for Migration and Minorities) brings together more than 100 VUB researchers studying themes such as migration, minorities and diversity. The Hannah Arendt Institute, set up by the VUB, University of Antwerp and the city of Mechelen, hopes to connect the scientific knowledge about diversity, urbanism and citizenship with the insights and experiences of policymakers, organisations and citizens. We will continue our commitment to the further integration of gender and diversity in the research at our university.

## Research project on inclusive education

There has been a spectacular increase in the number of students in higher education in recent years. The student population at the VUB doubled in barely 10 years. Where it used to be only young people from wealthy families who were given a chance to study, now roughly 70% of all Flemish young people goes on to higher education after secondary school. Yet, several groups of students remain under-represented, certainly in some study programmes. Not only that, but they

are more likely to drop out when they do take a chance.

The increase in student numbers and diversity demands a renewed approach to inclusive education at the VUB. We are developing a new vision and corresponding policy plan for inclusive education based on the policy formation research project within the Inclusive Education committee. The project is being coordinated by Professor Els Consuegra, a diversity expert affiliated with the teacher training programme, and implemented by researcher Margot Longeville.





# INCLUSIVE CAMPUSES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

The VUB campuses are welcoming places where discriminating, disadvantaging and transgressive behaviour are not tolerated. Our ambition is to be an agent of change, giving chances, correcting inequalities, and in doing so, guiding new generations towards more equality and appreciation of diversity (SDGs 1.b, 4.7a, 5.2, 10.2, 10.3 and 11.3).

## Inclusive campuses

We tackle structural transgressive behaviour, sexism and racism by, for example, optimising our hotline and

the VUB code of conduct. We use bystander training for a variety of target groups to explain what you should do if you witness transgressive behaviour. We also want to commit more firmly to practice-oriented training for staff on anti-sexism, anti-racism and intercultural communication. In addition, we are developing a vision and step-by-step plan for a more accessible, inclusive and trans-friendly campus infrastructure, administration and communication. Lastly, we and our colleagues at the ULB take part in the Belgian Pride parade and make a statement against homophobia and transphobia.

## A new perspective on the smallest room

In 2021, the buildings and surroundings of the VUB Main and Health Campuses were screened for their accessibility for people with a disability. We drew up a step-by-step plan to tackle the identified issues, flanked by a vision text that demonstrates our engagement: we strive towards accessible and inclusive campuses that promote the well-being of our users. All students, staff and visitors must be able to use the infrastructure autonomously and in an equivalent way.

That goes for the toilets on our campuses as well. We had already experimented with designing all-gender bathrooms: toilet spaces where everyone is welcome – both cis and trans people and students who identify as non-binary, queer or gender-fluid. A survey with about 700 VUB respondents revealed mainly positive reactions. But there also appears to be a need for traditional male/female toilets. That is why we are going for a pragmatic mix of separate and all-gender toilets, spread across the campus.



## Equal opportunities

We support students from under-represented groups in gaining their diplomas, but also in their journey towards a career in the academic world or in the employment market. We want to make the doctoral process as inclusive and diverse as possible. For example, students with academic ambitions, strong research skills and a migration background, or a complicated family or financial situation can apply for a PhD writing grant of 30 days to help them work out their doctoral proposal. Also on the agenda: stimulating entrepreneurship in our students.

### KPIs

- % personal characteristics: diversity in the student population
- Number of PhD writing grants
- % job students with a migration background – benchmark in 2023
- % personal characteristics: diversity among VUB job students – benchmark in 2023

## Where are we today?

### Diversity at its best

Following extensive consultations, the Flemish universities agreed in late 2016 to register the characteristics of students enrolling for the first time (also known as first-generation students) according to the same definitions. The characteristics are as follows:

#### Working students

A student with an employment contract for at least 50% of full-time. Students who are self-employed in their main profession or job seekers entitled to benefits are also included.

#### Parents' education

A student from a low-educated milieu is a student whose parents have not completed a secondary school education. A student from a medium-educated milieu is a student whose parents have not gained a higher education diploma but at least one of them has a secondary school diploma.

#### Students with a disability

A student with permanent or long-term impairment of one or more bodily functions as listed in the International Classification of Functioning (ICF)

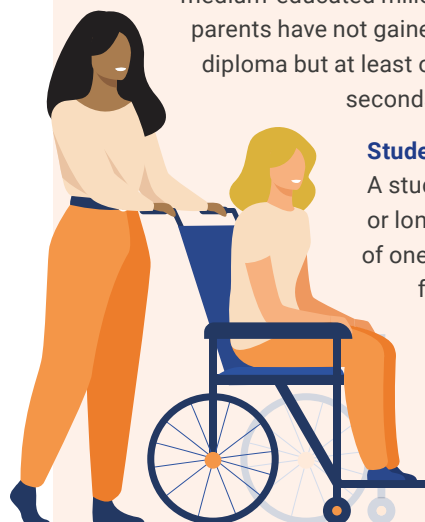
of the World Health Organisation (WHO). This mainly concerns students with a developmental or learning disorder (dyslexia, ADHD etc.) but also students who don't see or hear well or are suffering from an illness such as cancer.

#### Bursary and near-bursary students

A bursary student is one who receives a scholarship from the Flemish Community in accordance with the statutory provisions. A near-bursary student is one who does not receive a scholarship but whose reference income does not exceed the maximum limit for entitlement to a bursary by more than 3,000 euros (indexed).

#### Foreign-language and multilingual students

A foreign-language student is one who speaks a language other than Dutch with all family members at home. A student who speaks another language, in addition to Dutch, with at least one family member is considered to be a multilingual student.



### **Newcomers**

Students with a home address in Belgium at the moment of enrolment who have no Belgian secondary school diploma (as opposed to students with a migration background). They also either don't have the Belgian nationality themselves or they have at least 1 parent or 2 grandparents who did not have the Belgian nationality at birth.

### **Students with a migration background**

Students who have an official home address in Belgium and a secondary school diploma. They also either don't have the Belgian nationality themselves or they have at least 1 parent or 2 grandparents who did not have the Belgian nationality at birth.

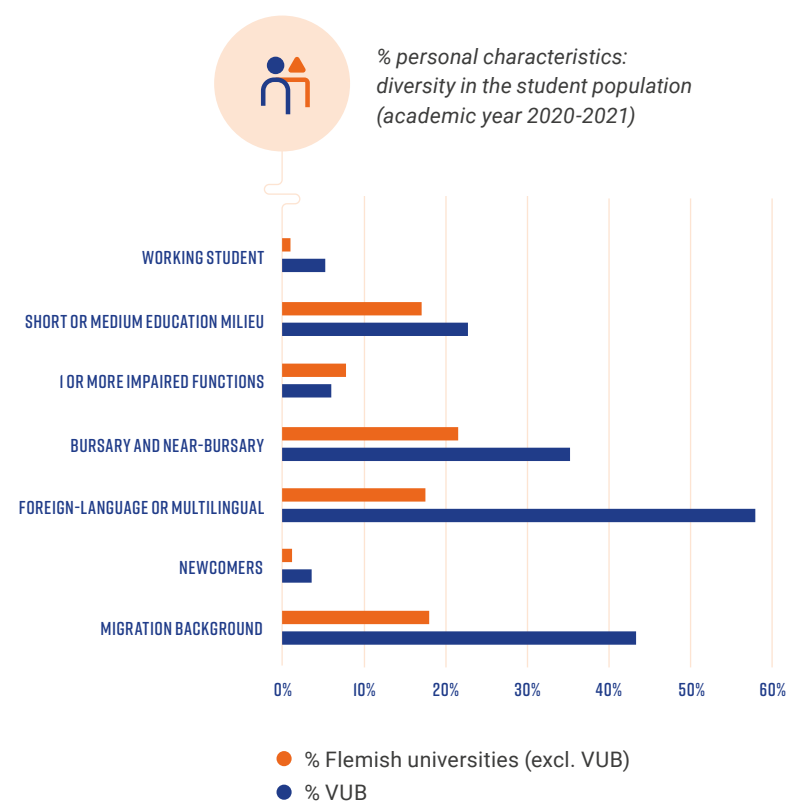
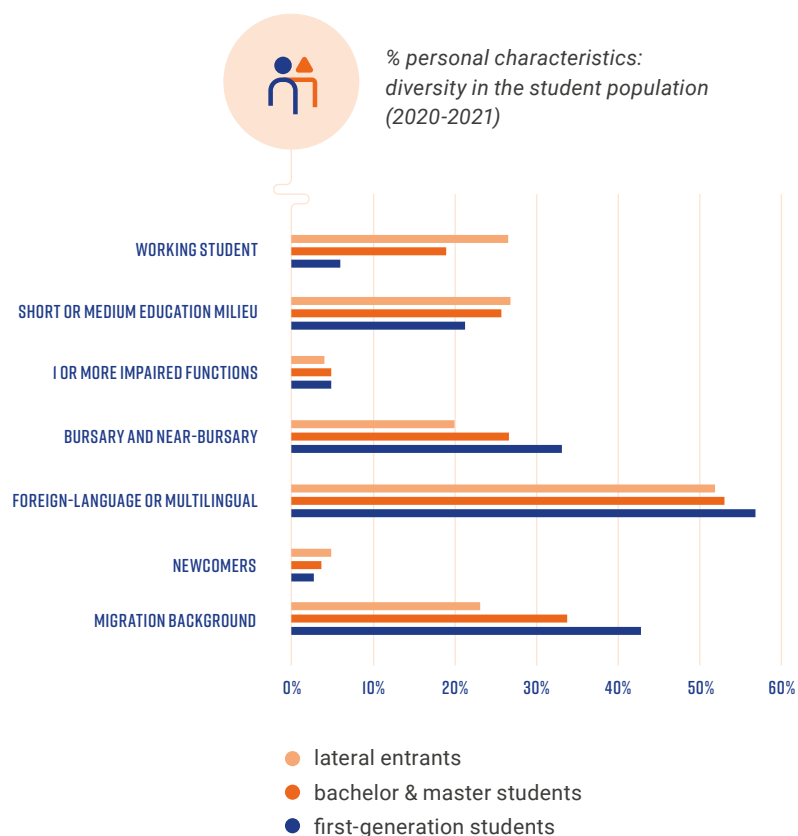


The data from the 2020-2021 academic year shows that the VUB first-generation students form an incredibly diverse group when it comes to predetermined background characteristics. When we look at the entire student population, we also score high in diversity: in the 2021-2022 academic year, 34% of our bachelor and master students had a migration background and a good 53% was foreign-language or multilingual.

The rise in student diversity is a sign that the second wave of democratisation in higher education is in full flow. This benefits all of society, because diversity leads to education and research that unites differing premises and has a broad view of the world.

At the same time, there are challenges. For example, we don't reach the same percentages of certain characteristics for our bachelor, master and lateral-entry

students, as we do for our first-generation students. Students with the characteristics we're discussing here also don't sufficiently go on to our doctoral mandates and an academic career. Our workforce should partly reflect that composition so that students with a migration background have role models. But our university is growing faster than we are able to adapt. In the short term, we aim to make improvements to reflect the diversity of society better, for example through guest lectures.







### Removing barriers for students with ambitions

The VUB is keen to make the doctoral process as inclusive and diverse as possible. Therefore, we offer a PhD writing grant to master students who have doctoral ambitions but find it challenging to write a mandate application due to family or financial barriers. With the writing grant, strong and motivated final-year students can still attempt to launch a research career. Candidates must describe their project proposal and anticipated work plan, communicate their study results (or other academic accomplishments) and provide a letter of motivation for their candidature. Students who belong to an ethnic-cultural minority are even more encouraged to apply. The pilot project was launched in 2021. At that time, we awarded one writing grant.

### Student jobs: incentive for under-represented groups

1 in 3 students at the VUB has a migration background, 4% has a recognised disability, and almost a quarter are international students. More than other students, those 3 groups often benefit from a student job, partly because they're more likely to experience

discrimination in the regular employment market. For that reason, we aim to allocate at least half of our student jobs to students from those under-represented groups. In 2023, we will look into how many students with a migration background, international students and students with a disability are already employed in our services.



### Step-by-step plan for a good job student policy

Student jobs offer young people the chance to gain work experience, accumulate a network and get to know the university from a different angle. Plus, they provide income. The university also benefits from working with job students: they support our staff and expand the connection between staff and students.

To ensure that the VUB group of job students is as diverse as our student population, we will be creating extra job opportunities for students from underrepresented groups in the coming period. We are aiming to allocate at least 50% of our student jobs to students with a migration background, a disability and/or to international students. We drew up a step-by-step plan for achieving that goal. One of the things it recommends is that our services only require job students to have some knowledge of Dutch if that is truly necessary for the job.



### WeDecolonizeVUB: a safe space for everyone

The academic world is built on white, male, heteronormative foundations. Today, we strive towards a diverse and inclusive approach, far from the exclusive, Eurocentric and western standpoint. WeDecolonizeVUB started as a student project at the Universitair Centrum voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (university centre for development cooperation). The project consists of multiple parts, such as a library with books by authors from all continents, social events and an online platform. WeDecolonizeVUB also creates safe spaces for students who have been affected by racism.

## COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT

We encourage students, staff and other parties involved to actively commit to equality and inclusiveness on and around the campus (SDGs 10 and 17). The diversity in Brussels and on our campuses offers various ways of doing that, from student jobs and internships to the projects of our The World Needs You campaign (De Wereld heeft Je Nodig).

### VUBuddy

In 2021, we organised the VUBuddy project. An experienced VUB student shows new students from the same discipline the ropes at and around the university. We put them in touch with each other with the aim of creating a connected university where everyone can find their place.

### VUB Equality Network

We make our commitment tangible through, for example, the VUB Equality Network. It offers the various partners and actors the chance to pool their expertise and develop actions on inclusion and equality. We distribute a newsletter highlighting all the actions and keeping the network up to date with opportunities, interesting information and upcoming events.

At the same time, the VUB Equality Network is a safe place where students, staff and external parties can find each other, exchange experiences and discuss themes such as equality, inclusion, racism and discrimination. It's our desire to change the university from the inside out.

We are further expanding the VUB Equality Network to increase participation by students and staff and use the network as an instrument in policy development.

### Partners

A collective effort is needed if we are to make our society genuinely equal and inclusive, which is why we are committed to co-creation and collaboration with numerous internal and external partners. The VUB forms part of EUTOPIA, for example, a partnership of 10 European universities working together on the university of the future. EUTOPIA aims to outline future-proof education that will tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow. Through the partnership, we accumulate knowledge and build learning communities across the borders of countries, universities, disciplines and cultures. Closer to home, we cooperate with numerous student organisations and initiatives such as WeDecolonizeVUB, which strives to create a safe(r) space for students who experience racism.



# ACTION PLAN N 3



WELL-BEING  
AS A SPEARHEAD





Valéry-Ann Jacobs,  
academic coordinator for well-being

“We are becoming more and more aware of the importance of well-being at our university. However, we are only at the very beginning of a cultural change. Through research into this theme and training about the results, we strive together towards a university that also enables us to grow as people; a safe environment where we can develop into healthy world citizens who feel secure in themselves.”

## OUR IMPACT

The well-being of our students and staff is a priority. It's our duty to take responsibility for that. Our students and staff spend much of their time on our campuses. So we have a significant influence on their mental health and well-being. That's why we want to prevent the risk of burnout, depression or a skewed work-life balance for our staff. At the same time, we are keen to reduce feelings of anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts in

our students. We are integrating well-being fully into our operations and making our university a reference point for well-being, organised as a community of caring. The COVID-19 crisis only reinforced that intention. We are convinced that a safe and healthy working and learning environment strongly benefits the happiness and well-being of our VUB community.

## OUR GOALS

We want to make our university a place where everyone – students, researchers and staff – feels at ease. To that end, we must make sure that everybody knows where to go for help and support.

We strive to support our well-being policy with data so that we can measure our impact. We are firmly committed to research and to building a teaching and self-teaching network for well-being.

We summarise the ambitions of the Well-being Framework in 5 goals:

- > We are working on a policy framework that is integrated into the existing structures. 3 bodies work out the well-being policy and take the initiative: a work group for student well-being, one for staff that will operate together with the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work and an academic network of researchers. The academic coordinators act as a bridge between the groups.

## IN PRACTICE

- > We build an online knowledge platform on well-being where everyone can improve their well-being – with scientifically substantiated tips for well-being, for example. In addition, we raise awareness of aspects of well-being and focus specifically on transgressive behaviour.
- > We work on a data-driven well-being policy, measuring aspects surrounding well-being, for example, and communicating that to the outside world.
- > We are committed to interdisciplinary research into well-being, and regularly assess which aspects of well-being we want to research in more detail.
- > We take structural measures and further expand the care and support services for students and staff. We apply a transparent and performant HR policy and ensure a more individualised career path for our staff.

We take the well-being of our students and staff seriously. We expect every member of our community to propagate our well-being policy. To achieve our goals with regard to well-being, we are working on the following strategic actions:

- > **research into and education on well-being**
- > **knowledge platform and awareness of well-being themes**
- > **bottom-up initiatives for well-being**
- > **a welcoming campus and working environment**
- > **help and compassion**





## RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ABOUT WELL-BEING

Many research projects at the VUB are linked to well-being. It is a strongly interdisciplinary theme that is studied within several domains, including the social, medical and engineering sciences. We aim to further expand our research into well-being in order to improve the well-being of the VUB community and, by expansion, all of society and to achieve a maximum synergy between research and policy (SDGs 3 and 17.7). Interdisciplinary research will play a major role in that.

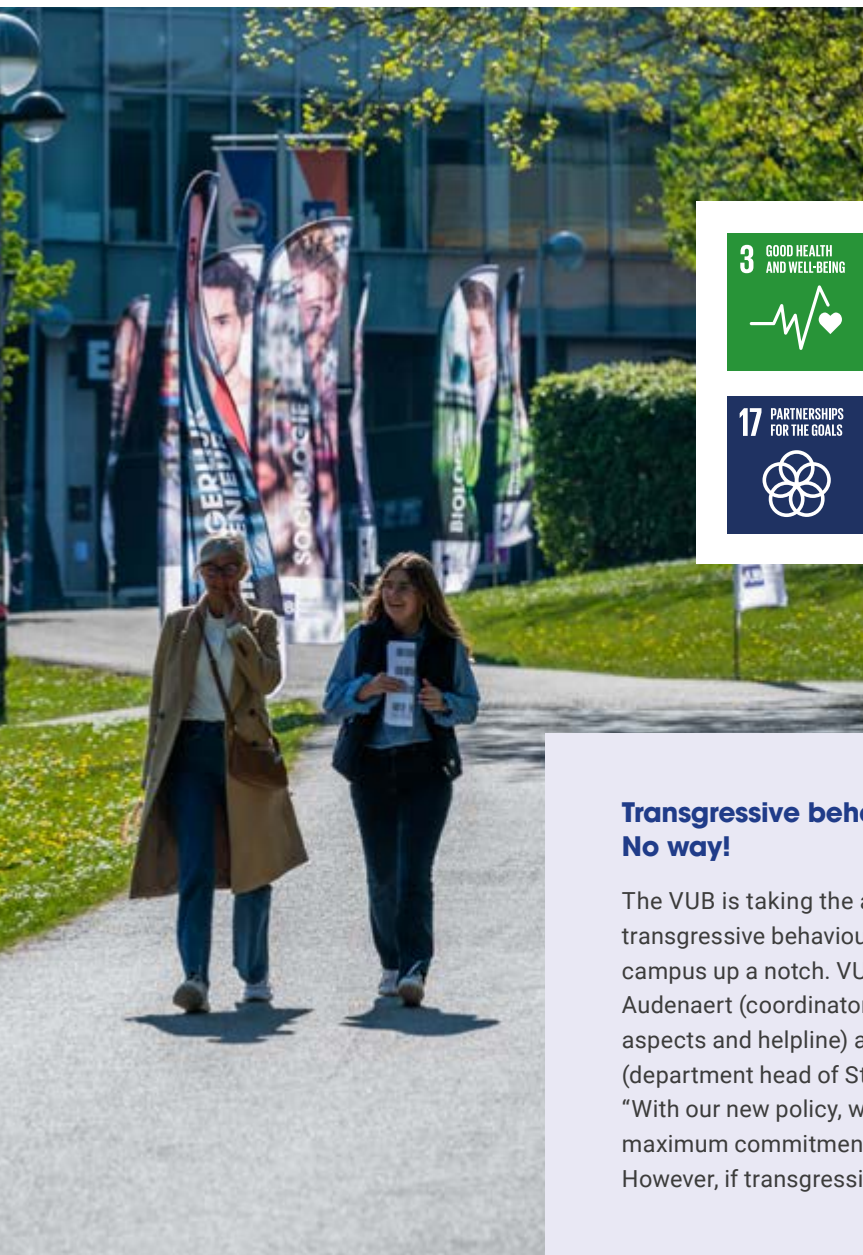
There is increasing focus on both physical and mental well-being in the various study programmes at the VUB. As a university, we want to open up discussion about those topics, break taboos and enter into a dialogue on well-being. To that end, we are developing study programme components that contribute to 'well-being literacy' in our students (SDG 4.7). They can then convey their knowledge about well-being at our university and in their future workplace.

### The better lit, the safer?

Interdisciplinarity at the VUB is even more cohesive if research groups collaborate with the central services. Take, for example, the collaboration between the lighting group MERLIN (a part of MOBI) and the Infrastructure Unit. Together they are studying how we can raise the perception of safety in our car parks by playing with the distribution of lighting.

In cooperation with the Community Ecology Lab, the researchers are also looking at the impact our campus lighting has on flora and fauna and in particular, on the number of insects. After all, insects are a major link in the food chain. By linking it to sustainability and ecology, well-being is being deployed on our campus as a true meta-transversal.





# KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM AND AWARENESS OF WELL-BEING THEMES

As an educational institute, we have a wealth of knowledge about well-being and health themes. We pool that expertise and make it available to our students, staff and anyone else who needs it (SDG 3). By setting up an online knowledge platform on well-being, we aim to keep everyone up to date with developments in that area at the VUB. The platform collects insights and valuable tips from research projects and other information. Important topics include healthy nutrition, sleeping well, a healthy place to work or study, a

healthy living environment, sports and exercise, mental relaxation, help in the case of addiction, dealing with loss or trauma, dealing with stress or burnout, time management and work-life balance.

Using the knowledge platform and open communication, we create awareness of well-being and transgressive behaviour. And through our The World Needs You campaign and Ateliers, we aim to make everyone aware of the social relevance of well-being (SDG 17.16).

## Transgressive behaviour? No way!

The VUB is taking the approach to transgressive behaviour on and around the campus up a notch. VUB employees Elly Audenaert (coordinator of psychosocial aspects and helpline) and Sofie De Smet (department head of Student Affairs): "With our new policy, we're making the maximum commitment to prevention. However, if transgressive behaviour does

occur, we want victims, care workers and others who are affected by it to know they're not alone. That's where the name of our policy comes from – YANA: You Are Not Alone."

"We already had a wide range of organisations, procedures and people at our disposal to tackle transgressive behaviour. But they were not sufficiently coordinated at that time. That's something we want to change. At the same time, it

was necessary as a university to take a strong line and make the VUB community aware of the boundaries that exist: according to the law, according to our policy and according to other people."

Our colleagues Sofie and Elly will continue to shape the YANA policy during the 2022-2023 academic year. You will find more information about transgressive behaviour and professional help on our website.



[Read more about transgressive behaviour](#)



## BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES FOR WELL-BEING

Students or staff members who have launched a project on well-being or who would like to organise an event, will be given a warm welcome. Our well-being policy can only succeed if staff from a number of different departments get behind it (SDG 3). We offer support in the implementation of valuable initiatives and give them a boost. Students and staff members who wish to join in are very welcome. We are also keen to set up research projects with external partners, research institutes, companies and individual researchers (SDGs 17.6 and 17.7).

Interdisciplinary collaboration forms the basis for the bottom-up implementation of our well-being policy. One nice example of that is the Well-being Tables, meetings that took place in the context of weKONEKT.brussels. Diverse groups of students join a table and discuss themes such as stress, perfectionism, racism and discrimination and dealing creatively with well-being. Or take the workgroup on student well-being: it is composed of students, educationalists, people from the student amenities, university psychologists and academics with expertise in nutrition, exercise and physical and mental health.

### Exchanging experiences during a unique dinner

The personal well-being of our students is a priority for us. Now more than ever. So on 30 March 2022, we invited all the VUB students to a convivial and inspiring dinner at the Pilar BOX on the VUB campus. The keywords for the evening were art and well-being.

Lynn Tytgat (coordinator weKONEKT): "The students were welcomed by the curator of

the exhibition 'Hello there, I just wanted to ask how you're doing'. After the reception and a brief introduction, everyone sat down at the table for a vegetarian meal. The guests were given the opportunity to share their experiences in small groups of 5 or 6 students under the supervision of VUB university psychologists. All kinds of topics came up: art as therapy, sleep, procrastination, psychosocial health etc. The students were also given concrete tips and tricks. The evening was rounded off

with a slam performance by artist Lisette Ma Neza. She took her inspiration from the insights, ideas and feelings of the students present."

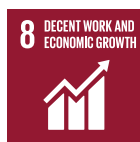
The weKONEKT.tables are a collaboration between weKONEKT.brussels and the PILAR ASAP Festival. The 2023 edition is all about the theme 'Let's talk about sex'.



[wekonekt.brussels](https://wekonekt.brussels)



# A WELCOMING CAMPUS AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT



We are keen to create a welcoming learning and working environment where everyone feels safe and at ease (SDGs 4.7a and 8.8). We are developing some structural measures to deal with transgressive behaviour and a 'boundary-wise' policy on sexually transgressive behaviour within the student community. We are optimising the functioning of our helpline for the entire VUB community so we can take action on reports of sexist or racist behaviour and all forms of bullying and violence more quickly. We're also looking critically at our procedures, communication

and social skills. In addition, we are working on creating safe campuses, improving the well-being of the VUB community (SDG 3) and developing a transparent and high-performing HR policy with the aim of improving the well-being of our staff. We are promoting a more individualised career path by deploying our staff based on their preferences and competences, where possible. We are looking at the work-life balance and implementing a new evaluation and promotion policy for the academic staff (SDG 8.5).

## New hazing framework creates a safe environment

In recent years, the folkloristic element of student fraternity life has been under pressure, both internally and externally, due to a few regrettable occurrences. That has led to various parties at the VUB collaborating on a new VUB hazing framework which contains clear agreements on hazing and initiation rituals. Sofie De Smet, department head of Student Affairs at the VUB: "We took as starting

point the general rules in the Student Life Codex and those of the Flemish hazing framework, which the VUB also signed. We want this new hazing framework to prevent all forms of undesirable behaviour during pledging activities and create a safe environment for all participants without detracting from the traditions."

The agreements apply to all members and non-members who participate in the association's activities or events. The rules are not open to discussion. For example,

physical contact that is experienced as denigrating is not tolerated.

Sofie: "A student association can be a strong social support system for students. That feeling of social connection is an important factor in the students' well-being; they take strength from it. But another precondition of feeling good about yourself is, of course, that you can take part in a hazing activity safely and worry-free. The new hazing framework is fully committed to that."



## Where are we today?

### KPIs

- Number of reports to the helpline (by email)
- Profile of people reporting to the helpline in 2021
- % characteristics of the report
- Number of sessions of and participants in training session 'Boundary-wise leadership and bystander intervention'
- % supervisors took part in these sessions

## Helpline 2.0

The VUB Helpline can be found at the Health and Safety department but operates independently and autonomously. It focuses on students, staff and externals, such as visitors. The helpline is covered by professional confidentiality: all reports are treated in confidence.

In 2020, the number of reports fell as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the number rose again. That was probably because more activities and lessons took place on campus and more staff were working offline again. In recent years, we have reviewed the operations of the helpline. That has enabled a more structural approach to transgressive behaviour. That can be seen in, for example, a faster follow-up and

personal support of those reporting. But we also worked out a preventive policy, set up awareness-raising campaigns, improved monitoring of numbers etc.

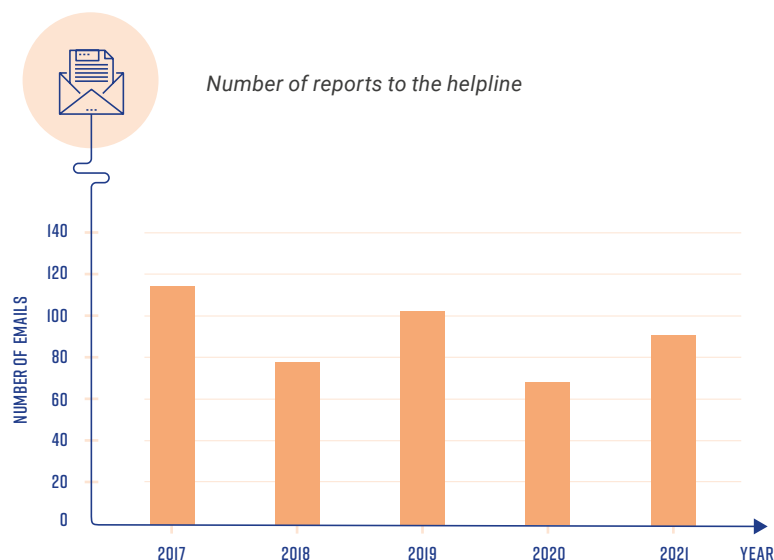
In the coming years, we will be continually evaluating and adjusting the operation of the helpline in the context of our YANA policy (see p. 67).

### Grenswijs (Boundary-wise) policy

With our new policy 'Grenswijs' for student life, we aim to prevent sexually transgressive behaviour. We're doing that by offering students the necessary tools for dealing safely with sexuality. The guiding principle is the Sensoa flag system. Sensoa is the Flemish expertise centre for sexual health. The flag system is a method developed in Flanders to assess sexual behaviour at

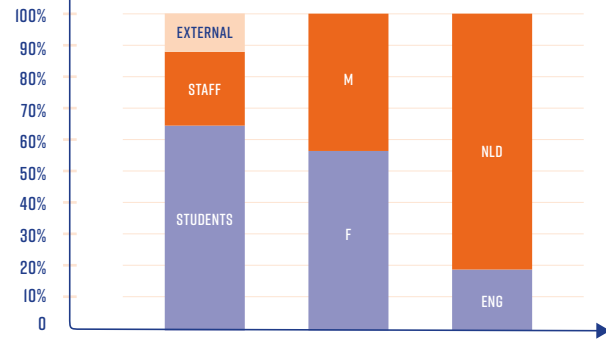
case level and subsequently respond appropriately and limit such behaviour in the future. Grenswijs is a part of our broader policy plan concerning transgressive behaviour, YANA (see p. 67).

We also collaborated with Sensoa late in 2022 on the organisation of training sessions – 'Boundary-wise leadership and bystander intervention' for our staff. How do you react as a bystander when you observe colleagues' transgressive behaviour? There were 5 sessions on the VUB Main Campus and 2 on the Health Campus, in both Dutch and English. A total of 117 managers took part, which is 46.8% of all managers at the VUB. This training session has now been evaluated and adapted, and we're looking at how to reach more employees.

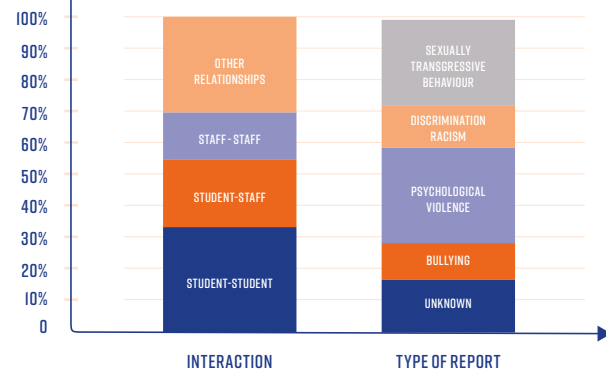




Profile of people reporting to the helpline (2021)



% characteristics of the reports (2021)





## HELP AND COMPASSION

The way you feel has an impact on your life, your studies and your work. We offer help with themes such as stress, burnout, health, addictions and trauma to both students and staff (SDG 3.8). In order to ensure that students can find help more quickly, we are currently working on a better coordination of our range of care and support facilities for primary prevention and secondary help.

In 2022, we collaborated with Attentia on an anonymous well-being survey among our staff. We gauged the general well-being climate

and points of improvement for the VUB as an organisation. All employees were sent a personal feedback report listing their sources of motivation and energy guzzlers and offering concrete tips and advice. Based on the overall results, there were talks about well-being with department heads and managers.

Furthermore, we are working on transparency and clarity about where to go for help with a particular need. This is how we hope to improve the physical and mental well-being of our VUB community.

### Compassionate university

A serious illness, a death or a loss are things you might experience as a staff member or student. And for that reason, the VUB has a place in its community for compassion and grief. We have even signed a declaration of intent to that end, as 'Compassionate University'.

"That makes us a pioneer in Europe," says Sarah Dury, professor of the Compassionate Communities Centre of Expertise. "If you're going through a difficult time and need a sympathetic ear or a pat on the back in addition to the regular and extensive care services on offer, the VUB community is there for you."



## Where are we today?

### KPIs

- Annual Flemish well-being survey for students
- 5-yearly well-being survey for staff
- Annual PhD and supervisors survey

### Well-being surveys for the entire VUB community

As a scientific institution, we find it very important that our well-being policy is data-driven. We measure aspects of well-being in our students, doctoral students and staff by way of periodic surveys and monitor the progress. We share the results with the VUB community and use them as a guideline for our well-being policy. We also include the results of the annual well-being survey by students in Flanders, commissioned by the Flemish Minister of Education, in the development of our policy.

### The well-being of our doctoral students

One of our surveys is the annual doctoral students survey, which we have been organising since 2017. It is a vital initiative to ask doctoral students about their job satisfaction and support them better.

Based on the results, we divide the respondents into clusters: dissatisfied, reasonably satisfied, satisfied and self-confident. In 2021, roughly half of the doctoral

students found themselves in the reasonably satisfied cluster, as in previous years. They feel they are on the right track with their research and estimate their chances of a successful submission as quite high. At the same time, they are neutral about their work environment, their supervisor and the obstacles they face. Another 14.0% is in the satisfied cluster: they are very satisfied with the external elements, such as their work environment and the support and freedom their supervisors give them. A further 15.5% was dissatisfied with their supervisor and working conditions. That group has many doubts and is uncertain whether they will submit their doctorate successfully. The self-confident cluster consisted of 1 in every 5 (19.8%) respondents.

Striking: more than half of the respondents indicated that they felt there were not enough hours in a day. 1 in 3 felt they could never keep up with the work.

### Uncertainty due to COVID-19 restrictions

Since 2020, we have also been researching the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our doctoral students. The 2021 survey showed their well-being was strongly influenced by the COVID-19 restrictions. There are 2 important conclusions to be drawn.

Firstly, there was a great degree of uncertainty. Many doctoral students had to adjust their research plan but often did that without their supervisors' help. Many of them did not know what the final impact would be, while others had problems with their data collecting. Most doctoral students were confronted with delays, but only a few discussed a possible extension of their contract.

Secondly, the respondents viewed the start of the 2021-2022 academic year as a considerable challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that many people prefer a combination of teleworking and working at their workplace. So the 'return to the new normal' was accompanied by serious potential tensions between doctoral students themselves and possibly between doctoral students and their supervisors. Some choose remote working to better combine work and life, while others avoid it because they want more social interaction with colleagues, more frequent contact with their supervisors or because they need research infrastructure. The challenge is to find the right balance, for everyone.

# SDG MATRIX

[illegible]

Action plan on inclusion (action plan 2)

[illegible]

Action plan on well-being (action plan 3)

[illegible]

# TABLE OF PERFORMANCE AND TARGETS

old measuring method

new KPI due to new policy

The table contains the data available on 1 March 2023.

KPI	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Target 203	Frequency of reporting	Note
<b>TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY</b>								
Emissions of CO <sub>2</sub> equivalents: Scopes 1, 2 and 3 (tonnes)		78,444			Available in the course of 2023		2022, '24, '26 etc.	2019 is the reference year for the Climate Plan
Sustainable modal share of staff travelling to the VUB Main Campus (carpool, train, metro/tram/bus, bike, on foot)	88%			88%			3-yearly	Statistics gathered in the context of the 3-yearly Federal Mobility Survey
Sustainable modal share of staff travelling to the VUB Health Campus (carpool, train, metro/tram/bus, bike, on foot)	46%			46%			3-yearly	Statistics gathered in the context of the 3-yearly Federal Mobility Survey
Sustainable modal share of accommodation students versus commuting students to the Main Campus (train, metro/tram/bus, bike, on foot)*		Student room-campus: 97% Home-campus: 94%					3-yearly	Statistics gathered in the context of the 3-yearly Federal Mobility Survey
Sustainable modal share of accommodation students versus commuting students to the Health Campus (train, metro/tram/bus, bike, on foot)*		Student room-campus: 97% Home-campus: 72%					3-yearly	Statistics gathered in the context of the 3-yearly Federal Mobility Survey
% off-campus working by staff				Main Campus: 35% Health Campus: 20%			3-yearly	Statistics gathered in the context of the 3-yearly Federal Mobility Survey
Number of accidents with injury among staff while commuting	26	29	10	7	23		Annually	
Primary energy consumption (GWh)				92.6				
Primary energy consumption/m <sup>2</sup> (MWh)				369	362		Annually	New measuring method introduced in 2021
Energy consumption versus own generation				approx. 3%	No complete data available as yet, number of installations rising	10%	Annually	New measuring method introduced in 2021
% green electricity	100%	mix (= grey electricity)	100%	100%	100%		Annually	
m <sup>3</sup> tap water use				87,748	81,016		Annually	New measuring method introduced in 2021
L tap water use/m <sup>2</sup>				341	307		Annually	New measuring method introduced in 2021
The biotope surface factor						+20%	Annually	New KPI
The degree of paved surfaces						25%	Annually	New KPI
The number of rare protected species that live on and near our campuses							5-yearly research	

\* Of the total number of students who filled in the mobility survey, 32% is an accommodation student and 68% a commuting student.



% rainwater compared to the total amount of water used						20%	Annually	New KPI
Total amount of waste (tonnes)	776	790	518	630	476		Annually	
% separated waste compared to total amount of waste – Main Campus, bulky waste included	48%	70%	43%	49%	42%	70%	Annually	Brussels-Capital Region target value includes bulky waste. Bulky waste fluctuates a lot because it depends on infrastructure works.
% separated waste compared to total amount of waste – Health Campus, bulky waste included	18%	13%	14%	23%	30%	70%	Annually	Brussels-Capital Region target value includes bulky waste. Bulky waste fluctuates a lot because it depends on infrastructure works.
% separated waste compared to total amount of waste – Main Campus, bulky waste excluded	30%	35%	30%	31%	37%	n/a	Annually	Check on KPI for impact of policy and to follow up on actions
% separated waste compared to total amount of waste – Health Campus, bulky waste excluded	17%	13%	14%	24%	31%	n/a	Annually	Check on KPI for impact of policy and to follow up on actions
Number of restaurants at VUB with the Good Food label					2			
% vegetarian and vegan meals sold	Vegetarian: 10% Vegan: 11%	Vegetarian: 9% Vegan: 12%	Vegetarian: 9% Vegan: 13%	Vegetarian: 5% Vegan: 20%			Annually	
<b>WORKING ON INCLUSION</b>								
Bias training in every faculty					Realised	A minimum of 1		
% women in every faculty evaluation and promotion committee				Realised		A minimum of 1 in 3		
% women in central administrative bodies				Realised except for the Academic Council where the percentage of women is 32%		A minimum of 1 in 3		
% female (FTE) independent academic staff in total				33%		A minimum of 1 in 3		
% female (FTE) independent academic staff per faculty				Social Sciences and Solvay Business School: 39% Medicine and Pharmacy: 38% Engineering: 25% Physical Education and Physiotherapy: 40% Arts and Philosophy: 43% Psychology and Educational Sciences: 40% Law and Criminology: 37% Sciences and Bioengineering Sciences: 17%		Between 40 and 60% per faculty		
% female bachelor and master students per faculty				Social Sciences and Solvay Business School: 52% Medicine and Pharmacy: 66% Engineering: 24% Physical Education and Physiotherapy: 45% Arts and Philosophy: 62% Psychology and Educational Sciences: 83% Law and Criminology: 68% Sciences and Bioengineering Sciences: 40%				
Leaky pipeline: % women (FTE) in the various phases of an academic career				Academic staff pre-doctoral: 45% Assisting academic staff: 57% Academic staff post-doc: 34% Teacher: 38% Associate professor: 36% Professor: 30% Full Professor: 19%				

% women (FTE) among new independent academic staff – recruitments				27%				
% women (FTE) among independent academic staff – promotions				49%				
% difference in women's pay compared to that of men – unadjusted pay gap				13.80%				
% difference in women's pay compared to that of men – adjusted pay gap, corrected for position				No significant difference				
% personal characteristics diversity among first-generation students				Migration background: 43% Newcomers: 3% Foreign-language or multilingual: 57% Bursary and near-bursary: 34% 1 or more impaired functions: 5% Short or medium education milieu: 21% Working student: 6%				
% personal characteristics diversity among bachelor and master students				Migration background: 34% Newcomers: 4% Foreign-language or multilingual: 53% Bursary and near-bursary: 27% 1 or more impaired functions: 5% Short or medium education milieu: 26% Working student: 19%				
Number of PhD writing grants				1				
% job students with migration background								Benchmark in 2023
% personal characteristics: diversity among VUB job students								Benchmark in 2023
<b>WELL-BEING AS A SPEARHEAD</b>								
Number of reports to the hotline (by email)	78	102	67	91				
Profile of those reporting to the hotline				Male/female: 56%/43% External parties/staff/students: 12%/24%/64% Dutch-speaking/English-speaking: 81%/19%				
% characteristics of the report (interaction)				Student - student: 33% Student - staff: 22% Staff - staff: 15% Other relationships: 30%				
% characteristics of the report (type of report)				Unknown: 17% Bullying: 11% Psychological violence: 30% Discrimination/racism: 14% Sexually transgressive behaviour: 27%				
Number of sessions and participants training session 'Boundary-wise leadership and bystander intervention'					7 sessions with 117 participants in total			
% managers that took part in these sessions					46.8%			
Annual Flemish well-being survey for students					Results incorporated into our well-being policy			
5-yearly well-being survey for staff					Realised			
Annual PhD and supervisors survey					Results incorporated into our well-being policy			



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