

New KU Leuven Campuses

1. Policy Achievements: 2014-2017

On 1 October 2013, academic programmes (except for the Arts) moved from the university colleges and integrated into the universities. This was a milestone in the history of KU Leuven, resulting in an additional 13,000 students and 1,300 members of staff, more or less.

A number of the policy achievements are related to this integration. The KU Leuven policy in relation to teaching, research and social outreach took on concrete form in the external campuses along with the deployment of each campus's strong points and with consideration for each local situation. KU Leuven opted for integrated programmes based on accreditation as *fully-fledged university programmes* and by involving them in the normal dynamics of quality control within the university. COBRA, the new quality control mechanism applies equally to them as to the other programmes. This means that the university guarantees the quality of these programmes through its own direction. The new and expanded faculties take real responsibility for their integrated programmes and play an active role in carrying out faculty policy through their own specific profile.

But there is more.

The new campuses are *part of the university*. They have joined the university with their own expectations, wishes, expertise, with huge commitment and much enthusiasm. We have put a lot into this over the past few years. With it came a considerable number of policy initiatives and much appreciation for the enormous change that integration meant for the members of staff, also for the members of staff who already belonged to KU Leuven. Our university looks a lot different since integration with its new campuses, its new programmes and new colleagues. KU Leuven immediately strengthened its regional presence and was thus able to further strengthen its social role in the whole of Flanders.

Work was made of *outlining a tenure and promotion policy for teaching staff* and of the criteria for transferring OP3 teaching staff into the ZAP framework in order to create clarity regarding career perspectives. A balance was sought in the integration process between staff members' acquired rights and the possibility of following existing or adapted trajectories within the university. We began by promoting staff members within the integration framework and by defining our own frame of reference for weighting research, outreach and teaching. But this work is not yet complete. The specific situation of a number of staff members – based on their position and competences – requires more adequate insertion as staff members at the university. No one can be left behind. A new negotiation structure for the campuses is in place and the presence of these members of staff on various advisory and administrative bodies has been guaranteed for all locations.

There has been *investment in programmes*: the creation in Brussels of a Master of Business Engineering, the growing success of the bilingual bachelor years in cooperation with Saint-Louis, the preparation of two English language Masters at the Technology Campus in Ghent are a few nice examples.

We have *stimulated research*, created a framework for the integrated programmes – within the policy lines of the faculties and departments they belong to – in which they can continue to work intensely expanding their research in accordance with their own domain-specific profile. Cooperation with the DOC services has opened up new possibilities. The implementation of the ‘Impulse’ Fund (Call 1 and 2) has offered opportunities to strengthen research capacities. The extension of FLOF mandates to include integrated programmes and the introduction of research advisors to the humanities are important stimuli for research.

We have invested in the regional specificity of the campuses. First and foremost, by often being present on our campuses: out of interest for our colleagues’ work and for their ambitions and cares in their new surroundings, which the university is for them. Their regional involvement is an important aspect of the profile of these programmes. Numerous initiatives and achievements illustrated how these programmes are embedded in regional social life: the growing access to forms of cooperation with other teaching institutions, research projects in cooperation with regional players, permanent training initiatives that form a response to knowledge needs in a region, educational schemes for secondary schools, organising and participating in ‘STEM’ initiatives, etc. Industrial Engineers have grafted teaching specialisations and research spearheads onto regional priorities and onto companies active in the region.

The embeddedness of campuses in a region does not stand in the way of how integrated programmes shape their *international profile*. They act as coordinators or partners in a variety of international education and research projects, they work together with universities and institutions abroad (e.g. The Ethiopia Project in cooperation with the British Council, Interreg and Tempus projects), they develop dual degree programmes, or are involved in initiatives in cooperation with the European Cultural Foundation.

Initiatives have to be taken that will lead to an *optimisation of student recruitment and related communication* (visibility as KU Leuven campuses, their own magazine and research newsletter, efforts in relation to infrastructure).

The strengthening of the KU Leuven identity and local profiling of KU Leuven campuses were important goals. Cooperation with the local government and the business world has been further developed and is running more smoothly in many places than before. Particular attention was paid to univocal communication regarding our KU Leuven identity. This can be illustrated by pointing, among other things, to full membership of KU Leuven in the Board of Directors of the non-profit association Br(ik). This association brings together institutes of higher education in Brussels with a view to providing good services (housing, mobility, etc.) for its students. In the past, our campuses in Brussels were only indirectly represented (through partner schools) but now they are directly involved in the association. In Antwerp too, KU Leuven is now a direct city interlocutor in Gate 15.

Initiating and further developing *regional alumni activities* in order to get former students more closely involved with the new campuses will help broaden the span of our presence in the various regions of Flanders: the Brussels core and a new initiative for a Brussels dissertation prize for KU Leuven students, a successful start to alumni activities in East Flanders, a new chairperson for the Antwerp core.

We have invested considerably in assuring that *the campuses function well*. An analysis of the current situation, including future needs and possibilities will allow us to draw up sustainable plans for each campus including structural service agreements with local partners, especially with partner university colleges on shared campuses.

The goal of *decisions taken regarding infrastructure* and accommodation for integrated programmes on the campuses is to create a solid basis to further develop KU Leuven infrastructure on these campuses: the purchase of premises in Sint-Niklaasstraat in Ghent for Campus Sint-Lucas Ghent, the purchase of the Meyboom building in Brussels, the acquisition of a permanent lease and preparation for construction works at Campus De Nayer and Campus Geel, further profiling of the Antwerp campuses and a further extension of KU Leuven support services, the setting up of ‘antennas’ (counsel services), the acquisition of a permanent lease for Campus Carolus, our own education and research building and the Hof Bladelin in Bruges for such initiatives as continued education, the takeover of Roosenberg Abbey (spaces for study initiatives including interpretation, architecture and art), an agreement in principle with Odisee regarding the sharing of buildings at the Technology Campus in Ghent. These investments – where applicable - result in agreements on the sharing of infrastructure between academic and professional programmes on shared campuses and in this way help create a general infrastructure that is adapted to the new educational and research needs.

2. Policy Lines for the Future

- In the meantime, our colleagues in the new campuses have found their way in the new university: their own way but at the same time a way that creates connections in the community the university comprises. Each day I note how they put their talent and expertise to the service of the students, how they work on educational and research projects with such power of imagination. Perhaps even more strongly than in other programmes, they bring ‘l’imagination au pouvoir’ to our university. Their vision on quality is designed to stimulate innovative thinking.
- Not all integration perils have been solved. We will continue to work on them together in the coming years. It is now the moment for more strategic definition of how the campuses can be involved in a policy of strong complementarity, for defining ‘strong points’ that can also be situated outside of Leuven.
- This means making choices. These are choices – their purpose not being reorganisation – but choices that make growth possible. Among the possibilities are the following: setting up European Studies in Brussels, in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB), the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Arts; a stronger development and profiling of our architecture programmes in Ghent and Brussels; strengthening the Translation and Interpreting programme in Antwerp and the Tower of Babel that is Brussels; using the various possibilities of multi-campus education in the Industrial Engineering programmes, academic mobility, etc.

But there is more.

- The decision of the present policy team not to remove the partitions between KU Leuven “in the strict sense of the word” and the integrated campuses in 2019, but to keep them in place for the period 2019-2023 is a *strategic decision* for the future. It allows the integrated programmes to continue their “academisation” process, to increase the capacity of their research as provided and in the meantime to develop and validate their

own profile-specific research parametrics. The calculation of the standard personnel units and growth-paths for integrated activities, with as point of departure the zero line agreed upon in the inter-group decision of 23 June 2015, will take place in 2017, once clarity has been reached on the budget envelopes for Higher Education stipulated by the Flemish Government.

KU Leuven wishes to see the growth-path of supplementary research funding, as set out in the integration decree, carried out optimally and to the full. I shall strongly urge the Flemish Government that they carry out this promised and much needed growth-path to the full.

- A priority point of attention is and remains the profile of the various programmes at KU Leuven campuses. Next to offering room to expand on their strengths and room to live and work on the campuses we will *continue to invest in strengthening the KU Leuven identity*. For these programmes, it is important that existing KPIs are complemented by their own KPIs in order to ensure the continuity of their profile. Together with our university I will play a pioneering role in agreements with other Flemish universities.
- Within this *stimulating educational environment*, we will use COBRA to develop an inspiring vision on education and further perfect the quality of our training. Some fine examples of this are the brick experiment (Faculty of Architecture), international exchanges, international student awards gained, etc. In the future, we will continue a lively debate on education on the campuses – very much in the spirit of their strong teaching traditions.
- KU Leuven initiatives – take the recent sustainability initiatives for example – based on a university wide policy for students – more than was the case in the past – will also be organized by the campuses. In this way, we will strengthen our sense of belonging to what is happening on the campuses. At the same time, there will be plenty of room to develop the *regional profile of each campus* by taking initiatives locally which might mean attracting the whole university community to the campus. I extend my full support to the ambitions of some campuses who are ground breakers in attracting students of migrant origin into higher education.
- Integration meant a great change for the staff at the campuses. This change brought with it expectations about adequate *staffing and career opportunities*. We must continue to work on this in the future and bring about a complete integration into the present structure of KU Leuven, while paying particular attention to the strengths of each campus. Tenure and promotion policy for ‘OP’ (teaching staff), the inclusion of colleagues from the integration framework in senior academic staff, progress within tenure tracks and developments among teaching staff and administrative and technical staff members will be followed from close by and possible adaptation will be examined and carried out where necessary. In any case, I will never accept, on any given campus or in any given programme, that the rules of play will be changed during on-going procedures to the disadvantage of given persons. Great respect should also be maintained for teaching staff (OP) who did not decide to become senior academic staff as they fully belong to the university, among other things, through the dynamic and innovative education they provide. I wish to provide clear perspectives for *all* staff members, those recently

employed, those in the integration framework and senior academic staff. This will happen through dialogue, through respectful continuous conversation and not through a top-down policy that would leave little room for contributions from all concerned.

- *Interdisciplinarity* is an important point of focus for the new campuses. This concerns both teaching and research but also initiatives taken by each campus in the region. A number of initiatives have been taken over the last few years including the creation of an artwork at the Technology Campus in Ghent, a series of lectures on 'Denkend Geloven' (Thinking Believing) in Ghent, initiatives involving Campus Sint-Lucas Ghent and Campus Sint-Lucas Brussels: Ghent and SMAK, Brussels and Bozar, Bruges and the concert hall, exhibitions at Sint-Lucas Ghent and Brussels campuses; cooperation with Museum M, STUK and Artefact by the Campus Group T, etc.

These initiatives have my full support. They create room for creativity and are also an expression of our social and cultural ambitions: preparations for participation in the Festival of Light by Campus Sint-Lucas Ghent and the Technology Campus in Ghent in collaboration with LUCA School of Arts and Odisee, exhibitions and student projects, cultural initiatives in collaboration with the cities in which our campuses are located. A project on urban development such as Euricur offers opportunities to move beyond the boundaries of disciplines and to work with researchers from various campuses on themes that matter a lot to us, themes on which we have built considerable expertise through three Groups working at our university.

- I also attach considerable importance to *good cooperation with partner schools* and I endorse the importance of cross-connections with professional BA programmes: the mutual exchange of expertise, cooperation in joint projects (MIRO, NV Actief, etc.), joint organisation of job fairs, science weeks and open-lecture days, the shared use of laboratories, the completion of joint research projects (Tetra, KMO innovation projects, etc.)
- The decisions taken regarding *infrastructure* now have to be implemented and carried out. They will allow us to provide additional space for teaching and research: auditoria, laboratories and technical workshops for experimentation and measurement, office space for staff. In preparation for the works, I will ensure that sufficient room is available for adapted teaching and working methods and also for the introduction of new teaching technology, room as well for project work and to practice communication skills. Already existing examples at our university may serve as inspiration: the library in Arenberg, Agora, the Technology-Enhanced Collaborative Learning project (TECOL). The opening of a D&D Lab in Ghent is another example.

The new campuses form an ideal opportunity for KU Leuven. With them we are present in the whole of Flanders and in Brussels. This requires continuous attention from and concrete presence of the rector, full attention for the staff regulations and the wellbeing of all staff members, and the strengthening and further development of that unique KU Leuven-community feeling.