

Vision text International Policy VUB

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Vision

VUB incorporates the principle of *Free Inquiry* in its daily operation, education, research, community engagement and outreach policy. For VUB, humanism is not just a theoretical thought, but a life practice. As comprehensive university in the cosmopolitan city of Brussels, we want to be perceived as an *open independent university platform, embedded in international networks*. Our attitude is one of mediation and critical discussion, mitigated by high quality research, without prejudice, dogma or religious bias, so that students from around the world - that otherwise would never come in direct contact with one another - feel at home and participate in a tight community. "*Unity in diversity*" means more to us than just the integration of foreigners in the local ecosystem. This form of diversity, based on tolerance towards diverse philosophies, is the direct implementation of the *Universitas* thought, essential in the education towards independent world citizens that can act locally *and* think globally. We provide capacity for abstraction of everyday problems and we nurture *early adopters* of new technologies, scientific theories and social models. Thereby, we wish to be the source of new creative talent with a clear intercultural focus that goes *beyond the obvious and that is open to new ideas and perspectives*.

We are convinced that the competences, experience and knowledge within one single university are insufficient to understand the complexity of some research subjects and global problems, to model them and to design solutions. Therefore, we gradually develop the university network as the *basic instrument* to fulfill our functions and to which our individual university belongs. Only by doing so, we can prepare for new career paths, taking into account the extended life span, longer careers, faster job changes and the required flexibility, shorter economic cycles, the worldwide war for talent and the much needed global intercultural skills.

In such a network, *privileged partnerships* are extremely important to realize more than just individual *in- and outgoing student mobility* and exchange, but also to build, next to occasional research synergies, sustainable cooperation structures such as international joint educational programmes, joint research laboratories, joint and dual degrees, embedded in a system of quality assurance that transcends the boundaries of the own university. Whenever collaboration leads to added value, *the bi-diploma should be standard for the PhD*, rewarding each party for its contribution. International *joint research laboratories* are according to us (i) a guarantee for quality support of the joint education and (ii) a breeding ground to realize social, economic and cultural impact through knowledge and technology transfer, with the aim of a.o. contributing to inter-regional development, including (i) the creation of new economic activity through *spin-offs*.

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born-international, (ii) the cooperation with existing industry, government and the nonprofit sector and (iii) the pursuit of societal and cultural synergies. The VUB strives for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 privileged partnerships.

For this purpose, we will gradually equip all university functions and the associated departments with the adequate knowhow to participate in these international ecosystems, in which our students will also be embedded².

Fuelled by the origin and history of the university, VUB is strongly engaged in the creation of societal value and impact - next to and originating from groundbreaking research. This explains why *development cooperation* takes a prominent place. Securing the expertise relevant for development cooperation is a major concern. In our actions we strive for long-term continuity, sustainable even when the temporary subsidies stop. We want to embed specialized master programmes, with particular relevance to developing countries, into our curriculum. The network of host institutions for our students in developing countries will be further expanded. In addition to capacity building in the South, it is our vision to realize *continuity by supporting the peer-to-peer relationships in a sustainable way*. Therefore, we strive for (i) diversification of the channels of funding, a.o. towards international sources, (ii) rejuvenation of the generation of initiative takers, (iii) capitalizing on senior expertise, (iv) personal appreciation for achievements, (v) encouragement of student participation (vi) focus on a few countries for the major projects;

Students who develop into "*redelijk eigenzinnige*³" individuals, with a commitment towards a *sustainable humanistic society*, who develop into *open minded world citizens*, well prepared for a professional career in an increasingly multilingual environment, graduates that are trained to keep a high employability value throughout their professional career and an "independent" research attitude ... these educational objectives can only be realized in an environment that stimulates and supports multidisciplinary international skills and competences. *VUB wants to guarantee this*, by further investing in the general education principle of *Competence-based learning in a flexible education system*.

Bringing into practice the vision described above, requires a certain scale of the institution and hence is very ambitious for a medium-sized university like VUB. Therefore we also treasure the cooperation with our alliance partners in Belgium.

² Privileged International Partnerships, Jan Cornelis and Jacqueline Couder (University Board 28 Jan 2014)

³ Reasonably opinionated. Our advice: consult a VUB academic staff member for elucidation