

RIK VAN DE WALLE
RECTOR

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA IN THE EU AND BEYOND

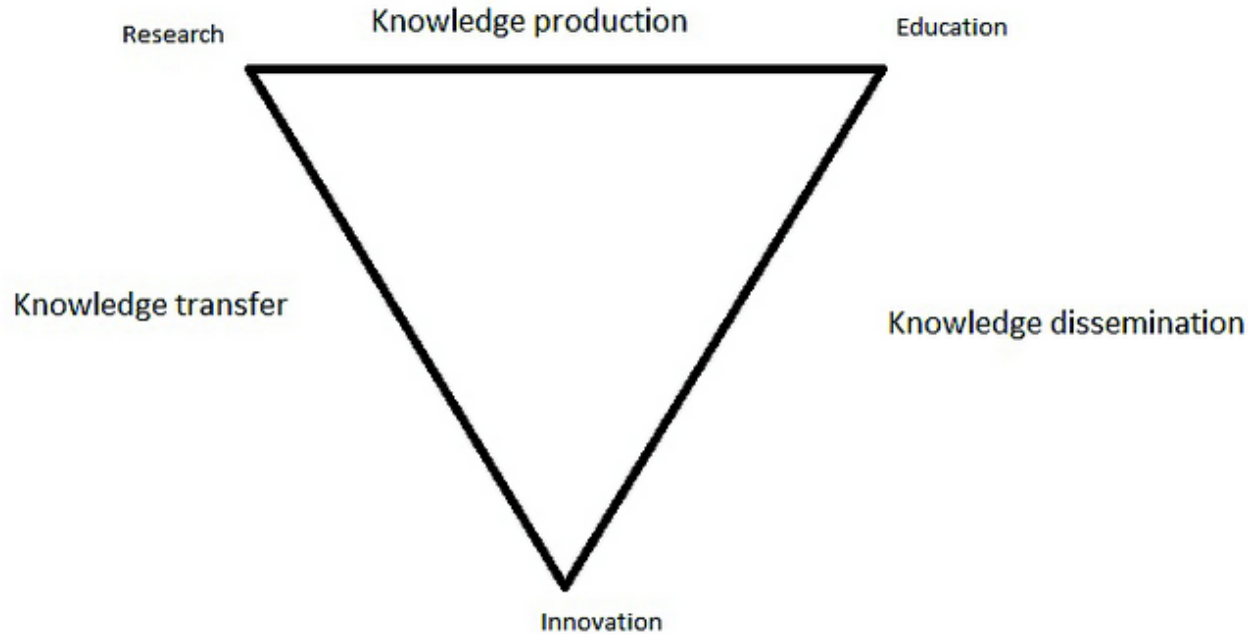
Opening of the Belgian Semester at JRC Ispra – 9 January 2024

TREMENDOUS LOCAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

- (Economic) recovery after Covid-19
- War (Ukraine, Israel-Hamas, ...)
- Changing geopolitical order
- Energy/supply crisis
- Impact on inequality and exclusion
- Climate change
- ...



SOLUTIONS: KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE



Magalhães A, Veiga A. Reconfiguring Education and Research in the European Higher Education Area. *Revista Lusófona de Educação*. 2018;42(42).

MORE COMPLEX EXPECTATION PATTERNS

Universities ought to...

- create jobs and boost economic growth
- assume social responsibility
- contribute to sustainability, and to diversity and inclusion
- keep knowledge safe and control its export
- ...



MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM (MCU)

- MCU 1988
 - Institutional autonomy
 - Academic freedom
 - Intertwining of education and research
- MCU 2020
 - Reaffirmation of fundamental values
 - Attention to new local and global responsibilities



RAPIDLY EMERGING KEY TECHNOLOGIES

- Exponential growth of scientific data
- Transformations in key technologies (AI, advanced materials, quantum technology, nanotech & life science technologies) outpacing political and societal developments
- Universities and researchers lacking rules and procedures



EVOLVING ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

- Tremendous local and global challenges
- Changing geopolitical order
- More complex expectation patterns
- Rapidly emerging key technologies



- Assume responsibility
- Push the frontier
- Break down barriers



ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY

- As the actor which combines research, innovation and higher education, universities have a particular societal responsibility (e.g., regarding key technologies)
- Ethics and values come from within (Magna Charta Universitatum)
- Imperative to actively live our values
- Start with our own institutional contexts



GHENT UNIVERSITY

- Top 100 university
- Since 1817
- 11 faculties



BELGIUM

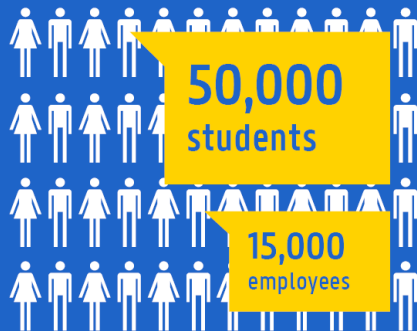


SOUTH KOREA



GHENT UNIVERSITY
GLOBAL CAMPUS

The 1st European university
in South Korea.



73 English-taught
master's
programmes

2,000
Ghent University
students abroad

7,350
International students
at Ghent University



DARE TO THINK

Our credo: critical and
independent minds.



PLURALISM & PARTICIPATION

Open to everyone
irrespective of ideological,
political, cultural or
social background.



SUSTAINABILITY

For a future that is
ecologically, socially
and economically
sustainable, within a
local global context.

'THE GHENT MODEL' (2018)

INSIDE
HIGHER ED

Published on *Inside Higher Ed*
(<https://www.insidehighered.com>)

[Home](#) > Ghent University, in Belgium, embraces new approach to faculty evaluation less focused on quantitative metrics

Ghent University, in Belgium, embraces new approach to faculty evaluation less focused on quantitative metrics

Submitted by Elizabeth Redden on January 23, 2019 - 3:00am

It was an unusual press release, to say the least, framed more as a call to arms than a communiqué about a new personnel policy.

"Ghent University is deliberately choosing to step out of the rat race between individuals, departments and universities. We no longer wish to participate in the ranking of people," said [the press release](#) [1] announcing the Ghent's new policy for evaluating faculty performance, including for tenure.

THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

PROFESSIONAL JOBS SUMMITS RANKINGS STUDENT ABC

Universities should be working for the greater good

Friendly competition can push us all to do better. But when the competitiveness that fuels excellence and prestige becomes based in the logic of the market, universities lose sight of their true purpose, writes Kathleen Fitzpatrick

But if we look around, we might note that this model of success is beginning to fall apart. Our pursuit of hierarchy is resulting not in the greater glory of the professoriate but in greater contingency for all. Tenure is being undermined across the US by the diminution of everyone's basic academic freedom to teach and research as they see fit. If we recognised that the floor of what we'll accept for others among us gradually becomes the baseline for what we'll all be offered and replaced invidious distinction with solidarity, we might demand that teaching and service requirements be distributed more equitably, and that all positions provide appropriate research support and a living salary.

We might decide – as Ghent University did last December – not to “participate in the ranking of people”. This would create an environment in which talent of all varieties can flourish, instead of being assessed according to bureaucratic metrics that not only depersonalise and disenfranchise but that too often stifle the real innovation that we hope to foster. Critics of such transformations in assessment practices – nearly always those who have benefited from existing modes of measurement – argue that a change like this would represent an inevitable lowering of standards. They seem convinced that, in walking away from the ostensibly objective metrics we have deployed for determining “excellence”, we are giving up on excellence entirely.

myscience.be > news > wire - news in brief > Ghent University is changing course with a new career model for professorial staff (ZAP)

news

> wire - news in brief

Nieuws 2019

Engineering sciences
Natural Sciences
Earth and Environment

Ghent University is changing course with a new career model for professorial staff (ZAP)

7 December 2018

Career | Administration

Ghent University dares to think. Ghent University also dares to push its own boundaries.

BASIC RESEARCH FUNDING (2023)



Rik Van de Walle
@rvdwalle

...

I dare say it bluntly: this is an important decision, even a game-changer. Based on confidence in our professors and their staff. I am proud of this. And grateful to the many colleagues who made this possible. Competition is good. But only within the limits of what is reasonable.
[Post vertalen](#)

UGent @ugent · 14 jul. 2023

Ghent University pioneers with non-competitive basic funding for professors. We are taking another step in the transition from quantitative to qualitative research evaluation @rvdwalle Want to read more? ugent.be/en/news-events...



Home News Rankings Jobs Students Events Resources

News

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Belgian university introduces universal basic research funding

Over 1,000 professors will get €30,000 a year to spend as they please as a remedy to the low success rates of national and international competitions

July 20, 2023

[Ben Upton](#)

Twitter: [@benwupton](#)

A Belgian university is to offer a flat research grant to all its academics from next year, in what its rector said was a response to low success rates for competitive alternatives.

Once Ghent University's scheme is fully up and running by 2027, full- and part-time researchers will be able to get at least €30,000 (£25,700) annually – enough that two could club together and fund a doctoral grant, the university said.



Source: Getty Images

PUSH THE FRONTIER

- Disruption in balance between investigator-driven frontier research (ERC grants) towards more politically-driven approaches
- Perception persists that, in times of emergency, frontier research is a 'luxury'
- Our most pressing challenges today are pressing precisely because they do not yield to today's understanding and tools
- Support for frontier research at all levels is therefore vital



BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

- Open global cooperation is vital for academics and their universities
- In EU context, it will be key to safeguard and promote continued excellent collaboration in research, education and innovation
- Prevent formation of new, and remove existing, barriers to free circulation of knowledge and its bearers

ACA
ACADEMIC
COOPERATION
ASSOCIATION



Article Three



ThinkPieces
#global_context

#ACATHINKS

August 2023



Co-funded by
the European Union



RIK VAN DE WALLE | in
Rector, Ghent University, Belgium

Rik Van de Walle has been rector of Ghent University since 2017 and President of CESAER since 2020.

He obtained the degrees of Master of Science in Engineering Physics and Doctor of Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at Ghent

European Higher Education Cooperation in a Global Context

In pursuit of knowledge
Steering academic cooperation in times of
global crises

In 1989 the winds of change opened up a world which for more than forty years had been divided in two opposing blocks and a group of non-aligned countries, bringing new opportunities for global trade and cooperation, including academia. It was also a time when Europe made promising advances in structuring educational cooperation against the background of strengthened EU integration. Prior to 1989, the scale of academic cooperation was much smaller, both within Europe and outside, and contacts between academics of opposing blocks were scarce. Once the Iron Curtain fell, often researchers from one side would be surprised to learn that their new acquaintances from the other side had been doing similar activities for years.

CESAER: 58 MEMBERS FROM 28 COUNTRIES



A grid of logos for 58 member institutions, arranged in approximately 10 rows and 6 columns. The logos include:

- RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
- TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DARMSTADT
- INSTITUT POLYTECHNIQUE DE PARIS
- U.PORTO
- KIT (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
- Warsaw University of Technology
- CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
- National Technical University of Athens
- UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA
- université PARIS-SACLAY
- TAL TECH (Technische Universität Berlin)
- STU (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava)
- ktu (Kauçuk University of Technology)
- Politecnico di Torino
- ETH zürich
- BRNO UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
- INSA (Institut National des Sciences Appliquées Lyon)
- MÜEGYTEM 1782
- POLITECNICO MILANO 1863
- Technische Universität Braunschweig
- SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME
- UGA (Université Grenoble Alpes)
- AI (Aalto University)
- UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE
- TU Graz (Graz University of Technology)
- EPFL
- POLITECNICA
- UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE
- LUND UNIVERSITY
- NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
- UCD DUBLIN
- University of Strathclyde Glasgow
- TU Delft
- UCLouvain
- POLITECNICA
- UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE CATALUNYA BARCELONATECH
- TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN
- TECHNION (Israel Institute of Technology)
- AALSBORG UNIVERSITY DENMARK
- UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE CATALUNYA BARCELONATECH
- POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
- GHENT UNIVERSITY
- The University of Sheffield
- UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
- KU LEUVEN
- TÉCNICO LISBOA
- Southampton
- TU WIEN
- GRANIC UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
- RWTH AACHEN UNIVERSITY
- CTU (Czech Technical University of Prague)
- KTH (KTH Royal Institute of Technology)
- Leibniz Universität Hannover
- ParisTech (Institut des Sciences et Technologies Paris Institute of Technology)

LIAISING WITH EU PRESIDENCIES

Rik Van de Walle appointed Envoy to the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU

News

Our Board has appointed Rik van de Walle (Rector of Ghent University) as our association's Envoy to the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU until June 2024.



Rik Van de Walle
appointed as
Envoy to the Belgian
Presidency

CESAER

23rd October 2023

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ESTABLISH THE ERA AND EEA

- Shaping the **European Research Area (ERA)** is a treaty obligation since the 2007 Lisbon Treaty (“the Union shall have the objective of strengthening its scientific and technological bases by achieving a European research area in which **researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely**”)

Example: reform of research careers

- Reinforce the ERA through also establishing a **European Education Area (EEA)**

Example: European University alliances linking education and research/innovation



Reform is overdue

Researchers' employment conditions must be improved to meet Europe's goals

Rik Van de Walle is president of the Cesaer group of science and technology universities and rector of Ghent University

Being a researcher is unlike almost any other profession. At its best, it is a creative, inspiring and satisfying pursuit. Many researchers are passionate about their subject and find meaning and motivation in working with students and colleagues. They

they should do. This has been driven largely by assessment and reward structures that put undue focus on narrow, simple-to-measure indicators and criteria. Change must come from within: from inspiring leadership combined with bottom-up

A crucial part of this is ensuring sustainable funding. In a recent position paper on using the EU budget to build recovery and resilience following the pandemic, Cesaer calls on EU institutions, member states and associated countries to commit to leading

careers. At the European level, this could include the development of a framework that stimulates diversity in researchers' career paths by, for example, creating legal conditions that allow all universities to deploy tenure track and similar models.



“Let’s shift to a culture built around quality, risk-taking and trust, replacing the focus on individual competitiveness with open, collaborative and team-based approaches.”

Rik Van de Walle
Rector

 Ghent University
 @ugent
 Ghent University