This policy plan is the official communication of our plans for 2020-2021 to the entire VUB community. Our policy plan is traditionally subdivided per committee. As every year, we strive to start and follow up a wide range of projects. This document is illustrative, not exhaustive.

This year is unlike the others. 2020-2021 will focus on the COVID-19 issue and its impact on our students and on education. In this context, mental well-being, good communication and the creation of a strong student representative network are of utmost priority.

Good student representation, especially in these times, depends on the engagement of the broad student community. With a strong and enthusiastic team we can work together to achieve this. We build on the successes of our predecessors and proactively face the extraordinary challenges of these times.

It’s a year like no other, but let’s go for it!

Lisa Jongmans,
President Student Council VUB
2020-2021
STUDENT SERVICES

The year ahead will be a very challenging one, with the student services playing a crucial role. Our priority at stuvo is well-being: that of the student, the staff and the general well-being on campus. We have tried to build on and address the needs of the entire student and university population.

Ecology

A topic that has - rightfully so - received a lot of attention these last few years is prevention and environment. What can we change and improve at the VUB to make it a greener, more ecological institution?

As a student council we strive for 'Zero-Waste' campuses. This is a long-term project to which we are gradually evolving. This year we will start with making it compulsory to use reusable cups on campus. Not only on TD’s, but also at receptions, in the restaurants, etcetera. A second objective is to make waste sorting more efficient both in the student rooms and the student restaurant. A GFT waste bin in the student rooms is a great starting point.

Accessible campus

The VUB presents itself as an open, accessible campus: everyone is welcome. We want to make sure that this profile is justified and will pay special attention to better facilities for people with disabilities, for whom attending classes and participating in campus life is an extra challenge. Placing a ramp at the entrance of the student restaurant, room numbers in Braille, ... Together we will look at the possibilities and start a dialogue with those who require structural changes on the campus.

Safety

Over the last years, stories about sexual misconduct and thefts are accumulating, and not only at our university. It is time to improve safety on and near the campuses. The VUB has already partly solved the problem by strengthening security. We, as the Student Council, will look at how we can further optimize security. It is important that everyone can travel carefree on the campuses of the VUB at any time of the day.

Leisure and study spaces

The VUB experiences an increase in registration numbers every year. In time this leads to capacity problems, which is already noticeable in for example the student restaurant. The study and leisure areas are outdated, scarce and quickly overcrowded. Students who have an extra hour in between classes or want to take a break after class have few places to relax. We aim to find more and non-student organisation related leisure and study spaces that are comfortable and accessible for everyone.
Willy Van Der Meeren rooms and fakbar

A quarter of the empty Willy Van Der Meeren rooms are provided for student services. Currently there are a lot of ideas on the table - including a public sanitary block - which we intend to explore. The plan to install a fakbar in the old laboratories in building C also has yet to be defined and realized. We certainly plan to collaborate with the students in order to give the best possible interpretation to the vacant buildings.

Mobility

If you have cycled in Brussels before, you are probably aware that our city is not built in a bicycle-friendly manner. While the Brussels Minister of Mobility, Public Works and Road Safety is working hard on a bicycle-friendly Brussels, there are still many improvements to be made. Together with committee stuvo, we are searching for solutions to promote cycling. We are exploring the possibility of safe indoor bicycle parking facilities, better bicycle lanes on and around the campus and improved bicycle entrances. Together with other student councils in Brussels, we can give a voice to cyclists and try to guarantee their safety.
EDUCATION

During the previous semester, education received a shock, and with this shock, a few already existing problems came to surface. With trial and error, the VUB has nevertheless shown its most flexible side in the transition to distance learning. The follow-up of digital education, tackling problems and monitoring existing projects will form the foundation of this year’s Education section.

**Follow-up digitization education**

As the Student Council, we think it is important that the digitization of education is now running smoothly and can be used in a positive way towards the future. Together with the VUB we will ensure that this happens.

**Re-evaluating ombudspersons**

Together with the Innovation Committee, we want to examine the current ombudsmen. We will try to ensure that these people are easily accessible for students and that they are there to help the student whenever possible.

**Reviewing the appeal procedure**

This year we want to modify the appeal procedure with the Education Committee. Because this procedure is extremely cumbersome and complicated to us. We notice that our students also experience this and therefore find it difficult to appeal to their rights. This year we want to change something about this.

**Maintain and improve contact with student representatives**

Being in contact with the entire student community is an essential part of central student representation. The first persons students can turn to are their education representatives, so maintaining good contact with this group is a priority.

**Recognition of extra curricular activities**

When a student is committed to and for the VUB, it is encouraging to get recognition for this as well. That is why we want to make sure that these students also receive a certificate at their graduation ceremony for all the work they have done as a student representative, member of a student organization, etcetera.

**Monitoring committee study progress**

The rules regarding study progress often differ from one faculty to another. They can also be strict or unclear. In order to get unity and clarity in this, the regulations are discussed and adjusted in the study progress committee. The student council is also represented in this committee to ensure that the students are involved in these decisions.

**Development of the giscorrection standpoint**

The rules regarding giscorrection on exams mainly depend on the professor or the faculty in question. As the Student Council we want to write a scientifically based standpoint on this to create unity within the VUB.
Support study path guidance

When determining a study path, it is important that our study path counsellors are aware of the difficulty of a course. Naturally, study credits are a first indication, but the success rate of a course is also telling. That is why it would be helpful if the study path guidance counselors are aware of these grades. This way, they can better guide students in the development of their individual trajectory.

Examine the OO-files

The OO-files regularly turn out to be incomplete or unclear. We therefore want to find out where the problems are and then tackle them.
INTERNATIONAAL

Within the international committee we focus on the core tasks: representing and guiding international students. In addition, ongoing projects are monitored.

Support International Student Platform

This year we want to focus on strengthening the contact with and the operation of the International Student Platform (ISP). We want to help improve the internal functioning and external communication. There will be a focus on structuring the collaboration with the student council. Furthermore, we will work together on several projects that will help the needs of international students. The selection, prioritization and development of these projects lies with the ISP itself.

Follow-up international students and COVID-19

International students were also affected by the pandemic. Together with the Education Committee and the Vice Rector of Internationalization, we want to offer help to our international students, who are being affected by this situation in a different way than most Belgian students.

EUTOPIA

EUTOPIA is an alliance of the VUB and five other European universities striving to create a true European higher education experience. First of all, our students need to be informed about this relatively new international alliance. It should be clear to students what new opportunities this presents to them. We want to work with our partners to organize conferences and other events to strengthen the alliance and make the most of it. This offers a unique opportunity for our students who have the ambition to develop valuable skills they can rely on for the rest of their lives.

Student Social Entrepeneur

We want to monitor this ongoing project and see how we can offer our ambitious and socially engaged students an option to develop their ideas with professional support. This project mainly focuses on the bringing of already existing options at the VUB.
In the year ahead, the Jette Committee will focus on ongoing and campus-specific projects. COVID-19 related matters will be addressed by the other committees.

**Investing in healthy food and beverage vending machines and installing a new coffee machine**

This is an ongoing project. As stuvers, we want to play a prominent role in this project and be actively involved in the plans. We want to emphasize that healthy food and beverages, taking into account the sustainability and environmental compatibility of the packaging, are our preference. The coffee machine needs a replacement. We are trying to find an alternative.

**Short-term solution for leisure and group work areas**

There are currently not enough places in Jette where students can relax and get to know each other. This is mainly a problem for covered or indoor spaces, when the weather does not allow them to sit outside together. This mostly affects students who are not living in student housing, but also students who are living in student housing could use an extra area to sit in between classes. The places that are available (“the green/blue seats”) are affected by overcrowding and filth. Extra space could also solve this problem. From the campus we already heard that there will be seats created on the long term. In the meantime, we are eager to find a solution.

**Guarantee the safety of the student housing**

There is room for improvement in securing the student housing on the Brussels Health Campus. Students would feel safer by installing peepholes in the doors. This way, they can see who is ringing their doorbell. Another option could be the use of an access badge or code at the main entrance of a student housing unit. We will investigate the difficulties and monitor this.

**Kick-off Jette 2021**

Organizing a Kick-Off event in Jette remains a very important question for many Jette students. They too deserve the opportunity to get to know their university, campus and associations. Moving to the Kick-Off in Etterbeek remains too big a hurdle (despite the use of free buses). The Jetse Kick-Off was planned for September 2020 but due to the corona virus this could not take place. It is important to continue and monitor this, taking into account possible Covid measures next year.

**Erasmus opportunities for medical students**

Erasmus is currently not possible for students of Medicine at the VUB while it is a possibility for students at the universities of Ghent and Antwerp. This year we would like to inform ourselves about how this is organized at other universities and determine the limitations.
INNOVATION

This new coordinorship is characterized by the need for guidance and follow-up of long-term projects. It makes a distinction between four pillars. The feedback with the vice-rectorate of innovation and valorization, strategic aspects, projects and follow-up.

Vice Rector of Innovation and Valorization

This is a vice-chancellorate with whom we have very little connection. As student council we want to investigate what this vice-rectorate does and how we as students can play our part. For this purpose a first meeting will be organized with vice-rector Prof. Dr. Ir. Hugo Thienpont in the course of the first semester.

Strategic aspects

The main task of the student council is to advise and guide in policy. To complete our task, this year we will work on a number of strategic aspects. This will allow us to advise on policy-related matters to the VUB beyond the policy bodies in which we have a seat. This implies that every semester research is done on a theme, followed by a survey among the students, which will eventually lead to a written position and advice. During the first semester we will focus on 'The structure of the VUB', in which we analyze the entire structure of the VUB from the student's point of view. In the second semester we focus on the mental well-being of the students. This is a subject that has been discussed several times this year and which appeared not to be completely developed.

Intensive projects

As a new member, it is sometimes a challenge to start long term projects or to realize them successfully. Among the intensive projects a variety of projects are listed that require a certain planning and guarantee a long term vision. These projects require extensive research, a step-by-step plan and deadlines. Next academic year there are four major projects that can be placed under this wing. The first is a project about equality, in this project racism and LGBT+ will be central. We know there is still room for improvement in these areas and as the Student Council represents all students, it is about time we take a look at this. Next, a project will be launched aiming to increase contact points for the student council. In other words, we want to simplify the flow of information to students and lower the threshold between students and student-representatives. We will try to achieve this by developing a system that can be used every year with a clear idea of the collaboration with stuvers from education and faculty councils, associations and the Moeial. The welcoming of first year students also plays an important role in this and will be used in the best possible way to introduce us.
INNOVATION

The next project on the list is to increase network opportunities. Despite the fact that a lot is already happening in this area, it does not reach all students and usually does not follow a central policy. We want to improve this so that all students have the opportunity to increase their academic and professional contacts. Finally, we are going to review the recognitions of the associations. This year, the coordinator of student organization will review all recognitions of each association, this will be monitored by the student council. Alongside this challenge, we will, in collaboration with BSG, review and evaluate their recognition conditions. The final aspect of this project will be a debate on the functioning of our current associations, in the light of the current environment in which we find ourselves.

Follow-up system

As mentioned earlier, there is a need for a strong follow-up of the planned projects. Because the student council changes management annually, a concrete and efficient system needs to be developed in which the state of affairs for each project can be consulted at all times. This to guarantee a certain continuity and to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, but also to facilitate the flow of information to external parties.
In the academic year 2018-2019 we started working with a substructure for each coordinator. Members chose one coordinatorship to which they joined in order to assist throughout the year and realize projects. In 2020-2021 we completed this evolution and are currently working with the Committees Student Services, Education, International, Jette and Innovation. Each committee is managed by its coordinator. Since 2018-2019, this has led to higher efficiency and better follow-up. In this way, each member can also work on his or her interests. In addition to this clear internal structure, this year we need to be more flexible than usual. In addition to executing projects and communicating with students, we also need to follow up on the "current affairs" of COVID-19. There will be a lot required of us and we must be able to respond to the special needs of students.

It will be a challenge to reach the student and in particular the generational student. Therefore, this year we need to focus even more on online communication. Strengthening recognizability on social media and offering easily accessible communication options is a priority.

To support us, we have hired three job students. They work within the domains of administration, communication and input. Input is a new field that will mainly involve surveys and other forms of student participation. In this way we hope to be able to identify the above-mentioned special needs.

Last but not least, this year's team building will not be business as usual. We know that a strong group feeling is important for our board members as well as for the cooperation throughout the year. We need to be creative in creating and maintaining the team spirit.
OUR TEAM

PRESIDENT
LISA JONCMANS

VICE-PRESIDENT
JONNICK FONKE

COORDINATOR STUVO
JOLIEN LERSBERGHE

STUVO COMMITTEE
ANOUK HAENEN
MICHAEL VAN DEN POEL
SANDER WOUTERS
SUZAN DE HOOG
YORBEN VAN DE WEGHE

COORDINATOR EDUCATION
LIESL DE PAUW
CAITLIN JANSEN
RUBEN SIMONS
STEFANIE MULDER
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EDUCATION COMMITTEE
FATIMZAHRA BELAIDI ZINE
DOMINIQUE SURINX
LIO EGGERS
AUDREY DEVOS
SASHA SOLAU
LULA MARIS
VIKTOR DE GROOTE

COORDINATOR INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

COORDINATOR JETTE

JETTE COMMITTEE

COORDINATOR INNOVATION

INNOVATION COMMITTEE

More information is always available on our website: student.vub.be/studentcouncil

You can mail us at studentcouncil@vub.be

On our Facebookpages ‘Studentenraad VUB’ or ‘Studentenraad Jette’
you can keep track of the latest developments

On our Instagrampage you can find images of our activities:instagram.com/studentenraadvub

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