



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

Gender Equality Plan 2024 - 2026

“In our context, striving for well-being and equality must be self-evident. We live in a diverse world, so we embrace that diversity.”

Rector Jan Danckaert

DocuSigned by:

Jan Danckaert

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Facts & Figures

VUB, that is over 21,000 students from 145 countries in over 150 programmes. Over 4,000 staff members who contribute daily to the mission of our university. And over 70,000 alumni - or 50 generations of ambitious professionals who are making a difference all over the world as motivated entrepreneurs, critical researchers, and engaged citizens.

Have a look at the [VUB Facts & Figures 2021-2022](#)



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About this Gender Equality Plan



- ▼ It provides an overview of the VUB gender policy: it's vision, targets and actions – with a focus on academic staff.
- ▼ Together with the [Report to the Society](#) our bi-annual public CSR monitoring, and the [Facts & Figures](#) it gives an overview of what VUB is doing in the field of gender and equality.
- ▼ With this plan VUB commits to enhance gender equality while facing a challenging financial context.
- ▼ Approved by the VUB Management Committee, the 23rd of October 2023.

Equality Vision



- ▼ Guided by our compass of humanist values, the VUB embraces diversity and rejects inequality. We celebrate the uniqueness of every student and staff member in our community.
- ▼ We strive to be an agent of change, correcting inequalities, offering opportunities, and guiding new generations towards increased equality and the appreciation of diversity.
- ▼ [Vision text](#)
- ▼ [Equality webpages](#)

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers HRS4R & Eutopia Inclusion Manifesto



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Resources

The VUB provides the necessary resources for the design, implementation, and monitoring of the progress of the actions

▼ Dedicated staff

- ▼ HR Equality Advisor, A. Wils (HR Department)
- ▼ CSR Policy Officer, L. Wouters (Strategy & Policy Department)

▼ Other collaborators (not-exhaustive)

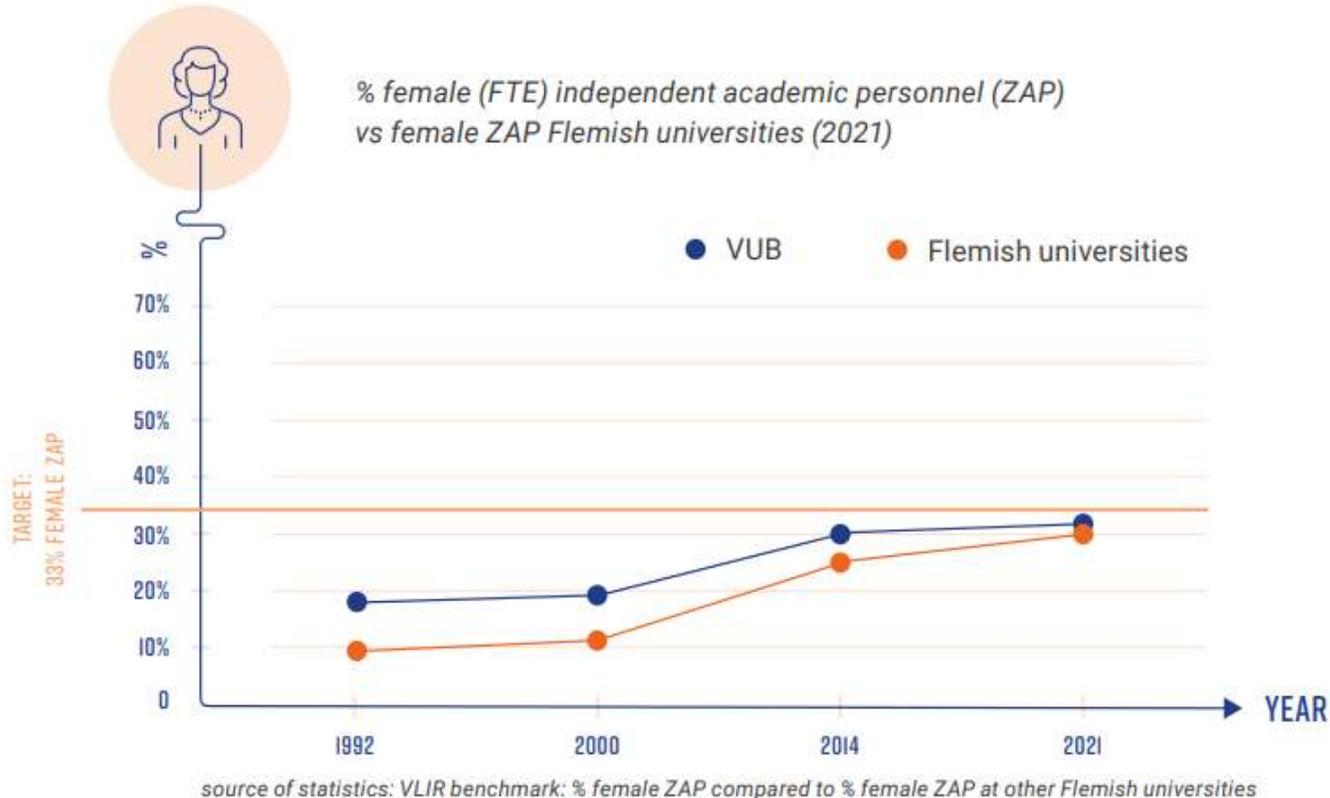
- ▼ Adjunct HR-director M. Abduli (HR Department)
- ▼ Academic Recruitment Policy Officer, R. Van Vossole (HR Department)
- ▼ Coordinator Research Funding Europe T. Van Loon (Research Department)
- ▼ Coordinator Reporting centre transgressive behaviour E. Audenaert (Prevention and Environmental Service)
- ▼ President of the Diversity Working Group of the Femisch Interuniversity Council B. Spruyt
- ▼ HR Equality Working group: H. Pan, S. Konaté, J. Liem, M. Mphaphuli, E. Oelbrand

Targets 2024-2026

- ▶ A bias-proof recruitment policy and equal opportunities in career development, together with a healthy work-life balance
- ▶ At least 33% female professors VUB-wide
- ▶ An optimized and expanded monitoring of gender and diversity parameters
- ▶ Inclusive campus and working environment where everyone is treated with respect



Monitoring



The VUB provides for the collection and monitoring of data. The Gender Equality Plan is evidence-based with gender-disaggregated data collected across all staff categories. This data informs the objectives and targets, indicators, and continuous evaluation of the progress of the Gender Equality Plan.

See also our bi-annual public reporting on CSR, including gender: [Report to the Society](#) (2021-2022) referring to targets of the [previous Equality Action Plan \(2021-2024\)](#).

Monitoring

- ▼ Currently, VUB gender data is split between male and female staff (and students). In the future we want to go for a more inclusive non-binary approach (following the example of Horizon Europe).
- ▼ A yearly monitoring and benchmarking of the diversity of the staff and student population as well as of the representatives in governing bodies takes place via the [Diversity Working Group](#) of the Flemish Inter university Council.
- ▼ Annual reporting about M/F ratio's and the recruitment of female professors to the Academic Council.
- ▼ Presentation of the statistics of the participation of the VUB in the European research and innovation framework programme with gender breakdown (Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe) to the VUB Research Council.

Work-life balance and organisational culture

VUB offers a workplace with an open, humanistic and respectful approach. We stimulate and support a healthy work-life balance by:

- ▼ 2 daycare centres for children of staff, students (and other Brussels residents)
- ▼ Flexible working hours, telework & workation possibilities, an attractive holiday arrangement, sabbaticals from 3, 6, 9 up to 12 months, and a replacement fund for tenured academic staff so that they can be temporarily replaced when absent/ill or during maternity leave.
- ▼ A mix of M/F toilets and all gender toilets on the main campus.
- ▼ Sustainable food & drinks in our [VUB-restaurants](#) and [sport facilities](#) on campus
- ▼ Psychological support via the HR-team 'Well-being', the [Brussels University Consultation Center](#) and an external coach for tenured academic staff



% women 2021-2022

Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Gender provisions included in the [University Statutes of the VUB, article 5 Gender balance 2014](#)

The VUB strives for gender balance in the filling of mandates, the composition of governing bodies, the granting of titles and honorary titles (...)

And at least 1/3 of the voting members of the opposite sex: the University Council, Board of Directors, Academic Council, Education Council, Research Council, Innovation and Valorisation Council, International Policy Council, Faculty Bodies, UZ Brussel Board of directors

Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

- ▼ Research Policy Plan 2022-2026
All (evaluation) panels and (selection) committees are in principle gender balanced (1/3-2/3)
- ▼ Regulations for tenured staff, guest professors and substitutes, 2015
Gender balance of all committees is targeted, with at least 1/3 of the voting members of the opposite sex
- ▼ Gender balance for the Student Facility Council imposed by decree: at least one-third of the members are of the opposite sex.



Vice-Rectors 2022-2026

Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

We strive to provide an open, transparent and merit based recruitment process and a workplace with opportunities to develop your skills:

- ▼ Publication of researchers positions on Euraxess
- ▼ A gender balanced selection committee
- ▼ A toolkit for academic staff/promotors: tips & tricks when recruiting
- ▼ An anti-biastraining
- ▼ LRN platform with trainings for all career stages
- ▼ Trainings provided by the Doctoral Schools and the RESEARCH Department



Gender dimension in research

- ▼ [Urban Engaged University](#): Through excellent research and qualitative education on a human scale, the VUB wants to make an active and engaged contribution to a better society.
- ▼ Tutorials, training and tailored advice on the gender dimension in research by the RESEARCH Department



Equality research & education

- ▼ VUB houses a variety of professors and groups researching equality, e.g. these projects:
 - ▼ [RHEA](#) VUB Research Centre Gender, Diversity and Intersectionality
 - ▼ [BIRMM](#) Brussels Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Migration and Minorities
- ▼ [Interuniversity Master Gender & Diversity](#)
- ▼ Elective courses at VUB: Introduction to Gender & Diversity Studies, Gender, Diversity and Politics, Islam and Gender, and Philosophy and Ethics of Sexuality

Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

The VUB campuses are welcoming places where discrimination and transgressive behaviour is not tolerated:

- ▼ Operational target 2.1 in the Policy Plan of the Rectorate 2022-2026: *“We embed policies on wellbeing and transgressive behaviour in the organisation”*
- ▼ [Report it Helpline](#) (1,5 FTE), reports to the Student Council, the Committee for Prevention and Safety at Work and the Board of Directors
- ▼ [VUB Code of Conduct](#) (2019)
- ▼ Legislation of the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue
- ▼ Reporting Centre transgressive behaviour organised by the Flemish Government (2023)
- ▼ [Charter](#) Transgressive Behaviour in Higher Education in Flanders (2018)



Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

With the development of its “You Are Not Alone” policy the university is putting maximum effort into prevention and better support for victims

- ▼ Campaign “No Way. This is where we draw the line.” (see picture)
- ▼ Bystander training for staff and students
- ▼ A new initiation charter & student codex including a code of conduct
- ▼ A new disciplinary procedure for staff and for students

Training and capacity building

- ▼ Engaged leading week: we want to recognize and strengthen the leadership potential of our university, and build bridges between current and future leaders at all university levels. VUB sees 'engaged leadership' as a collective activity that applies to everyone, and through which we all can contribute to a more caring university (operational target 2.3 in the Policy Plan of the Rectorate 2022-2026).
- ▼ Academic leadership days: in this three-day retreat, early career academic staff members will have the opportunity to exchange experiences, ideas and best practices with peers, VUB policy makers and more senior colleagues
- ▼ A broad range of training and workshops:
 - ▼ Anti-Biastraining
 - ▼ Anti-Discrimination workshop
 - ▼ Bystandertraining
 - ▼ How to conduct a job interview
 - ▼ Gender dimension in research

Outreach & community support

Gender week 2023

Machteld De Metsenaere
inaugural lecture

6/03

The Iranian uprising and women's rights



Keynote speaker:
Professor Ladan Rahbari (UVA)



RHEA RESEARCH CENTRE
GENDER, DIVERSITY
& INTERSECTIONALITY

RHEA Gender Week 2023



Eutopia Diversity Week 2022 @ VUB

New actions 2024-2026

- ▼ Expand the monitoring with candidates M/F during the selection process (dashboard)
- ▼ Develop a training on inclusive communication and on intercultural competencies
- ▼ Start up of a pilot mentoring project with a focus on career improvement
- ▼ The launch of an information campaign about who's who in the VUB wellbeing landscape, when seeking help and support, especially in the case of transgressive behaviour
- ▼ Facilitate breastfeeding/pumping on campus
- ▼ The implementation of a renewed career/promotion policy for tenured academic staff (operational target 2.2 in the Policy Plan of the Rectorate 2022-2026)

Previous action plans and engagements

- ▼ List of previous VUB policy plans that will be built upon (see also [equality webpages](#)):
 - ▼ Diversity plan 2005-2006
 - ▼ Gender Action Plan 2014-2016 on demand of the Flemish government, including gender targets
 - ▼ Equality Action Plan 2019-2021 leading to the [Actiris Diversity Label of the Brussels Capital Region](#)
 - ▼ [Equality Action Plan 2021-2024](#)

- ▼ Interuniversity engagements:
 - ▼ Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR): Gender Action Plan. Women in academic careers and university policy (2013)
 - ▼ Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) and the Young Academy: [Charter Gender in Academia](#) (2019)

