



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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# Table of contents

- ▼ About VUB
- ▼ About this Gender Equality Plan
- ▼ Equality vision
- ▼ HRS4R label & Eutopia Manifesto
- ▼ Targets 2030
- ▼ Resources
- ▼ Monitoring
- ▼ Work-life balance and organisational culture
- ▼ Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- ▼ Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- ▼ Integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching content
- ▼ Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment
- ▼ Training and capacity building
- ▼ Outreach & community support
- ▼ New actions 2024-2026
- ▼ Previous action plans and engagements

[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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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

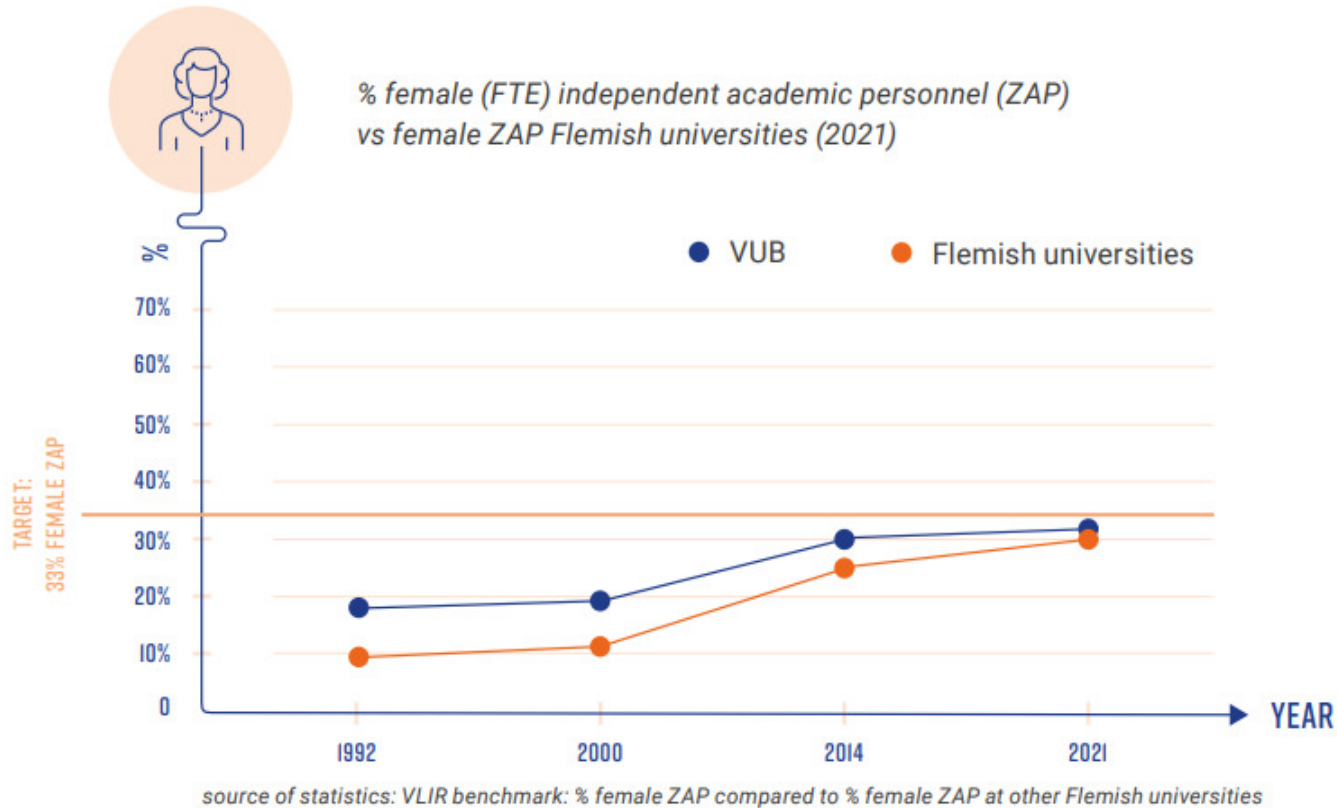


# Targets 2024-2026

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



