Brussels Institute for Advanced Studies, BrIAS
VUB and ULB in a nutshell

VUB + ULB host 60,000+ students.
ULB + VUB + Erasme and UZBrussel: more than 16,000 members of personnel

No dogmatism, taboos or prejudice.
Building bridges.

Five out of 10 Belgian Nobel laureates, two Abel laureates and two Belgian Fields medal laureates were professor and/or alumni of the universities*.

*Henri La Fontaine, Nobel peace, alumnus; Prof. Jules Bordet, Nobel medicine; Prof. Albert Claude, Nobel medicine; Prof. Ilya Prigogine, Nobel physics; Prof. François Englert, Nobel physics; Dr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel peace, alumnus; Prof. Jacques Tits, Abel prize; Prof. Pierre Deligne, Abel prize and Fields medal, alumnus; Prof. Jean Bourgain, Fields medal, alumnus.
Institutes for Advanced Studies

The Princeton IAS set the rules in 1930:

• A haven for scholars and scientists;
• Afraid of no issue; under no pressure for or against any particular solution of the problems under study;
• Complete intellectual liberty, free from concerns;
• Provide the facilities, tranquility, and time.

Pierre Deligne  Jean Bourgain
Institutes for Advanced Studies

Two Belgian initiatives:
BrIAS, Brussels Institute for Advanced Studies, created by ULB-VUB in 2018 and operational since May 2021
LIAS, Leuven Institute for Advanced Studies, created by KULeuven, and opened (?) November 2, 2021.
In June 2018, VUB and ULB decided to develop BrIAS:

• as a common ULB-VUB initiative;
• with a strong link to the Brussels region;
• to be located from 2024 on in Usquare, the prestigious former military barracks in Elsene / Ixelles near the VUB-ULB campus.
Scientific motivation

• For our researchers: collaboration, mutual emulation and cross-fertilisation

• For the fellows: time to pursue research, to write articles without daily hassle

• For all, and specific to IAS:
  • Move from hyperspecialisation to an inter- and transdisciplinary approach avoiding tunnel vision in which the broad scientific context is lost.
  • Time to discuss informally, dream, disagree and, hopefully, come up with disruptive concepts, ideas or discoveries.
How to remove obstacles to scientific creativity?

- No daily hassles, thinking out of the box: **go abroad** (cfr. sabbaticals).
- Inter- and transdisciplinary discussions, confrontations: understanding each other **requires time**
- The best ideas may come during a dinner or an afternoon walk: "**common**" living and working quarters

BrIAS offers the perfect environment: 15 to 20 fellows; Usquare; 5 to 10 months.
Unique niche: not just another IAS

The values of ULB and VUB highlight some **unique niches**:

- **Potentially controversial subjects** with important societal impact;
- Specific efforts to welcome acknowledged **researchers who had to leave or flee** their country to save their lives or gain physical or intellectual freedom;
- Close collaborations with institutions in **countries where society faces critical challenges** with respect to sustainability.
Fellows – number and support

• Once fully operational, 15 – 20 fellows
• Senior fellows: 5 to 10 months, preferably 10
• Some junior fellows for shorter periods
• Support:
  • free housing
  • contribution to living costs
Location in Usquare
Live and work in Usquare

Renovation started November 2021
What between now and 2024?

• BrIAS Co-directors:
  Serge Jaumain, ULB and Frank Deconinck, VUB

• Administrative support manager:
  Annette Hansen, Annette.Hansen@vub.be

• The first BrIAS Pilot phase theme (2021-2022)
  "The past, present and future of food, climate and sustainability".

• Programme directors:
  Christian Hermans, ULB, director CPBL, "Unité Nutrition des Plantes cultivées", assisted by David Cannella.
  Paul Erdkamp, VUB, director FOST, "Social & Cultural Food Studies", assisted by Nel de Mûlenenaere and Frits Heinrich.
Thank you