



UNIVERSITEIT
GENT

INTEGRATED POLICY PLAN FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION 2019-2023

Director Internationalization

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1 THE RATIONALE BEHIND AN INTEGRATED POLICY PLAN FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

1.1 Definition of internationalization

Internationalization of higher education institutions is a concept that has been **defined** in various ways over the years. In 2015, the definition of Jane Knight¹ used in the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2014-18 was revised as follows: *“Internationalization of higher education is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.”*²

This new definition emphasizes a number of important aspects which were not sufficiently addressed in the previous definition, and thus in the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2014-2018, more specifically, 1. that the decision to take the internationalization route as a university is an intentional process and therefore a conscious choice, for which the necessary resources must be made available; 2. that internationalization is an important means to improve the quality of education and research, and not an end in itself; 3. that it is a process that concerns all staff members and all students; and 4. that internationalization aims to make a meaningful contribution to society, in particular in an increasingly globalized world.

1.2 Global internationalization context

The **motives** for internationalization in higher education can generally be divided into four categories which are not mutually exclusive, namely **political, economic, social and cultural** motives.³ These vary over time and by country and region, which can lead to different approaches and strategies. In addition, the importance of internationalization has increased in Flanders in recent years due to both international and local trends that have a major impact on our society and the (political, economic, social and cultural) context of higher education in Flanders.

Recent global political developments and positions which may affect the vision of internationalization include the call to create a **network of European universities** by the French President, Emmanuel Macron, in September 2017, which was adopted by the European Council in December 2017 with the aim of creating a European educational space and increasing the international competitiveness of higher education in Europe. The stricter immigration legislation of the Trump government in the US and the effects of Brexit in the UK makes access to US and UK universities increasingly difficult for many (mainly non-EEA) students and may thus also create new opportunities and improve the competitive position of European universities.

Moreover, **global challenges** should no longer merely be addressed at the national or regional level. At the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, the first steps were taken towards formulating a global agenda to combat poverty, inequality and climate change. This led to the 193 member states of the United Nations signing the agreement for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 25 September 2015. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals must provide an answer to the urgent social, economic and environmental problems facing our planet and society. Higher education institutions can make an important contribution to the achievement of these objectives through scientific research, for which

¹ Knight, J. (2003): Updated internationalization definition; *International Higher Education*, 33, 2-3.

² De Wit, Hans et al (2015). *Internationalisation of Higher Education*. Study requested by the European Parliament. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU\(2015\)540370_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU(2015)540370_EN.pdf)

³ De Wit, Hans (2002). *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 83-102

sharing knowledge and experiences through international cooperation and networks is crucial. Participating in international research not only offers the opportunity to contribute to the development of solutions to global problems, it also strengthens the international competitive position of universities and provides the possibility of generating additional research resources and offering innovative, internationally oriented education. In addition, research projects specifically addressing the challenges of developing countries contribute to meeting the UN target of spending 0.7% of the GNP of donor countries to official development aid.⁴

Internationalization can also play an important role as a **driver of innovation**. Particularly due to the strong networking and cooperation character of internationalization and its global nature by definition, those directly involved are in an excellent position to play a role as a monitor and reporter for European and worldwide events, trends and evolutions with an impact on higher education in general. In a recent paper, international education specialists⁵ pointed to the contribution that internationalization can make to the (international) social engagement of students and university staff.

However, this does not prevent that **friction** may arise between internationalization and certain other social and global developments: for example, sustainability considerations may be at odds with the desire to encourage mobility, and factors such as security, (geo)political instability and human rights policies may affect the policy choices with regard to internationalization.

1.3 Internationalization in Flanders

The Flemish legislation that outlines the higher education landscape in Flanders is described in the **Codex of Higher Education**⁶. This Codex determines, for example, the admission conditions for students (Art. II.174 et seq.), the framework within which Flemish higher education institutions can offer foreign-language courses (Art. II.266) and the language requirements for the teaching staff and the academic staff charged with a teaching assignment (Art. II.270), in terms of teaching language⁷ as well as administrative language⁸.

Since Belgium ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention on the recognition of higher education diplomas in the European Region in 2009, the admission of foreign students to Flemish universities has been determined by checking the equivalence of the diploma and by setting language admission requirements. However, just like for Flemish students, a selection on quality, based on previous study results, is not possible.

Recent demographic and social changes and the associated emergence of a **super-diverse Flemish society** also have an impact on the context in which higher education institutions operate. In early 2016, around 3.3 million people of foreign origin lived in Belgium, which is 29.5% of the total population; in the Flemish Region, there were more than 1.3 million people of foreign origin, which corresponds to 20.5% of

⁴ UN resolution 24 October 1970

⁵ Uwe Brandenburg, Hans de Wit, Elspeth Jones and Betty Leask: Internationalisation in Higher Education for Society. University World News, 20 April 2019

⁶ <https://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14650>

⁷ Each member of the teaching staff and of the academic staff charged with a teaching assignment must adequately master the teaching language in which (s)he teaches a course unit. This means that the staff member must master the language at the CEFR level C1. This required level of proficiency of the teaching language is to be demonstrated by means of qualification certificates issued by officially recognized institutions which show that the staff member masters the teaching language at the required level.

⁸ Each member of the teaching staff and of the academic staff charged with a teaching assignment who does not teach any course units in Dutch must master the Dutch language at CEFR level B2. The university board provides for a mandatory integration trajectory which guarantees that the staff member will at least master the Dutch language at CEFR level A2 after two years. The programme ends when the required CEFR level of B2 has been acquired, which must be within five years after the temporary appointment or at the time of the permanent appointment. The required level of proficiency of the Dutch language is to be demonstrated by means of qualification certificates issued by officially recognized institutions which show that the staff member masters the Dutch language at the required level.

the total Flemish population.⁹ A majority come from neighbouring countries (64% of the total number of foreigners and 45% in the population of foreign origin) and from Maghreb countries, followed by Afghans, Iraqis and Russians. In Ghent, 28.9% of full-time students in secondary education have a foreign language as their home language; this percentage even rises to 44.7% in vocational secondary education.¹⁰

The practice of what Ghent University considers **multiperspectivism** is therefore of increasing importance, not only for those seeking an international career, but also for students who will remain in Flanders. It is therefore crucial to emphasize the significance of the internationalization of Flemish higher education and the acquisition of intercultural skills across all faculties. An international experience offers students, researchers and staff members additional opportunities to improve their critical thinking, problem-solving capacity and sense of creativity, to contribute to personal development, to expand their language skills and to obtain a broader view of society, characteristics which are also important on the local labour market. In addition, international classrooms can contribute a great deal with regard to activating education. After all, international discussion groups in which students must explain their own context to students with a completely different background, thus being confronted with a different reality, can only benefit the teaching process.

In 2017, the Flemish Education Council emphasized the importance of developing an **internationalization strategy for Flemish higher education**.¹¹ The Council pointed out that *if Flemish higher education institutions want to continue to play a pioneering role in the development of knowledge and if they want to prepare their students for their professional and personal functioning in an increasingly global and super-diverse society, they must continue to internationalize*. The institutions must take on the role of leader in this process, while the government can play a coordinating role and set the required preconditions. Since then, the Flemish government has taken the initiative to develop such an internationalization strategy in consultation with higher education institutions. This will be developed further by the new government.

The Flemish Advisory Council for Innovation and Enterprise (Vlaamse Adviesraad voor Innoveren en Ondernemen, VARIO) adds to this by highlighting the importance of training international talent in Flanders. VARIO has repeatedly called for a relaxation of the language policy at universities and university colleges, by including a more extensive range of English-language Master's and Bachelor's programmes, as well as a relaxation of the Dutch language requirements for foreign lecturers as a crucial part of the strategy to attract and anchor top international talent and thus to develop Flanders into one of the top 5 European **innovative knowledge regions**.^{12,13} Moreover, the education working group of the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) has agreed for realistic and feasible adjustments to the language policy, taking into account the reality and possibilities of foreign researchers and placing the priorities of foreign researchers in the performance of academic tasks.

Also in the allocation keys used for the allocation of research funding at the Flemish universities (Decree on the Special Research Fund and Decree on the Industrial Research Fund), the international dimension will become increasingly important.¹⁴ For example, part of the funds will be allocated based on the number of international co-publications, and a similar portion will depend on the share of the budgetary return from European framework programmes. Thus, it is suggested that the Special Research Fund (BOF) resources

⁹ This includes persons with a current foreign nationality (foreigners), persons with a foreign birth nationality who have in the meantime become Belgian and persons with a Belgian birth nationality with at least one parent with a foreign birth nationality. Source: Noppe et al. (2018), Flemish migration and integration monitor, Statistics Flanders & Internal Administration Agency

¹⁰ Population register of the City of Ghent (population and foreign nationals register), Flemish Community, Department of Higher Education

¹¹ Advice on an internationalization strategy for Flemish higher education, Flemish Education Council (Vlaamse Onderwijsraad), March 2017

¹² Internationaal toptalent aantrekken en verankeren, Flemish Advisory Council for Innovation and Enterprise (Vlaamse Adviesraad voor Innoveren en Ondernemen), VARIO, November 2017

¹³ VARIO memorandum 2019-2024, Vlucht vooruit, bestemming: top 5 kennisregio's, December 2018

¹⁴ <https://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14113#271406>

create a leverage effect for successful applications to the European Framework Programme (H2020 including ERC, and, in the future, Horizon Europe).

2 GHENT UNIVERSITY'S INTERNATIONALIZATION POLICY

In its **mission statement**, Ghent University presents itself as a socially engaged and pluralistic university that is open to all students regardless of their philosophical, political, cultural and social background, and that wants to offer opportunities to its own and incoming students and staff.¹⁵

By drafting an **Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2014-18**¹⁶, Ghent University outlined, for the first time, an institution-wide vision on internationalization, with the aim of strengthening its international position and bringing internationalization more to the forefront within the institution. To this end, five strategic objectives were formulated: 1. Striving for the most efficient internal structure and communication regarding internationalization; 2. Making choices about the intensity and form of international cooperation with certain regions, countries and partner institutions; 3. Striving for maximum internationalization of the own education and research through a structural anchoring of student and staff mobility and Internationalization@Home; 4. implementing a targeted recruitment of international students and academic staff; and 5. developing Ghent University into an internationally strong brand.

To achieve these objectives, Ghent University makes use of a model of **embedded internationalization**, in which internationalization is inextricably linked to other university-wide policy visions and plans and is anchored within the existing central and faculty structures. Internationalization is one of the six strategic objectives of both the education policy¹⁷ and the research policy¹⁸ of Ghent University.

In 2018, Ghent University's Board of Governors decided to introduce a new strategic policy cycle, based on six **university-wide policy choices**, approved by the Board of Governors in January 2019: 1. Activating learning, 2. Diversity, 3. Talent management, 4. Sustainability, 5. Enhanced alumni activity, and 6. Strengthening of Ghent University's social identity. The Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-2023 aims to contribute to the realization of these university-wide policy choices.

With regard to its internationalization strategy, in addition to aiming for quality education and research as well as for a better international visibility and image, Ghent University must make some considerations. These include, for example, the relationship between the ambitions with regard to internationalization and sustainability and the limitations that human rights concerns can pose in the choice of partner institutions. In other words, there is a need for a **holistic and ethical framework** in which a coherent vision is developed that gives direction to Ghent University's policy within the existing international context. This framework should therefore provide answers to questions such as

- How can internationalization contribute to achieving the objectives that Ghent University sees for itself as an important actor in the social system?
- To what extent can Ghent University's ambitions regarding internationalization be reconciled with its pioneering role in sustainability?
- To what extent can Ghent University's ambitions regarding internationalization be reconciled with its human rights policy and possibly other ethical aspects that play a role in choosing cooperation modalities?

¹⁵ <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/missieverklaring.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/internationalisering>

¹⁷ <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/onderwijsbeleid>

¹⁸ <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/onderzoeksbeleid>

- To what extent do factors such as security, (geo)political instability, crises and diplomatic and consular issues play a role in the internationalization policy?
- What role do we wish to take up in academic diplomacy?
- To what extent should the internationalization policy also explicitly contribute to the (ethical) image of Ghent University in other policy areas? For example, do we take any initiatives for refugees?
- How can Ghent University aspire to be a top university with social impact, which attracts excellent students and researchers and contributes to international (North-South) cooperation?

With the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-2023, Ghent University wishes to emphasize its ambition to take on **a leading position in Europe** within this holistic and ethical framework which is to be developed further, as a university that excels internationally in education and research and creates an international working and learning environment where all members of the Ghent University community, regardless of their background, feel at home and where students are optimally prepared for the challenges of today's globalized society and labour market across national borders. The **strategies** that can be used are diverse, for example, international cooperation and development projects, institutional agreements and networks, the integration of international and intercultural dimensions in the learning process, the curriculum and the research, the mobility of academic staff by means of exchanges, fieldwork, sabbaticals and consultancies, the recruitment of international students and staff, exchange programmes for students and staff and semesters abroad, summer schools, joint / double degree programmes, and branch campuses.

3 KEY ASPECTS OF THE INTEGRATED POLICY PLAN FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION 2019-2023

The proposed policy choices that must allow Ghent University to pursue a qualitative policy to attain the intended leadership role and to realize these ambitions are subdivided into **four clusters**. The first relates to the way in which Ghent University relates to the external world: with whom do we enter into which kind of partnerships, with which objective, and what is Ghent University's image as perceived by the outside world? The second cluster emphasizes the role that internationalization can play as a driver of innovation and social engagement: how do we use the information about the general trends and evolutions affecting higher education, acquired from contacts within our networks and activities carried out within our partnerships, to feed Ghent University's education and research policy, and how do we contribute to the development of the capacities of our global partners? In the third cluster, we pay special attention to issues that relate to the potential impact of internationalization on the quality of education and research at Ghent University. This includes the entire cycle from inflow to outflow: how do we offer optimal opportunities to our own students and staff and how do we attract talented international students and researchers; how are they welcomed by Ghent University and how do we ensure that they continue to enjoy studying and working at Ghent University; how do we make sure that they feel connected to Ghent University for life, even after leaving our institution? Finally, the fourth cluster relates to the internal structural choices that must be made to allow Ghent University to achieve the internationalization objectives within the embedded model.

For each cluster, this policy document first describes the main policy choices for the next 5 years with a view to achieving the intended objective, and then defines the **policy areas or priorities** that should allow Ghent University to achieve this objective. These choices are the result of a broad consultation and reflection process¹⁹ within Ghent University's community including all Ghent University staff involved in internationalization. The term 'policy areas', or 'policy priorities, was deliberately chosen over 'action points' because a policy plan must reflect the values of the policy. In the implementation of the policy plan, action points will be specified for each policy area, if necessary decided by the competent policy bodies. These action points, with corresponding timelines and budgets, will therefore be defined during the operationalization phase.

3.1 CLUSTER 1: Ghent University and the international context

This cluster examines the way in which Ghent University relates to the external world. On the one hand, this includes the choices regarding the partnerships that Ghent University wishes to enter into and the factors that influence these choices. On the other hand, it relates to Ghent University's international image: how are we perceived by the outside world, and what are the factors that do or do not make Ghent University a desired partner?

The previous Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization put a strong emphasis on grouping and shaping a partner policy in which, in addition to faculty partnerships, the focus was on platforms, thematic networks (ITN), strategic institutional partnerships (SIPs) and the campus in South Korea. The Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-2023 aims to continue this approach and further frames this strategic partner policy within the holistic and ethical vision of internationalization. Subsequently, the different resources that can shape this vision and strengthen the relationship between Ghent University and the external world are discussed.

¹⁹ See reports Expert Group meeting 21/09/17, Brainstorming Day Expert Group 09/10/18 and Internationalization Day 24/10/18

Policy area 1: Making appropriate and effective strategic choices regarding qualitative partnerships.

To strengthen the relationship between Ghent University and the external world, the Ghent University community can make use of various resources, such as faculty partnerships, international education and research projects, Regional Platforms (RP), International Thematic Networks (ITN), Strategic Institutional Partnerships (SIP) with special attention for the further expansion of the existing U4 partnership into a European University Network (U4Society), the Ghent University campus in South Korea (GUGC), and academic diplomacy. The relationship between Ghent University and the external world and the resources that can be used to strengthen this relationship are depicted in the figure below.

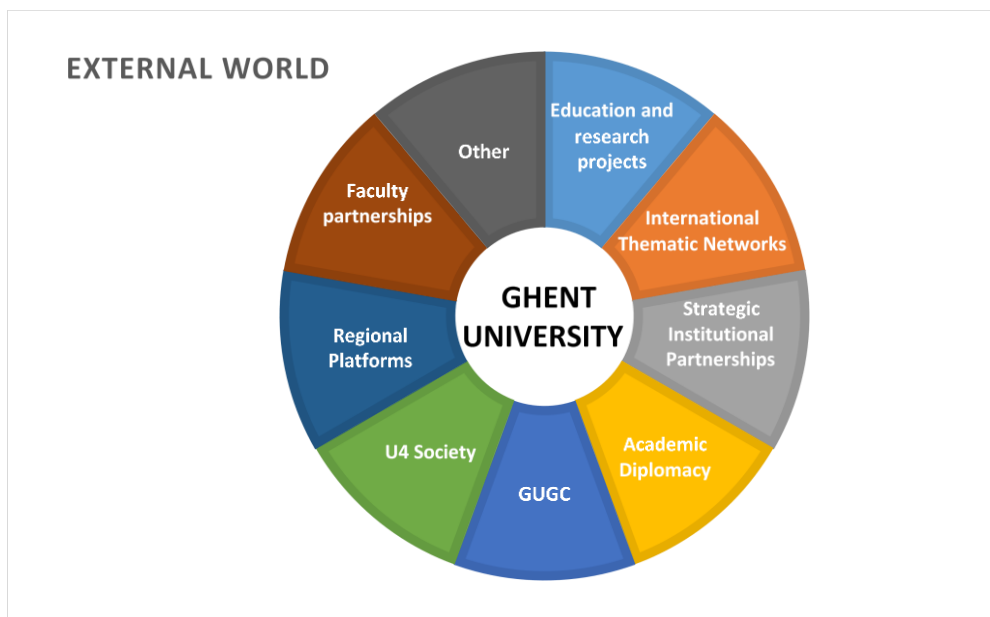


Figure 3: Schematic representation of the Ghent University's Strategic Partner Policy

Faculty partnerships and international projects are often based on individual contacts with a specific educational or research finality. They therefore have a different starting point than the other resources described above, which implies that their implementation also takes place in a different way. However, starting from an institutional setting may lead to a more adapted and efficient approach to partnerships and thus to more quality. When choosing partners, several strategic considerations must be made in addition to aiming to contribute to quality education and research at Ghent University and enhance Ghent University's international visibility and image.

Objective policy area 1

To develop an active partnership policy that takes into account a to-be-created holistic and ethical framework on internationalization, specifically regarding sustainability, human rights policy and factors such as security, (geo) political instability, crises, and diplomatic and consular issues.

Policy area 2: Strengthening the current functioning regarding Regional Platforms, International Thematic Networks & Strategic Institutional Partnerships

Ghent University's policy on strategic international cooperation, which was approved by the Board of Governors in 2015 and further elaborated on in the context of the 1st Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization, focuses on 3 models of cooperation: International Thematic Networks (ITN), Regional Platforms (RP) and Strategic Institutional Partnerships (SIPs). This policy is continued in the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-2023.

Within the existing Regional Platforms (Africa Platform, ASEANplus, China Platform, CESAM Platform and Russia Platform)²⁰, specific expertise has been built up on, for example, the language, culture, and existing higher education systems in these regions. The platforms make this knowledge available to the faculties to support the reinforcement or expansion of existing forms of cooperation. Over the next 5 years, efforts will be made to standardize and strengthen the operation of the platforms.

The International Thematic Networks²¹ support the development of new initiatives in the field of mobility, research, education and services provided to society around a specific theme. In this way, they contribute to Ghent University's international image. Within the operation of the International Thematic Networks, three different tendencies are distinguished according to the main objective: strengthening the existing excellence, strengthening the capacity in the South, or strengthening Ghent University's own capacity through its network.

Strategic Institutional Partnerships (SIPs) are distinguished from the above-mentioned forms of strategic international cooperation as being project-transcending partnerships between two or more institutions on an equal and complementary basis and in mutual management, resulting from a well thought-out institution-wide policy of all partners. The partnership thus provides a framework for intensive cooperation between the partners regarding education, research, services and institutional management with a view to strengthening their joint as well as their individual position. In recent years, Ghent University's SIPs have been established on the basis of long-term collaborations in the context of North-South cooperation (with current partners in Vietnam, Ecuador, Ethiopia and South Africa) and negotiations have been started to launch SIPs based on research excellence with institutions in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Objective policy area 2

To regularly evaluate, optimize and adjust where necessary the existing activity with regard to strategic international cooperation.

Policy area 3: Rolling out the pilot project 'U4Society, an inclusive European University for all'

As indicated in the introduction, Europe recognizes the growing importance of strong international partnerships between higher education institutions. With the initiative of the European Universities, Europe wishes to stimulate intensive cooperation between the multinational networks of European universities. These networks serve as a driver for a thorough educational innovation and the further implementation of the Bologna process. The European Commission attaches great importance to strengthening the European values and identity. The objectives are an even greater participation of students in virtual and physical mobility and the promotion of staff exchange, mutual use of facilities, linking programmes to support cooperation and further implementation of the Bologna agenda.

²⁰ <https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles/internationalisation/regionalplatforms.htm>

²¹ <https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles/internationalisation/thematicnetworks.htm>

Ghent University has always been a strong supporter of European initiatives. From the very beginning, Ghent University has been a trendsetter in various programmes: Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+. Also within the recently launched pilot for 'European Universities', Ghent University has the ambition to consolidate its reputation as a trendsetter and to help shape the future European programme. Through the U4Society partnership (successor to the U4 network), Ghent University aims to take on a pioneering role in the further expansion of the European Higher Education Policy area in the coming years.

To be eligible to be included in the pilot project, Ghent University developed a strong and innovative vision together with the Universities of Göttingen, Groningen, Uppsala and Tartu. This vision was linked to an ambitious long-term objective and translated into innovative actions that must become a new standard within the European Higher Education Landscape.

The proposal, entitled '**U4Society, an inclusive European University for all**', includes the creation of an open, integrated space between the partner universities, as a blueprint for an inclusive 'European University', where obstacles to an international learning experience are eliminated, so that more students and staff members can gain access to the best education and research environment, and where excellence is sought through the sharing of knowledge, resources and infrastructure. With a view to strengthening inclusion and increasing participation in international education, the further digitization of education and administration is an important dimension. Emphasis is also placed on the use of internationalization in strengthening the social engagement of students and staff through, for example, the development of projects for international entrepreneurship and international societal challenges.

Objective policy area 3

To make the U4Society cooperation model one of the spearheads of the central internationalization policy and use it as a guideline for several other action points in the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-23.

Policy area 4: Further expanding the Ghent University campus in South Korea (GUGC)

Another important spearhead of the internationalization policy is the further expansion of the Ghent University campus in South Korea. Ghent University wishes to develop high-quality education and research in the field of life sciences on this campus, which was established in 2014. Focus policy areas are (plant) biotechnology, bioinformatics, food technology and nutrition, green chemistry, biomedical research and environmental technology (corresponding with the current research centres). This is in line with the South Korean government's desire to develop Songdo, the policy area where the campus is located, into an important bio-industry and life sciences hub in Asia.

To support research in these policy areas, attract funds and doctoral students and ensure an adequate influx of well-trained researchers, we will explore the opportunity to set up a **graduate school** with an MA and doctoral programme in addition to the existing undergraduate programmes in molecular biotechnology, food technology and environmental technology. The aim is to increase the current student number from 440 to 1,000 students by 2024. At the same time, the GUGC must further develop into a **fully-fledged Asian hub of Ghent University**, where exchange programmes between the home campus and the GUGC also enable Flemish students in the aforementioned fields to take some of their course units at the GUGC. Furthermore, exchange programmes can be set up with other universities, particularly in Asia, to guarantee a sufficient international student population.

Objective policy area 4

To gradually expand the GUGC campus, including the submission of a proposal to set up a graduate school by the Director of Internationalization, in consultation with the deans of the Ghent University faculties involved and the GUGC Campus Council, to Ghent University's Board of Governors.

Policy area 5: Strengthening Ghent University's international image

The above-mentioned policy areas also fit in with Ghent University's image or **branding strategy** at the international level. Ghent University is still insufficiently known among foreign students, researchers, institutions and other actors seeking international cooperation, despite a strong research position, high-quality education and a high position in several international rankings. Changing this requires a joint and thorough long-term effort. Such a strategy should be developed together with the Communication Office with input from everyone involved (central departments and faculties).

In addition to communication, a cornerstone of such a policy is a thoroughly developed academic diplomacy in which contacts are established, built up and maintained in a targeted and professional manner with all sorts of important internationalization stakeholders (e.g., embassies, foreign sister institutions, ministries, the provincial and city government and the (international) business world). In addition, Ghent University plays a leading role in bodies that determine the global, European and national / regional policy on international university cooperation.

Objective policy area 5

To develop a collaboration with all those involved in internationalization (central departments and faculties) in order to establish and promote Ghent University internationally as a strong brand. To take up an active and leading role with regard to academic diplomacy and policy on international university collaborations.

3.2 CLUSTER 2: Internationalization as a driver for innovation and social engagement

Due to the strong networking and cooperation character of internationalization as well as its global nature, those involved in internationalization are in an excellent position to take up a role as a monitor and reporter for European and global events, trends and evolutions affecting higher education in general..

Within Ghent University, a great deal of information is being collected, obtained from contacts within our networks and when carrying out activities within our partnerships. This information is still insufficiently used to feed Ghent University's education and research policy, to enhance the international entrepreneurship and social engagement and to contribute to the strengthening of the capacities of our partners in the South.

Policy area 6: Strengthening the monitoring and reporting role of internationalization within Ghent University

In line with the vision of internationalization as a means, in particular for quality promotion, Ghent University also recognizes the strong role of internationalization as a driver of innovation and social engagement. Passive and active networking and cooperation as well as the global nature of internationalization by definition create opportunities to monitor, report and even manage European and global events, trends and evolutions affecting higher education in general. An example of this is the Bologna process, which is strongly driven by an internationalization rationale. Its broad impact on general institutional policy and especially on education and research policy is therefore undeniable. For example, the U4Society project proposes actions to promote the international entrepreneurship and social engagement of students on global social issues through international exchanges. This emphasizes the transversal nature of internationalization as well as the need to devote the necessary attention to it in different administrative and operational processes. The image of internationalization as a *driver for innovation, inclusion and social engagement* must be reinforced, for example by strengthening existing and creating new Internationalization@Home initiatives (e.g., virtual classrooms, activating international education and the involvement of international students and student associations in the social engagement of the (own) students). It is important to consider how to involve students (even more) in the development of such initiatives (e.g., via buddy programmes).

Objective policy area 6

To monitor, benchmark and report Ghent University's positioning and efforts with regard to internationalization as well as the European and global events, trends and evolutions affecting higher education as input to Ghent University's own policy.

Policy area 7: Collaborating with universities and research centres in the Global South

As an outstanding university, we must not lose sight of our role in the capacity building of universities in countries in the Global South. Ghent University has always been fairly active in this field, mainly under the umbrella and through funding from the federal Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) at **VLIR-UOS**, the Flemish Inter-University Council for University Development Cooperation. North-South cooperation is therefore an integral part of an active international policy which includes making know-how available but also benefits Ghent University. The many success stories demonstrate that cooperation based on equality is possible and can lead to added value for qualitative education and research. A good examples of this is the establishment of Strategic Institutional Partnerships that have emerged from long-term North-South partnerships, in particular with Can Tho University in Vietnam, ESPOL in Ecuador, Jimma University in Ethiopia and the University of Western Cape in South Africa, as well as other initiatives in the **Global Minds programme**²², which will be continued and expanded under the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-23.

The VLIR-UOS model of partnerships²³ is a model that can certainly be further expanded, but other sources must be sought to fund this policy so that our efforts with regard to cooperation with the Global South become less dependent on a single donor. Possible donors are other Flemish and Belgian actors, such as Enabel, and international actors, such as Europe, Nuffic, EuropeAid and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. For this purpose, the local governments in the South will be charted.

²² <http://www.ugent.be/globalminds>

²³ <https://www.vliruos.be>

Objective policy area 7

To further expand and strengthen the cooperation with universities and research centres in the Global South as an integral part of the internationalization policy. To make available our know-how in the policy area of capacity building at universities and the execution of research and education projects in this policy area to international governments and donors more than is currently the case.

3.3 CLUSTER 3: Focus on quality at inflow and outflow

Internationalization has a potentially important role to promote the quality of education and research at Ghent University. This cluster elaborates on this role of internationalization throughout the entire cycle from inflow to outflow, from the effect of the curriculum on the appeal of our institution to foreign students and how an active recruitment policy can contribute to the quality promotion of education and research at Ghent University, to the role of alumni in the positioning of Ghent University in society and in building its international reputation. We also address the need to provide a good service to international students, doctoral students, researchers and staff members so that they are happy to continue studying and working at Ghent University. An additional aim is to offer qualitative opportunities for our own students, researchers and staff to receive international training and to develop their talents.

Policy area 8: Strengthening the internationalization opportunities for students, researchers and staff

This policy area relates to both the range of courses offered to incoming students and the range of outgoing mobility and training opportunities for Ghent University students and staff.

The existing offer of **foreign-language courses** is mainly based on initiatives from individual teachers, and not based on a concerted supply policy (in consultation between the central and faculty level), which considers the needs from an international perspective and not just the knowledge and goodwill on the supply side. Adjusting the course catalogue to suit our own strengths as well as the needs at the international level will increase Ghent University's appeal. Moreover, a strong course catalogue can lead to a more strategic student recruitment, and a wider range of foreign-language courses will increase international interaction in the field of education and research. This will also contribute to talent development and recruitment and can thus form an important cornerstone of the university's policy choices on this matter. In addition to offering foreign-language courses, our international course catalogue should include courses on our own language and culture. This opportunity remains largely untapped.

In its language policy document (2017)²⁴, the Department of Educational Policy proposes a **structural and integrated language policy**, for students as well as lecturers, with attention to both academic Dutch and academic English. This policy document argues for a strengthening of the academic language skills of students and lecturers at Ghent University in order to promote general talent development, which contributes to quality education.

The **offer of foreign-language course(unit)s** at Ghent University can be expanded within the limits set by the decree regulations. However, this must be functional and must serve other purposes. After all, internationalization is not the same as the Anglicization of education. A minimum of foreign-language course(unit)s must be available at every faculty so that 'mixed classrooms' can be created to teach

²⁴ <https://www.ugent.be/student/nl/studeren/taaladvies/talenbeleid>, note approved by the Educational Council on 12 October 2017

international and intercultural competencies, which must be built into all study programmes, to the student population at Ghent University.

In order to meet the existing concerns about the **quality of incoming international students**, we should examine the possibility of setting up foreign-language proficiency tests (which give prospective students insight into their chances of success) and a specific English-language preparation programme for international students. In the context of the development of the new Erasmus programme, which will come into effect in 2021, the Department of Educational Policy has also made a conscious choice for modern, **high-quality partner management** with regard to student exchange.²⁵ The offer for outgoing student exchanges must be optimized, strengthened and possibly expanded with new forms of exchange (e.g., intensive courses and international social engagement assignments).

Within the supply policy, there is also a focus on **other forms of international cooperation and mobility** ranging from virtual mobility and short-term forms of mobility (summer courses) to courses offered at other universities. A number of initiatives have already been set up, mainly in the context of the U4 partnership²⁶ and at the initiative of individual faculties^{27,28}; however, there is still room to expand on this and to coordinate it better. For example, the project proposal for the European University (see policy area 4) allows plenty of room for such initiatives.

This policy area also includes how the international **training catalogue for** (incoming and outgoing) **staff** can be improved. After all, in a more internationally oriented university, it is essential that the staff involved at all central departments and faculties also acquire the international and intercultural competencies necessary to be able to offer an optimal service regarding internationalization. These competencies can best be acquired in an international context. Also here, many initiatives have already been set up (e.g., sabbaticals for professors, training exchanges for staff, staff exchange week and benchmarking activities in U4Society context), but this offer can certainly be improved upon, in particular for those staff members who are not working on internationalization.

Objective policy area 8

To optimize, strengthen and expand the range of international educational opportunities for both our own and foreign students and staff with the aim of educating students and staff to become conscious and engaged global citizens with broad international and intercultural skills (including language skills).

Policy area 9: Actively recruiting talent

One of the university-wide policy choices is talent management, including **active recruitment** of talented students, doctoral students, researchers and professors, both nationally and internationally, which calls for a clear focus and policy. Such a policy is of course related to a general image policy, but also requires a specific approach in terms of being present on recruitment forums (both physical and virtual). A cautious start has already been made with regard to **student recruitment**, for example, by appointing a responsible person at the central level, but this must be further shaped, developed and implemented together with the platforms and faculties. To achieve this, we propose the formation of a policy group on active 'acquisition' lead by the director of internationalization as well as the establishment of faculty support points. Central and faculty staff members will be (partly) actively and jointly involved in student recruitment and the acquisition of international (= non-European) (research) funds to guarantee a coherent and unambiguous presence

²⁵ 'Naar een rationelere benadering van bilaterale (raam)akkoorden voor studentenuitwisseling', Department of Educational Policy, October 2018

²⁶ <http://www.u4.ugent.be/index.php/events/summer-winter-schools>

²⁷ <https://summerschoolghent.com/hm/>

²⁸ <http://www.qrili.ugent.be/for-students/summer-courses>

policy abroad and at external forums. To this end, use can be made of the possibilities offered, for example, by the VLUHR Working Group on Internationalization, and this in cooperation with other Flemish institutions.

In addition to attracting top international students, Ghent University can also focus on attracting **top international talent in research**. Ghent University is not yet top of mind with (emerging) top doctoral students and researchers when developing their careers. This requires not only attractive career prospects but also a certain active policy on attracting profiles (e.g., via search committees). This is of course primarily a faculty policy, but it can be stimulated and supported centrally.

In 2014, Ghent University obtained the European label 'HR Excellence in Research'²⁹. In 2019, the necessary steps will be taken to obtain this label again, with a corresponding action plan.

Objective policy area 9

To develop and implement a policy on international talent recruitment using virtual and physical platforms for the recruitment of international students, doctoral students, researchers and staff in a coordinated manner.

Policy area 10: Improving the welcoming and guidance of international staff, researchers and students

New students, doctoral students, researchers and staff members at Ghent University must be welcomed in an efficient and cordial manner, regardless of whether they are Flemish or foreign. The same applies to visiting researchers and students. The specific structural and administrative bottlenecks that complicate the recruitment and employment of foreign researchers were examined by the VLIR working group on international researchers. The document drawn up by this working group shows that a service tailored to foreign researchers is needed.³⁰

In recent years, a great deal of effort has already been made to improve **the welcoming and the guidance** of international students as well as staff; however, the communication flow of the procedures to be followed to all central and faculty departments must be improved. The current operation for exchange (mainly Master's) students and foreign diploma students must also be consolidated, and the user-friendliness of the admission procedure for foreign students must be improved.³¹ The existing buddy programme for international students must be further developed and supported in consultation with the student associations. Moreover, there is an important group, including (exchange) doctoral candidates and other researchers who are staying at Ghent University for a short time at the invitation of a department, who are in a 'grey area', and for whom there is uncertainty about which central department within Ghent University is responsible for their welcoming and guidance during their stay at Ghent University. However, this is crucial, not only for the well-being of these individuals, but also as an important factor that contributes to the image and reputation of Ghent University abroad. In order to welcome foreign staff and students in the best possible way, while at the same time promoting the image of Ghent University, it may be worthwhile to consider collaboration with other stakeholders such as the City of Ghent, the other knowledge centres in Ghent (such as university colleges, Vlerick, VIB and IMEC) and possibly international companies in the region. A possible solution might be to establish a central, visible and accessible place in Ghent where international visitors are welcomed in an efficient and cordial manner (an **international house**). Other

²⁹ See <https://www.ugent.be/en/work/hr-excellence>

³⁰ Barrières voor de buitenlandse onderzoeker bij verhuis naar, werken in en verblijf in België (VLIR), 20 Februari 2018

³¹ The current admission procedure for students who require a visa demands that the complete file reaches Ghent University no later than 1 March, including legalized copies of diplomas. It is argued that the deadline to submit the paper version should be moved later.

university cities abroad already have this (e.g., Göttingen and Maastricht), and an ‘international house’ is being built in Leuven near the station.

This also includes a broader welcoming and **integration policy** to help **international staff** to familiarize themselves with Ghent University and to integrate themselves, not only at Ghent University, but also in the wider social context in which they work and live. Examples of this are investing in a Ghent University expat community so that foreigners feel more at home at Ghent University, establishing a general policy for communication in a language they understand and offering language support measures.³²

Moreover, welcoming means to provide better services in terms of support for visa applications, finding suitable accommodation, handling financial transfers, social security, etc. Although much progress has already been made in this policy area, the procedures can be more streamlined. If Ghent University wishes to attract more international talent, the absorption capacity with regard to housing and other conditions must be expanded.

Objective policy area 10

To develop and implement a coherent and high-quality policy on welcoming international students, researchers and staff at Ghent University.

Policy area 11: Alumni policy

The **international alumni policy** plays a very important role in the international policy on the positioning of the university. This concerns both Belgian alumni living abroad and foreign alumni who have returned to their country or work internationally. They are the best ambassadors for our institution. That is why we must maintain close contact with them. An important tool for this is to set up an alumni database. To this end, a public tender will be launched in 2019, so that the database will be operational in 2020.

The international policy on chapters, including chapters in the US (New York), the Western Balkans, China (Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu), Tanzania, South Africa and Vietnam, will be strengthened, expanded and supported. This policy also fits within the university-wide choice on this matter.

Objective policy area 11

To create, develop, coordinate and strengthen an international alumni policy as part of the university-wide choice policy for alumni activities.

3.4 CLUSTER 4: Ghent University’s internal structure regarding internationalization

Achieving the internationalization objectives and implementing the 11 policy priorities described in the 3 clusters above can only be achieved in an optimal and efficient manner if Ghent University’s internal structure complies with the proposed model of embedded internationalization. In the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2014-2018, the pursuit of the most efficient internal structure and communication regarding internationalization was put forward as an objective. However, a survey of and discussions held with the various sections of Ghent University for the creation of the new Integrated Policy Plan clearly

³² Reference is made here to, amongst others, the Integration Trajectory for non-Dutch-speaking professorial staff that was approved by the Executive Board on 13/12/18.

revealed that the current complex structure with the Expert Group, the Interfaculty Resonance Group for Internationalisation (Interfacultaire Resonantiegroep Internationalisering - IFRI), the Commission Development Cooperation (Dutch: Commissie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking - COS), working groups and other consultative bodies was perceived as too convoluted and fragmented to allow efficient and transparent policy guidance. There was therefore a general demand for clearer and simpler structures, a better flow of information and more efficient management and support of (faculty) initiatives.

Policy area 12: Optimizing the positioning, composition and authority of the internationalization structures, at the central and faculty level.

The structures with regard to internationalization, both at a central and faculty level, must allow for a broad discussion and operation in which all aspects of internationalization are dealt with in an integrated manner (such as, strategic partnerships, coordination of resources of internationalization for education and research, welcoming of international students, researchers and visitors, talent development and internationalization as a driver for innovation and social engagement).

At the **central level**, it must be examined whether the existing structures can be clarified and simplified, and how internationalization can best be reported and advised to the central boards, committees and governing bodies (Board of Governors, Executive Board). That is why it is necessary to review and possibly revise the composition, operation and positioning of the existing bodies (the Expert Group, IFRI, COS and the Resonance Groups Partnerships and Process Management, Staff, and Students) established at the time of the first Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization. Their authorities and the relationships between these structures must be optimized and, where possible, integrated.

For the same reason, the operation, composition and positioning of the Faculty Chairs for Internationalisation (FCI) should be reviewed **at the faculty level** and adjusted if necessary. At the moment, the operation of the FCI is not uniform across the 11 faculties. While the functioning of this committee is limited in some faculties to mere education-related matters or to student exchanges, in other faculties its functioning is broader. However, input in preparation of this Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization revealed a great need for a broader, integrated and more comprehensive discussion on internationalization at the faculty level, which, apart from education-related topics, also includes other matters related to internationalization such as international recruitment, a welcoming policy, research collaborations with institutions outside of the EU and North-South cooperation. In addition, there appears to be a need for a better inflow and outflow of information about internationalization to the other faculty structures such as the Scientific Research Committees (Commissies Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek - CWO), Education Quality Control Committees (Commissies Kwaliteitszorg Onderwijs - CKO) and Study Programme Committees (opleidingscommissies), to thus feed the faculty policy on education, research and staffing and improve the services provided to international staff, researchers and students.

Objective policy area 12

To optimize the positioning, composition and authority of the central and faculty committees and structures with regard to internationalization, taking into account the input from the faculties and the central departments.

4 CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned policy areas provide direction for a policy for the coming 5 years that must allow Ghent University to attain an even stronger international position. The term ‘policy areas’ was deliberately chose because it clearly indicates that joint efforts from everyone involved are needed to achieve this objective. Developing this policy will undoubtedly result in a further internationalization of our student population and a diverse corps of researchers, staff and professors. This is necessary if we want to continue to take on a **leading role as an academic institution in Europe and the world**. After all, only through international cooperation and exchange and by attracting top international talent will we as an institution be able to continue to contribute to economic and social innovation.

The implementation of this policy plan will require a **significant investment of resources and staff**. In this regard, we do not advocate for new recruitments or large additional budgets, but rather for a consolidation, gradual increase and optimization of the use of available resources by using them in a concerted manner instead of fragmenting them. With the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2014-2018, a start was made on this, for example, by structuring partnerships, concentrating Special Research Fund resources in projects with a multiplier effect, using Global Minds funds as seed money to attract larger projects, which has been demonstrated to result in **multiplier effects**, for example, in terms of additional resources from research, the number of international doctorates and an increase in (the quality of) students. The same was found to be true for the deployment of staff. For each of the policy areas, the action plan must establish clear responsibilities with regard to its implementation.

If this policy plan is approved by the governing bodies, a clear action plan will be drawn up for each of the policy areas in consultation with all those directly involved (central departments and faculties) as well as a time frame for its implementation, the KPIs to be achieved and the required budget for the coming 5 years so that this can also be anchored in the (multi-year) budget. The Director of Internationalization will be responsible for implementation, monitoring and reporting.

What is important in this regard is that investing resources in internationalization not only leads to additional resources, but above all to a stronger and high-quality university that is better able to take on its role as an educator empowering young people as global citizens and as a provider of solutions to global social problems. It is therefore justified to provide the necessary resources for this.