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Special Dossier:
Vlerick's blueprint
for the future

Vlerick Leuven Gent
Management School

The Autonomous Management School of
Ghent University and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven



Dear reader,

The financial crisis has been hitting the headlines in the past few weeks. With its broad perspective on business, Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is in touch with the banking and business world and looks upon this crisis from a positive rather than a negative point of view.

The crisis forces everybody to reconsider traditional business models and translate them into new ones, with more intervention by different stakeholders and greater focus on long-term strategies. If Belgian businesses wish to stay competitive, they have to invest in developing these new business models. Belgium can enjoy a competitive edge in the market through funding of education and research.

Since Vlerick has always been on the innovative side of the business community, we will undoubtedly contribute to this change of models. The new developments taking place at the School in the fields of entrepreneurship, governance, performance management and risk management will certainly help the development of this new generation of business models. Those strategic research domains being multidisciplinary and transversal, Vlerick's contribution will be the results of many individuals joining forces together.

The financial crisis and the slowdown of the economy confront managers with new challenges. Important topics in times of crisis include risk management and communication. As an academic business school, Vlerick sees it as its social role to arm the managers of today and tomorrow with useful management insights and help them to develop their management skills.

When the economic situation takes a turn for the worse, however, this has an impact on education. Some companies, seeing education as a cost, may be tempted to cut the attendance in open programmes, or sponsoring of parttime MBA's. Companies with a strategic perspective on HR however will want to continue investing in the development of their key people, and in change support programmes, particularly in these challenging times. Whereas for the full-time MBA and the Masters degree programmes, an increased demand is to be foreseen. As some students in this group come directly from university, they might choose to study longer and wait for the job market to improve before embarking on their career, while some others might decide to re-orient their career.

The future of the School in a fast-changing world, but also in times that bring very exciting challenges: that is the main theme in this issue of Orator. I firmly believe that, as an organisation, we are well-positioned to tackle these challenges and changes in society. With our internationalisation strategy, I am sure that we can add value to the business community, now and in the future.

I do hope you enjoy reading this issue of Orator and wish you all inspiring times.

André Thibeault
Professor of finance and risk management

Orator

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Special Dossier

Vlerick's blueprint for the future

With a new Dean at the helm of Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School and the new academic year now well under way, our special dossier turns the spotlight on the School.

What daring dreams has the School fulfilled recently and what new concrete plans are in the pipeline? What place does Vlerick occupy in the international arena as an academic business school and how will it pursue its international strategy? How can the School define and fulfil its social role in the future? What challenges does this bring? And what does all this mean for students, alumni, companies, academic research and the School's own staff members?

Dean Philippe Haspeslagh on the School's future Creating one international, open business school

The appointment of Dean Philippe Haspeslagh has blown a breath of fresh air through the corridors of Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. His biggest challenge is to position Vlerick firmly in the international market without creating two separate schools. He also plans to develop faculty staff and ensure that the new generation is ready and able to provide continuing support to the international and Flemish business community. Last but not least, he argues that Vlerick must think and act as one, presenting a united front to the world.



Dean Philippe Haspeslagh: "Vlerick needs world-class international and Belgian talent"

Strong brand

"Vlerick has always enjoyed a strong position in Flanders," explains Professor Philippe Haspeslagh. "A position unequalled elsewhere. Other countries have national business schools, too, but they've not really become household names." According to Haspeslagh, Vlerick's unique status has its roots in the philosophy of the School's founder, Dries Vlerick, and more recently its institutional context. "We are the independent business school of two top universities and have close ties with both. Some business schools have an excellent grasp of theory, but are not tuned in to the needs of managers in the real world. Other schools mainly use people with practical business experience in their teaching programmes." Vlerick's strength is the very fact that it offers a combination of academic research and practical relevance. Haspeslagh adds, however: "Our strong brand name, which is a real asset in Belgium, is not yet something we can fall back on abroad. It will take time to make a name for ourselves outside Belgium."

International focus

Nevertheless, the School's international strategy is already beginning to pay off.

Haspeslagh: "The international MBA in St Petersburg and BiMBA, the international MBA we offer in partnership with Peking University, are two examples of our success in this area." The Dean feels this is not enough in the long term, however. "Even though we're doing well in the rankings, there's still scope for boosting the international profile of our brand name." Haspeslagh is realistic about the School's current degree of internationalisation, but is positive about the future. "Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School cannot afford to rest on its laurels. Competition between business schools is hotting up and clients are demanding more and more in terms of quality and the international character of that quality." Internationalisation is also an important component in the way the rankings are decided. Haspeslagh: "If you're well up in the rankings, your brand name and reputation attract the best students and you find yourself on corporate shortlists."

Three priorities

Since he officially took up office on 1 September 2008, Haspeslagh has touched base with members of staff in every department. This has given him a good idea of the School's strengths, but



Interaction and exchange between international MBA students in Belgium, Russia and China to be stepped up.

also the challenges that lie ahead. “I have three priorities. The first is to develop both faculty staff and internal management, because we’re a supply-driven business where professionalism is the byword. Secondly, as I mentioned earlier, internationalisation must play a more prominent part. The third priority is that Vlerick must think and act as one, presenting a united front both in-house – together with the alumni – and to the outside world.” So is it safe to assume

“Entrepreneurship is about more than just starting a venture; it’s about building on what you’ve started”

that there are already many projects in the pipeline in each of these areas, some involving serious investment? Haspeslagh: “There certainly are. Fortunately, I have a good management team and highly dedicated staff, otherwise I wouldn’t dare push ahead so fast.”

In the current economic climate Haspeslagh expects training to come under increasing threat in the business

world. “Particularly as regards open enrolment programmes. Because of the war for talent, companies cannot afford to prune their entire training budget, but training demand is definitely changing. Clients used to ask for two days of marketing for x employees. Now they want something more professional, more discerning, more target group-oriented. Simple client-supplier relationships are evolving into partnerships.”

MBA becomes School's flagship

Within the range of programmes offered by the School, the repositioning of the MBA programmes is an important item on the Dean’s agenda. “We want to promote the international MBAs as the flagship of the School. Specifically, this means developing both the international MBA in Leuven and the platform in St Petersburg, and expanding our collaboration with Peking University. We also want to intensify the interaction between international students.”

Cross-functional research

The development of research will also continue to be a focal point. “The emphasis must shift more towards cross-functional research into subjects that are vital to businesses. Individual researchers must come down from their ivory tower,

learn to look beyond the boundaries of their own field, or, in other words, adopt a more multidisciplinary approach in their work.”

International ambassadors

A special role is reserved for alumni in the internationalisation process. They provide essential feedback from the business world and act as ambassadors for Vlerick. “With the School forming the linchpin, I want to invest in the website, interactive platforms, support and facilities for the benefit of our alumni. Investing in face-to-face meetings is also feasible in Western Europe.”

Dean Haspeslagh does not like change for its own sake. “Naturally, it will take an enormous effort to maintain the internationalisation momentum. Our close-knit ties with Flanders do not need to suffer, however. We are what we are today because of Flemish companies and we’ll continue to be their partners. Policy support work will not be neglected either.” Haspeslagh concludes by saying: “Entrepreneurship is about more than just starting a venture; it’s about building on what you’ve started.” ■

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Executive education Partners in management development

More complex demands, greater training needs and a new role for teaching staff – those are the main trends in the executive education market according to General Director Patrick De Greve. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is ready to take on its role as partner in management development.

With 23% more executive programmes on offer, Vlerick clearly has increasing appeal for the business world.

Training demands
are becoming
increasingly complex
and international

Vlerick offers two types of management programmes for experienced professionals. “First of all, there are the open enrolment programmes,” explains Patrick De Greve. “Ninety of these are available for individuals from various organisations and sectors: 20 long-term programmes comprising more than 20 days’ training and 70 short-term courses of less than 10 days. Then there are our in-house programmes, which are tailored to an organisation’s specific training needs.”

The programmes cover a wide range of knowledge domains: accounting & finance, general management, governance & ethics, human resource management (HRM), innovation & entrepreneurship, marketing & sales, operations & technology management, organisational behaviour and strategy. The School also offers a limited number of programmes for specific industries. There is a huge choice of subjects within each domain. The top three favourites requested by the business sector are currently strategy, leadership develop-

ment and performance management. De Greve: “The participants and clients involved in the open enrolment programmes are 60-70% local and 30-40% international. In the tailored programmes, the ratio is reversed.”

Complexity

The business world is changing rapidly, so the training sector cannot afford to stand still. De Greve discerns trends in the executive education business and developments affecting both clients and staff. “Executive education is an expanding market. Vlerick has been offering these programmes for many years, but a growing number of business schools and other professional providers are now doing likewise.” The reason is all too obvious. De Greve: “Training needs in the market are increasing. Labour shortages mean that it is now more important for companies to retain personnel. Another thing we’ve noticed is that more attention is being given to management careers and career development.”



The demands made by clients on providers are also changing, becoming more sophisticated and complex, according to De Greve. "Clients used to ask for two days of marketing for x employees. Now they want something more professional, more discerning, more target group-oriented. Another trend is the demand for shorter training programmes. This calls for creativity in learning architectures. How do we intensify the impact within a shorter period of time while maintaining quality – that's the question." Not just the type but also the format of programmes on offer is changing, however. "What we're seeing is that more and more programmes are taking place outside the classroom. There's a growing need for coaching and training on the job, and project work is rapidly catching on." De Greve is critical of the predicted rise in e-learning: "There's a lot of talk about e-learning, but it's not something that our clients are looking for yet. I have seen an increase in blended learning, though."

Facilitator

Staffing levels are being adapted to match client demand. De Greve: "Changes in the executive education business and in client requirements have prompted us to review the staff situation. The number of programmes this year is up by more than 23% on last year, so we're planning to take on extra staff. That's quite a challenge. We're looking for determined, academically trained people who want to come down from their ivory tower. They also need to be business-oriented, enjoy teaching and be prepared to take on business-related challenges. That's a scarce commodity."

Besides trying to increase staffing levels, Vlerick also has a training programme for existing personnel. "As a result of changing client requirements, our own professors are expected to meet different demands these days. On the one hand, they have to have more in-depth expertise, while on the other, they need a more

interdisciplinary mindset." The staff's role is also changing. "A lecturer is gradually taking on the mantle of coach and facilitator." In response to the question whether Vlerick is prepared for the changes taking place in the training sector, De Greve is wholeheartedly positive. "Vlerick likes complex demands. We used to have client-supplier relationships, but over the years we've shifted more towards partnerships. Partners in management development. You're in safe hands with us."

International locations

Vlerick still offers its programmes for more experienced managers mainly in Belgium. De Greve: "Globalisation with respect for diversity is a challenge. We provide our open enrolment programmes chiefly in the home market. The tailored programmes are rather more international. We organise training courses for some companies in their offices worldwide, from China to Canada, from Vladivostok to the Middle East." The advantages that Vlerick has to offer are its flexibility and customer-oriented approach. "There's plenty of room between the elephant's feet, you might say. Our School is still a relatively small organisation, so we're able to respond and adapt quickly to new situations. And perhaps humility and entrepreneurship are also inherent in the Flemish culture," laughs De Greve.

The campuses in St Petersburg and Beijing currently offer a part-time and a full-time MBA programme, but no open enrolment executive education programmes as yet. "It costs a lot of money to put together and market a carefully thought-out portfolio. We do already provide in-house programmes, however." De Greve expects there to be a limited number of market-tested open enrolment programmes available in St Petersburg within a year or two. "Initially using teaching staff from Belgium, but the idea is to steadily increase the number of lecturers from

Russia. As far as Beijing is concerned, it's too early to make any decisions yet. For the moment let's work on building our reputation by providing top-quality MBA programmes and in-house training for Chinese companies. As Vlerick continues to expand its international horizons, international managers will have even more opportunities to brush up their management expertise within the portfolio of executive education programmes." ■

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General Director Patrick De Greve: "Vlerick is a real partner in management development"

A Vlerick MBA, a cognitive and social experience



Professor Dirk Buyens, Academic Dean and head of the HRM Competence Centre: "The social dimension of a manager's role will become more important in the future"

The MBA programmes offered by Vlerick have evolved in several ways over the past few years: the School has expanded its international horizons by offering its MBA in Russia and China, a bigger range of different formats is now available and teaching methods have been revised. Besides the full-time and part-time MBA, executives with a busy international schedule now have the option of doing an Independent Executive MBA. The additional requirement to complete a social project for the full-time MBA caters to the business sector's growing interest in sustainable development. Professor Dirk Buyens looks at the key advantages of Vlerick's flagship programme and the challenges ahead.

Different MBA formats

"Our philosophy is clear. We have one MBA, but several different formats," says Professor Dirk Buyens, Academic Dean and head of the HRM Competence Centre. The international full-time MBA is available at the Leuven campus and in Beijing and is aimed at people who are taking a year's sabbatical to find new inspiration or to give their career a fresh boost. The international part-time MBA is offered at the Ghent, Leuven and St Petersburg campuses and in Beijing. This two-year MBA format is designed for people wishing to gain a further qualification whilst working. Candidates seeking to do a part-time MBA in Dutch can do so at the Ghent campus. Vlerick's portfolio also includes two modular MBAs: the MBA in Financial Services and Insurance, in conjunction with the University of St Gallen and HEC Montreal, and the Independent Executive MBA (EMBA), a programme offered in

partnership with Amsterdam Business School. "The latter option is spread over 18 months and comprises three-weekly weekend sessions, held alternately in Leuven and Amsterdam, and four residential weeks," explains Buyens. "The EMBA caters to the busy schedule of executives who cannot free up time every week to attend classes at a fixed location, because their job involves international travel, for example."

International melting pot

To study for an MBA, participants need to have at least three years' work experience. Buyens again: "We offer three Masters programmes for fairly new graduates: General Management, Marketing and Finance." The MBA programmes are an international melting pot. "80% of the students doing a full-time MBA at one of our Belgian campuses are not Belgian, 25% in the case of the part-time MBA.

The difference is due to the nature of the two programmes. Part-time MBA students also have a job." In St Petersburg, Russian is the predominant nationality, as is Chinese in China. "But that doesn't mean it's a local programme," stresses Buyens. "The international character of our MBA provides important added value at all our campuses."

Advantages

Besides the international flavour of its MBA, Vlerick has other benefits to offer. "Our MBA is a 'despecialisation' programme, meaning that we tackle the various disciplines in an integrated way. All students go through the same learning process. The advantage of this is that there is interaction between the lecturer and the experts in the classroom." A second plus point is the opportunity for networking. "The students are together in the same group for either one or two years. It



is both a cognitive and a social experience for them.” The focus on research through the School’s three spearheads, Corporate Social Responsibility, Doing Business in Europe and Technological Venturing, is another reason why people choose to study at Vlerick. “Because of the way we’re structured, developments in these research fields are immediately incorporated into the course material. Our researchers also teach, so it stands to reason there will be a transfer of knowledge.” Buyens adds that many students appreciate the balance between theory and practice. “We have close ties with business; most of the professors juggle active involvement in this sector with their academic responsibilities. So we’re firmly grounded in the real world.” Besides the academic advantages, Vlerick devotes special attention to providing a

“The biggest challenges ahead are to strengthen Vlerick’s international brand name and sustain the drive to revise teaching methods”

range of services. “Our Career Services Office was set up in 2002 and has accumulated a wealth of experience since then. Its task is not only to advise full-time MBA students as to a careers programme and coach them in their hunt for a suitable job and employer, but also to introduce companies to the students. With a maximum group size of 65 students, networking and personal coaching are still feasible.”

Home (far) from home

The main impact of an MBA on people’s lives is the opportunity to broaden their knowledge. Time for reflection is also very



important. Buyens explains: “It’s a turning point in your career. A chance to revitalise your mind and then perhaps embark on a fresh start. Sometimes you see people changing direction. Others become even more firmly convinced that they’re in the right field, but take a more generalist view. And then there are people who make the most of the opportunity to create something for themselves.” For part-time MBA participants, the programme is less often a turning point in their career, but they do gain a different, richer perspective on their chosen field of work.

The opportunity for reflection takes on an extra dimension for international students. “After all, they’re far from home,” points out Buyens. “And they must have had reasons for choosing to study abroad. Vlerick is doing well in the rankings and there are few schools that hold triple accreditation.” The School also takes special care of its international students. “They are allocated a mentor, a Vlerick alumnus, who ensures that they soon feel at home in Belgium and takes them to social events or welcomes them into their home. Belgians don’t have the most open culture, so we structure the arrangement [laughs]. Students sometimes get homesick and we have to deal with that, too, of course. You need to feel at home to be able to perform well and that’s something we work on constantly.” And with some

considerable success, judging by the negligible drop-out rate.

Dotting the i’s

The full-time MBA is currently under review. “We’re extending the programme by two months to 12 months, despite pressure to shorten it. The additional time will be devoted to a social project. The social dimension of a manager’s role will become more important in the future, and interest in sustainable business practice is also growing in the business sector.”

Another increasingly significant aspect will be exchanges with other campuses. Starting next year, students from the Belgian campuses will spend two weeks in China. “But it won’t be just a sightseeing trip,” warns Buyens. “They’ll be taking courses.” He is convinced that these changes will make the MBA programme even more appealing. In his view, the biggest challenges ahead are to strengthen Vlerick’s international brand name and sustain the drive to modernise teaching methods. “Traditional education will always be there, but digital media will also claim a place and will be incorporated into the learning architecture.” ■

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Rankings and accreditations showcase Vlerick's



Peter Rafferty, Director International Business Development: "The most important challenge is to have the human resources to fulfil our ambitions."

Accreditations and rankings are important for the recognition, reputation and visibility of business schools. In this interview Peter Rafferty, Director of International Business, explains the difference between these two accolades. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is doing well in both areas, the result of intensive and consistent efforts by all concerned. "From board members, staff, alumni to current students: everyone adds to the success of the School locally and internationally," says Rafferty.

Rankings and accreditations are often mentioned in the same breath. Rafferty stresses that there is a big difference between them. "Rankings tend to be historical and essentially put together by publishers. Two of the most influential rankings are those of The Economist and the Financial Times." Comparing the position of Vlerick in those rankings (see Table 1), we can see big differences. Rafferty: "These are very easy to explain. The methodology behind the rankings differs. The FT ranking, for example, is based on three main criteria: the career progression of alumni (salary), diversity of experience and research capabilities. In other words, they put a 45% weighting on salary and largely exclude personal development, extent of international networking and the quality of fellow students." The Economist ranking is more student-centric. Rafferty: "It measures the way the schools meet the demands of the students. Salary carries a weighting of 20%."

Rafferty points out that it is important for students not just to look at the number of a specific ranking: "My advice is to compare several rankings when choosing a school. You have to evaluate whether what is being measured is an important consideration for you. If you feel that networking opportunities is an important aspect, then make sure the ranking you look at measures this as well. If you'd like to study in Europe, then just look at European rankings."

He finds rankings important: "However, Vlerick does not regard raising its position in the rankings as an absolute objective. It's worthwhile as long as it's the result of the improvements the School has made under the stimulus of its own strategic objectives. We also believe that rankings should be taken seriously only if they show a stable pattern over time."

Accreditation

Accreditations are judgements by business schools among themselves. Rafferty:



position in the world

"You can compare those accreditations with the ISO system in the business world. Our School is one of a select group of institutions that holds all three of the major international accreditations relevant to the world of management education: EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB. All three have the same procedure: application, eligibility, self-assessment, peer review and continuous improvement." Rafferty is very happy with the accreditations: "It signifies that our management education and research correspond to the highest quality standards in the world. It's important because it is a distinction that raises the School's recognition, reputation and visibility and, at the same time, provides a benchmark for defining the necessary actions that will place the School on an even higher level."

Both rankings and accreditations are important. "Students ask for them. If you're going to pay tens of thousands of

"Accreditations are important because they are a distinction that raises the School's recognition, reputation and visibility and, at the same time, provides a benchmark"

euros for your tuition, it's only natural to seek impartial judgement on the quality of the school." Not only for students are they important. Rafferty: "With those rankings and accreditations we can prove that we operate at the best level in the world in our field of activity. We're showing all our stakeholders that they can have confidence in us. For fundraising, rankings and accreditation can be of tremendous importance."

International impact

Why is Vlerick doing so well? Rafferty: "The general reason is that we offer a complete educational experience. We are academic-oriented, have links with business and have a proven alumni network, which results in a rather holistic approach to management education. As a team we have a balanced approach." And he stresses another very important point: "We would not be as high in the rankings if we had not embarked on our internationalisation strategy in 1999. From a local Flemish school we have grown into an international business school with an extensive MBA programme; 96% of our student body is international and each year we have around 40 nationalities in our classrooms."

The international journey has not yet reached an end. Rafferty: "We have a strong basis in Russia and China now. And we have plans for India and Brazil in the future. The most important challenge is to have the human resources to fulfil our

Table: Rankings

| | Economist 2008 | Financial Times 2007 |
|-----------|----------------|----------------------|
| Belgium | 1 | 1 |
| Europe | 7 | 16 |
| Worldwide | 14 | 98 |

ambitions." Finally, Rafferty stresses the importance of the alumni network for the internationalisation process. "We intend to strengthen the bonds with all our former students. In Western Europe we have more physical access. Outside Europe we'll use modern technology to expand their networking opportunities." Rafferty is not afraid that internationalisation will fundamentally change the Vlerick culture. "There will be local adaptation, but we will stay strong in academic content, strong in our ability to put it into practice and strong in our entrepreneurial spirit. And let's not forget, the respect between academic and business culture is still another one of our strengths." ■

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Renewed research drive strengthens international position

The School is pursuing a policy focusing on innovative multidisciplinary, differentiated research with the aim of consolidating the position of businesses in the globalised economy. There is a need to attract new researchers, and Vlerick has plenty to offer them.



Cornerstone

Besides management training, research is one of the cornerstones on which the School builds its work and reputation. Professor Leo Sleuwaegen, Research Director, explains that Vlerick places emphasis on multidisciplinary research by encouraging research centred on its three spearheads, Corporate Social Responsibility, Doing Business in Europe and Technological Venturing. "As a result of the School's growth and its increasing internationalisation, some fine-tuning is necessary. To ensure that we continue to stand out from other business schools and to confirm our commitment and obligations to the business sector, we recently decided to begin delving deeper into topics relating to our spearhead fields of research."

Multidisciplinary research groups

The strategic research topics are organised in a multidisciplinary and transversal way, drawing on the expertise of several of the School's competence centres. There is also a growing tendency to set up an academic Chair for each topic. Professor Sleuwaegen: "This is a logical consequence of market trends. The problems encountered in society in general and in businesses in particular are increasingly complex." Within the School, it is rapidly becoming the norm for research groups to develop across the competence centres. Additional funds have also been made available for transversal research areas. Sleuwaegen again: "Thirty per cent of the grant we receive from the Flemish government has been earmarked for research in these fields. Any proposed academic research project on a relevant topic is also given



preferential treatment. Needless to say, we are continuing to collaborate with our parent universities, Ghent and Leuven, and with the international research networks in which our researchers are involved." The School is deliberately aiming to make the composition of its research groups more international. "This need is reflected in the market, where companies are also tending to adopt a more international approach. Attracting international researchers therefore has our full attention."

New international staff

Professor Sleuwaegen feels that Vlerick is definitely an attractive proposition for international researchers. "Our work ranges from pure academic research to applied research. The results are used in the business world, leading to innovation, and we then build on these innovative results in our programmes." According to Sleuwaegen, Vlerick research has enormous added value. "As an academic management school, we act as the interface between academia and the business world. Our approach is more inductive than deductive." Vlerick also has much to offer at European level. "Our roots are in Europe and we understand the context of this market very well. We are able to interpret the prospects for and in the European business sector." Sleuwaegen thinks that young researchers, in particular, can benefit from a win-win situation at Vlerick. "They can pursue an academic career within the School's broad applied research programme."

Internationalisation is a tried-and-tested reality

In addition to specific research assignments for European and other transnational institutions, Vlerick is active in

many international research groups and is a founding member of important alliances such as the European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS). The School is also involved in international opinion-forming research, for instance as the Belgian partner in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and the World Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum.

Flemish roots

Vlerick may be pursuing an international course even more vigorously than before, but this does not mean that it has forgotten its Flemish roots. "We've done a lot of policy research for the Flemish government and are associated with FDC, Flanders District of Creativity, as a Knowledge Centre," points out Sleuwaegen. "This has resulted in reports on the competitiveness and international position of Flanders, for example." Sleuwaegen also feels that Vlerick has a broader responsibility. "We have a strategy for social commitment. Thanks to the contacts we have in the public and private sectors, we often act as a link in a chain. If the parties do not know or fully understand each other's position, we can step in and clarify the situation."

The local research groups, which benefit from the close involvement of the School's foundation partners, are another important point in Vlerick's favour. "Supporting businesses is an integral part of our mission and it's something we do very successfully. We want to continue building our research groups and looking for new international partners. By putting international and local cooperation on an even more professional footing, we can only enhance the quality of what we do." Sleuwaegen concludes by saying: "Internationalisation is not just a concept, but a tried-and-tested reality. I firmly believe that we can use our networks over the next few years to internationalise our research community even more successfully." ■



Professor Leo Sleuwaegen: "The problems encountered in the business world increasingly call for multidisciplinary research"

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Professor Ann Vereecke: the School's first



Professor Ann Vereecke, Faculty Dean:
"The whole school should do its bit to attract new staff"

As a result of expansion, Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School has recently been adding to its international team of talented teaching and research staff and is planning to step up its recruitment drive over the next three years. Professor Ann Vereecke, the new Faculty Dean, is responsible for coordinating and managing the process.

Capacity analysis

Vlerick has always been careful when it comes to investment in infrastructure and personnel. Nevertheless, investment in more staff is a sound decision at this point in time. Vereecke explains: "The School has seen enormous growth in the past few years in terms of turnover, range of programmes and student numbers. For the staff this means more classes, more courses, more projects and more exams. Some people are also travelling to St Petersburg or Beijing on a more regular basis. To prevent the risk of overload, we have to be proactive. Several new professors have already joined the School this year, including some internationally renowned names. The plan is to push ahead with the course we're steering and step up a gear."

"We're looking for professionals with a PhD, having the classic threesome in their portfolio: education, research and business."



Faculty Dean

The international standard in the business school sector is about 180 teaching hours per year. "Some of our lecturers do much more than that at the moment," says Vereecke. "Having a heavy teaching workload doesn't do any harm in the short term," she adds, putting it in perspective. "But we have to ensure that preparation and innovation don't suffer as a result. That's why we need to increase staffing levels."

If the teaching overload continues for too long, this inevitably means that less attention and time is devoted to research. An undesirable side effect, according to Vereecke. "The competition with other schools is also about research output. So the highest quality is expected there, too. If the overload in teaching and research activities persists, the limit is bound to be reached at some point. Our aim is not simply to maintain but also to improve the quality of our research centres. Both research and teaching are therefore key areas in our search for new people."

One of Vereecke's first tasks in her new post was to carry out a capacity analysis. Initially, the focus will be on the next three years. International recruitments will be based on expertise and are not linked to any specific campus. All the competence centres need people, primarily Finance, followed by Marketing and Strategy in second and third place.

Vlerick profile

Unfortunately, people with the typical profile that Vlerick is seeking are not just sitting around waiting for a job to turn up. "For a start, we're looking for professionals with a PhD. They should also have the classic threesome in their portfolio: education, research and business. They must be able to bridge the gap between education and the business world. Entrepreneurial spirit and an international mindset are also essential prerequisites." Vereecke is realistic,

however: "What we're looking for is not easy to find and we're not the only ones in the hunt – it's a real war for talent out there." But do potential candidates actually know that Vlerick is looking for professors? There are few jobs advertised on the website, for instance. Vereecke laughs: "That's a perfect example of why my job is necessary!" She feels it is an illusion to expect every candidate to have all the requisite skills and expertise. Coaching and training are therefore important to her. "You mustn't be afraid to invest in the people you recruit. You must also have the courage to put together teams comprising senior and junior members." At the same time, Vereecke is also keen to provide training and support for current staff members.

Vlerick is looking for new professors the world over. Vereecke: "The academic community has its own channels. Each competence centre has its own associations and all the major conferences have dedicated job sites and provide private facilities for introductory meetings." All members of staff are also expected to do their bit. "Vlerick people are used to talking to colleagues in their field about research, but networking is also important." Vereecke sees it as her task to act as a facilitator: "I'm going to make sure all the necessary information is readily available right across the board." The website will also be updated with a section for job candidates where they can find socio-economic and tax information. "We've had guest professors for years and the competence centres have all accumulated a wealth of relevant information. We're now planning to gather it all together into one convenient package."

Advantages

Why should an international PhD fellow consider a move to Belgium? Vereecke ticks off the advantages. "First of all, we're not a very big school, but we attract

Why a Faculty Dean?

Since 1 September Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School has had a Faculty Dean for the first time in its history. Professor Ann Vereecke has been appointed to this new position, but is no stranger to the School. "I've worked here for 20 years and for the past few years I've been in charge of the Operations & Technology Management Competence Centre and the part-time MBA programmes. My management experience will certainly stand me in good stead in my new post." So what exactly does the Faculty Dean do? Vereecke: "There's no detailed job description as such, because this used to be part of the Dean's duties. The first item on the agenda is therefore to work out what the main priorities are and organise the job accordingly. The prime reason for creating this post is the need to ensure that the staffing level is commensurate with the growing number of programmes available and the requirements of our research centres."

high-quality staff and students. We're one of a select group of business schools with triple accreditation. Another advantage is our interaction with the real-life business world." Last but not least, Vereecke mentions the School's geographical location: "Belgium is right in the heart of Europe. Our campuses in Ghent and Leuven are less than three hours from London, Paris and Frankfurt. The country has a good industrial base and the economy is doing well. Beijing and our campus in St Petersburg are also centrally located." In short, plenty of good reasons for international professionals to join the Vlerick team. And the idea of a change in culture does not scare Vereecke: "We can only learn from new viewpoints and new ideas." ■

 De Nederlandstalige versie van dit artikel vindt u op www.vlerick.be/news/magazine

Kofi Annan Fellows will benefit their own country

The two Kofi Annan Fellows for the 2008-2009 academic year have arrived. Both of them appreciate the professional culture here at Vlerick and the chances their Masters education will give them.

"The Kofi Annan Business School Foundation is a joint initiative with the Hogeschool Utrecht and the Public Advice International Foundation," explains Haspeslagh. "Promising students and young professionals from developing countries are selected to study for a business degree." These students receive their education free of charge, provided they return to their native land afterwards. "The brain drain from developing countries is high," says the Dean. "It is therefore a prerequisite for this fellowship that the students go back to their own country." As part of their curriculum, the Fellows will also work on a project in their home country. "Awareness of sustainable development is growing. Vlerick cannot and will not close its eyes to that," concludes Haspeslagh.

Finance

This year's students come from Vietnam and Uganda and both have a financial

background. Vy Pham Mai Nguyen, who worked in the Consumer Banking department of the Asia Commercial Bank in Vietnam, is doing a Masters in General Management. "After Vlerick I hope to become a product manager in the bank's Card department, as there is a growing credit and debit card industry in Vietnam." The Ugandan Ronnie Alinda held a position at the Central Bank of Uganda. "My Masters in Financial Management will make me one of the most highly qualified financial people in Uganda. I would fit into any of the local or international banks in Uganda, but I'm planning to return to the Central Bank to try and contribute to formulating a framework that would accelerate the growth of the whole financial sector."

Broad spectrum

Both Fellows plan to return to their own country and will therefore be countering a trend. Alinda: "The brain drain from

Uganda is high. Due to the biting poverty in Uganda, most graduates opt for blue-collar jobs in Europe and America, which pay much better." Vy explains that the situation in Vietnam is the same: "Most highly educated people prefer to work in international business in Vietnam or elsewhere. The government's salary policy and working conditions do not entice highly qualified people to work in the public sector."

Vy and Alinda compared many business schools but in the end chose Vlerick. Why? Both mention the balance between theoretical and practical orientation. "Vlerick educates and trains me for the real financial environment. It doesn't turn me into a walking financial encyclopaedia," explains Alinda. And Vy adds: "Apart from the knowledge gained, my stay at Vlerick will develop my interpersonal skills, independence and ability to take on responsibility." ■



Dean welcomes special guests

Vy Nguyen (left) and Ronnie Alinda (right) both received a scholarship to cover their tuition fees and an additional €5,000 to help with their living expenses. Dean Philippe Haspeslagh was delighted to hand over a cheque to them. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is one of the pioneers in this ambitious project to provide potential leaders in developing countries with top-class management education.

Dean Philippe Haspeslagh is very happy with "these motivated young professionals who will be able to do a lot for their country at some point in the future". He emphasises the School's corporate social responsibility and the need to expose all students to the reality facing poorer countries. He hopes their fellow students will extend the hand of friendship and welcome to "our special guests".



Prof. André Thibeault answers 9 questions on the financial crisis

The lack of transparency in some segments of the financial markets and the complexity of underlying risk profiles are the main causes of the financial crisis. That is the opinion of André Thibeault, professor of finance and risk management at Vlerick. We spoke to him on the day ING received an injection of €10 million from the Dutch government. He is optimistic about the future.

■ **There's some financial crisis or other reported in the press every day. Can we really talk about a crisis in this case? And could it have been predicted?**

"Yes, it's definitely a crisis. And yes, it could have been predicted. But actually it's better to have it now than two years down the line, when the consequences could have been even more dramatic. In the banking industry, depending on their capital base, all banks will be affected to some extent sooner or later."

■ **What are the main causes of the crisis?**

"Moral hazard is one of the main causes of the financial crisis. In their race for high returns, the banks started to get hungry for risk and the quality of their portfolios deteriorated. The lack of transparency in the markets, the lack of knowledge about underlying risk profiles, the capacity of banks to re-package risks and, in the end, the inability of rating agencies to properly inform investors have all led to the loss of confidence that prevails in the market."

■ **Was it right for the government to intervene?**

"That was very sensible, in my view. I'm confident that this will prevent a recurrence of the situation that was seen in the 1930s. The economy will slow down, of course, but we don't need to worry about falling into a deep recession. In the end, government intervention might be positive for the taxpayers themselves. First, this is aimed at preventing a deep recession

and, second, since the securities are not all bad, the investment made by the government can return a good profit in the future."

■ **What will be the outcome of the crisis?**

"For the financial services industry, the casualties are now well known. The next step is to try to mitigate as much as possible the impact of the crisis on the real sector of the economy. Most large companies can probably secure their access to liquidity, but for some it might be problematic, - GM, for example. However, it may get really serious for small and medium-sized companies if there's not enough liquidity in the economy. The move by the government to guarantee interbank transactions tries to tackle this issue. In general, the crisis forces everybody to reconsider traditional business models and translate them into new ones."

■ **What will the new business model look like?**

"From a pure capitalist business model, we will see a more Keynesian approach. The new model will involve more intervention by different stakeholders and a greater focus on long-term strategies. This model is already been taught at Vlerick."

■ **What added value can Vlerick deliver as a business school?**

"The financial crisis has thrown up many questions. Vlerick delivers training programmes to the business community as well as to the population in general. It's

important for those participating in the economic life of the country to know about regulations, financial processes and risk management."

■ **What skills do financial professionals need nowadays?**

"Communication skills are very important. Professionals should know how to communicate with clients and how to communicate with specialists. They should understand the financial products that financial experts put together for them."

■ **Is training in ethical awareness a solution?**

"No, taken in isolation it's not. I believe that the emphasis should be on knowledge of financial processes and products. You have to learn how to recognise risks. Then you can recognise unethical behaviour."

■ **How do you see the future?**

"Actually, I'm not so pessimistic. I can even say that I'm optimistic in the medium term. The normal economic environment could be restored within 12 to 18 months and since most of the financial investments are of good quality, their value will increase again when confidence is restored."

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Driving Leadership Talent Programme

Merging western and eastern European insights

Today's international corporations are becoming increasingly proactive in encouraging high potential employees to develop. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School can play an important role in helping companies provide the right environment for this by establishing company-specific programmes. The InBev programme Driving Leadership Talent for its corporate partner InBev CEE Zone is a prime example.



InBev CEE Zone sends 25 of its young high potentials to Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School

The programme is a joint effort with the Central European University Business School, with the programme split into two modules, one held at the Vlerick Ghent campus, the other at the CEU Business School campus in Budapest. It has presented an opportunity for the two schools to pool their knowledge and provide InBev CEE Zone with a strong, tailor-made programme for young potentials.

Pooling knowledge

For InBev CEE Zone, working with the two business schools has had numerous advantages. János Bogdán, Director of People Continuity at InBev CEE Zone, describes InBev as a truly global company: "There are a huge variety of cultures melded into one unique corporate culture. To develop leadership talent that can be successful in this global environment, we need partners who are skilled in dealing with this diversity." The combination of Vlerick with CEU Business School perfectly meets InBev's demands. "It allows insights into both western and eastern European cultures," explains Kristi Valentine, International Business Development Manager at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. "And, as both schools were already working with the company, it enables Vlerick and CEU to pool their knowledge of InBev and its markets so as to tailor-make the programme." "The cooperation with both schools has been excellent," confirms Bogdán.

Vlerick's relationship with CEU Business School is its first with an Eastern European

InBev Central and Eastern Europe

InBev is the world's leading brewer employing almost 89,000 people worldwide and with sales in over 130 countries. InBev Central and Eastern Europe has its headquarters in Moscow and covers Russia, Ukraine, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia. The InBev CEE partnership was Vlerick's first outside Europe but is seen as a natural development from its existing relationship with InBev Belgium.



The Driving Leadership Talent programme involves active learning.

School. Bogdán feels the collaboration of the two schools gives the programme's participants an exciting and inspiring international environment. Maria Findrik, Director of Executive Education Programmes and Professor of Economics at CEU Business School agrees: "The international composition of the schools and the programme's participants makes the programme unique. It truly provides a setting in which participants can learn to better understand each other and work together." The two schools worked together closely to define the course curriculum and decide where each component would be given, exploiting each other's particular skills. The programme's teaching material brings together the best of each school and covers the fundamentals of general management, from strategic management to people management, economics to finance – precisely those subjects up and coming talent need in order to become effective senior management in the mid-term. "We're convinced that this is one of the best ways of retaining our talent and keeping them motivated," says

Bogdán. For Vlerick and CEU Business School it's an opportunity to not only pool knowledge, but also build new ideas into their teaching materials. "Some of our senior managers were giving guest lectures and providing case studies on our practices," explains Bogdán. "The programme participants were then able to work on projects dealing with current business critical issues at InBev."

Strong relationships

It was these case studies that made the programme so relevant for its participants. "They were the real test of how effective the whole learning process was," says Findrik. Both schools felt the case studies were an essential component of the course. Anastasia Korshunova, International Business Development Officer at the Vlerick St Petersburg campus helped foster the relationship with InBev CEE Zone when it first approached Vlerick with the idea of a mini-MBA programme for its young potentials. Right from the start, it was clear that the programme had to integrate conceptual business models with practical

Central European University Business School

The Central European University Business School (CEU) was established in 1988 and was the first educational institution in the CEE region to train managers by offering a western graduate business programme leading to an American MBA. It currently has a total of 350 students in six academic degree programmes and over 450 executive development participants per year. Its partnership with InBev CEE brought about the collaboration with Vlerick in the InBev CEE Driving Leadership Talent Programme.

business cases. "An MBA is not an academic course," says Korshunova. "It has to be practical." In the Driving Leadership Talent Programme, the practical side involves active learning with input from InBev, and support from the Vlerick and CEU staff. It means that the programme's participants immediately get to apply the economic and management principles they've learnt and understand how InBev uses the principles in practice. And it enables the staff at both business schools to keep the teaching material pertinent. "As a business school, we have to ensure that the knowledge we impart can really be translated into practice," continues Korshunova. "The good partnerships we have with companies prove our concepts work."

Vlerick greatly appreciates the role its partnerships play in contributing to the quality of the programmes it offers. "The key to being a top-quality business school," says Korshunova "is maintaining strong relationships with companies. It keeps the School alive and vibrant." The collaboration between Vlerick and CEU Business School adds another level. ■

Driving Leadership Talent Programme

- Launched in September 2008
- Location: Vlerick's Ghent Campus – CEU Business School, Budapest
- Number of participants: 25
- Target audience: young high potentials

N De Nederlandstalige versie van dit artikel vindt u op www.vlerick.be/news/magazine

Developing high potentials

Vlerick prepares future leaders for AGC Flat Glass

When AGC defined its vision to include innovation, it meant innovation in every area of the company and at all levels. Innovation within their management was no exception and AGC Europe quickly recognised that its talented managers would benefit from a programme aimed specifically at facilitating the transition from being an efficient manager to being an effective manager. Similarly, AGC Flat Glass in Russia realised that its young high potentials needed a programme that would give them a strong grounding in business skills and develop their personal leadership. This resulted in collaboration with Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School to provide the AGC-European University Programme for its talented managers in the European region, including Russia, and the Optimising Management Potential Programme for young high potentials from its Russian branch.



25 young high potentials at AGC's Russian branch ready to optimise their talent

Management toolbox

Alexandre Segers, responsible for company-specific programmes at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, worked on the development of the management programme for Europe. "The AGC European University Programme has been set up to prepare talented AGC managers in the European region, including Russia, for higher positions," he explains. "It equips them with a management toolbox to develop and run their business activities while considering the impact of their actions on the AGC Group. In general, the programme aims at sharpening their strategic mindset and strengthens the

leadership capabilities needed for fast and appropriate action within an international organisation." It works on the assumption that people in middle management already have leadership experience and skills. The programme for AGC in Russia, however, is aimed at young high potentials who do not yet have a broad background in the management field or have not studied management.

Optimising management potential

"The collaboration with AGC Flat Glass in Russia stems from the relationship with AGC in Western Europe," says Kristi Valentine, Business Development Manager

AGC Flat Glass

AGC Flat Glass is a world leader in glass manufacturing, producing glass for roofs and façades, interior design, car windscreens and sunroofs, solar panels, household and industrial appliances, and displays. The company's European headquarters are in Brussels and it has some of its largest production plants in St Petersburg.

Info

www.AGC-flatglass.com

“Through innovation and operational excellence we will shape the future of glass and be recognised as the European leader in providing the community with innovative and affordable solutions to improve people’s everyday life”

(Executive Committee, AGC Flat Glass Europe)

at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. “They were looking for a corporate partner that would help them develop their talent force.” They needed a programme that would teach the fundamentals of management along with leadership styles and skills. “Their people are very well qualified,” explains Valentine. “They have a highly technical mindset and are so skilled in their specialised field, but needed to develop their skills in other areas.” As such the programme includes an individual coaching trajectory where the participants’ strengths and growth potential are transformed into concrete action plans for their further development. There are coaching sessions given between modules and they have continual individual support from a Vlerick coach and an internal AGC coach throughout the duration of the programme. What’s more, the course curriculum includes topics such as leadership skills, team-building, professional communication, negotiation and conflict management, leading projects creatively and making a strategy work.

By providing the personal coaching element, the course also acts as an inducement for employees to stay with the company. Many organisations in Russia experience a relatively high turnover of personnel and company-specific, personalised training is considered an innovative concept that can help increase loyalty. With this programme, AGC is showing its willingness to invest in its people. It is looking to the future, finding people who want to grow with the company and providing them with the means to broaden their scope and venture beyond the immediate boundaries of the job they were initially trained to do.

Building relationships

As far as Vlerick is concerned, the programme is also a means of strengthening its association with AGC. “Being able to further our relationship in Russia has reinforced the partnership and trust already established in Western Europe,” says Valentine. “We don’t want to just have programmes, we want to build

“We don't want to just have programmes, we want to build relationships.”

relationships. Our aim is to be the educational provider for organisations. When they come to us, we want to be able to say yes, we can assess your organisation, advise you and provide you with the support you need to make you more

effective, to make you more efficient and to make you a leader in your business unit or sector.”

This is a prime example of a relationship in equilibrium. Vlerick provides the learning environment, AGC provides the practical application. “Working with companies helps our professors further their research,” says Valentine. “It puts their theories to the test and in this case helps them identify any differences between Russia and Western Europe and understand what those differences may be. It can create a learning experience for the professors that can be reflected in their lectures.”

One Vlerick, one AGC

Although the programme has been developed purely for AGC’s young Russian talent, it partly takes place in Belgium. This, in itself, provides a fantastic opportunity for the participants to learn more about international management and team skills in practice and, of course, to network within the organisation. “AGC headquarters in Brussels acts as their host and guest speakers from the company are involved in the programme,” says Valentine. It enables the company to create a sense of unity. “We always say we’re one Vlerick to the customer, whether you’re in Ghent, Leuven or St Petersburg,” says Valentine. “But in this way AGC is also one company to us.” ■



Teambuilding at the Optimising Management Potential Programme’s kick-off session

Optimising Management Potential Programme

- Launched in July 2008 (to be finalised in June 2009)
- Location: Vlerick’s St Petersburg Campus – Vlerick’s Ghent Campus
- Number of participants: 25
- Target audience: young high potentials

N De Nederlandstalige versie van dit artikel vindt u op www.vlerick.be/news/magazine

This academic year, 40 part-time students will be following the MBA programme at the Vlerick campus in St Petersburg. What has made it so successful? We talk to three participants, Sergey Sadovsky from PetroElectroSbyt, Philipp Libin from Arizona Chemical, and Bonnie van der Velde from KS Media.

Part-time MBA students in St Petersburg



Philipp Libin: 'Understanding the driving forces behind decisions'

The Vlerick MBA programme has given me more than I had expected. Each programme module was given by a different professor, each with their own accent, own method of presenting and own exam tasks, so, in addition to gaining a lot of new knowledge, I also got fantastic examples of communicating and presenting ideas to people. I learned a lot of jargon, acronyms, and analysis methods common in business today which means I now not only

understand the wording of our company's international management presentations but also the driving forces behind their decisions. I'm really looking forward to applying my new knowledge in my work – I have several ideas from my project work that I would like to develop and implement for my company's benefit.

Sergey Sadovsky: 'Enabling plenty of knowledge transfer'

The management responsibilities I have now as financial director are quite different to those I've had in previous positions. I felt I needed a more strategic view and the MBA programme has definitely given me that. In fact, it's exceeded my expectations. It's enabled me to systemise the knowledge

I'd obtained in my previous work and study, giving me an understanding of how different topics are connected. And it's given me new insights into both familiar and unfamiliar areas, partly because my fellow students were from a variety of sectors, so there was plenty of knowledge transfer. In the short

term, I'll be using my new skills to improve business processes, but it's also inspired me to become more involved in project management starting from initiation and following through to product launch.

Bonnie van der Velde: 'Practical and immediately applicable to my daily work'

I moved to Russia from the Netherlands in 1999 after graduating from the Netherlands Institute of Tourism and Transport Studies and set up my own company here, KS Media, in 2003. Right from the start, I've been responsible for aspects such as human resources, finances and sales, but I felt I needed to work more effectively and faster. I realised an MBA would help me acquire the knowledge to do this but I wanted a business school in

St Petersburg offering a part-time programme in English, taught by an international team of professors. I liked the atmosphere at Vlerick and the decision was easy. The course is practical and immediately applicable to my daily work so I can start focusing more on my company's strategy and give the very talented people in my team more operational responsibilities.



A woman's touch

“An interview? Great! Can you take a photo of us all together?” Sara De Hauw, Inge De Clippeleer and Kirby Van Laere are three young and infectious enthusiastic new members of staff in the Human Resource Management Competence Centre. We caught up with them in the InBev lounge at the Ghent campus.

'Vlerick offers researchers plenty of opportunities'

Sara: “I studied industrial psychology at Ghent University. Two years ago I was doing a work placement at Vlerick as part of my course. Later, when I heard there was an opening for a researcher, I applied immediately and was offered the job. I'm now researching competence development and competence management for the Centre for Work and Social Economy, under the supervision of Professor Ans De Vos. Why Vlerick? Because Vlerick is so good at linking theory and practice, something I missed at university.”

Inge agrees with her: “That's exactly why I chose Vlerick!”

“After I graduated I wanted to go on and do a doctorate,” continues Sara, “but, at the same time, I thought it was perhaps a little too soon. I wanted to get a bit more experience under my belt first and working as a researcher is the perfect solution. Perhaps I'll carry on studying later. The subject? I don't know yet... human resources is certainly a field that's changing all the time. I'd rather wait and see which subjects are really topical when the time comes.”

“I studied educational science at Ghent University, specialising in special education,” says Kirby. “After I graduated I wanted to increase my knowledge and expertise, without forgetting the human aspects. That's why I decided to do a Masters in Human Resource Management at the University of Antwerp Management School (UAMS). The course also brought me into contact with Vlerick. I had lectures from a few Vlerick professors and Professor Dirk Buyens supervised my thesis. Working at Vlerick gives me the

chance to try out lots of different things and develop as a researcher. What am I doing at the moment? Under the supervision of Professor Ans De Vos and Annelies Meganck, I'm developing career management tools, and I'll also be working with Professor Koen Dewettinck developing performance management tools. Another one of my tasks is to coordinate the middle management programme. My job is really hands-on and that suits me just fine. I see myself in a practical role and Vlerick certainly offers enough opportunities on that front!”

Inge: “I studied educational science at Ghent University, too, but specialised in social welfare. In February I went to a job fair organised by the industrial psychology faculty.” “That was us,” laughs Sara. “That's right!” continues Inge. “I got talking to someone called Katleen, who did her doctorate at Vlerick. She was so enthusiastic. There happened to be a job vacancy at the time, so I applied and started as a researcher in July. I'm working on the 'psychological contract' under the supervision of Professor Ans De Vos, and I'll also be doing research into performance management with Professor Koen Dewettinck. As a Vlerick researcher, you have the opportunity to work in different subject areas. This enables you to gain a deeper understanding of your field of study and find out which areas particularly appeal to you. It's impressive what I've been able to do here in just four months. Future plans? Who knows... a doctorate isn't out of the question.” ■

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From top to bottom: Inge De Clippeleer, Kirby Van Laere and Sara De Hauw

'I would like to place innovation management in a broader context'

In September Floortje Blindenbach-Driessen was appointed Assistant Professor in the Innovation & Entrepreneurship knowledge domain. After studying chemical engineering at Delft University of Technology, she then worked for engineering contractors Fluor Daniel for several years, first as an engineer and later as a consultant. Her experience there sparked her interest in innovation management. She decided to study this topic in greater depth and in 2006 she obtained her PhD from Erasmus University Rotterdam with her thesis on "Innovation Management in Project-Based Firms". She then spent some time in the US, where she held successive positions as Visiting Scholar at the R.H. Smith School of Business (University of Maryland) and Visiting Assistant Professor at the George Washington University School of Business.

"At Fluor Daniel I was closely involved in all kinds of projects for which I facilitated innovation workshops, amongst other things. I found it frustrating that there were so many great ideas, but often little

came of them. I wanted to see how things could be done better. While I was doing my PhD research, it struck me that the innovation management literature mainly tended to focus on traditionally functionally organised mass-production firms. The growing demand for services and complex, integrated systems has led to other types of organisational structures and production processes in many companies, such as IBM, Boeing, ABB, CapGemini, etc. The central theme of my research is how these kinds of service-oriented, project-based organisations should set up and manage their innovation processes, specifically at both organisation and project level. How did I end up at Vlerick? The School just has such a strong reputation, plus I also met Karin Wouters in Maryland. She did her PhD research at Vlerick and held a post-doctoral position in the Management & Organisation department of the R.H. Smith School of Business while I was there. When it was confirmed that I would be moving to Belgium, she advised me to apply for a job at Vlerick. Within the Innovation & Entrepreneurship knowledge



Floortje Blindenbach-Driessen, Assistant Professor in innovation & entrepreneurship

domain, I hope to be able to contribute to building our expertise in innovation management. I find this field absolutely fascinating, both as a researcher and as a lecturer. I'm looking forward to placing innovation management in a broader context." ■

Innovation = Creativity + Entrepreneurship!



Eight teams of three people were given the task of working together to create a piece of artwork. Each team member was handicapped in some way: sight (blindfold put on), movement (hands tied) or speech (mouth covered with a sticking plaster). Mr Seele then judged the results and chose the most creative.

More than 650 people signed up for the Creativity Class 2008 via the Jobat job portal or the Flemish daily De Standaard. HR consultants Hudson eventually selected the 24 lucky finalists. Between 10 and 13 September they took part in an inten-

sive four-day training course in entrepreneurial creativity, including a competition, organised by Flanders DC and Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. Orator got the lowdown from Pascal Cools, General Manager of Flanders DC, and Stijn De Zutter, researcher in Vlerick's Innovation & Entrepreneurship knowledge domain. Pascal Cools: "The main task of Flanders DC is to promote entrepreneurial creativity. With the Creativity Class we can delve deeper. We feel it's important to have a steadily expanding pool of people who firmly believe in the importance of innovation. Thanks to the last three Creativity Classes, we've built up a hard core of ambassadors that we can regularly use as a sounding board in future."

Stijn De Zutter: "The Creativity Class fits in very well with our Innovation & Entrepreneurship knowledge domain and is an excellent opportunity for our professors to test new insights in practice. The participants included scientists, consultants, architects, lawyers, marketing people, etc. – not your everyday mix of profiles. The Creativity Class shows that multidisci-

plinary teams work and that – with the right group dynamics – cognitive differences can be overcome without any problem."

Pascal Cools: "We want to stimulate entrepreneurial spirit. And that's just what we've done. The competition element involved developing a product or service to encourage people to exercise more. The winning team now wants to start a business based on its 'Pronto-fit' concept. Mission accomplished, I'd say!"

"And don't underestimate the fun factor of this initiative," adds Stijn De Zutter. "Everyone had a great time!"

To be continued!

Congratulations to the winners: Christophe Cop, Elke Van den Bergh, Jan Maeyens and Aline Ghijssels.

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www.vlerick.be

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Info: Lize Vanden Begin,
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gaetane.beernaert@vlerick.be
- E** **Management & ICT Forum**
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- N** Nederlandstalig programma
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Vlerick Alumni broadening international horizons



General Manager Martine Dykmans and Brand Manager Dominique Soetaert are responsible for ensuring that the alumni association provides professional services.

The alumni association of Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year. Launched as a purely Flemish initiative back in the 1950s, the organisation has been pursuing a more international course for the past five years. Over the next few years Vlerick Alumni will be striving to increase the professionalism of its international activities still further.

“The School’s founder, Professor André Vlerick, recognised the strategic importance of alumni,” explains Martine Dykmans, Vlerick Alumni’s General Manager. Her colleague, Brand Manager Dominique Soetaert, adds: “Vlerick was a visionary in his day. The word networking didn’t even exist, but he was actually doing it.” And André Vlerick’s vision is still relevant today, 50 years on.

Alumni of universities and other institutions of higher education have a special bond with their alma mater. “Besides the bond created by studying together, other key factors at Vlerick are the extensive professional network and the concept of lifelong learning,” continues Dykmans. “Our alumni are employed in management positions, have a multidisciplinary mindset and act as one another’s suppliers, clients or consultants. The word Vlerick is a calling card in the business world.” Soetaert concurs with this view: “It’s a reliable indicator of quality that enables you to make contacts more easily.” As the number of international students grows, so too does the network of international contacts.

The alumni association takes its task seriously. Dykmans again: “We’re 100%

committed. We provide professional services and have our own budget. Our aim is to support our alumni in their personal, professional and social development. Members have unlimited access to our online database and can check out reports on events that have taken place or make use of our career services.”

The word Vlerick is a calling card in the business world

Soetaert adds: “We have plans to expand our portfolio and offer more services with an international dimension. We’ll definitely use technological tools such as blogs and e-learning.” The aim is also to get the academic staff more closely involved in terms of input.

Chapters

Vlerick alumni live and work in 100 countries, but most are based in Belgium. Chapters, the local alumni networks that organise structured activities, are currently only to be found in Belgium, China, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and

South Africa. Soetaert explains: “Our critical mass in any given country is 30 alumni. Once we’ve reached that

Each and every graduate acts as an ambassador for the School

figure, we open a chapter, which is then run by volunteers, usually expats. To ensure continuity, we want to get non-Belgian alumni more involved in the foreseeable future. Besides countries with chapters, there are many other countries that organise ad hoc meetings.

“The number of participants is sometimes small, but the impact is usually substantial,” stresses Soetaert.

International liaison officer

Each and every graduate represents added value for Vlerick, acting as an ambassador for the School. And this is becoming an increasingly important factor in recruiting new students and staff. Dykmans: “Together with the School, we’re working on making the alumni association more professional and more international. At the moment we’re looking at the possibility of recruiting an international liaison officer. International experience and vision are more important than nationality in this case.” The skills and capabilities of Vlerick’s international alumni are also

receiving closer scrutiny. “Finding out who has what relevant information. Eventually we also want to get our alumni involved in entrance exams abroad.” In the meantime, of course, all the existing activities will simply continue: “The mentor programme, career services, the international newsletter and organised events worldwide. We’ll just be taking a more systematic approach.” And that’s how the alumni and the School spread their Flemish wings on the global stage! ■

Info

www.vlerickalumni.com

N De Nederlandstalige versie van dit artikel vindt u op www.vlerick.be/news/magazine

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School and Vlerick Alumni support Sister Jeanne Devos Fund for Children’s Rights

Continuing the practice adopted in recent years, we have once again decided not to send seasonal greetings cards to our business contacts, but instead donate the earmarked budget to a good cause. Our intention is always to choose a charity that is directly involved in providing support and education for less-privileged children and young people.

It will therefore be a great honour for us to hand over a cheque for €10,000 to Sister Jeanne Devos on 2 December, during the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Vlerick Alumni.

“Every child is our child” is the fundamental message that Sister Jeanne keeps repeating. The Fund for Children’s Rights therefore aims to raise funds to enable her to work in India, helping children who have escaped from an abusive situation by providing them with education and support.

Join us today with your individual gift!

Help give traumatised children a better future by making a donation to K.U.Leuven bank account no. 734-0194177-89 mentioning “gift 400/0002/13136” (tax certificate issued for donations of €30 or more).

For further information, visit <http://www.kuleuven.be/jeannedevosfonds>

Specially for the Fund, Flemish artist Koen Vanmechelen has designed the giant “Cosmogolem” figure, which symbolises the helper, the intermediary between man and healing. For the children, it serves as a protector who holds their dreams of a happy future in safekeeping. For the School and its alumni, it will be the embodiment of a long-lasting collaboration with Sister Jeanne Devos.





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