Work plan
Academic year 2020-21

In 2020, many activities at Campus Brussels continued from our living rooms and home offices. However, the pandemic forced the cancellation of most physical events from March. To some extent, the cancellation of events has also been a blessing in disguise as it has freed up staff capacity to both take stock and plan ahead, allowing the Campus to begin initiating own activities in addition to its traditional facilitator role.

Context

In September 2020, new leadership will arrive at Maastricht University (UM) Campus Brussels. Mariolina Eliantonio (LAW), as Director, and Paul Stephenson (FASoS), as Associate Director, will take over from Christine Neuhold, who in turn has been appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

The months of September to December will be primarily dedicated to ensuring a smooth transition in leadership, upgrading the meeting rooms for hybrid events, implementing the Covid smart start-up plan prepared before the summer, and starting the process of renewing the Campus’ strategy that will be implemented as of 2022. This will take place in parallel with other activities: hosting the first hybrid events and courses; providing a venue for Belgium-based staff to deliver lectures for UM students during travel bans; organising the first events under the RELAY Jean Monnet project for which Campus has been awarded EU funding; active participation in various platforms and working groups, e.g. the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN), the European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH), UM’s Strategic Board for Internationalisation (SBI); the participation in the Universities Informal Liaison Offices Network (UnILiON) Secretariat and organisation of the network’s annual event; monitoring EU policy developments, etc.

The preparation of a renewed strategy in which Campus Brussels takes a pro-active stance will be an important action in itself. It will involve with the UM community in order to better understand how Campus Brussels can support it and add value.

Campus Brussels, already reflecting its pro-active approach, has drafted a work plan with activities and deliverables to prepare or launch in 2020-21. An overview of these actions is presented below (please note that a more comprehensive version of this plan is available for UM staff upon request).

Actions under Teaching and Training

Education is a core competence of UM Faculties. Campus Brussels serves as an instrument to add value to the faculties’ educational activities. In this spirit, the Campus has been supporting UM education since its inception: hosting part-time PhD programmes and executive courses for professionals, facilitating the organisation of events to develop
educational programmes with international partners, etc. This has, until the pandemic, taken up a significant proportion of staff capacity.

1. **Continued support to UM education activities**
   Campus Brussels will continue to support educational activities organised by UM Faculties, from executive courses to PhD programmes. While the number has been reduced, there are already several educational activities planned in hybrid format.

2. **Provision of equipment and support for Belgium-based teaching staff**
   Campus Brussels will put its new infrastructure at the service of Belgium-based UM staff who are unable to travel to Maastricht to deliver education. Campus Brussels will invite them to take advantage of a stable high-speed internet connection, high-quality audio and video, support services, and a UM institutional setting.

3. **Field trips for students**
   Campus Brussels will offer UM Faculties to design and organise field trips for students on their behalf. Field trips to Brussels are aimed at acquiring practical insights to complement theoretical studies. Such trips would also contribute to a unique profile that UM could offer as the European University of the Netherlands.

**Proposed actions under Research Community Hub**

As with education, research is a competence of UM Faculties and interfaculty research centres, as well as research activities located on the Brightlands Campuses. Campus Brussels has been supporting it in a variety of ways, mostly by hosting events: small meetings with international partners to form consortia; kick-off, midterm review and dissemination conferences of EU-funded research projects; workshops to discuss issues ahead of publications, etc. Before the pandemic, these activities had also taken up a large percentage of staff capacity.

In 2020-21, Campus Brussels will continue to support UM researchers to the extent that is possible in light of the pandemic’s developments. It also proposes three additional actions:

4. **Continued support to UM research activities**
   Campus Brussels will continue to support research activities organised by UM Faculties. While this number has been reduced, there are already several research activities planned in hybrid format that will require the Campus’ support, such as a conference on the Boards of Appeal of EU Agencies or a lecture on the ‘EU’s refugee crisis’ as part of an event series on ‘European Values, Citizenship & Belonging’.

5. **A publication of a compendium with highlights of research outputs and added value facilitated by Campus Brussels**
   For the last decade, Campus Brussels has facilitated dozens of events in the framework of research projects, ensuring that UM researchers were worry-free of logistical hurdles and can focus on content and conception of ideas. As part of this ten-year anniversary, the Campus will produce a compendium which follows up on previous events and identifies research outputs and added value that have resulted from some of the most exciting Campus Brussels events.

6. **Fireplace Talks**
   Campus Brussels will continue this initiative launched by former Campus director Christine Neuhold, in which UM researchers discuss theoretical insights together
with practitioners, followed by a networking reception. The event targets primarily alumni and the ‘Brussels Bubble’ but is also open to the general public.

7. Launching an ‘Academic Co-working Space’
Brussels is always buzzing with UM researchers, whether because they live there or because they are conducting research in the EU capital. Some often pass by the Campus to work, unwind, use the printer, have small meetings, etc. Campus Brussels proposes to take this a step further by promoting itself as an ‘Academic Coworking Space’, inviting researchers to use Campus Brussels as a hub in which to work together with colleagues more regularly.

Proposed actions under UM Embassy

Unlike education and research, the UM embassy function is not solely a competence of the UM Faculties but also a competence of Campus Brussels. It is a cross-cutting function as it supports knowledge transfer, networking, brand-building, alumni engagement, etc. for the benefit of UM as a whole.

The Campus has previously supported Embassy actions organised by the UM Community such as alumni events organised by the Alumni Office and the Brussels Alumni Circle; meetings of UM-York, the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE), the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), and the Association of Academic Health Centers International (AAHCI); student-led extracurricular Brussels trips such as Student Forum Maastricht; policy dialogues; staff outing days; meetings to share best practices in academic management, etc.

Recently, as part of its development, Campus Brussels has already begun organising its own activities under Embassy: the now-traditional Christmas/New Year’s reception; organising sports events with UM alumni, staff and students to fundraise for UM research; and an increasingly active role as UM’s EU liaison office by monitoring EU policy and participating in European networks.

In 2020-21, Campus Brussels proposes to undertake the following activities:

8. Continued engagement in EU affairs
The Campus will continue to actively engage in EU affairs / policy to monitor developments and advocate for the university’s interests. The Campus will also continue its active as well as participate in European networks to position UM, increase its visibility, and international collaboration opportunities.

9. Implementation of the RELAY Jean Monnet Project
Campus Brussels was successful in securing Erasmus+ Jean Monnet funding for a 2-year project. The project, entitled Spreading and relating EU affairs beyond the EU institutions (RELAY) will examine the European Commission’s political priorities with a wide array of stakeholders. RELAY will be implemented from September 2020 through August 2022 and will consist of a series of events and working papers that will form the basis of a policy brief that integrates all input received by stakeholders.

UM project partners include YUFE, Studio Europa, the Centre for European Research in Maastricht (CERiM), the Brightlands Institute for Smart Society (BISS), and the Maastricht Sustainability Institute (MSI).

10. Organisation of the UnILiON 2020 annual conference
As part of its EU affairs activities, Campus Brussels co-manages the network of university Brussels offices (UnILiON), which is currently composed of 52 Brussels-based university liaison offices. As part of its tasks, the Campus is coordinating UnILiON’s 2020 annual conference, which will take place on 17 November 2020. The annual event will consist of two events: a closed meeting between UnILiON university executives and the future presidencies of the Council of the European Union, and an open public conference that will bring together high-level policy makers and senior representatives of the education, research, and innovation community.

11. Virtual talks on EU affairs
The Campus will capitalise on the experience and network of the past years to organise short virtual talks to regularly inform the UM Community of developments at EU level and give people the opportunity to ask direct questions to policy-makers who are designing and implementing such actions.

12. UM-Europe annual conference
UM has a strong European focus. Its education and research activities both contribute to tackling European challenges. It leads YUFE a European University Alliance and several other European initiatives, some in collaboration with local and regional partners. As such, UM’s stakes for ensuring the continued smooth alignment with EU policy are high.

Emulating what other international universities do, Campus Brussels proposes organising an annual UM-Europe conference to position UM by discussing its priorities together with high-level policy-makers and members of the European academic community.

13. Field trips for staff
Campus Brussels will design field trips for UM staff who are keen to spend a day away from Maastricht for deep-impact meetings, team-building, and networking with EU stakeholders.

14. EU career kick-off days
Launching a career in Brussels is not an easy task: the competition is fierce, and accessing jobs is often not just a matter of technical competence, but the result of having excellent soft skills. Campus Brussels proposes launching an ‘EU career kick-off day’ for students who want to work in the Brussels arena.

15. Meet Maastricht University in Brussels
UM is an attractive university for people working in the Brussels bubble (and for their children): international, strong European focus, and a stone’s throw from the EU Capital. Building on previous recruitment events, Campus Brussels proposes to design a yearly ‘Meet Maastricht University in Brussels’ day, with information on studying at UM tailored for the Brussels bubble.

16. Podcast series: stories from Brussels
Campus Brussels will launch a podcast series aimed at community-building, both among UM’s Brussels-based community as well as between the Brussels-based and the Maastricht-based communities. The series will feature personal and professional stories from staff, students, and alumni, help promote research and act as a record of the time to capture how the UM community is adapting during the pandemic.
Cross-cutting actions

17. A renewed strategy for Campus Brussels
Campus Brussels will renew its strategy to align its strategic goals with the new UM framework strategies and other developments within and outside of UM.

18. Contribution to UM’s institutional development
Campus Brussels will also continue actively contributing to UM’s own institutional development by providing input into UM’s framework strategies, the Strategic Board for internationalisation, and European networks as well as further its collaboration with UM stakeholders and other UM (Europe) initiatives to explore synergies and add value.