

**Interuniversity Working Group “Belgian Colonial Past”**

**(VLIR-CRef)**

**The decolonisation of the Belgian academic  
world.**

**Anthology of the inventory of initiatives**

**(Louise Calvo, CRef)**

---

## 1 Working groups, committees and other bodies

---

### 1.1 *Initiatives in the framework of historical relations with Congo and academic heritage*

**ULB:** Project HERICOL (Héritages coloniaux en Belgique: universités, mobilisations et contre-mobilisations) (2020-2025, led by A. Hajjat, A. Lauro, S. Newell)

**USL-B:** project Human Remains Origin(s) Multidisciplinary Evaluation (HOME, 2019-2021).

**KU Leuven:** report *Beladen, omstreden, betwist. Koloniaal erfgoed en dekolonisering van de universiteit* (16 dec 2020, 38 blz.)

### 1.2 *Advisory bodies*

**UGent:** creation of a diversity team within the university and appointment of a diversity coordinator for the university.

**ULiège:** the Centre for Partnership and Development Cooperation (PACODEL) coordinates all activities related to Southern countries in research, education and community services.

**UHasselt:** a gender and diversity committee (in which each faculty is represented) advises on the objectives and actions related to the transversal policy line *UHasselt inclusive*.

### 1.3 *Reading groups*

**VUB:** WeDecolonizeVUB

**UCLouvain:** "Pensées décoloniales" Group (ECR-INCAL)

### 1.4 *Other*

**ULB:** Afric@ULB

**VUB:** in the Equality Action Plan II (2021-2024), one of the strategic objectives (SD2) concerns anti-racism, decolonisation and diversity.

---

## 2 Academic and public activities

---

### 2.1 *Seminars, debate evenings and symposiums (since 2018)*

**In all universities,** numerous study days, lecture series, science cafes, workshops, panel discussions, lunch seminars, networking conferences, reading groups, film screenings...

## 2.2 *Honorary doctorates*

**UAntwerpen:** Denis Mukwege (2019)

**ULiège:** Denis Mukwege (2018), leading to the creation of the Mukwege International Chair on Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict

**UCLouvain:** Denis Mukwege (2014), Achille Mbembe (2017)

## 2.3 *Exhibitions*

**UAntwerpen:** Congoville (2021)

**ULB:** Notre Congo, Onze Kongo – Belgian propaganda revealed (2016)

**UHasselt:** Contentious heritage / Omstreden erfgoed (2019-21)

**USL-B:** The Congolese in the Great War: unknown at this address? (2016-2017)

## 2.4 *Archive guides*

**ULB:** the ULB's think tank on colonial past has, among other things, led to an archival research and the production of a *Guide to the colonial archives* of the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

**UCLouvain:** in collaboration with the Université Saint-Louis, the Centre for the History of Law and Justice of the UCLouvain has digitised the colonial law journals (<http://www.digithemis.be/index.php/ressources/doctrine/revues/revues-coloniales>).

---

## 3 External initiatives

---

### 3.1 *Students' initiatives (associations)*

**UMONS:** a group of African students had launched a petition in June for the removal of the bust of King Leopold II, which was located in a room of the UMONS that was not accessible to the public. The statue in question was transferred to the archives and collections of the MUMONS museum for further historical recontextualisation.

**ULiège:** the Circle of African Students and Friends of the University of Liege (CEAA-ULg) is recognised by the Fédé (Fédération des Etudiants ULiège). Although it is not a regular organiser of events related to the (de)colonial issue, it actively relays, via its Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Ceaa.ULg>), the activities organised by others, whether they come from scientific institutions or civil society.

**UCLouvain:** the Placet Centre welcomes students from Belgian cooperation countries and organizes activities related to diversity, inclusion and interculturality.

### **3.2 *Involvement of teachers in external initiatives (since 2018)***

**UGent:** participation of UGent researchers and students in the citizen participation initiative 'Dekoloniseer mijn stad' of the City of Ghent.

**ULiège:** in 2020, hearing of several ULiège experts by the City of Verviers in the framework of a reflection on the colonial past and its symbols in the street.

---

## **4 University teaching**

---

### **4.1 *Programs***

**UAntwerpen:** Master's in development, Evaluation and Management

**ULB:** Master's of Arts in African languages and civilisations

**KULeuven:** Máster en Estudios Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos

**UGent:** Master's programs in African languages and cultures at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

**ULiège:** Master in Population and Development Studies

**UCLouvain :** Master in Population and Development Studies

**UNamur:** specialized master's in international and development economics (in collaboration with UCLouvain).

### **4.2 *Courses***

Numerous examples of pre-colonial and colonial history in different disciplines.

### **4.3 *Initiatives to 'decolonise' subject areas or curricula***

**KULeuven:** metaforum working group on multiregionalism.

**UCLouvain:** creation of a minor entitled 'Decentering History. Subalternities and Postcolonial Criticism' (30 ECTS) accessible to all students enrolled in the Bachelor's degree and of an option in 'History, Decentering and Criticism. World and Societies' (15 ECTS) accessible to students of the Master 60 and 120 in History.

---

## **5 Involvement in primary and secondary education**

---

### **5.1 *Participation in commissions***

**UCL/ULB/USL-B:** On the French-speaking side, specialists in the history of colonisation from UCL, ULB and USL-B were invited by the Cabinet of the Minister of Education Caroline Désir to review and

formulate proposals as part of the revision of the Pact for Excellence in Education's history reference framework.

### **5.2 Development of manuals, learning materials and study days for teachers**

**KULeuven** : Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse created several materials (courses, textbooks, ...) to teach colonial history in high schools.

**VUB** : guest lesson for secondary schools: 'Should Belgium apologize to Congo?' (2-hour workshop taught by a member of the history department).

**UNamur** : production of a textbook for teachers (secondary school classes) on the history of the environment (including the colonial period) in collaboration with the Africa Museum Tervuren and the UCLouvain.

---

## **6 Scholarship system**

---

Often in collaboration with VLIR-IUS, ARES-CCD.

**UAntwerpen** : Scholar In Residents

**ULB** : Esprit libre grants from the Jacques Lewin - Inès Henriques de castro Fund

**KULeuven** : Marc Vervenne Fund

**UMONS** : Action Sud Fund

**ULiège** : International Relations Steering Committee (CPRI)

**UCLouvain**: South Partnership scholarships and medical specialisation scholarships

**UNamur**: UNamur-CERUNA doctoral scholarships, UNamur-Southern countries scholarship program, Wynants-Sudan Fund

---

## **7 Collaboration with Central Africa**

---

**UMONS**: Professor J.-P. Tshibangu coordinates the DR Congo Country Group in the framework of the ARES-CCD actions.

**UAntwerpen**: the UAntwerpen's USOS (Universitaire Stichting voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking) has a privileged partnership with the Catholic University of Bukavu.

**UGent**: some promoters have concluded bilateral framework agreements with former Belgian colonial institutions, such as that of prof. M. Meeuwis with the University of Kisangani.

**ULiège**: taking all fields together, the figures provided by Radius show that there are 54 active partnership agreements between ULiège and the DRC (36), Rwanda (10) and Burundi (8) between 2018 and 2021. These agreements concern research projects, teaching issues or institutional cooperation.

**UHasselt** : the Educational Development, Diversity and Innovation Department (OODI) is a partner in the Erasmus+ project e-Inclusion. The transnational project is a collaboration of higher education with centres of expertise especially the Knowledge Centre for Innovation and Online Learning (KIC) and the Expertise Centre for Diversity Policy (ECHO). The objective is to develop online tools for teachers to create an inclusive learning environment. Central to the project is the awareness tool from in-depth frameworks around supremacy and racism, implicit bias and equity.