

# STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN FLANDERS

Report 2024

# HIGHER EDUCATION FLEMISH COMMUNITY - UNIVERSITIES

- KU Leuven
- Universiteit Antwerpen
- Universiteit Gent
- Universiteit Hasselt
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel

➤ *Number of students (academic year 2023-2024): 143.931*



# HIGHER EDUCATION FLEMISH COMMUNITY – UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND ARTS

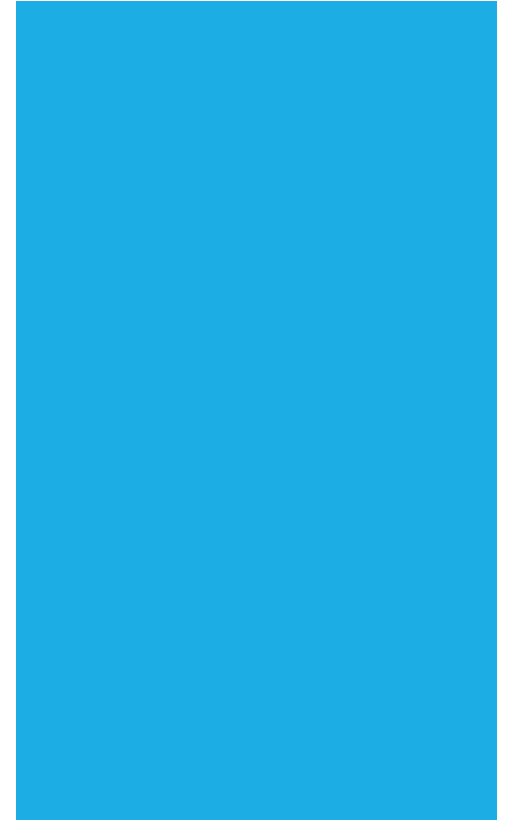
- Antwerp Maritime Academy
  - Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen
  - Arteveldehogeschool
  - Erasmushogeschool Brussel
  - Hogeschool Gent
  - Hogeschool PXL
  - Hogeschool VIVES
  - Howest, de Hogeschool West – Vlaanderen
  - Karel de Grote Hogeschool
  - LUCA School of Arts
  - Odisee
  - Thomas More Hogeschool
  - UC Leuven Limburg
- *Number of students (academic year 2023-2024): 151.234*

# UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS

- Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (VLIR) represents the Flemish universities
- The Flemish Council of Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts (Vlaamse Hogescholenraad) represents all Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts
- VLUHR-I carries out two core tasks:
  - joint international marketing and promotion
  - support of incoming and outgoing student mobility financed by the Flemish government.

# STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: ACTIVITIES AND WORK FIELDS

- Individual or collective housing
- Nutrition
- Medical and psychological assistance
- Transportation
- “Student activities”: sports, culture, events, student societies, ...
- Social services



# STUDENT HOUSING

- Increased student population and more internationalisation → shortage of student housing and decrease in affordable housing
- Mainly in the cities (Ghent, Leuven, Antwerp, Brussels)
- Esp. problematic for more vulnerable students (with financial difficulties, international students, ...)
  
- In 2024 the Flemish government granted interest-free loans for a total of 100 million euros for the construction and renovation of basic student rooms by the HEI.
- In total, 7 projects were selected from 5 institutions (out of 13 projects submitted), accounting for 1.744 new rooms.
- The new Flemish government (2024-2029) has renewed its intention to invest in basic student housing.

# STUDENT HOUSING

The Flemish government wants to streamline both the leases and the databases of student housing in Flanders.

In light of the large housing shortage HEI are not convinced this is the first priority.

However, these streamlining measures are a good development in the long term. Esp. for international students who will have more confidence in the legal security of the rental contracts.

# SOCIAL SERVICES: STUDY FINANCING

**General information** → For study expenses

- Study financing by the Flemish Community (= study grants)
  - The student support services can inform the students about study financing by the Flemish Community
  - They can help the student follow up their case
  - They can pay an advance of the study grant
- Student support services
  - Can give an additional amount of money or a loan
  - Can give information on other financial possibilities by the government, grants,...
  - Can help the student to find a student job,...
  - ...



# SOCIAL SERVICES: STUDY FINANCING

- Between 2020 and 2023, studying became 19-20 % more expensive in Flanders
- The number of grant students increased in five years from 60.000 to 70.000.
- Concerns that the group of students who just fall short in qualifying for a grant won't start studying anymore because of the increased costs.
- These students can fall back on financial support from the student services, but this puts extra financial pressure on the HEI who are also operating with a limited budget
- Financial worries impact the mental health of students as well

# OTHER ONGOING TRENDS

- Increased attention to student mental wellbeing
  - Student Support Services report that there's an increased demand for care from students (more severe psychological problems)
- Policies concerning transgressive behaviour in HEI