

University Rankings: From curse to blessing ?

**Seventh Ethical Forum of the University Foundation,
Brussels, Thursday 20 November 2008, 2-6 pm**

University rankings are there to stay. Should we sabotage them as much as we can? Or can we refashion them in such a way that our universities end up fulfilling their functions even better than before, without worsening our lives or those of our students in the process?

This question will be the focus of the 7th Ethical Forum of the University Foundation, to be held in Brussels on Thursday November 20th, 2-6 pm. The meeting will be opened by the head of research at QS, the organization that produces the Times rankings and will close with a general discussion introduced by a Minister, a Rector and one of the people involved in university evaluation at the European Commission. As an innovation with respect to our usual format, room will be made for a selection of short prepared interventions from the floor on the question "*Are university rankings a good thing? A bad thing? Why?*", to be sent to Hilde Garmyn fu.us@universityfoundation.be by November 13th.

Programme below. Full details, including registration form on the website of the University Foundation www.universityfoundation.be/en/forum7.php.

Participation is free of charge but registration in advance is required (by e-mail to fu.us@universityfoundation.be) no later than November 13th. Please specify your surname, first name, institution and function.

Participants wishing to have lunch can do so at the restaurant of the Foundation. Please indicate this on the registration form and transfer the payment to the University Foundation.

Looking forward to welcoming you soon,

Jacques Willems, chairman of the University Foundation
Eric De Keuleneer, executive director of the University Foundation
Philippe Van Parijs, coordinator of the Ethical Forum
Bart Pattyn and Benoît Frydman, members of the organization committee

Programme

- 13.30 Registration
- 14.00 Introduction by Eric DE KEULENEER (executive director of the University Foundation) and Philippe VAN PARIJS (coordinator of the Ethical Forum)

Good intentions, perverse effects? Perverse intentions, good effects?

- Ben SOWTER (Head of Research at Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), London) will explain how QS produces the rankings published annually by the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, what he regards as the main problems faced by the methodology used, and how he sees the future of university rankings.
- Richard YELLAND (Head of Education Management and Infrastructure Division, Directorate for Education, OECD, Paris) will present and discuss OECD's position on the role of rankings in the emerging global market for higher education.
- Patrick LOOBUYCK (professor of philosophy at the Universities of Ghent and Antwerp, co-author of the book *Welke universiteit willen we (niet)?*) will echo the concerns of young academics about the impact of rankings and related methods on university life.
- Room will be left for some short prepared interventions by members of all Belgian universities who would like to react to the question "*Are university rankings a good thing? A bad thing? Why?*". Those interested are invited to send a note of no more than 20 lines by November 13 to fu.us@universityfoundation.be.

15.45 Coffee break

16.15

Which way forward?

Benoît FRYDMAN (director of the Centre de philosophie du droit, Université Libre de Bruxelles) will sum up the challenges emerging from the first part of the forum and other reactions to our theme.

The general discussion will be introduced by

- Peter VAN DER HIJDEN (European Commission, DG Education and Culture),
- Bernard RENTIER (Rector of the University of Liège),
- Frank VANDENBROUCKE (Minister of Education, Flanders).

Conclusions by Philippe VAN PARIJS (UCLouvain & Harvard).

18.00 Reception