

From Unrecognised Talent to Shared Prosperity: Social Investment in Refugees and Newcomers through Higher Education

Day 1 · Monday 16 November 2026

From Camp to Campus and the Social Investment Theory

Historic Irish College, Leuven

TIME	PROGRAMME	ROOM
11:00–13:00	Registration Welcome desk open	-----
13:00–13:30	Prof. Dr. Ides Nicaise — KU Leuven / UCLL Opening and welcome: From Camp to Campus Fall School	-----
13:30–14:00	Mohamed Ridouani — Mayor, City of Leuven Investing in people, investing in cities: newcomer talent and shared flourishing	-----
14:00–14:30	Break	-----
14:30–15:00	Dr. Chiemeeke Onyeze-Joe — ULB The challenges that educated newcomers face in Flanders and Europe	-----
15:00–16:15	Dr. Tobias Hentze — IW, Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Economic and fiscal reasons for social investment	-----
16:15–17:00	Prof. Dr. em. Jacques Haers, s.j. — reflection Beyond human capital: human dignity and the common good. Connecting Pope Francis' Dignitas Infinita to Pope Leo's Magnifica Humanitas	-----
17:00–18:30	Reception	-----

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Day 2 · Tuesday 17 November 2026

The bigger picture on migration and society

UCLL, Campus Hertogstraat, Leuven

TIME	PROGRAMME	ROOM
9:00–9:45	Dr. Hielke Van Doorslaer — Denktank Minerva Part 1 — The migration paradox: demographic and economic trends	-----
10:00–11:00	Dr. Hielke Van Doorslaer — Denktank Minerva Short break, then Part 2 — European Migration Pact and Belgian policies: between rhetoric and practice	-----
11:00–11:30	Coffee break	-----
11:30–12:00	Pol Barbé — KU Leuven Recent research on the labour market in Flanders	-----
12:00–12:45	Dr. Dries Lens Paths to integration: labour market trajectories and skill investments among immigrants in Flanders	-----
12:45–13:45	Lunch Tables along topic lines	-----
13:45–14:30	Dr. Peter De Cuyper — KU Leuven High-skilled migrants and mentoring as a leverage for labour market integration, followed by discussion	-----
14:30–15:00	Prof. Dr. em. Ides Nicaise — KU Leuven Access of migrants to higher education in Flanders: positive trends despite socio-economic and cultural obstacles	-----
15:00–15:30	Coffee break	-----
15:30–16:00	Panel discussion and reflection Participants: Ides Nicaise, Clara Cruz Santos	-----
16:00–16:30	Walk to Naamsestraat as a group	-----
16:30–17:30	Site visit — KU Leuven Admissions Hosted by Dr. Ed Guzman	-----

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Day 3 · Wednesday 18 November 2026

Pathways to higher education

UCLL, Campus Hertogstraat, Leuven

TIME	PROGRAMME	ROOM
9:00–9:30	Prof. Dr. Orhan Agirdag — KU Leuven Inclusion and structural inequality: from formal access to genuine inclusion — multilingualism, inequality and hidden institutional barriers	-----
9:30–10:00	Nele Vanderheyden — Atlas / THEA Newcomer support: lessons from supporting newcomers into higher education in Antwerp	-----
10:00–10:30	Nele Breuls — NARIC Diploma recognition: recognising what students already bring — foreign qualifications and access to the labour market	-----
10:30–11:00	Coffee break	-----
11:00–11:30	Dr. Christine Engelen and Sabine Steemans — Linguapolis Language requirements: bridge to participation or barrier to inclusion?	-----
11:30–12:30	Dr. Aleidis Devillé — Thomas More / Next Steps Institutional responsibility and admissions: from recognition to admission — how can higher education institutions create genuinely inclusive pathways?	-----
12:30–13:30	Lunch Tables along sector lines	-----
13:30–14:00	Afaf Reguib — IVANHOE From aspiration to pathway: orientation, intake and individual guidance	-----
14:00–14:30	Maryse Boufflette — CVO CLT Building the general language foundation for further study: can CVOs go the distance, e.g. B2/C1?	-----
14:30–15:00	Prof. Dr. Ann Bertels — ILT From general language proficiency to academic readiness	-----
15:00–15:30	Coffee break	-----
15:30–16:00	Chiara Kerckhof — AMAL, VTHO foundation year Bridging the gap: what an integrated preparatory year can offer students and society	-----
16:00–16:30	Dr. Melanie Hall — UCLL Why investing in foundational and language programmes matters	-----
16:30–17:30	Reception	-----

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Day 4 · Thursday 19 November 2026

Pathways to inclusion and belonging

UCLL, Campus Hertogstraat, Leuven

TIME	PROGRAMME	ROOM
9:00–9:30	Dr. Flore Geukens — UCLL Beyond access: the Codex of Higher Education and why student support for refugees and newcomers is a needed social investment	-----
9:30–10:00	Katrien Vermijlen — Alderwoman, City of Leuven Belonging beyond the campus: how cities can support inclusion, participation and connection	-----
10:00–10:30	Raf D’haese — KU Leuven Social and academic inclusion: barriers, opportunities and institutional responsibility in higher education	-----
10:30–11:00	Coffee break	-----
11:00–12:30	Katrien Mertens with students and participants — UCLL Sense of Belonging workshop: what does it take to belong? Student voices, lived experience and personal narratives	-----
12:30–13:30	Lunch Tables along topic lines	-----
13:45–14:15	Joshe Kuypers — PXL Maximising learning potential: the student support mode	-----
14:15–14:45	Testimony — JENY BSG – UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Finding your place and giving back: a personal journey	-----
14:45–15:30	Coffee break	-----
15:30–17:30	JENY BSG — Dancer, choreographer and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Belonging in Motion: building trust, connection and community through movement	-----
17:30–17:45	Katrien Mertens — UCLL Seeing and belonging differently: introduction to the Photovoice exhibition	-----
17:45–18:45	Photovoice exhibition and reception — UCLL Through Our Eyes: student perspectives on inclusion, identity and belonging	-----

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Day 5 · Friday 20 November 2026

The future of higher education solidarity

UCLL, Campus Hertogstraat, Leuven

TIME	PROGRAMME	ROOM
9:00–9:20	Mieke Achtergaele — UCLL Closing technical remarks	-----
9:20–10:00	Ben Jordan — UCAS What UCAS can teach us about fairness and transparency (10 min. technical set-up, 30 min. talk)	-----
10:00–10:30	Jennifer Moesker — Studielink How institutions share infrastructure without losing the capacity to respond to individual circumstances	-----
10:30–11:00	Coffee break	-----
11:00–11:30	Dr. Ed Guzman — KU Leuven Admissions What coordinated admissions mean in Flanders: institutional realities, opportunities and limits	-----
11:30–12:15	Speakers panel — Jennifer Moesker, Ed Guzman, Minne Philippe and others From individual challenges to shared responsibility.	-----
12:15–12:45	Dr. Imran Uddin — UCLL, closing keynote From access to responsibility and shared prosperity: making the right to quality education (SDG 4) real for all	-----
12:45–13:45	Lunch	-----
13:45–14:15	Lalynn Wadera — Alderwoman, City of Leuven Shared prosperity: why access to higher quality education and lifelong learning (SDG 4) matters to all	-----
14:15–15:00	Anton Neronov — VUB Policy round tables, including a break. Each table formulates one recommendation and one concern	-----
15:00–15:15	Coffee break	-----
15:15–16:30	Anton Neronov — VUB Policy round tables continued	-----
16:30	Good-bye	-----