

Opposition to anti-social austerity plans at Ghent University

Information meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2023



Some practical agreements

- **Please turn off micro during the presentation**
- **Presentation will be forwarded afterwards**
- **Questions and discussion after the presentation**
- **Questions afterwards also possible by e-mail or telephone (contact details at the end of the presentation)**

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What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **Approved text was emailed by rector on 29/3**
- **Largely the same as the text that had become known through the media beforehand**
- **Only concrete list of savings proposals was postponed to Executive Board 5 May 2023**
- **Final version of the note on Executive Board 7 July 2023**
- **"These proposals and choices [in the present memorandum] are unanimously supported by the members of the management consultation [= deans + directors]. Moreover, all members of the management consultation have committed themselves to propagating and realizing the totality of the proposals and choices."**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **Concrete figures:**
- **€33.6 million per year by 2027**
- **11.2 million euros through additional income**
- **22.4 million euros through cutbacks**
- **Faculties: 5.6 million euro cutbacks**
- **Central Administration: 16.8 million euro cutbacks**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What additional income?**
- **Increase in financial contribution for general costs (= overhead) that may be charged on certain income**
- **5.5 million euros through an increase in overhead that may be charged to certain Flemish project types (10% = > 15%), and to 2nd cash flow: FWO (=> 15%) and BOF (=> 10%)**
- **5 million euros through increase in overhead on contract income 4th cash flow (=> 25% as with EU funding, with or without differences per discipline)**
- **"Simulations at the universities show that the real overhead is on average 30% to 35%"**
- **Increase in registration fees (not yet quantified, with the exception of doubling for PhD students, cf. note 2022: € 1.1 million)**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What Cutbacks?**
 - **Faculties:**
 - 5.6 million euros
 - By share in university allocation model on 1/1/2023
 - Interpretation is left to the faculties themselves
 - "rationalization and optimization of education", reform or abolition of rarely followed courses and subjects, bundling of courses with the same content, organization of exams, ...
 - **Other measures:**
 - Staff points distribution mechanism frozen until 2027
 - Discontinuation of biennial fast track to professor
 - Review system staff points

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

What cutbacks?

- **Central Administration: 16.8 million euros in total**
- **Concrete savings on budget lines**
- **The deferred list already included some 5 to 6 million proposed savings, including:**
 - **Save on training for staff**
 - **Save on childcare**
 - **Save on cleaning**
 - **Discontinuation of dsv job service**
 - **De facto delete Green Office**
 - **Deletion of staff sports afternoon**
 - **Scrapping pension party staff**
 - **Outsourcing car parks and introducing paid parking for staff**
- **Adjustments for Executive Board of 5 May 2023?**
- **Little hope that management will voluntarily replace the above with social alternative measures**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

What cutbacks?

- **Central Administration: 16.8 million euros in total**
- **Where should the remaining EUR 11 million come from?**
- **"Process analysis – efficiency gains"**
- **"This should allow for both short-term and long-term people and resources to be freed up."**
- **Linked to reform to three support services**
- **Is it inconceivable that such a large number of tasks could be eliminated?**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What cutbacks?**
 - *"Achieving savings of this magnitude and performing process analyses for efficient operation will mean that intervention in personnel is effectively unavoidable."*

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What cutbacks?**
 - **Possible measures:**
 - **Selective hiring freeze in Departments I and V (i.e. everything outside DSV, “kassen” and projects)**
 - **For everyone, or only for ATP, or just for AAP, ...? Different application faculties vs directorates?**
- **"The support services (current UGent directorates) will immediately start the selective recruitment freeze for the points awarded in the 2023 policy plan and for the positions that become available during the calendar year."**
 - **Also no replacement of who leaves during the year**
 - **Vacant functions to accommodate**
 - **or via "reorganization within the existing group" (deletion of tasks? workload?)**
 - **or to be filled in via internal mutation**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What cutbacks?**
 - **Overview of possibilities that the board wants to be able to use:**
 - **Internal mobility**
 - **Ghent University wants to be able to assign employees a different position**
 - **That other job "must be appropriate to their competences, which may be acquired after further training, education and training"**
 - **Mutation to external organisation (e.g. UZ Gent, SOCs, ...)**
 - **Consequences for employment conditions?**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What cutbacks?**
 - **Overview of possibilities that the board wants to be able to use:**
 - **"Disponibility scheme due to reorganisation"**
 - **For statutory employees**
 - **Remain attached to the institution but exempt from benefits**
 - **One continues to receive compensation (which is lower than a full bet)**
 - **How is eligibility determined? Voluntary/mandatory? How high is compensation? Consequences of retirement? What about contractual colleagues? Workload for remaining staff?**
 -

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What cutbacks?**
 - **Voluntary exit**
 - **With "a financial compensation"**
 - **For contractual and statutory employees**
 - **Amount of compensation? General or selective? Impact on remaining staff?**

What was approved at the Board of 28 March 2023?

- **What cutbacks?**
- **“Social plan“**
 - **"For contractual employees for whom no suitable position is available at a certain time, a social plan can be negotiated that results in the termination of the employment of a group of employees."**
 - **This shows: no guarantee of offering suitable alternative function**
 - **In fact, therefore, only a nice name for compulsory redundancy**
 - **Ghent University claims that this is possible for both contractual and permanent staff members**
 - **How is it determined who/which groups are affected? Way for managers to fire "those who do not fit within their own vision"?**

Possible consequences?

- **If the amounts still to be found are expressed in terms of the number of jobs, we arrive at about 300 positions that must disappear => risk of social carnage**
- **Focus on CA: up to 1 in 5 positions at risk**
- **Utter ambiguity as to who or where: everyone an outlaw?**
- **Who will take on these duties if not within the CA?**
- **What about the quality of service after such a clearing?**
- **How will the savings be implemented within the faculties? Take over extra tasks with fewer people?**

What is this management actually doing??

- **Just like last year, the board wanted to keep everything secret until it was decided**
- **Alternative savings proposals from trade unions and ATP representatives of the Executive Board were not taken into account**
- **GDPR is wrongly used as an excuse to hinder staff communication by trade unions and staff representatives to inform and organise staff**
- **Instead of working participatoryly to further improve cooperation between all faculties and directorates, the board uses this savings plan to set the staff of faculties and boards against each other. In fact, this will harm the entire Ghent University.**
- **Enough is enough!**

We propose an alternative

- **Proposed savings plan is not inevitable and necessary**
- **Annual accounts each year much more favourable than budget (budget 2022: -15.4 million vs annual accounts + 9.6 million => 25 million difference, with only 2 million savings from "core tasks note" 2022)**
- **Moreover, there are many alternative measures that are much more social**

We propose an alternative

- **Proposal for a concrete working method**
- **Every year, the budget is submitted to the union negotiations, after which an in-depth analysis and debate takes place on the budgetary objectives. We also take into account the possible positive results of the annual accounts of the previous year against the budget.**
- **We record the final result of the budget, and thus gain an insight into the possible deficit in the budget**
- **This shortage is resolved through a list of agreed austerity measures that are socially correct: no redundancies, no cuts in wages and working conditions.**
- **Of course, the Board of Directors has the final say, but in this way we ensure a budget and a possible savings list that has real support**

We propose an alternative

In addition, the structural underfunding of higher education must be tackled!

- **Onderindexering**
- **Skip “clicks”**
- **"If all the decree provisions had been fully applied, Ghent University would now receive € 80 million more basic funding per year“ or even 107 million if taken into account funding/student**
- **Trade unions, staff and students and the university administration must join forces for this (vs attitude of the board in previous years)**
- **Advance proposal general action day on 13/10/2023: day that the money runs out**

Your active support makes the difference

We ask you for the mandate for this alternative proposal

- **And we ask for your active support to help make this happen**
- **In 2022, it turned out that conversations with the board often turned out to be deaf conversations**
- **Visible support and participation in actions makes all the difference ☑ "the staff does not support this proposal, so we don't have to worry about it"**
- **What can I do?**
- **Participate massively in future actions to show your support for the board!**
- **Help inform and sensitize your direct colleagues, and convince them to inform themselves, among other things by subscribing to our info mailings**
- **Sign up for our action committee and help devise and organize impactful actions for your board or faculty, and/or university-wide**

Action week 2 to 5 May 2023

- **Action week culminating in Friday 5 May 2023 (date Board)**
- **Goal action week:**
 - **Pressure from Ghent University community on the board to withdraw the current plan and to join the alternative proposal**
 - **Effective and sincere consultation instead of deaf conversations**
 - **Full transparency to all staff and students + cessation of censorship of personnel communication by trade unions and staff representatives**
 - **Discussion concrete action proposal 5 May 2023**

Join our action committee

- **This action committee will meet for the first time on Monday 24 April 2023 at 12h**
- **First initiative:**
 - **Develop some concrete actions for the action week at the beginning of May, as a warm-up to the mass day of action on 5 May 2023**
 - **Important points:**
 - **What kind of actions and when to have the most impact?**
 - **What willingness to participate is there for which type of action? (strike, punctuality action, solidarity campaign, other types of actions, ...)**
 - **Practical: who does what for the concretely planned actions?**
 - **Ideas may also be sent to vakbonden@UGent.be**

Questions/discussion

Raise Hand (in MS Teams)

- Reminder:
- Sign up for our joint action committee
- Contact us on vakbonden@ugent.be and sign up for the info emails from the trade unions
- Our individual contact details:
- ACOD: acod@ugent.be - 0494 99 10 49 - <https://www.acodugent.be>
- ACV: acv-openbarediensten@ugent.be - 0472 87 18 07 - https://ugentbe.sharepoint.com/sites/EPV_ACV
- VSOA: filip.lobbestael@ugent.be - 0478 76 73 40 - <https://vsoa.ugent.be/>
- If you wish, you can also register on the UGent sharepoint of the trade unions:
- <https://ugentbe.sharepoint.com/sites/EPV>