

1. **External and independent hotline: the external prevention service.** An external and independent hotline is necessary, but not sufficient in itself. There must also be a guarantee that something will be done to tackle the problems that are being reported. The Belgian Welfare Act gives an external prevention service the means to oblige the management to take action: in addition to staff, also students should be given the possibility to go directly to the external prevention service, and moreover, it should be actively and widely publicized how this can be done in practice.

As a trade union, we support the demand of victims for an external and independent hotline. But that is not enough: there must also be guarantees that when something is reported to that hotline, this will also lead to concrete action by management. We therefore want this external contact point for staff and students to be added to the external prevention service that the Welfare Act already provides.

Why is that important? First of all, those services are legally protected against influences from the government or the employer, and offer guarantees of confidentiality. Think of the recent case of De Pauw: because of the legal protection of the professional secrecy of the prevention advisor, De Pauw could not get access to the "envelope" with what was being reported by individual victims about his behaviour. No other internal or external body can offer such absolute confidentiality.

Moreover, a prevention service, as opposed to a newly established body, has far-reaching legal possibilities to oblige the management to take action when they identify problems, and to call in the governmental inspection services when the employer takes no or insufficient measures. If the university management fails to act, it even risks criminal prosecution under the Welfare Act. Given the limited response of the university management to complaints in the past, this seems to us to be a necessary safeguard.

We therefore propose to give students as well as staff direct access to this external prevention service: both to discuss the problems in total confidentiality with a trusted person, but also to receive support in formal procedures. The prevention advisor can see to it that real action is taken about those complaints within the university.

Furthermore, it is far from sufficient for management to limit itself to an announcement that these procedures and possibilities already exist for staff members. Instead, these must be made known proactively and widely to all staff and students, along with all the necessary practical information on how victims can make use of them. All this should be communicated in a clear and visible way and repeated periodically.

2. **Improvements to the disciplinary regulations: no longer give the power decision to start a disciplinary procedure with the rector or vice-rector. Inform victims about all steps of the procedure.**

The disciplinary regulations for staff and students at UGent were recently amended and strongly improved. The culture of us-us was broken by composing the bodies of appeal with an equal number of representatives of the university authorities on one side and the trade unions on the other side. However, there are still a number of elements that fall short. For example, the decision whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings is an individual decision of the rector: put this decision directly in the hands of a disciplinary body (composed in the way as also described above for the bodies of

appeal) that is specifically charged with this assessment whether or not a disciplinary procedure should be started. This way that decision is kept away from university management.

Inform victims about all steps of the procedure.

3. Better support and follow-up of victims: provide better guidance and support to victims: mental support, but also help with the ongoing procedures. Inform them about the steps taken, and protect them from reprisals.

Ensure that victims receive good and reliable support from their very first reporting. Take care of their mental well-being, but also guide them through the maze of current procedures. Inform them correctly and in a timely manner about all steps taken, and ensure that they are effectively protected against possible reprisals or negative career consequences.

Give victims an easy way to appeal the board's decision on whether or not to take certain preventive measures, if they feel that these measures are not having an adequate effect. Support victims and encourage them to make use of this possibility when they deem it necessary, and ensure an immediate change of approach so that the problems are tackled in an effective way.

4. Strengthen the statutes of junior researchers: finally provide a real legal status for fellowship holders, so that they too can count on better social protection. Get rid of the cheap fake statutes that are a problem especially for foreign researchers

One of the major problems is the striking inequality in the statutes between young researchers (mostly fellows) and their superiors (professors). The fellowship status is not legally defined in Belgium, which makes fellowship holders particularly vulnerable in case of problems. The trade unions in higher education have been asking for a real legal status for fellows since 2010, but the university boards are fighting it. Do something about this at last: give fellowship holders the legal protection they deserve. Specific attention should also be paid to foreign researchers: many foreign colleagues still work in insecure and precarious positions, and are often paid much less than their Belgian colleagues. This makes them even more dependent on their superiors and makes them extra vulnerable. Put an end to this discrimination.

5. A safe workplace for everyone, need for information and education: limit the dependence on supervisors and managers, and break the culture of silence. Address inappropriate behavior, regardless of position or influence, and establish a clear code of ethics. Bring about a cultural shift

Ensure that young researchers are less dependent on supervisors and managers, for example by ensuring that the HR aspects of their job (employment, leave, welfare, etc.) are monitored by someone other than their supervisor who assists them with the content of their PhD. Bring researchers more in contact with each other, so they also learn which behavior is normal and when encountered behavior is inappropriate. Break through the culture of silence, protect people who speak out against inappropriate behavior.

Make managers who ignore inappropriate behavior just as responsible as those who exhibit it. Work purposefully on a culture change that puts an end to the normalization of problematic behavior: give groups where this behavior often occurs sufficient follow-up and guidance to work on this.

It is also necessary to make clearer agreements about what can and cannot be done at UGent. Every staff member and every student must be made aware of these deontological expectations.

In particular, when foreign colleagues start working at UGent, they should proactively be given clear and comprehensive information about their rights during their stay in Belgium, especially their rights vis-à-vis their supervisor, about the way in which they can enforce these rights, and how they are protected against reprisals should they do so.

UGent is an educational institution with a strong social mission. This means that influential staff members and managers must be extra careful and considerate in their behavior towards students and staff members. Every staff member and every student must know exactly where to turn with questions or when they become the victim of inappropriate behavior.

6. Less competitive and more core funding for higher education: stop the dependence on external competitive funding and the cut-throat competition between academics. More resources for sound education and research, and support for researchers.

Our research funding is largely based on external, competitive research funding. Many of those funding channels are also severely underfunded. This creates fierce competition between institutions and between individual researchers: not a good basis for cooperation based on mutual trust and respect. Moreover, it makes institutions and research groups heavily dependent on researchers who can easily obtain external funding: they often get away with misconduct and fraud. We advocate more public funding for higher education. This should guarantee higher and more secure basic funding for researchers. This can slow down internal competition and create more incentives for cooperation. Better support can also help professors to de-stress and give them more time and rest to care for staff.