



**ITINERA**

Expertise - Pathways - Impact

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

20  
21

## Preface annual report

We may all be familiar with the refrain of 'I never promised you a rose garden': *"I beg your pardon, I never promised you a rose garden, Along with the sunshine There's gotta be a little rain sometime"*. The song continues with 'I could sing you a tune and promise you the moon' after which there is another "but".

During the year 2021, which was remarkable in every way, I often thought of that song. Like the year before, 2021 was completely dominated by the pandemic. We went through several waves with renewed hope, but both socially and economically things continued to struggle. First we thought that the vaccines would get us out of the covid misery altogether, then it turned out to be more complex and discussions about covid safe passes, personal freedoms and all sorts of conspiracy theories crossed the debates. To continue the metaphor: not infrequently, a rose garden seemed to be ahead, but afterwards it rained much more often than anticipated.

This health crisis has revealed a great deal about the challenges facing a democracy these days: increasingly complex challenges, a tension between science and policy, a gasping economy yearning for a long-term vision and, in between, a critical mass that began to shout louder and louder through all sorts of channels, transforming discontent and impatience into demonstrations that ended up in violence more than once. Anyone who goes over all this can hardly claim that everything is going well in this country. No matter how much respect we can and should have for those who stood at the helm in these challenging times, it is crucial that we evaluate the policies of the past years in a calm and well-founded manner and learn from mistakes. For instance, we often searched for the rationale behind certain decisions and for a long time we lacked a touchstone against which to measure decisions that would then lead to a more coherent approach and uniformity across the different policy levels. Other decisions were good and well-founded and helped our society move forward.

The task of a think tank like Itinera in this is clear: we have our hands free to search for the sore topics as precisely as possible and we have the luxury to speak freely where necessary. In the coming years, Itinera wants to present itself even more emphatically as a sanctuary to do that thinking exercise: we map out the problems, we discuss them with the wider society and we offer solutions to do better. Of course, Belgium is a complex country, but do we not hide under this umbrella too often?

**I beg your pardon  
I never promised you a rose garden  
Along with the sunshine  
There's gotta be a little rain sometime**

**Joe South**

Other countries face similar challenges and, in the end, the challenge is to take up the gauntlet. To put it bluntly: we must make the good things easier than the bad. Think of issues such as prevention in healthcare, sustainability, technological innovation, fair taxation or the energy issue, areas in which we can still make a lot of progress but are currently doing too little. The question is why? We have a great deal of expertise in this country, but for one reason or another, experts, entrepreneurs or creative initiators and policy all too often miss each other.

Itinera wants to do something about this mismatch. In the year 2022, we will explicitly organise ourselves as a public meeting place. We want to continue to speak on the basis of our expertise, but at the same time we are reaching out to the rest of society: policy makers, entrepreneurs, civil society and all citizens of this country. As we gradually look forward to 2024 and the mother of all elections, we must set to work now to convert the identified issues into improvement processes, recommendations and solutions. The more accurate the diagnosis, the greater the chance that the recommendations will be effective.

Avanti.



**Prof. Ignaas Devisch**  
CEO

## Mission and vision

Think tank Itinera offers its associates the space and freedom to take a daring and constructive approach to strategic expertise for a **better future** and **better governance** of this country. We work **independently** and **critically** to develop recommendations for the social and economic challenges of our time, carrying on a dialogue with all stakeholders in society.

We develop **long-term solutions and visions**. Because we owe this to ourselves and to future generations. We **aim for an inclusive and sustainable society** that offers opportunities for all.

We do so based on the assumption of a good society that is based on four main pillars:

- › Creative entrepreneurship as the foundation for prosperity.
- › A context of good public governance.
- › Civil society as a binding agent for a well functioning democracy.
- › Responsible citizenship for all.

## Board of Directors



**Alexander D'Hooghe**  
President

**Alexander D'Hooghe** is the chair of Itinera's Board. He is an associate professor at MIT and founding partner of ORG Permanent Modernity, a design agency and think tank based in Brussels and New York that operates internationally in the urban planning and architecture space. Alexander has published internationally, notably with 'the Liberal Monument' (Princeton, Fall 2010) and recent papers in journals in Germany, Israel, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, the US, etc.

Alexander D'Hooghe is the former director of the MIT Centre For Advanced Urbanism (CAU), which focuses on the large-scale, complex urban issues of our time. D'Hooghe earned his doctorate in 2007 from the Berlage Institute at T.U. Delft. Before that, he earned a Master in Urban Design from Harvard in 2001, and a Master in Architectural Engineering from the University of Leuven in 1996. He has worked with industry leaders like Rem Koolhaas and Marcel Smets.



**Siham Rahmuni**  
Boardmember

**Siham** is an ambitious young entrepreneur working towards sustainable innovation in every arena. She is guided by her keen sense of social responsibility and inclusion. As a mentor and bridge builder, she inspires those around her to broaden their horizons beyond their own perspective.

Siham graduated with a bachelor's degree in tax accountancy and then started as a financial assistant at a company whose international expansion was in full swing. After just a year, she was named department head, and two years later, she was responsible for the global financial side of the company. After a stopover in France as interim CFO, she joined real estate service provider Quares, where she progressed from financial manager to Finance and HR director and finally CEO. As a member of the Board of Directors, she helps chart the company's strategic course.



**Salvatore Curaba**  
Boardmember

**Salvatore Curaba** was a professional football player at Sporting Charleroi in the eighties when he started working for an IT company as a young twenty-something. He never lost his love of sport and IT, but five years later, at 25, he said goodbye to both Sporting Charleroi and the city itself to pursue a career at IBS in Brussels.

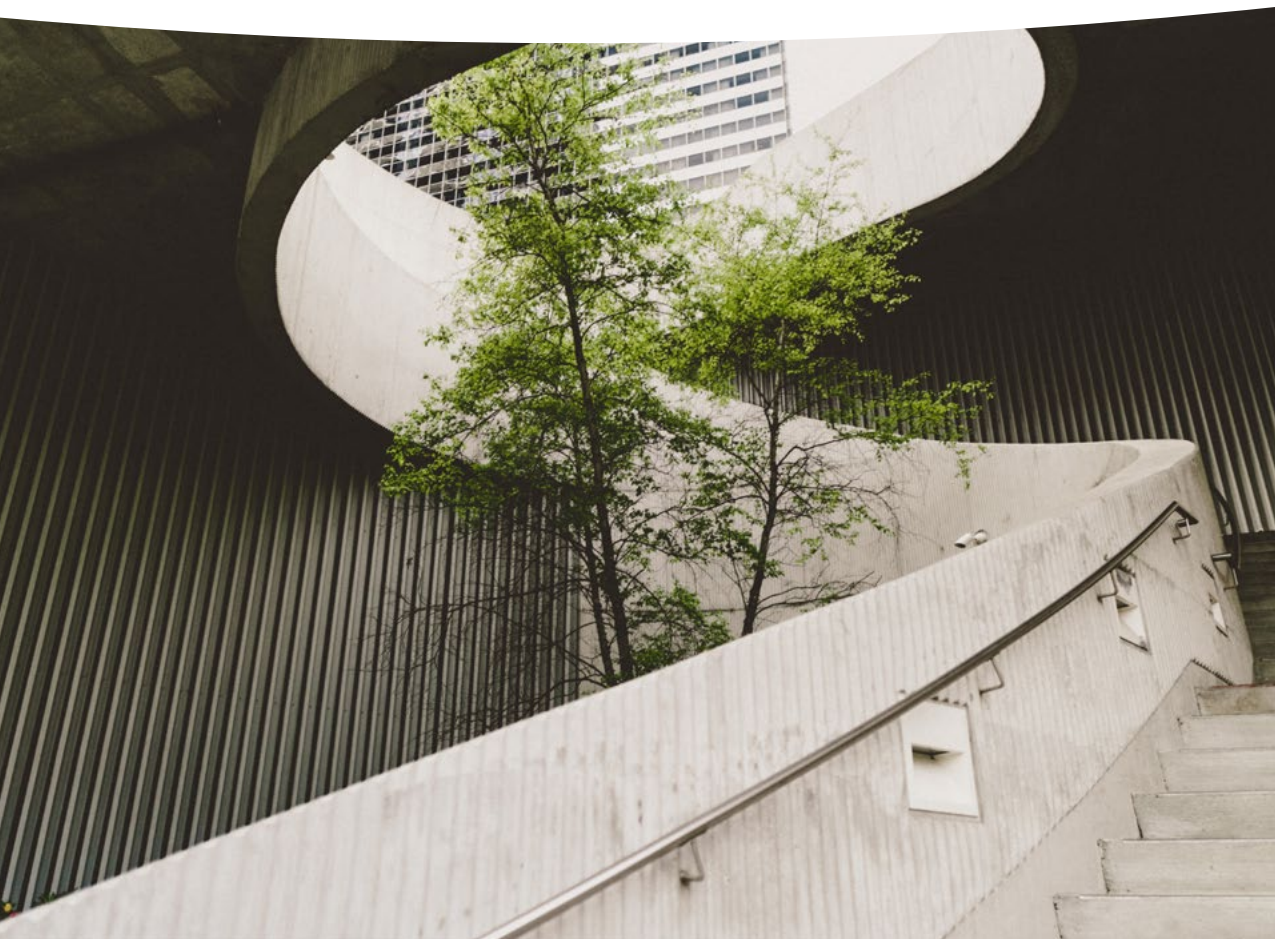
In 1999, he founded EASI, a software development and IT infrastructure management company. Twenty years later, he handed over the management of EASI to two CEOs so he could focus on chairing the RAAL La Louvière football club in his home city.



**Ank De Wilde**  
Boardmember

**Ank De Wilde** is the founder and CEO of Absolem, an innovative industrial engineering firm she launched in 2010 with Bruno Dejaeghere. Four years later, she shot to fame as a "CSR pioneer": she created a meaningful way to be socially impactful by letting Absolem employees volunteer at non-profits. She is on the Advisory Board for Ethical and Meaningful Business of Etion.

Ank questions existing paradigms about entrepreneurship, growth, and collaboration and believes not only that people and technological innovation really can go hand in hand, but that connecting people with each other, their organisation, and their environment creates sustainable value for both the organisation and society.

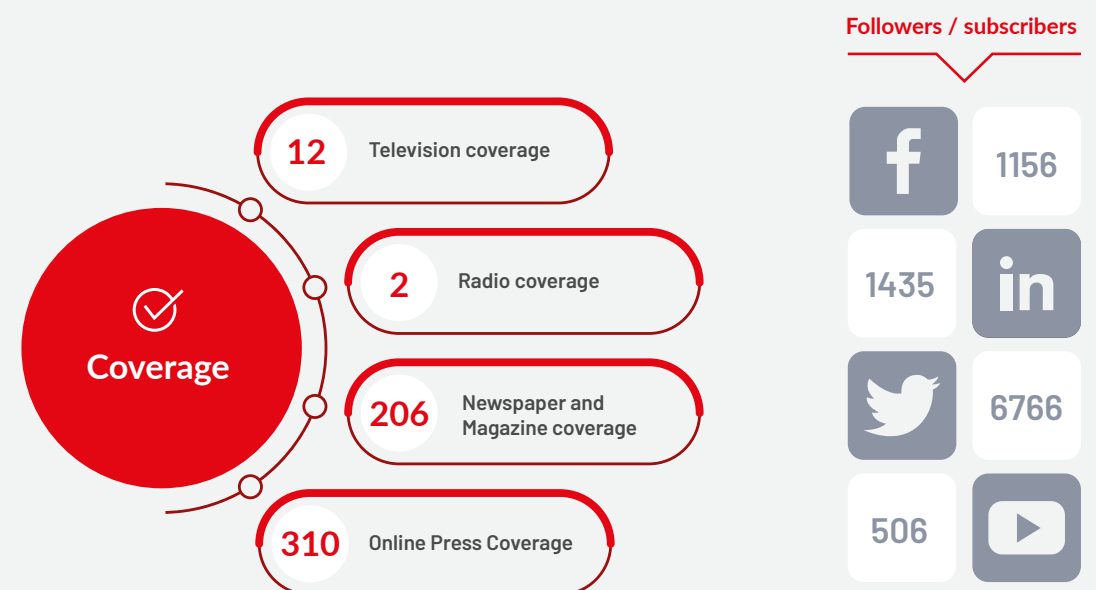
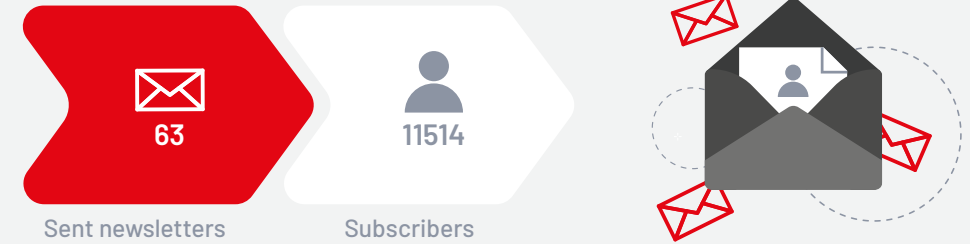


## Financial Partners

Itinera does not receive support from the government, pressure groups, political parties or civil society groups. **We are funded by individuals, families, foundations and companies that believe in our activities and objectives.** You can provide financial support to Itinera free of any obligations, via a one-off donation, by becoming a patron or by including us in your will. You can also opt for multi-year funding that is linked exclusively to the mission of the Institute.

- ACKERMANS & VAN HAAREN
- ADENS
- AGEAS
- ALHEEMBOUW
- AXA
- BALTISSE
- BASF
- CARMEUSE
- CAPITAL@WORK
- CORDEEL
- DENYS
- DIEPENSTEYN
- EXMAR
- FIMACO
- FINN
- GEPHURAS
- GROUP M.A.M.
- JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICA
- KOINON
- LAKESPRINGS
- LA LORRAINE
- LATEXCO
- MASELIS
- MATEXI
- MOORE BELGIUM
- ORBIUS
- P. DRION
- SAFFELBERG INVESTMENTS
- STICHTING LIBEERT
- SOUDAL
- VAN BREDARISK & BENEFITS
- VPK GROUP
- XYLOS
- ZEB

## Itinera 2021 in figures





**Ignaas Devisch** is the CEO at Itinera. He is a widely read philosopher and a regular guest on radio and television programmes, providing commentary on ethical and philosophical issues. He also has a regular column in De Standaard. He is a professor of medical philosophy and ethics (University of Ghent), author, and consultant on ethics and philosophy for companies and individuals. He hosts lectures at home and abroad, to both specialist and general audiences.



**Karel Volckaert** is the COO at Itinera. He is a partner at riverrun, which advises governments, organisations, and companies on strategy, organisation, and value-and-risk management. In the past, he has worked as a strategist and fund manager in asset management, and as a valuation specialist. Karel is a civil engineer in physics (University of Ghent). As a visiting fellow, he partnered with chief economist Ivan Van de Cloot to write the book Taxshift.



**Johan Albrecht** is a fellow and founding member at Itinera, and professor of environmental economics at the University of Ghent. His research at Itinera is focused on energy and health. Johan studied at the University Ghent and Oxford University and has served as an energy and technology policy advisor for several Belgian and international organisations. Johan Albrecht is the author of several books, including Coronashock (2020) and Investing in a Healthy Lifestyle (2020).



**Marc de Vos** is a founding director and fellow at Itinera. He has a weekly column in Trends magazine and is regularly asked to provide commentary on labour events. His research at Itinera is focused on labour and inequality. Marc holds a doctor of law (University of Ghent), licencié en droit social (ULB) and Master of Laws (Harvard University). He taught labour law, European law, and introduction to the rule of law at the University of Ghent and the VUB.



**Ivan Van de Cloot** is the Chief Economist at Itinera and Executive Professor of Economics at the University of Antwerp School of Management. He is a sought-after commentator on financial and economic events and has a regular column in the newspaper De Tijd. His research for Itinera focuses on taxation, public finance, and good governance. Ivan studied economics at the University of Antwerp.



**Jean Hindriks** is a fellow and founding member of Itinera. He is president of the Economics School of Louvain (UCL) and was part of the 2020-2040 Pension Committee, which later transitioned into the Academic Council for Pension Policy. His research focuses on pensions, good governance, and education. He provides regular commentary on these themes in the French-language press. Jean was co-director of the Center of Operations Research and Economics (CORE).



**Simon Ghiotto** is a fellow and the communications coordinator at Itinera. His research is focused on lifelong learning and social policy. He is host of the Itinera Talks Podcast and member of the nonprofit organisations SODaplus and Act4Change. Simon studied economic policy at the University of Ghent and development and international economics at the Université Catholique de Louvain-La-Neuve and the Université de Namur. He also holds a teachers' degree.



**Joël van Cauter** is a fellow at Itinera. His research addresses the themes of poverty and citizenship. Joël studied philosophy at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and economics at UCLouvain, where he also obtained a PhD in philosophy. As an independent consultant, he conducts socio-economic research for institutions and private companies. He is a true jack-of-all-trades who has held positions in the political field, the non-profit sector, and the socio-economic sector.

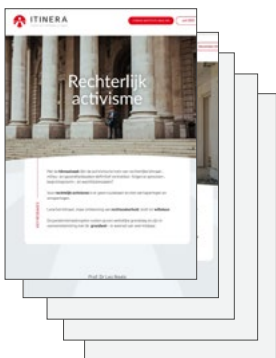
Hier een quote  
of bedankje?



**Liesbeth Defrancq** is Office Manager at the Itinera Institute. She studied Law at the VUB in Brussels and Journalism at Erasmushogeschool in Brussels. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Law and a bachelor's degree in Journalism. She joined the Itinera-team in October 2016. Previously, Liesbeth worked as an editor for the newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws.



## Reports



- › Renovation policy in Belgium; little impact and (too) many free riders (Johan Albrecht)
- › Judicial activism (Leo Neels)
- › The energy transition is not an investment product (Johan Albrecht)
- › How unique is the Belgian ambition to increase the employment rate to 80% by 2030? (Johan Albrecht)
- › Circular industry: the key to a resource-rich Belgian future (Stijn Ronsse et al.)



## Book

### L'État et le marché, le meilleur des deux mondes

Do our politicians still know what the role of government is and where their responsibility lies? Can, should or may the government play a role in the transformation of the economy? What is better left to the dynamics of the market? And what principles of good governance should guide us?

Ivan Van de Cloot searches for the characteristics of a dynamic society, which does not primarily serve vested interests, but facilitates a continuous renewal of the economic fabric. The author makes a plea for a government that operates on the basis of trust in its own citizens and businesses, and that focuses on the valuable tasks that the market or private initiative do not realise.

Markets can fail, just as governments can. However, a country can distinguish itself through good governance, both within the government and the market. It is therefore in the interest of our general prosperity to make the best of both worlds.

This book is the translation of 'Overheid+Markt, het beste van beide werelden'



## Webinars

During the webinars Itinera's fellows as well as guests discuss themes that are close to our hearts, ranging from youngsters, the public debate or the role of the government, civil society and individual citizens.



The rule of law is the foundation of democracy  
Catherine Van de Heyning

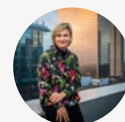


Fault lines 2020, perspective 2030  
Marc De Vos

## Impact

Itinera's fellows are **regularly seen in the media** and write a great deal for the general public. However, or perhaps especially, Itinera also succeeds in **obtaining impact far away from the cameras or newspapers**. During confidential conversations, the fellows advise citizens, policy makers and civil society. They are also members of councils and committees that publish recommendations for politicians. CEO Ignaas Devisch, for example, is an expert member of the Superior Health Council and the Belgian Advisory

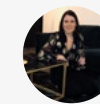
Committee on Bioethics. Chief Economist Ivan Van de Cloot examined the budget in the Flemish Broad Review, fellow Marc De Vos sits on the High Council for Employment. They **take part in hearings and their reports are the subjects of parliamentary discussions**, such as the one on the lack of impact of renovation subsidies, or they collaborate on **policy advice and guidelines**. Irrespective of the political colour, policy makers take her expertise seriously and are happy to call on it.



Hilde Crevits  
@crevits · 03 mei 21

De @ItineraTwit studie toont aan dat we troeven in huis hebben voor een circulaire en duurzame economie in Vlaanderen.

Dit is ook een van mijn prioriteiten, met de versterking van @CirculFlanders en steun voor onderzoek en innovatie in het Vlaams Relanceplan!



Karen Liesens  
@KarenLiesens

"De overheid is vaak met zoveel nevenactiviteiten bezig dat ze haar kerntaken verwaarloost." - @IvanVandeCloot

Interessante webinar over de kerntaken van de overheid. Meer info hierover in het boek "overheid+markt".



09 mrt. 21 om 12:48 vanuit Riemst, België ·  
Twitter for iPhone

Geachte heer Neels,

Enige tijd geleden kwam u aan het woord tijdens een hoorzitting over de noodzaak om ons democratisch systeem te moderniseren door de representatieve democratie aan te vullen met meer burgerparticipatie in de besluitvorming op de verschillende bevoegdheidsniveaus alsook in de samenleving, georganiseerd door de *Commissie voor de Democratische Vernieuwing en Burgerschap* van de Senaat.

Afgelopen vrijdag, 18 juni, werd het informatieverslag hierover goedgekeurd tijdens de plenaire zitting.

more impact examples on next pages →



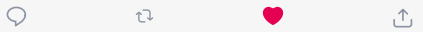
**Jonas De Raeve**  
@JonasDeRaeve

Enkele aanbevelingen uit [@ItineraTwit](#) webinar [@wduyck](#):

- meer data over output van leerlingen en scholen
- betere oriëntering
- inzetten op taal
- leerplicht verlagen tot 3 jaar
- herwaarderen lerarenbroep
- evidence-based didactiek
- niet te eng voorbereiden op arbeidsmarkt

1:29 p.m. · 2 mrt. 2021 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 5 Vind-ik-leuks



Beste Bart, Leo en partners van Itinera,

Amaai. Wat een sterke reeks Itinera spreekbeurten 'Perspectief 2030'. Topniveau. Gedreven, inhoudelijk heel sterk en met een krachtig orgelpunt vandaag.

Ik hoop dat jullie analyses en suggesties in de juiste oren vallen. Het is nodig. Er is veel meer sense of urgency nodig. Ik wens jullie veel succes om deze boodschappen verder uit te dragen! Ik hou me ondertussen graag bezig om de social profit sector ook tot goed bestuur een resultaatgedreven daadkracht te brengen.

Van harte proficiat aan het hele team van Itinera!  
Groet,  
Marc.



**Bruno Segers**  
27 min

Wijze woorden die al meer dan dertig jaar worden gepredikt door plichtsbewuste economen en ondernemers met een lange termijn visie. [Itinera institute](#)

Eerst brengt een generatie politici dit land aan de rand van de afgrond, nu herneemt een generatie politici oplossingen die de vorige generatie politici bewust naast zich heeft neergelegd.

Zwitserland aan de Noordzee? België is bijna in de Noordzee verdwenen bij gebrek aan politieke moed, besluitvorming en daadkracht.

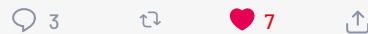


BUSINESSAM.BE  
CD&V-voorzitter Coens bepleit nieuw politiek model voor België: 'Zwitserland aan de Noordzee' - Business AM



**Fouad Gandoul**  
@Fgandoul · 52 m

aan het kijken naar de [@ItineraTwit](#) webinar met [@wduyck](#) ... kga straks vragen aan mijn pubers of ze de woorden 'laakbaar' en 'hopen' begrijpen :-) [#boeiendeUiteenzetting](#)



**Ignaas Devisch** @idevisch · Aug 26, 2021

Al in volle voorbereiding maar per 1 september neem ik ook officieel deze mooie opdracht aan: Filosoof Ignaas Devisch gaat denktank Itinera leiden



tijd.be  
Filosoof Ignaas Devisch gaat denktank Itinera leiden  
Wissel van de macht bij de denktank Itinera. De filosoof Ignaas Devisch vervangt Leo Neels als directeur. Bart Verhaeghe laat he...



**Caroline Pauwels**  
@PauwelsCPauwels

Dit is echt goed nieuws. Net wat we nodig hadden. Proficiat en veel moois en boeiends gewenst!

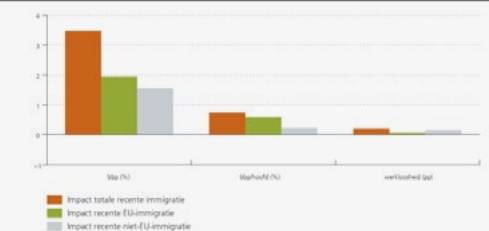
12:47 PM · Aug 26, 2021



**NieuwsuitDeKamer** @DeKamerBE · 09 feb. 21

De economische impact v immigratie in België - hoorzitting met Ivan Van de Cloot [@ItineraTwit](#), Jan van de Beek [@demo\\_demo\\_nl](#) [@UniUtrecht](#), Mark Elchardus [@VUBrussel](#), François [@Gemenne](#) [@Hugo\\_Obs](#), Andrea Rea [@germe\\_ulb](#) & [@MarcoMartiniell](#) [@Cedem\\_ULiege](#)  
Live> [tinyurl.com/3bo3ll6a](https://tinyurl.com/3bo3ll6a)

Geaggregeerde impacten van de recente immigratie (in % en procentpunten)



Bron: NBS-berekeningen.

Onze collega Jelle heeft op basis van dit rapport een vraag om uitleg opgemaakt, gericht aan bevoegd Vlaams Minister Demir. Behandeling van de vraag in Commissie zal ten vroegste de eerste zitting na het reces gebeuren.

Ik bekeek de meeste webinars aandachtig en enkele waren ook verplichte stof voor mijn tweedejaarsstudenten Sociaal Beleid binnen de opleiding Sociaal Werk. Ik vroeg me af of die opgenomen webinars ook komend academiejaar beschikbaar blijven? Ware zeer interessant mocht dit kunnen.

# Ethical charter Itinera Institute

## 1. Core values

- 1.1. *Original and ambitious:* We are founded as a think tank and do tank to show, to advocate and to shape pathways for policy reform towards sustainable economic growth, social welfare as conditions to safeguard well-being for the whole of society. We seek to develop strategic and long term inspiration to help improve public and corporate governance, going beyond short-term agendas
- 1.2. *Factbased and open minded:* We have no priori's in terms of specific solutions or ideas. We think it is crucial to detect problems as specific as can be and map the possible answers to it. Therefore, our reports, papers and interventions in the public area are data and evidence based. We opt for a well founded and argued public debate and engage ourselves to stand for qualitative and data or -evidence-based interventions. We are enabled to reflect, speak, and act, independently from any interest group, and to address issues beyond any current stakeholder agenda and scope
- 1.3. *Constructive and participative:* In order to realize our objectives, we consider Itinera to be a sanctuary, engaged in- & outbound communication, providing a safe harbor for constructive, well-founded public debate with various audiences. We are convinced that polarization in society can only be tackled by an attitude of mutual respect, the willingness to listen and to exchange ideas in an atmosphere of respect.
- 1.4. *Pluralistic and inclusive:* Itinera rejects all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and violence toward others. We are not concerned by anyone's origin or religious or sexual preference. We accept that people are different and do not pin anyone down as to who they are.
- 1.5. *Competent and engaged:* our activities, output and interventions are basis on a professional attitude and scientific competence. We consider it our task to keep on learning and studying and our way of working should bear witness from that. We always strive for the best and this ambition embodies our fundamental engagement for a better society.

## 2. Professional relations and internal communication

- 2.1. Itinera embraces inclusiveness and diversity as an added value. We engage ourselves to compose a team of fellows and associated researchers representative of today's inclusive society. We also expect our team members to explicitly distance themselves from racism or any other expression of discrimination based on skin colour, religion or belief, sexual orientation or cultural background.
- 2.2. The Itinera research team is composed of four types of collaborators: fellows, associates, guest contributors and trainees or volunteers. They all make part of Itinera's team, together with our alumni and partners.
  - 2.2.1. The fellows are the backbone of our team and are engaged on a regular basis with Itinera. They are experts in one of our five main topics.
  - 2.2.2. Associates have their main activity elsewhere but speak and write with the tone of voice characteristic to Itinera.
  - 2.2.3. Guest contributors are temporarily engaged with Itinera for a particular contribution. They are invited by Itinera or applied by themselves to work at Itinera. They speak with own voice but within the overall goals of Itinera.
  - 2.2.4. Trainees or volunteers are temporarily affiliated with Itinera as team member during graduation or as voluntary researcher.

- 2.3. We work as a team. All fellows engage themselves to be part of that team, participate in the team meetings on a regular basis, and be open to a fair and critical exchange on our projects, papers and events.
- 2.4. We are ambitious and eager to make each other better as researchers and as human beings. We offer each other healthy criticism and always do so in a constructive and supportive way.
- 2.5. We consider today's problems to be complex and therefore consider interdisciplinarity not only as a way of working but as the only way to tackle future challenges in society.
- 2.6. Each fellow has its own voice and freedom of speech is important to Itinera. We do not need to agree on everything but our core activities and output are the result of a joint effort as a team. We start from an open debate in our team and in our outbound communication as well.

## 3. Relationship towards partners

- 3.1. Itinera is generously funded by private partners who believe in our mission and vision. Itinera explicitly expresses its gratitude for that. Together, we share the ambition to realize good governance in Belgium and abroad resulting in a sustainable and inclusive society, with increasing welfare and well-being for the whole of society.
- 3.2. In order to work as an independent think tank, private partners do not interfere in our daily activities can never 'order' publications. We are always eager to share our ideas and get into debate with the whole of society and therefore also our partners but we are no lobbyists or appendix of private interests.
- 3.3. Itinera offers reports, events, debates, papers or podcasts that aim to describe today's problems as precise as possible and look for answers that can serve this country to make a step forwards.
- 3.4. Itinera invites its partners and others to meetings or debates, brings people together and builds bridges between civil society, entrepreneurs, policy makers and the whole of society. We want to create networks and a place that facilitates people meeting each other.

## 4. Communication and mission

- 4.1. We opt for transparent and positive communication with others. Our analyses will always be critical but never personal. We argue with facts and evidence in order to improve policy making in Belgium.
- 4.2. All of our interventions are available to everyone. We think it is crucial to share ideas as much as possible and are open to critical remarks from others.
- 4.3. Inbound and outbound communication are equally important. Being a sanctuary, we have no dogma's or a priori's and welcome everyone to debate with us. Listening to others and being aware of what is happening in the whole of society, is crucial to avoid ivory tower expertise.
- 4.4. We are solution seekers animated by a positive passion and optimism: we believe the future is in our hands and that we can make it better than the past. We therefore look after and recommendations that achieve to solve problems as good as possible. We absorb every possible idea to make that happen.








**Itinera Institute VZW-ASBL**

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