



activity report
2025

UCSIA University Centre
Saint-Ignatius
Antwerp

ACTIVITY REPORT 2025

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Foreword

2025: a new colleague, a new winter school, a new European project

People make the organization. This is especially true for an organization such as UCSIA, which is inherently driven by values. We were therefore delighted to welcome a new colleague in 2025: Johanna Greiß. She is a philosopher and obtained a PhD in sociology with a dissertation on the institutionalization of food aid, the role of the EU in this process, and the impact of EU funding on it. In other words, she is the ideal person for UCSIA's thematic line on ethics and economics.

Johanna brings a broad background, extensive research experience, and sharp analytical insight. Above all, however, she is a team player who wants to help make a difference in addressing the major societal challenges of tomorrow, with particular attention to those whose voices are rarely or barely heard. In other words: someone with UCSIA running through her veins — it was only a matter of time before she joined UCSIA.

Service-learning remains a key strategic priority for UCSIA, and we strive to integrate it as fully as possible into all aspects of our work. The winter school is an excellent example of this. At the same time, we continue to invest in the development and strengthening of service-learning within higher education — not only in Flanders, but also at the European level. We coordinate the Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education and play a highly active supporting role within the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education.

In 2025, we were able to give fresh momentum to our service-learning ambitions with the approval of a new Erasmus+ project. Together with eleven partners, UCSIA secured European funding for a three-year project entitled *Service-Learning to Promote Competences for Democratic Culture* — or, in short, SL4DC.

With a new colleague, a new winter school, and a new European project, 2025 brought not only several important highlights, but also raised significant expectations for the years ahead. We are already looking forward to what comes next.

Erik De Bom
Acting Director

1. ORGANIZATION & HISTORY

University Centre Saint Ignatius Antwerp (UCSIA): Building bridges for a more just world

Mission and Activities The University Centre Saint Ignatius Antwerp (UCSIA) is an independent non-profit organization established to continue the Jesuit tradition of academic reflection and social engagement. With a strong focus on scholarship and societal involvement, UCSIA facilitates and promotes academic reflection, education and service around current and socially relevant themes. In addition, UCSIA places great importance on experiential engagement. Such experiences can have a profound impact on individuals, encouraging further reflection and action.

UCSIA provides a forum for in-depth dialogue on complex challenges such as climate change, migration, poverty, and social justice. We bring together academics, policymakers, civil society organizations and the business community to share insights and develop solutions. This is achieved through academic workshops, study days and webinars, with particular attention paid to amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable in society.

Within the thematic clusters 'Religion, Culture and Society' and 'Jesuit Heritage', UCSIA focuses on the role of religion as a connecting force within society. The annual international summer school 'Religion, Culture and Society' enjoys wide recognition. In addition, UCSIA collaborates with the University of Antwerp and heritage partners on the academic and societal valorization of the Ruusbroec Library.

Socio-economic issues also occupy a central place in UCSIA's work. Within the thematic clusters 'Europe and Solidarity' and 'Economics and Ethics', topics such as European cooperation, the social economy, financial ethics and sustainable climate policy are explored and discussed. Through Community Service-Learning (CSL), UCSIA also promotes innovative forms of education that connect academic knowledge with community service.

All of these thematic areas contribute to the development of the UCSIA Solidarity Academy. This initiative aims to provide a platform for rethinking both traditional and emerging forms of solidarity, reflecting on sustainable solutions for contemporary challenges, and strengthening local solidarity practices. The UCSIA Solidarity Academy draws inspiration from the Jesuits' Apostolic Preferences, with a focus on two key challenges: the just transition and issues surrounding migration and refugees.

History UCSIA builds on a long tradition of academic education and social engagement. In 1852, the Jesuits founded an institute for commercial education in Antwerp, which developed into one of the first European 'business schools' to award university-level degrees. The institution gradually expanded its academic offerings and, in the 1960s, acquired university status under the name University Faculties Saint Ignatius Antwerp (UFSIA).

In 2003, UFSIA merged with the State University Centre Antwerp (RUCA) and the University Institution Antwerp (UIA) to form the University of Antwerp. A year earlier, in 2002, UCSIA had already been established as an autonomous non-profit organization to continue the Jesuit tradition of academic reflection and social engagement. Since then, UCSIA has continued to play an essential role in connecting academia and society, with an open outlook towards the future.

ORGANOGRAM

General Assembly

The General Assembly is composed as follows:

Chair: Karine Moykens

for the Society of Jesus: Loïc De Cannière Marc Desmet sj Jacques Haers sj Kathia Reynders Ginette Van Bogaert Bart van Emmerik sj Guy Vanheeswijck Bastiaan van Rooijen sj Erwin Van Wassenhove	for the Antwerp university community: Bea Cantillon Sara Geenen Veerle Hendrickx Sarah Marchal Yves Stevens Chris Van Ginneken Herman Van Goethem Gerlinde Verbist Sara Vicca	external members: Mgr. Johan Bonny Alain de Crombrughe Mia De Schamphelaere Willeke Dijkhoffz Geert Janssens Bruno Spriet Jan van den Nieuwenhuijzen Wim Vandewiele Bruno Vanobbergen
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Bea Cantillon – Managing Director
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Erik De Bom – Acting Director
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Gilke Gunst
Barbara Segaert
Kaat Somers
Christel Van Wonterghem
Annick Wilms

2. SUMMER AND WINTER SCHOOLS

2.1. UCSIA Winter School: Migration challenging European solidarity 3-7 February 2025

UCSIA and Antwerp Summer & Winter University organized the first edition of the UCSIA Winter School, entitled '*Dignity amidst Despair: Migration Challenging European Solidarity*'.

Fifteen students from a range of disciplines and eleven different nationalities participated in this inaugural edition. The group included PhD and Master's students with backgrounds in international relations, political science, cultural studies, engineering, human rights studies, development studies and sociology. In addition, four participants were professionals working in organizations active in the field of migration and refugee support. This diverse composition fostered a strong interdisciplinary dynamic throughout the discussions and lectures.

On the first day of the programme, students were introduced to the concept of solidarity and its historical origins within the European context. Over the course of the week, they further explored this concept, as well as its implications for international migration in Europe. Migration was approached from institutional, legal, political and socio-economic perspectives. The programme also included a visit to the European Parliament in Brussels, where participants met with NGOs and policymakers.

A 'social learning' track brought participants into contact with local social organizations involved in supporting refugees and migrants. They took part in activities and engaged directly in conversations with refugees and migrants. At the end of the week, students presented group projects outlining their own reflections and ideas on European solidarity and migration. They visualized their perspectives in a '*Roadmap to Greater European Migration Solidarity*', bringing together insights from the lectures and their personal experiences.

In addition, participants wrote a fictional refugee narrative, placing themselves in the position of a refugee and describing the opportunities and challenges they might encounter, based on the insights gained during the winter school.



2.2. Multicultural societies and the requirements of a democratic state

3 February 2025

How can social cohesion and democratic values be fostered in a Europe characterized by increasing cultural diversity? During the opening session of the UCSIA Winter School, Marie-Claire Foblets, Director of the Department of Law & Anthropology at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, and Milena Belloni, Coordinator of the Migration & Global Mobility network at the University of Antwerp, shared their insights.

The growing cultural diversity of European societies raises the question of whether, and under what conditions, the law can continue to play a role in promoting social cohesion.

The session was structured in two parts. The first provided a brief overview of the various legal approaches that have been developed since the post-war period in several European countries to mediate conflicts between cultures, religions and/or belief systems. The second part focused more specifically on the role of human rights in this context, illustrating this with a number of examples from recent legal cases concerning the protection of freedom of religion and belief.



2.3. FUCE Summer School: Populism remaking humanism?

30 June - 4 July 2025

The sixth edition of the summer school, organized by UCSIA for the European Federation of Catholic Universities (FUCE), took place at the Catholic University of Lille. The programme explored the complex phenomenon of populism. How does populism redefine concepts such as ‘the people’ and the ‘public sphere’? In what ways does it transform liberal democracy?

The course examined the associated risks and challenges: the stigmatization of elites and minorities, the erosion of pluralism, the danger of authoritarian solutions driven by processes of digitalization, the rejection of expert knowledge, the appropriation of ideologies and value systems outside their original context, and the appeal to direct political legitimation. From a humanist perspective, participants sought pathways forward based on respect for pluralism, the embodiment of a shared humanity, and citizenship grounded in values.

Participants engaged with these issues through morning lectures with faculty members, an evening lecture by experts in law and politics, a public panel discussion entitled ‘My Europe’—featuring a selection of students sharing their experiences—and a simulation exercise in political argumentation, as well as visits to the European Parliament and the House of European History.

They articulated their reflections in an individual portfolio and exchanged ideas with peers during afternoon workshops. These efforts culminated in a group presentation at the end of the week. Participants were encouraged to use their imagination and express their emotions through a fictional narrative about encountering others through (inner) journeys, thereby experiencing how storytelling can enable shifts in perspective and foster understanding.



The programme was enriched by the diverse backgrounds of its 30 participants, who came from Eastern and Western European countries as well as Lebanon, and represented a wide range of disciplines, including law, economics and political studies, as well as philosophy, social and cultural studies, engineering, biochemistry and health studies. With this sixth edition, the summer school has now reached almost 150 undergraduate students from more than 30 member universities within the FUCE network.

2.4. The return of populism in the 21st century

30 June 2025

Legal scholar Ioannis Panoussis (Université Catholique de Lille) and political scientist Andrew Glencross (ESPOL) opened the 2025 FUCE Summer School programme with a joint lecture on populism, human rights and strategies of hate.

Ioannis Panoussis explored ways to counter the rise of populism in Europe. This represents an unprecedented challenge for contemporary democracies, as it is difficult to confront ideas that claim legitimacy from the 'will of the people'. Emerging 'illiberal' democracies pose a genuine threat to the rule of law and to human rights. Hate speech is often directed at migrants, minorities, institutions and politicians who advocate progressive values. What, then, are the causes and consequences of these strategies of hate? And are our national, European and international political institutions adequately equipped to respond to this phenomenon?

Andrew Glencross examined in greater depth the campaigns of hostility directed at three of the most common targets of European populism: minorities, institutions and progressive political actors. He

emphasized that this strategic mobilization of anger—far more precise and targeted than it may initially appear—needs to be better understood in order to be effectively addressed.

2.5. UCSIA Summer School: Competing values, shifting norms: Questioning the intersection of religion and politics through moral debates
24-29 August 2025

The 2025 edition of the summer school examined how moral debates shape the interaction between politics and religion. Guest lecturers Nadia Marzouki (Sciences Po), Yasmin Moll (University of Michigan) and Vlad Naumescu (Central European University) illustrated, through a range of case studies drawn from their anthropological and political science research, how religious and political actors frame moral issues and how these debates influence society.

Thirteen doctoral researchers participated in the programme: Martin Couto (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Junesse Crisostomo (National University of Singapore), Gabriela de la Vega (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Nicolò Di Dio (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Arisy Abror Dzukroni (UIN Walisongo Semarang), Abdelmonim Elmoutassim (Ibn Zohr University), Mick Feytaerts (KU Leuven), Prashant Kumar (Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi), Thomas Long (University of Manchester), Pratishta Maurya (Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi), Shajeem Muhammed Fazal P. V. (ISSER, Bhopal), Muhammad Shaheel T. (University of Hyderabad), and Dries Ver Elst (University of Antwerp). They were given extensive opportunities to present their own research and to receive feedback from fellow participants and the guest lecturers.



2.6. The revolution within: Islamic media and the struggle for a new Egypt 28 August 2025

Anthropologist Yasmin Moll (University of Michigan) presented her latest book, *The Revolution Within: Islamic Media and the Struggle for a New Egypt*, a compelling study of religion, media and social change in Egypt during the Arab Spring.



In this work, Moll focuses on the so-called “New Preachers” of Egypt: a group of media-savvy religious figures who gained international visibility through the first Islamic television channel in the years leading up to the Arab Spring. Their innovative style of preaching—a combination of melodrama, music and self-help—resonated with millions of young followers, yet also proved divisive. They were criticized by the political left as neoliberal, by secularists as covert Islamists, and by traditional religious authorities as overly Westernized.

Yasmin Moll conducted extensive fieldwork in Cairo over several years, working closely with these “new preachers”, their producers and their audiences. Her book therefore offers an alternative perspective on the 2011 revolution, demonstrating how Islamic media and expressions of public piety not only shaped religious life, but also enabled social and political transformation from within. The “inner revolution” she describes transcends the conventional divide between the secular and the religious, inviting a reappraisal of what public virtue, solidarity and coexistence can mean.

The lecture, delivered in English and based on the book, formed part of the UCSIA Summer School for early-career researchers and was open to a wider public audience.

3. PROJECTS

3.1. The power of narrativity: Between construction and deconstruction?

16-17 January 2025

In 2025, the two-day seminar for university and university college chaplains centred on narrativity: the stories that shape how we understand ourselves, others and the world around us.

Through their lectures and workshops, theologian Mariecke van den Berg (Radboud University Nijmegen), historian Eline Huygens (Utrecht University) and theologian Lenneke Post (VU Amsterdam) offered new perspectives on the narratives we experience as normative, as well as the stories we tell about ourselves and others. Professor van den Berg demonstrated how rigid interpretations of biblical passages can often contribute to exclusion, as well as feelings of alienation and disengagement among audiences. Dr Huygens provided insight into how young Catholic women today experience their faith and articulate their views on humanity and the world. Finally, Dr Post introduced participants—lecturers and chaplains alike—to the method of spiritual biography: reflecting on one’s own life path, identifying formative moments, and engaging in dialogue about them. In addition to academic reflection, the seminar provided ample opportunity for participants to exchange experiences from their respective contexts and to engage in more in-depth discussions of the successes and challenges of the past academic year.

The VUHP seminar is a joint initiative of the Flemish University and University College Chaplaincy (VUHP), co-chaired by Xenia Geysmans (University of Antwerp) and Renée Theyssens (University Parish KU Leuven), in collaboration with UCSIA.



3.2. New Year's event: Anne Provoost performs inopportunity poems for asylum givers

23 January 2025

At our New Year's event, we welcomed writer Anne Provoost, who brought the theme of migration and refugees into the spotlight in an original way with her inopportunity speech. Drawing on her new book of poetry *Decem*, she guided the audience through the experiences of asylum seekers, inviting reflection and fostering empathy.

3.3. Lieven Gevaert and the art of social entrepreneurship

30 January 2025

To mark the ninetieth anniversary of Lieven Gevaert's passing, a panel discussion was organized on the social role of business as a source of solidarity and justice in the world of work. Gevaert's initiatives in employee welfare and social protection emerged at a time when such systems were still far from being established. His progressive personnel policies were inspired by the social-Christian thought of the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891).

The discussion explored Gevaert's approach to social entrepreneurship and the ways in which, guided by a socially inspired Christian vision, he developed initiatives to promote employee well-being and social protection. Bea Cantillon, Chair of UCSIA, reflected on the significance of these initiatives in light of the later development of the welfare state. Leen Van Den Neste, Chair of the Executive Committee of vdk bank, considered the role of social enterprises within a sustainable and ethically responsible economy. Peter Heyrman, Head of Research at KADOC–KU Leuven, situated Gevaert's entrepreneurship within the broader context of Catholic social teaching. Jan van den Nieuwenhuijzen, Chair of the Antwerp University & University Colleges Association and board member of several social and cultural organizations, addressed the combination of economic success and social responsibility. The panel discussion was moderated by Marc Van de Looverbosch.

The event was organized by UCSIA in collaboration with AGFA Events, the Lieven Gevaert Fund (non-profit organization), and the Mortsel Local History Society.

3.4. European Leadership Programme: Biannual graduation ceremony with Kristzián Mészáros

19 February 2025

The European Leadership Programme (ELP) of the Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC) is a Brussels-based programme that brings together young professionals from various countries for a biannual formation in social engagement and responsible leadership. UCSIA supports the programme as a permanent partner in the organization of the biannual graduation ceremonies. In addition, every two years, UCSIA—working in collaboration with the University of Antwerp's University Foundation for Development Cooperation—offers a participant from the Global South a one-year professional placement.

Kristzián Mészáros, Director for Partnerships and Global Affairs at NATO, was the guest of honour at the graduation ceremony of the 12th cohort of ELP fellows on 19 February. He emphasized the importance of nurturing the community the participants had built and maintaining the relationships formed during the programme. Erik De Bom, acting Director of UCSIA, delivered a brief welcome address in which he reflected on the concept of "compassionate leadership".

3.5. What can literature teach us about compassion?

20 February 2025

In the context of the exhibition *Compassion* at the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS), UCSIA organized the lecture series '*Compassion in Context*', which explored the theme from neurophysiological, psychological, social, political-philosophical, religious and literary perspectives. The series aimed to invite a broad audience to reflect on the multidimensional meaning of compassion, as depicted in the MAS exhibition.

The first event—comprising a public evening lecture at MAS on 20 February and a study day at the University of Antwerp on 21 February—was organized in collaboration with the Karen Armstrong Chair (University for Humanistic Studies Utrecht) and Nieuw Wij. The starting point was Armstrong's book on compassion (*Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*) and the global movement of 'compassionate cities' it inspired. How can compassion act as a catalyst for social innovation, and how does it inspire actors engaged in community-building and neighbourhood development?

With author Rosita Steenbeek, who wrote an essay (*Love Your Enemies*) about her experiences supporting refugees during a stay in Lampedusa, compassion was given a concrete and immediate meaning as an expression of charity and care for others. She also reflected on the importance of this value in her personal development, growing up in a minister's family.

During the study day, led by Manuela Kalsky, holder of the chair, Flemish and Dutch organizations came together that connect people in super-diverse urban contexts, thereby contributing to the quality of social coexistence.

3.6. Compassion in the city

21 February 2025

This study day connected reflection on the *Charter for Compassion* and its impact with organizations that explicitly contribute to strengthening the local urban fabric. Where do we observe good practices of compassion? Which values do these organizations pursue, and how do they seek to embody and promote them? In her keynote address, Manuela Kalsky, Professor by Special Appointment to the Karen Armstrong Chair in Religion, Values and Societal Transformations at the University for Humanistic Studies and founder of the Dutch media platform Nieuwwij.nl, reflected on fifteen years of the *Charter for Compassion* and the contemporary search for connectedness. Elisabeth Van Wymeersch also briefly presented the findings of the SOLIGION research project, which examines the societal contribution of religiously inspired social organizations. In the afternoon, the 63 participants were introduced, over two rounds, to the vision and activities of the Antwerp-based organizations Boho2140, City Pirates and 't Vlot, as well as the Dutch organizations MO & MOOS and the Foundation for Healing the Legacy of Slavery.

The professional study day was organized in collaboration with the Karen Armstrong Chair in Religion, Values and Societal Transformations (University for Humanistic Studies) and Nieuw Wij.



3.7. What connects us? Strengthening the role of the religious education teacher *18 March 2025*

The biennial UCSIA study day for teachers of Roman Catholic religious education, organized in collaboration with the inspector-advisers for Catholic religious education, focused this year on the narrative identity of the religious education teacher. The following questions were central:

- How do you develop your own narrative identity?
- How can the testimonies of others foster reflection on values-based education for young people?
- How can Gospel stories and other narratives inspire the exploration of one's own positions?

The study day opened with a reflection by Bart Willemen on the teaching profession today and on what inspires and motivates him. It is not an easy profession, but it can be a deeply rewarding one for those who succeed in developing a strong professional identity. Throughout the rest of the programme, participating teachers were given the opportunity to exchange ideas in small groups and to learn from one another's experiences.

3.8. How does compassion play in politics?

20 March 2025



This second lecture in the series on compassion, featuring political philosophers Allegra Reinalda and Dirk De Schutter (KU Leuven), examined its political implications, drawing on the thought of Hannah Arendt. Throughout her life, Arendt opposed totalitarianism. While she acknowledged the value of compassion within personal, interpersonal relationships, she rejected it as a guiding principle for politics. The closeness that compassion presupposes, she argued, is detrimental to political action, which is characterized by sober judgement and ongoing disagreement. She illustrated how compassion in politics can devolve into a justificatory argument for paternalistic intervention and the restriction of individual freedom, notably in her analysis of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution.

The idea that compassion, understood as pity, can have a paralysing effect and may risk perpetuating unjust situations can also be found in the writings of Aristotle and Nietzsche. For Aristotle, catharsis entails a release from fear and pity, whereas for Nietzsche friendship is not grounded in shared suffering, but in shared joy—the capacity to take pleasure in the happiness of others. We often assume we know what others need, without truly listening to their desires. For this

reason, Arendt ultimately favoured solidarity as a more appropriate guiding principle for political life.

3.9. Thomas, church teacher

5 April 2025

UCSIA contributed to the organization of a study day marking the 800th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Aquinas, in collaboration with the parishes of St Paul, St Andrew and the Cathedral, Zomaar Een Dak (University of Antwerp), the Ruusbroec Institute (University of Antwerp), the Pieter Gillis Centre (University of Antwerp), and the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven.

The Dominican Thomas Aquinas is widely regarded as the greatest theologian of the Middle Ages. His work continues to inspire scholars to this day, while his life of holiness remains a source of inspiration for many believers. It has now been 800 years since his birth and 750 years since his death. To mark this occasion, his relics were brought to Antwerp, and the Dominican order organized three days of celebratory activities.



During the study day on 5 April 2025, Stephan van Erp (KU Leuven), Stefan Magnus OP (Tilburg University), Harm Goris (Tilburg University), Jan De Maeyer (KU Leuven), Andrea Robiglio (KU Leuven), Rudi te Velde (Tilburg University), Jeroen Reyniers (Ghent University) and Walter Van Herck (University of Antwerp) highlighted the many facets of the life and work of Thomas Aquinas.

3.10. Is our human brain wired for compassion?

29 April 2025



The third lecture in the series on *Compassion*, featuring neurophysiologist Christiaan Keyzers (Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, KNAW / University of Amsterdam) and psychiatrist Stephan Claes (KU Leuven), explored the extent to which the human brain and psyche are equipped for empathy and compassion. Laboratory research involving animal studies, as well as emotional testing in humans, provides tangible evidence of brain activity in mirror neurons when experiencing empathy. While all individuals are capable of empathy (including those with psychopathic traits), its expression ultimately depends on willingness. The degree to which we experience empathy can be regulated, depending on how responsible we feel and how closely connected we perceive ourselves to be to others.

One form of empathy that merits greater attention is self-compassion, as a counterbalance to the physical and psychological exhaustion with which many people struggle today. How do we become so mentally dysregulated and physically depleted that we burn out? Claes addressed this issue in his book *The Stressed Society*. Under conditions of choice overload and performance pressure, we disrupt both our nervous and

immune systems, while often ignoring the signals our body sends when it enters a state of defence. In a Cartesian society shaped by the maxim “*I think, therefore I am,*” the somatic dimension tends to be neglected, reducing the body to a mere instrument. Compassion thus refers not only to sensitivity towards the fate of others, but also towards our own.

3.11. European solidarity in theory and practice

5 May 2025

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, UCSIA and the University of Antwerp organized a public lecture in English on European solidarity in theory and practice. The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the principle of solidarity that underpins the European integration project, originally presented as a response to war, nationalism and political division. It was emphasized that solidarity within the European Union has evolved over time from primarily economic cooperation into a broader framework encompassing social policy, regional development, climate action and crisis response.

The programme opened with a keynote lecture by Andrea Sangiovanni, Professor of Philosophy at King's College London, who addressed the philosophical foundations of European solidarity and the ways in which this principle is realized within the European Union. This was followed by a panel discussion focusing on concrete examples of European cooperation. Dr Hanne Beirens, Visiting Professor at the College of Europe and former Director of the Migration Policy Institute Europe, discussed the EU Migration Pact and its associated challenges. Dr Francesco Corti, a member of the cabinet of the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for social rights, highlighted European social policy, with particular attention to fair labour mobility.

3.12. P.W. Segers Chair: Why is the EU European?

5 May 2025

On the occasion of Robert Schuman Day, UCSIA organized an evening lecture in English on the foundations of European identity and solidarity. The lecture was delivered by Andrea Sangiovanni, Professor of Philosophy at King's College London, and centred on the question of what makes the European Union genuinely European and why EU membership is limited to European countries. The lecture formed part of the P.W. Segers Chair.

In his contribution, Sangiovanni explored the notion of European solidarity in light of contemporary internal divisions and external pressures on the European Union. He not only considered how cooperation within the Union is structured, but also who, in principle, can be included in this cooperation. Attention was given to the historical development of the idea of 'Europe' and to the moral justification for exclusion based on geographical or cultural criteria.

The lecture concluded with a reflection on the possibility of questioning the exclusively European character of EU membership and the implications this might have for the concept of solidarity within the Union.

3.13. The medieval tables of the poor: Food distribution from a religious motive

21 May 2025

In collaboration with the Ruusbroec Institute, UCSIA organized a lecture on medieval almsgiving tables to mark the centenary of the Ruusbroec Institute. In her lecture, historian Hannelore Franck examined the almsgiving table as a parish-based institution for poor relief, paying particular attention to the interconnection between its social and religious functions within the medieval parish.

She explained how almsgiving tables distributed food and other goods to those in need, thereby playing a vital role in daily life in a context where formal social safety nets were absent. Attention was also given to the religious motivations of those who funded these institutions, as well as to the broader significance of food distribution within the parish and spiritual framework.

Following the lecture, attendees were given the opportunity to visit the exhibition *Divine Dishes* in the library of the Ruusbroec Institute. The exhibition highlighted the multiple roles of food in the Middle Ages, drawing on materials from the Ruusbroec Institute's collection.

3.14. Solidarity in compassionate communities

22 May 2025

The fourth and final lecture in the series on compassion focused on the role of compassion as a guiding principle in everyday life and in religious practice, with contributions from Anne Birgitta Pessi (University of Helsinki) and Emmanuel Van Lierde (Curando). Pessi, whose research has long explored the well-being of groups in society and of employees across various organizations, addressed the question of what binds and motivates communities. She distinguished forms of solidarity based on shared interests, collective responsibility and active cooperation. Such solidarity takes shape and becomes institutionalized at political, social and religious levels in the welfare state, social movements and the Church. It is strengthened by “compassionate leadership”, which fosters a culture of trust and a psychologically safe environment conducive to collective action. Compassion is not a personality trait, but a skill that can be developed and deployed as a tool for social cohesion and as a counterbalance to indifference.



Van Lierde presented a new publication resulting from a research project conducted by Curando in collaboration with the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven. The first part explores what the Bible teaches about radical love of neighbour, while the second examines the service of the Church to the world. What distinguishes the Christian faith in this respect? *Caritas*, or charitable love, is not uniquely Christian—it is a universal value. The example of Christ, in whom God becomes human, serves as both an encouragement and a source of support for sustained commitment—not only to alleviate immediate needs, but also to go further in addressing structural injustice. If charity remains merely passive, there is a risk that existing inequalities will be perpetuated. It is therefore essential to remain critically engaged and willing to take a stand. *Caritas* and *diakonia* also have an inherent political dimension.

3.15. Flourishing together: Holistic approaches to well-being in higher education

16-20 June 2025

In 2025, the Conference for European University Chaplains (CEUC) took place at the Old Abbey in Drongen, under the guidance of the Dutch-Flemish organising team: Dardan Bastiaan (Rapenburg 100 – Leiden University), Marieke Fernhout (Student Church – Radboud University Nijmegen), Tomas Folens (University Parish KU Leuven Kulak), Xenia Geysemans (Zomaar een Dak – University of Antwerp), Serena Saliba (KU Leuven), Martijn Steegen (University Parish KU Leuven), Günther Sturms (Motiv – TU Delft), Renée Theyssens (University Parish KU Leuven), and UCSIA.

Eighty university and university college chaplains affiliated with institutions across Europe attended the week-long programme on well-being in higher education. Guest speakers Anne Vandenhoeck (KU Leuven) and Hans Schilderman (Radboud University Nijmegen), both theologians, paid particular attention to the unique contribution of chaplains within higher education, both for the university community and for pastoral work more broadly. They advocated for further professionalization and a deeper articulation of the distinct identity of the university chaplaincy profession. Psychiatrist Ronny

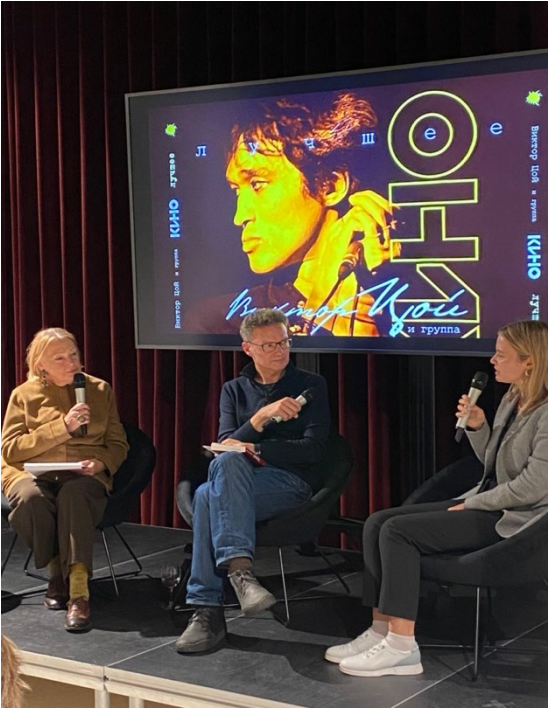
Bruffaerts (KU Leuven) and Martijn Janse, chair of the student organization Lieve Mark, shared their insights into student mental health today and students’ relationship with alcohol. The lecture programme was complemented by networking opportunities, workshops, the exchange of good practices, and cultural excursions, including a visit to the Compassion exhibition at MAS.

3.16. European Leadership Programme: Biannual graduation ceremony with Otilia Dhand
3 July 2025

The European Leadership Programme (ELP) of the Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC) is a Brussels-based programme that brings together young professionals from various countries for a biannual formation in social engagement and responsible leadership. UCSIA supports the programme as a permanent partner in the organization of the biannual graduation ceremonies. In addition, every two years, UCSIA—working in collaboration with the University of Antwerp’s University Foundation for Development Cooperation—offers a participant from the Global South a one-year professional placement.

At the July graduation ceremony, Otilia Dhand shared her experiences in leadership. She is Director of Institutional Relations at Temasek—a global investment company with a presence in Brussels—and has served as a member of the advisory group to the European Commissioner for Economy, which examined the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the European economy and society. Erik De Bom, acting Director of UCSIA, delivered a welcome address in which he reflected on what Hannah Arendt’s concept of compassion might mean in today’s context.

3.17. The sound of freedom: Music in resistance – resistance in music
23 October 2025



Writer and Professor of International Politics Peter Vermeersch witnessed first-hand how, five years ago in Belarus, a pop song evolved into an anthem for a generation longing for freedom. He followed several young musicians and bore witness to their journey marked by hope and despair, discouragement and perseverance. Through music, he developed a renewed perspective on the recent history of Belarus and Eastern Europe. By retracing the steps of these young artists, he sought to uncover the power of music in the struggle for freedom. This exploration resulted in his book *Polsslag*, which formed the basis for this evening on “the sound of freedom”.

Peter Vermeersch spoke about his encounters in Minsk, his travels with young musicians in Belarus and across Eastern Europe, and his reflections on the power of music in repressive regimes. His presentation was complemented by visual material he had captured himself. Musician, singer and composer Thomas Devos performed songs of resistance live in our venue, in both Russian and Dutch. Peter also welcomed Katsiaryna Lozka, a young Belarusian researcher at Ghent University, who studies the politics of violence and resistance in Belarus and

Ukraine. Together, they engaged in a discussion on resistance to the Lukashenko regime and the experiences of Belarusians living abroad.

This event was organized by UCSIA in collaboration with Pax Christi Flanders. It formed part of the UCSIA Solidarity Academy and Pax Christi's Peacemakers campaign.

3.18. UCSIA Peace Chair: An excess of violence

4 November 2025

Within the framework of the UCSIA Peace Chair, we organized a dialogue on violence in the history of modern Europe, featuring historian Maarten Van Alstein and poet Annemarie Estor, who approached the topic from essayistic and poetic perspectives.

Together, we reflected on a range of questions concerning violence in modern Europe. Why has the history of modern Europe been so marked by violence? Why did violence hold such appeal for modern societies? Does it still? Will the maelstrom of modernity once again give rise to total violence? Or does peace still stand a chance?

Maarten Van Alstein explored the troubling paradoxes of European modernity: while scientific progress, freedom and human rights played a crucial role in the development of modern European societies, Europeans themselves engaged in violence on an immense scale during revolutions, colonial conquests and world wars. Annemarie Estor read from her new narrative poem *Het overschot (The Surplus)*, in which a woman declares her love to an ambiguous figure who may be both a terrorist and a freedom fighter.



3.19. USOS book launch – ‘Caring for Our Common Home’

28 November 2025

To mark the 40th anniversary of the University Foundation for Development Cooperation (USOS), the book *Caring for Our Common Home* was published. This volume brings together contributions from USOS’s global partner network and explores how local and Indigenous communities are responding to challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, extractivism, social exclusion and inequality. The book launch was co-organized by UCSIA’s ELP fellow. Loïc De Cannière, member of the UCSIA General Assembly, delivered the closing address.

3.20. Financing a just transition

1 December 2025

UCSIA organized, in collaboration with Reset.Vlaanderen and the University of Antwerp (IMDO), an Autumn School on the financing of the climate transition, with particular attention to social justice. The central question was how to realize the necessary climate transition without excluding or disadvantaging specific groups.

During the Autumn School, it was emphasized that the climate transition is no longer a future scenario, but is already underway. It was noted that the way in which this transition is financed has a decisive impact on its social consequences. Participants explored how financial mechanisms, investments and economic structures can contribute to a sustainable and just society.

The Autumn School brought together a diverse group of participants—including scholars, policymakers, students and engaged citizens—to reflect on the role of financial systems in the transition. Particular attention was paid to how these systems might be reformed to serve the common good.

In addition to plenary sessions, interactive breakout sessions were organized, addressing themes such as sustainable finance, systems thinking, values-based banking, steward-owned enterprises, sustainable taxation, and the relationship between science and politics. The Autumn School functioned as a platform for exchange and reflection on new frameworks, practices and examples that can enable a socially just climate transition.

Keynote speakers included Professor Joyeeta Gupta and Professor Derk Loorbach. Speakers in the breakout sessions included Peter Depauw (economist and initiator of Steward-owned Belgium), Leen Van den Neste (lawyer, CEO of vdk bank and editor-in-chief of *Gids op Maatschappelijk Gebied*), Christian Ouolo (Oikocredit), Anne Snick (systems thinker, member of the Club of Rome and Fellow of the World Academy of Art & Science), Clément Fontan (Associate Professor of European Economic Policies, UCL), Tarcisio Diniz Magalhães (Assistant Research Professor of International Tax Law), and



Gerlinde Verbist (Professor and Senior Researcher at the Centre for Social Policy, University of Antwerp).

3.21. Ruusbroec Day

5 December 2025

Annual colloquium marking the anniversary of the death of the renowned mystic Jan van Ruusbroec (2 December 1381), organized in collaboration with the Ruusbroec Institute.

This year, Ruusbroec Day formed the culmination of the celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the Ruusbroec Institute. During the colloquium, the four-part series *'One Hundred Years of the Ruusbroec Institute'* was presented, comprising four volumes on (1) a century of collecting, (2) the Jesuits, (3) inspired women, and (4) embodied spirituality. The first copies were presented to Bea Cantillon and Erik De Bom, members of the board of the Jesuit Heritage Foundation.

3.22. Thinking as revolt in times of crisis – Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus

11 December 2025

In a context of increasing societal and political crises, UCSIA organized a colloquium on thinking as a form of resistance, inspired by the work of Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus. Central to the programme was the question of how reflection, responsibility and solidarity can contribute to connectedness and hope in times marked by democratic pressure, disinformation, polarization and climate change.

The programme consisted of lectures and reflections in the morning and afternoon, followed by panel discussions with ample room for dialogue. The morning sessions focused on the concept of 'crisis', while the afternoon programme explored 'revolt' and the possibilities for action.

An Dufraing, doctoral researcher at the University of Antwerp, examined crisis as a moment of political renewal through the lens of Hannah Arendt's thought. Anthony Longo, postdoctoral researcher at Tilburg University, addressed the role of social media in processes of depoliticization and political imagination. Lara Dutry (KU Leuven Kulak) discussed crisis as both a political and existential challenge in the work of Camus. Bernard Hubeau, Emeritus Professor at the University of Antwerp, reflected on civil disobedience and climate activism as moderate forms of revolt. Herbert De Vriese and Geert Van Eekert, both affiliated with the University of Antwerp, respectively explored just climate revolt and Arendt's critique of thoughtlessness. Allegra Reinalda, doctoral researcher at KU Leuven, examined the tension between thinking and acting among intellectuals.



4. SERVICE-LEARNING

4.1. Co-creation in service-learning

21 February 2025

On Friday 21 February 2025, the Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education—coordinated by UCSIA—organized a day of inspiration and exchange in collaboration with Odisee University of Applied Sciences. Johan De Wilde, educationalist, researcher and coordinator of MyCompass (Odisee University of Applied Sciences), opened the study day with a discussion of two prototypical educational approaches: education quality based on standardized testing, or education focused on transformative learning. In his keynote presentation, he argued in favour of co-creation and service-learning as powerful educational approaches that can support both visions. Throughout the rest of the day, service-learning professionals from various Flemish higher education institutions took the stage to present their own practices and to demonstrate how co-creation plays a key role within them. Once again, the networking event provided an excellent opportunity for participating lecturers, community partners and students to exchange ideas, inspire one another and be inspired.

4.2. Social engagement in architecture and design education

3 April, 15 May & 4 September 2025

In collaboration with the Doctoral Schools of KU Leuven, Hasselt University and the University of Antwerp, the Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education organized a three-session training programme for doctoral researchers in architecture and design on social engagement in teaching and research. During these sessions, participants were provided with practical tools for applying participatory action research (PAR) and service-learning in their own teaching and research practices. The programme also created space for critical reflection on their doctoral projects and on how students and societal actors can be (more) actively involved in them.

4.3. Service-Learning to promote Competences for Democratic Culture (SL4DC)

1 November 2025 tot 31 October 2028

In June 2025, Epos, the National Agency for Erasmus+ in Flanders, approved the new Erasmus+ project ‘Service-Learning to Promote Competences for Democratic Culture’ (SL4DC) (2025-1-BE02-KA220-HED-000357830). The SL4DC project runs from 1 November 2025 to 31 October 2028. UCSIA acts as the coordinator of this project, which brings together 12 partners from 9 European countries.

The SL4DC project aims to explore how service-learning can contribute to strengthening ‘competences for democratic culture’ (as defined in the European Commission’s [Reference Framework on Competences for Democratic Culture](#)) among both students and societal actors. The project focuses on three main strands:

1. **Mapping** existing service-learning practices in higher education that strengthen democratic competences among students and community actors.
2. Developing **pilot projects and educational materials** that combine **arts and service-learning** as a powerful approach to fostering democratic competences.
3. Developing **pilot projects and educational materials** that use service-learning to counter **disinformation and polarization**.

More information can be found on the project website: <https://sl4dc.eu/>

5. SCHOLARSHIPS

5.1. ELP Fellow: Adam Rachid

From October onwards, Adam Rachid joined UCSIA and USOS as the new ELP Fellow. After completing his studies in political science and international relations at the International University of Rabat, he recently obtained a Master's degree in Transnational Migration as an Erasmus Mundus Scholar at ULB.

At UCSIA, he is involved in projects on migration and mobility and contributes to the thematic cluster on Europe and solidarity. At USOS, he supports the coordination of partnerships within the organization's Global South network.

5.2. Fund Bruyns Scholar: Makram Elabed

The Fund Bruyns Scholar for the 2025–2026 period is Makram Elabed, originally from Gabès in southern Tunisia, and a doctoral researcher in chemistry and polymer sciences at the University of Sfax and the University of Antwerp. After obtaining two Master's degrees in polymer chemistry and organic chemistry, he is now focusing his research on the chemical valorization of plastic waste.

As a Fund Bruyns Scholar, he is working on research into chemical recycling technologies that can convert plastic waste—particularly PET—into useful and sustainable products. His research highlights not only the scientific challenges, but also the societal and economic opportunities associated with chemical recycling, with a specific focus on Tunisia, where such technologies remain limited in industrial application. During his stay in Antwerp, Elabed collaborates with researchers and establishes connections with the chemical industry.

6. COMMUNICATION

In 2025, UCSIA made a deliberate shift from visual renewal to substantive deepening. Following the complete rebranding in 2024—with a new logo, visual identity and website—the challenge lay in filling this renewed identity with content that reflects UCSIA’s mission: connecting academic reflection with social engagement.

This choice was reflected in more extensive news articles on the website, in-depth reports on events with the possibility to revisit lectures via YouTube, interviews with speakers and partners, and the launch of a dedicated podcast series. The newsletter followed the same logic: fewer calendar listings, more substantive content. The result is a communication strategy that does not merely announce, but actively engages in reflection.

6.1. Website

The UCSIA website (www.ucsia.org) evolved into a substantive content platform in 2025. Thanks to an increased publication frequency and more in-depth articles, news items consistently ranked among the most visited pages. The high engagement rate—typically around 45%—indicates that visitors actively engage with the content, rather than arriving on the site by chance. Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland were the leading countries of origin.

Website traffic ucsia.org — 2025

Month	Active users	Views	Engagement rate
January	2.743	5.835	50,8%
February	1.831	3.935	47,3%
March	3.100	5.600	47,4%
April	2.000	4.200	46,6%
May	2.600	4.900	45,5%
June	1.200	2.500	48,7%
July	800	1.600	44,3%
August	1.100	1.900	43,0%
September	1.300	2.400	47,9%
October	2.400	4.400	43,6%
November	2.600	4.400	40,8%
December	2.500	4.400	33,7%

6.2. Newsletter

The monthly UCSIA newsletter was given a new structure in 2025, consisting of a substantive introduction, two in-depth news items and a concise activities calendar. This approach aligns with the broader shift towards content-driven communication and has proven effective: with an average open rate of 33% for the Dutch-language version, UCSIA performs well above the non-profit benchmark of 25–30%.

In 2025, eight Dutch-language and six English-language editions were published. No English-language editions appeared in June and December, reflecting the fact that more UCSIA activities take place in Dutch than in English. In addition to the monthly newsletter, UCSIA also sent out around forty individual email announcements per year—for specific events, calls and invitations—a considerable communication output, each requiring its own preparation and design.

Newsletter performance 2025

	Dutch newsletter	English newsletter
Editions	8	6
Subscribers (end of 2025)	~2.615	~988
Open Rate	33,0%	30,6%
Click-Through Rate (CTR)	5,9%	2,9%

UCSIA also manages several mailing lists for different target groups—organized by theme (Dutch and English), for academic calls for papers and publications, and by specific programme—together comprising several thousand contacts.

6.3. Social media

UCSIA is active on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Bluesky. Growth over the past year has been largely organic, driven primarily by the quality of the content rather than by a strict publishing schedule. The table below provides a concise overview of the key metrics per channel for the period April 2025–April 2026.

Social media overview (April 2025–April 2026)

Channel	Followers	Views / Impressions	Interactions / Comments	Posts
LinkedIn	1.415 (+22%)	21.756 impressions	481 comments	104
Facebook	1.100 (+65)	42.922 views	1.106 interactions	96
Instagram	536 (+156)	32.906 views	412 interactions	75 + 175 stories
Bluesky	73	–	51 likes / 18 reposts	57

LinkedIn

LinkedIn remains UCSIA's strongest channel, reaching an audience of academics, policymakers and civil society organizations. An engagement rate of approximately 16%—compared to a typical benchmark of 2–5%—reflects a highly engaged audience. With 1,415 followers and a growth of 22% over one year, achieved without an intensive publishing schedule, this represents a strong performance.

Facebook

The Facebook page (facebook.com/ucsia) reaches a broader, predominantly Belgian audience in the 35–54 age group, with Antwerp, Leuven and Ghent as the leading cities. Photos generate by far the highest levels of interaction. With 42,922 views and 1,106 interactions, the channel demonstrates steady engagement.

Instagram

The Instagram account (@UCSIA_Antwerp) grew by 41% to 536 followers. Its reach of 12,943 users indicates that content regularly extends beyond its immediate follower base.

Bluesky

In 2025, UCSIA made a deliberate decision to gradually phase out X (Twitter) and to establish an active presence on Bluesky—a platform that better aligns with UCSIA's values and attracts an audience of academics and socially engaged citizens. The X profile remains active with a reference to Bluesky but is no longer actively maintained. X currently has 817 followers, while the Bluesky account grew to 73 followers in its first year.

6.4. New communication formats

Podcast: Solidariteit Spreekt (Solidarity Speaks)

In the autumn of 2025, the UCSIA Solidarity Academy launched its first podcast series, *Solidarity Speaks*. Across three episodes of approximately thirty minutes each, journalist and moderator Linda De Win engages in conversation with two experts—consistently pairing an academic with a representative of a social organization. This combination is intentional and reflects the core of UCSIA's mission: fostering dialogue between academic knowledge and societal practice.

The first season takes the COVID-19 crisis as a lens through which to explore three contemporary themes: solidarity, ecology and thinking about the future. The tone is informal, warm and critically hopeful. The podcast seeks not only to inform listeners, but also to connect them—forming a community of citizens who approach the challenges of tomorrow with hope and confidence.

Episodes overview season 1

Episode	Guests	Publication	Downloads
Solidariteit na COVID-19	Stijn Oosterlynck (UAntwerpen) & Naima Charkaoui (11.11.11)	29 Sept. 2025	192
Ecologie & duurzame transitie	Cathy Macharis (VUB) & Eva Smets (Oxfam)	27 Oct. 2025	121
Toekomstdenken & scenario's	Bert De Munck (UAntwerpen) & Jorgen Stassijns (Sciensano)	24 Nov. 2025	147
Total			460

The podcast is available on 17 platforms, including Spotify and Apple Podcasts. Listeners are primarily based in Belgium—Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent—but also in the Netherlands, Germany, the United States and Singapore. For a pilot season on a niche topic, this represents a promising international reach.

To support the launch, UCSIA created dedicated Instagram and Facebook pages for *Solidarity Speaks*, which together reached 2,300 people with just 27 Instagram followers.

The podcast is closely linked to the lecture series *U-turn: Five Years Later*, organized by UCSIA in the spring of 2026, and thus forms part of a broader, integrated programme of content.

Alumni network UCSIA Summer School on Religion, Culture and Society

The UCSIA Summer School is aimed at a highly specific audience: early-career researchers working at the intersection of religion, culture and society. UCSIA seeks to maintain contact with these researchers and to continue bringing them together. To this end, the first steps towards an alumni network were taken in 2025.

The website ucsia-summarschool.org has existed for some time, but in 2025 it was expanded with an active alumni section featuring news items on recent research by former participants. This section attracted a total of 4,890 unique visitors and 18,305 page views in 2025. The associated newsletter currently has 144 subscribers and was published six times. The LinkedIn page grew to 402 followers—an impressive figure for such a niche audience—while the Facebook group counts 183 members.

6.5. Communication of affiliated initiatives

In addition to its core communication channels, UCSIA also manages the communications of several affiliated initiatives, each with its own target audience and channel mix.

Active projects

Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education

The Flemish Network for Service-Learning connects professionals from higher education institutions and social organizations who work within the service-learning framework. The network communicates

through its own website, which features monthly blog posts, as well as via a newsletter and a LinkedIn channel.

The performance of this network is also notably strong. In 2025, the website attracted a total of 4,297 active users and 19,083 new visitors. On LinkedIn, the network recorded 7,962 impressions with an average engagement rate of 5.9%—comparable to the strong performance of the main UCSIA page. In 2025, an additional 45 followers joined the LinkedIn page, bringing the total to 321.

www.servicelarningvlaanderen.be

SL4DC — Erasmus+ project

SL4DC is the new Erasmus+ project coordinated by UCSIA. In 2025, work began on developing its communication channels—including the website, newsletter and LinkedIn presence. Initial steps were also taken towards designing the project’s visual identity and branding materials, which were finalized in 2026.

www.sl4dc.eu

Past projects

SLIDE — Erasmus+ project

SLIDE was an Erasmus+ project coordinated by UCSIA, focusing on service-learning across diverse European educational contexts. The project had its own website, newsletter and LinkedIn channel. In 2025, it was awarded the ‘EPOS Success Story’ label, achieving a score of over 90%.

www.slide-erasmus.eu

Baroque Influencers

Baroque Influencers was UCSIA’s flagship project in 2023, featuring its own website, podcast and social media channels. While these channels are no longer actively maintained, they remain available as an archive.

www.barokkeinfluencers.be

Jesuit Heritage Foundation

The Jesuit Heritage Foundation has its own website, which is managed by UCSIA.

www.jezuïetenerfgoed.be

The management of all these channels—alongside UCSIA’s core channels—illustrates the breadth of the communication ecosystem maintained by UCSIA.

Glossary

Active users: The number of individuals who have actively visited the website and performed at least one interaction, such as scrolling, clicking, or viewing a page.

Reach: The number of unique individuals who have seen a post or message, regardless of whether they interacted with it.

CTR (Click-Through Rate): The percentage of recipients who clicked on a link in an email, calculated based on the number of delivered emails.

Engagement Rate: The ratio of interactions on a post (likes, comments, shares, clicks) to the number of people who have seen the post. A high engagement rate indicates content that prompts a response.

Impressions: The total number of times a post has been displayed, including multiple views by the same individual.

Open Rate: The percentage of recipients who opened an email, calculated based on the number of delivered emails. An open rate above 25–30% is considered strong for non-profit organizations.

Views: The total number of times a page or post has been viewed, including repeated visits by the same user.

7. PUBLICATIONS

7.1. Books

Kaat Somers, Maaïke Mottart and Nicolas Standaert (eds.), *Service-learning in hoger onderwijs (Service-learning in higher education)*.

De samenleving als *krachtige leeromgeving* (Society as a powerful learning environment) (Gent: Borgerhoff & Lamberigts, 2025)

The book *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Society as a Powerful Learning Environment* is the result of a collaboration between 18 authors from 10 Flemish higher education institutions within the Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education. Published in February 2025, it is the first Dutch-language reference work on service-learning pedagogy. The book is complemented by dedicated web pages that provide further elaboration on the practical case studies it presents, thereby offering additional visibility to inspiring service-learning practices in Flemish higher education.

The publication explores service-learning as an innovative educational approach in higher education. Rather than learning exclusively in lecture halls or practical classrooms, students are challenged to collaborate with community partners on real-world issues. Through experiential learning, they combine theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience, while contributing to social change. Drawing on practical examples—such as homework support for disadvantaged children, the design of mobile housing units in collaboration with people experiencing homelessness, and the development of sustainable water installations in Benin—the book demonstrates how service-learning encourages students to engage with head, heart and hands. It offers both a theoretical framework and practical guidelines, supported by inspiring cases from the Flemish Network for Service-Learning in Higher Education.

To date, 274 copies of the book have been sold. Most Flemish higher education institutions have included it as a standard reference work in their libraries. The book has also been presented at various events organized by higher education partners.

7.2. Articles

Erik De Bom, 'Groots dromen, klein beginnen', *Tertio*, Issue 11 – July-August 2025, 15-20

Erik De Bom, 'De stad als laboratorium', *Tertio*, Issue 12 – September 2025, 22-25

7.3. Opinion pieces

Bea Cantillon & Erik De Bom, 'Op weg naar een Eco-Sociale Unie: de stille verwezenlijking van Schumans droom', *De Morgen*, 9 May 2025

Paul Daemen, Erik De Bom, Leen Dereymaeker, Marc Desmet, Lieve Hereijgers, Stefan Joris, Greetje Wassenberg, 'De patrimoniumtaks kraakt, het middenveld kreunt', *De Morgen*, 11 December 2025



ucsia.org