

Postdoc Day

Welcome by the rector Prof. dr. Rik Van de Walle

Aula Academica, November 9 2023

Dear colleagues

Dear postdoctoral researchers

Ladies and gentlemen

I am very happy to see so many postdoctoral researchers here in the Aula **for the first Ghent University Postdoc Day**. A day exclusively devoted to our postdocs, a day to get to know fellow postdocs and get acquainted with the broad service offer that we at Ghent University have in place for our postdocs.

{Celebrating a decade of targeted support for postdocs}

The timing of this 1st Postdoc Day was not randomly chosen: a decade ago Ghent University **launched the Postdoc Talent Management Program** to help postdocs in managing and planning their career. At the same time, the **Postdoc Community** was set up, an inclusive community by and for postdocs that aims at informing and empowering postdocs in their career development journey. So, this day is also a **birthday and a celebration**, for the whole community of postdocs at Ghent University!

Postdoctoral researchers are a big and crucial part of our research community: since 2004, the number of postdocs at Ghent University has tripled. At the moment, there are more than 1,700 postdocs at Ghent University, making up 22% of our total research staff.

{Postdocs: invaluable for Ghent University}

Postdoctoral researchers play a crucial and invaluable role in the core tasks of today's universities. Postdocs are dedicated 'drivers' of excellent **research**, in various roles. They develop new research lines, contribute to the ambitions of the research group (by offering support or taking the lead in funding applications, through research

project management, ...) and generate valuable synergies within the university and internationally. Postdocs also play an important role in offering high quality **education**, taking up teaching duties in various forms. They deliver **scientific services** to our rapidly changing knowledge economy with creative outreach activities.

Within all these areas of activity, postdocs are often key figures in supporting professors in the supervision and guidance of students, PhD researchers and other scientific staff. The level of dedication and autonomy with which postdocs perform this broad set of tasks testifies to their qualification of independent researchers.

Ghent University values this continued and indispensable efforts of all of our postdocs – of all of you, in other words!

{Postdocs: transition phase}

As a caring organization, Ghent University cannot ignore the biggest challenge that comes with the postdoc job, i.e., that it is inherently a temporary stage. A postdoc is not a lifelong career, it is a period of transition and a stepping stone to the next stage in your career. In today's academic world, a postdoc position does not automatically lead to a tenured position as professor.

We are aware of this and want to encourage you to consider your postdoctoral time at Ghent University also as an opportunity to reflect on your next career step and prepare yourself by attending trainings or participating in one (or more) of the many career support activities we organize to help you in your career development journey. Today, you will get an overview of all the support services we offer at Ghent University that can help you in growing your career.

Ghent University sees its postdocs as multi-deployable talents who can play a first-rate role in various sectors within today's knowledge society. We believe that our postdocs, as independent, creative and critical thinkers, have a key role to play – obviously inside, but definitely also beyond academia. We want to empower you to develop successful careers, in different roles, in different sectors of today's knowledge economy.

{Conclusion}

But today, dear postdocs, we want to put you in the spotlight and celebrate the birthday of the community of postdocs at Ghent University. We do not see you as temporary guests, but as our top talents, making this place a thriving academic institution.

I would like to end with a warm thank you to the organizers and contributors to this event. The event is **jointly organized by the HR department (Postdoc Talent Management) and the Steering Committee of the Postdoc Community**. They joined forces with many other services at Ghent University who support postdocs in their current and future careers to make the first Postdoc Day at Ghent University a success. Enjoy **your** day, postdocs!