



Joint press release



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Vlerick Business School and KBC institute an academic chair on the role and positioning of financial institutions

Together with KBC, Vlerick Business School's Centre for Financial Services is instituting a five-year academic chair on the role and positioning of financial institutions in the current financial and economic environment.

The KBC Chair on Customer Insight is a clear win-win for both parties. Academics have access to a whole range of information on regulations and distribution models, but a financial institution like KBC can enrich that general approach by contributing specific experience. This, of course, makes cooperation extremely interesting for all parties. Vlerick Business School is taking care of the academic underpinning, and KBC is inputting the practice-relevant aspects.

In the coming academic year, two specific topics will be up for discussion.

First, there will be research into the impact that regulation is having on banks' traditional role. As a financial institution, KBC works in an environment brimming with rules and regulations. The chair explores the tension areas arising between this environment and the expectations held vis-à-vis the company by KBC's stakeholders (clients, employees, shareholders, public opinion, etc.). John Hollows, Chief Risk Officer of KBC Group NV, will act as patron as regards this first topic.

In addition, focus is also being laid on service-based banking and insurance using Smart Data. The chair examines how the available information from financial transactions can be optimally applied to refine the provision of services to clients and enhance the client experience. In a later phase, a comparative study will be done to improve our understanding of the impact that Big Data is having on the European financial sector and on KBC. This topic is directly related to KBC's experience in the field of Big Data and Customer Insight. Pavel Kavanek, CEO of KBC's Czech Republic Business Unit and member of KBC Group NV's Executive Committee, will supervise development of that subject.

'KBC has for some time been a Prime Foundation Partner of the Vlerick Impulse Centre for Growth Management for Medium-Sized Enterprises and is delighted to now go into partnership with the Vlerick Centre for Financial Services. As a company that flies the standard of corporate social responsibility, we are convinced of the importance of lending support to advanced scientific research and education that gives stimulus to developing the financial services industry in Belgium and abroad. From the same point of view, KBC also values personal further education – which is something that this initiative will only promote. The Vlerick Centre for Financial Services aims to be a centre of excellence and a leading knowledge partner for the financial sector. It's for this reason that it is taking up position close to the heart of a leading financial institution like KBC, where client focus, performance and innovation are core priorities. We are looking forward to an interesting, fruitful cooperation which is set to give us the means to further improve the service we provide to our clients,' says Johan Thijs, CEO of KBC Group NV.

Philippe Haspeslagh, Dean of Vlerick Business School, sums up the chair's importance in the following words, '*By means of this KBC Chair on Customer Insight, located at its Brussels campus, Vlerick Centre for Financial Services will be further contributing to the change process in the financial world. First, by clarifying and objectivising the challenges facing the financial sector, such as the impact regulation is having on the positioning of banks. Second, Vlerick is also planning relevant applied research that will contribute to KBC's strategy implementation. More specifically, Vlerick professors Philippe Baecke and Öykü Isik will use their respective fields of expertise in marketing and information systems to work on the points at which Big Data and client-centricity converge. The accrued knowledge will also be of value to the relevance and quality of our courses. This chair will breathe renewed life into the old-established link between KBC and Vlerick, whose origins are personified in the guise of our founder, André Vlerick.'*

About KBC (www.kbc.com)

KBC is an integrated bank-insurance group, catering mainly for retail, SME and local mid-cap clients. It concentrates on its core markets in Belgium and certain Central and Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary). Elsewhere around the globe, the group has established a presence in selected countries and regions. KBC's head office is in Brussels, in Belgium. The group employs more than 37 000 FTEs and is listed on NYSE Euronext Brussels (ticker symbol 'KBC').

Together with the University of Antwerp, KBC instituted the KBC Risk Management Chair in 2011. Over four academic years, this chair focuses on financial risk management and should help KBC to gain a better understanding of how market risks can converge with credit risks without losing sight of its mission as an engine of the economy.

Follow KBC on Twitter at www.twitter.com/kbc_group.

About Vlerick Business School (<http://www.vlerick.com>)

Since its foundation in 1953, Vlerick Business School has been a leading international school, top-ranked year in, year out as one of the best business schools in Europe and the world. Its accredited courses are rooted in a robust tradition of innovative, independent research.

What Vlerick teaches it also applies in practice, thus combining a healthy mix of theoretical knowledge and practical insight. Each course is adapted to the needs of around 800 master's and MBA students and 6 000 or so business leaders, who are taught by internationally renowned professors at Vlerick's campuses in Brussels, Ghent, Leuven and St Petersburg.

As well as being present in the heart of Europe and maintaining close links to the University of Ghent and the KU Leuven, Vlerick Business School works in close conjunction with over 40 international business schools, such as Peking University in China and the University of Stellenbosch Business School in South Africa. The school has also established partnerships with 400 companies across the world, which ensures it a strong international presence.

Vlerick's MBA students hail from 40 different countries, and its 17 000 alumni represent the school in over 100 countries. This worldwide network binds together students, alumni and business and academic partners, who can learn, develop and improve together.

Each and every aspect of the school is imbued with the core Vlerick values: openness, vitality, pragmatism and a passion for innovation and enterprise. These values differentiate Vlerick from other schools and create an environment in which people can exchange ideas, develop new initiatives and find new solutions for the future challenges that face the world's economy.

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