



# Hot News

*A 600 day storyline of forging a new partnership with an outstanding US university*

CELEBRATING AN AMBITIOUS INTELLECTUAL VENTURE

## Interview of the Dean, Bruno van Pottelsberghe

### HOW WAS THE PARTNERSHIP INITIATED?

It all started on the 29th of May 2015, after a conference call with Laurent Bouton, former Ph.D. scholar of the Solvay Brussels School (at [ECARES](#), the European Center for Advanced Research in Economics and Statistics). **Laurent Bouton** was a Professor in the Department of Economics at Georgetown University (GU) and contacted me because his Department Chair, Professor Francis Vella, was thinking of creating an international partnership for a joint master in the field of political economy. I then had a conference call with Francis and we decided to dig further into this creative idea.



### Laurent Bouton

Laurent Bouton holds a Ph.D. in Economics (Universite libre de Bruxelles, ECARES, 2009). His main research interest is political economy. He is a Faculty Research Fellow of the NBER, and a Research Affiliate at the CEPR.

**600 days later** – including a visit in Washington DC, 600 email exchanges, and intensive internal debates – we are celebrating the launch of this exciting venture with **the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Rector of the ULB, Yvon Englert, the Chairman of the GU Department of Economics, Francis Vella, and the Dean of the Solvay Brussels School, myself.**

### NEARLY TWO YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS WAS IT COMPLICATED?

Well, actually it was not so long, as this type of partnership involves complex issues to solve, with two different regulatory environments that shape the delivery of university certificates or diplomas, and two different organizational structures. **For GU it is the first joint degree they sign with a foreign university.** For us it might not be the first double or joint degree (we have five active double degrees with foreign universities), but it is definitely **the first in-depth partnership with a US-based university!** There were also many interactions between Francis Vella, Laurent Bouton and Micael Castanheira for the design of the programme and the selection of faculty members. On our side, Professor **Micael Castanheira**, who has been a visiting researcher at New York University (NYU) for more than two years, will take the **academic directorship.**



SIGNATURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP. FRANCIS VELLA, YVON ENGLERT AND BRUNO VAN POTTELSBERGHE. 16<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2017.

### WHY DID THEY CHOOSE SOLVAY @ ULB?

I would say for **three main reasons**. Laurent Bouton was the initial chain-link, as a professor in GU who is now back in Brussels with a full-time position at ULB, SBS-EM. Then comes the fact that the two institutions are research-based universities, with excellent research output. This helps building a relationship based on mutual respect. The third reason is geographical: we are both based in capital cities, with important policy-making institutions at local and international levels. Besides the US government agencies, Washington DC hosts the United Nations, the IMF and the World Bank. Brussels has local institutions as well, and hosts a large number of European institutions. In addition, travel to the OECD (Paris), the ECB (Frankfurt) or the BEI (Luxembourg) are all less than two hours from Brussels, and students will have the opportunity to fine-tune their skills while visiting these international agencies.

### WHAT IS EXACTLY THE NATURE OF THE JOINT DEGREE?

Georgetown University will deliver a **Master Degree in Political Economy, jointly with an Advanced Master certificate delivered by Solvay at ULB**. The joint degree in Political Economy will start in **late August 2017**. Participants will take classes for eight months in Brussels in the Fall and Spring terms and then four months in Washington, DC in the Summer term. Half the faculty members will come from GU and the other half from the Solvay Brussels School. They will include field experts and policy makers from local or international policy institutions, research centers and think tanks. The degree will be jointly awarded by both institutions. See the link here under for further information and practical details, and a special reportage is dedicated to the new partnership in the forthcoming "From Solvay" magazine.

### SO, ARE YOU HAPPY?

At this stage I am, indeed, very happy, as this is an important milestone achieved for the new venture. The new concern now is whether **participants** will apply!

I am also happy for ULB and our faculty, as the creation of such an alliance testifies to the quality of our economic degrees and research and will further enhance the reputation of the School and of the ULB.



### Testimonial of Francis G. Vella

Francis Vella is the Edmond Villani Professor in Economics and Chair of the Department of Economics in the College. He joined the Georgetown faculty in 2005.

*"The joint venture with Solvay School of Economics and Management assists Georgetown University pursue its objective of global engagement. It also provides the GU economics department with an **extraordinary opportunity** to add to its portfolio of Masters Programs in a manner which expands the focus of study and audience of students.*

*The prospect of training motivated students in a program located in both the US and European capitals is a very exciting one. It also enables our faculty to collaborate with their academic counterparts in Brussels in addition to policy practitioners in both cities."*



MICHAEL CASTANHEIRA - ACADEMIC DIRECTOR OF THE PROJECT (SBS-EM), LAURENT BOUTON - RESEARCH FELLOW (ULB-ECARES), OLIVIER WITMEUR - SBS-EM DEPUTY DEAN EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, YVON ENGLERT - ULB RECTOR, FRANCIS VELLA - CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS (GU), BRUNO VAN POTTELSBERGHE - DEAN (SBS-EM) & MARIE-SOLEIL FRERE - VICE-RECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION. 16<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 2017.

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