

Entering Belgium as a non-EU researcher: A challenge



Marijke Lein – 8 November 2010

A photograph of a modern building interior. The space is characterized by large, light-colored wooden beams that run horizontally across the ceiling and walls. The ceiling is dark with several recessed spotlights. Large glass windows and doors are visible, allowing natural light to enter. In the foreground, there are several wooden pillars or partitions. The overall atmosphere is bright and contemporary.

Mission

Conduct basic life
sciences research

Transfer results to
society

Inform the public

72 research groups
4 universities



Vrije
Universiteit
Brussel

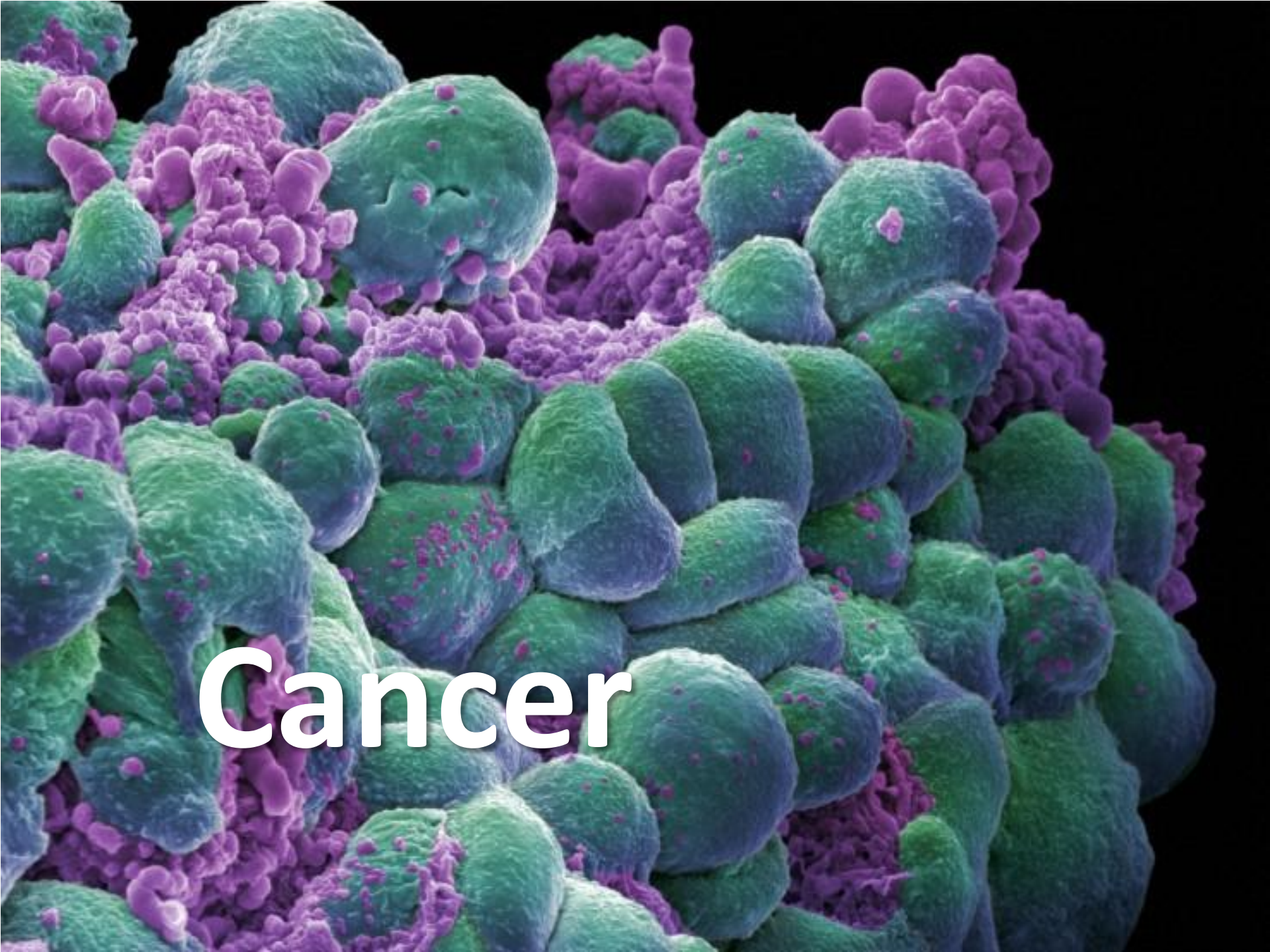


VIB = 1200 people
2009 = 223 new scientists



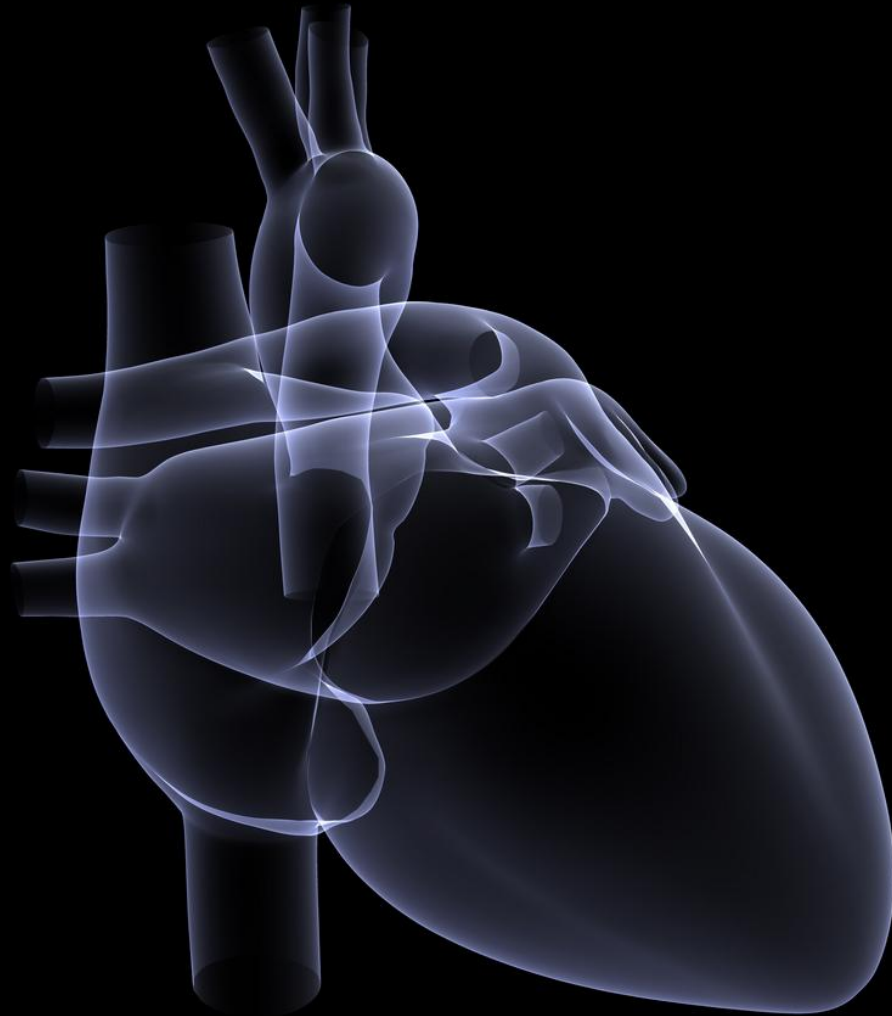


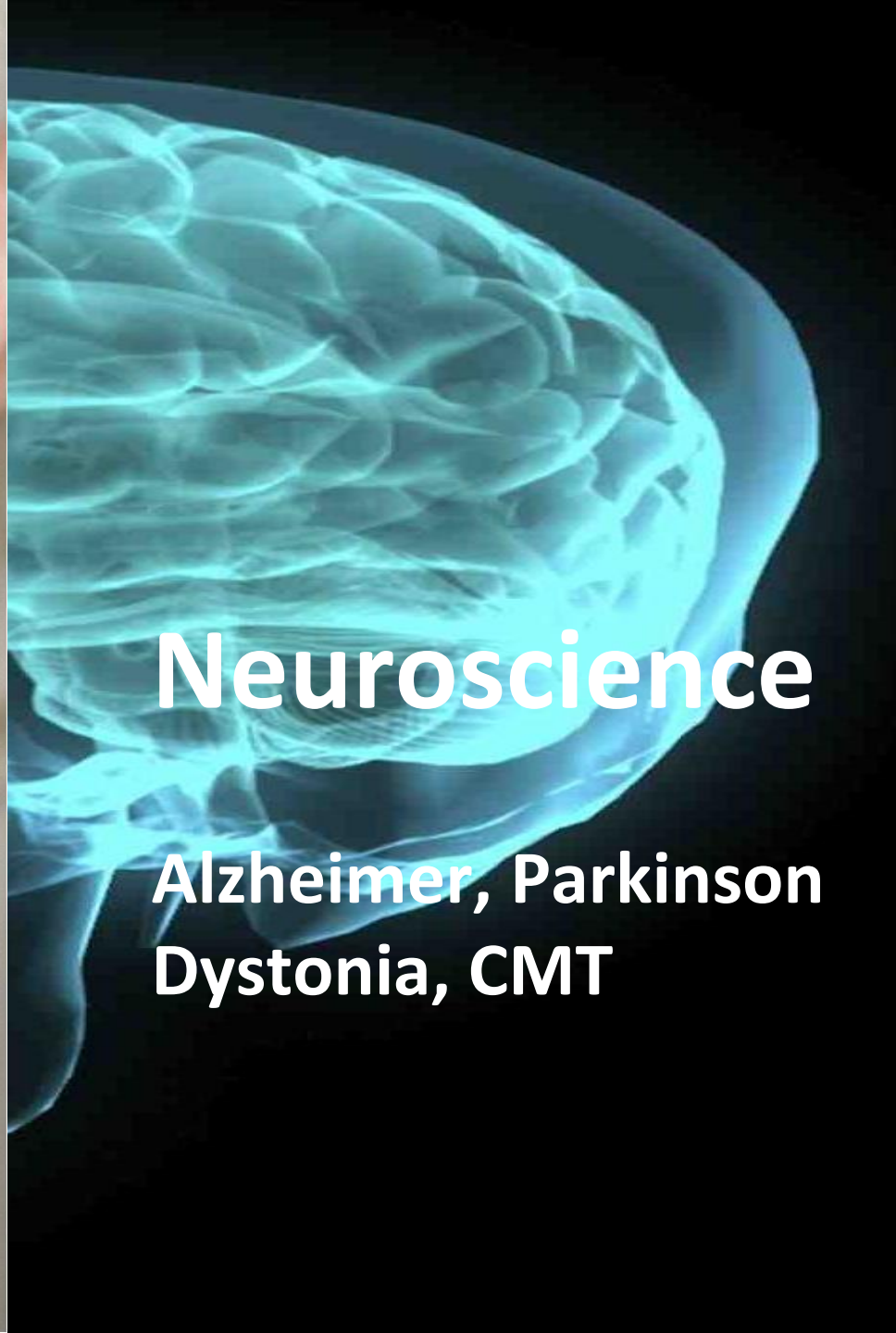
VIB: Themes



Cancer

Cardio-vascular diseases





Neuroscience

Alzheimer, Parkinson
Dystonia, CMT

Plant biology





Today: VIB is number 3 in life sciences research in Europe

=> *cfr. SIR world report 2010*
(Scimago Institutions Ranking)

SIR World report 2010

	Rank	Institution	Country	Output	IC(%)	Q1(%)	NI
	1	American Ceramic Society	USA	815	76,07	99,02	2,36
	2	Howard Hughes Medical Institute	USA	6.801	28,89	94,37	3,28
	3	Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research	USA	736	31,93	93,75	5,07
	4	Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard	USA	861	48,32	92,68	6,02
EUR	5	European Molecular Biology Laboratory Heidelberg	DEU	1.476	61,04	92,34	2,42
	6	Salk Institute for Biological Studies	USA	1.421	42,01	92,19	2,5
	7	Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory	USA	1.040	41,63	91,54	2,97
EUR	8	Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute	GBR	1.424	63,27	89,96	3,82
	9	Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research	AUS	1.161	50,9	89,75	2,1
	10	Scripps Research Institute	USA	6.220	34,87	89,74	2,31
	11	Research Institute for Fragrance Materials	USA	201	6,97	89,55	0,21
EUR	12	Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology	BEL	878	61,5	89,29	2,27
EUR	13	Cancer Research UK	GBR	2.381	49,06	89,12	2,33
	14	Institute for Systems Biology	USA	555	50,99	88,83	2,87
	15	Garvan Institute of Medical Research	AUS	684	49,71	88,74	2,27
	16	Carnegie Institution	USA	1.693	50,21	88,54	2,16
	17	J Craig Venter Institute	USA	780	46,92	88,46	3,09
EUR	18	Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Oncologicas	ESP	914	48,69	88,18	2,27
	19	The Rockefeller University	USA	3.720	43,06	87,93	2,44
	20	Burnham Institute for Medical Research	USA	1.501	44,97	87,87	1,95



VIB: an international and intercultural community

Some figures

	2001 - 2005	2006 - 2010
non-Belgian Ph.D. Students	11%	40%
non-Belgian postdocs	29%	50%
non-Belgian groupleaders	12%	17%

- Currently : > 60 nationalities
- 33% of all scientific staff = non-Belgian



VIB

MORE THAN
60 NATIONALITIES
WORKING AT VIB

Focus on non-EU researchers

- Today: > 60 nationalities
- VIB On 01/10/2010

– European researchers \Rightarrow 267

– Non-European researchers \Rightarrow 169

- Current Situation:

\rightarrow 500 people on pay-roll

\rightarrow 48 people with either $\begin{cases} \rightarrow$ Workpermit (first year) \\ \rightarrow Scientific visa \end{cases}

\rightarrow \pm 10% of people on VIB-payroll

Profiles

- Minimum schooling level = Master
 - Ph.D. Students
 - Postdoctoral scientists
 - Expert scientists/technologists
 - Group leaders
- Recruitment area :
 - the world top institutes
 - > Harvard, Howard Hughes, EMBL, Max Planck, ...

Migration Issues

A. Work permit

1. first entry in Belgium

- “old” system, but still used at VIB: why?
- goes faster, however...
- can (should!) be delivered at the embassy

2. criminal record?

- US: can take up to 3 months
- other countries: 1 day to several weeks
- problem: changing rules overnight
- discrimination in comp. to Europeans

➔ CASE

Migration Issues

B. Scientific Visa

1. “Gastovereenkomst”

initially - many problems

- not known at all embassies

- to be sent to Belgium

→ a lot of lost time

extension while already in Belgium

- In Leuven area = ok

- In Gent area = depending of the commune

- In Brussels = disaster

Migration Issues

2. Most common problems

- long delays in renewing the identity card (up to 6 months)
 - people are often “illegally” in Belgium
 - people are “stuck”, can’t leave Belgium

3. Suggestions

- Duration of scientific visa + residency = duration of the contract
- Inform all communes properly with extra focus on Brussels area

Migration Issues

C. Family Issues

1. Problem

→ Virtually impossible to get everything in order at the embassies, prior to arrival in Belgium.

People can't enter Belgium together

2. Children

→ no automatic visa.. Why grant them a visa separately?

Migration Issues

- Problem: non-EU citizen is married to EU citizen

No work permit/scientific visa needed, only if they enter Belgium together
- In other cases: work permit/scientific visa is needed???

Migration Issues

3. Other problems at embassies

- Very difficult to get hold of someone
- outsourcing of the visa-department

⇒ Low service level

Take home messages

- Communication – communication - communication
- Scientific visa: quick delivery at embassy is needed
- Criminal record: reconsider please!!
- Scientific visa: ID-card = duration of the contract
- Make it easier for families to enter Belgium