

## Report on the AURORA-meeting of UDE and VUA in Duisburg



*Mid-September, twenty Dutch and German people are lining up for a photo in the shadow of the Gerhard-Mercator-Haus at the Duisburg campus. What these people have in common: a shared mission of matching academic excellence with societal relevance – a mission that sounds quite abstract to be honest. What brought these people together: all of them are either staff members of the Universität Duisburg-Essen (UDE) or the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA), both of which are part of the AURORA network which aims to support its members in exactly the mission described above.*

*Along the motto of our university (Open-minded) we tried to embrace this idea of AURORA. By inviting our Dutch colleagues to Duisburg, we created an opportunity for staff from both universities to meet their counterparts and to discuss current challenges for universities and internationalization in an informal and relaxed setting. Therefore, our International Office of UDE organized a two-day-program (13./14.09.) at the campus in Duisburg which included a series of presentations by different UDE staff members who work in management and administration. More specifically, those presentations addressed management information, valorization, operational management, diversity and community service – topics which our visitors had expressed special interest in. The presentations led to intense and vivid discussions and gave an impression on how things work at UDE. The staff from the VUA could relate this to their own work in the Netherlands and discuss similarities and differences with us.*

*Still, getting some fresh air is (next to coffee) always a good idea during a conference. Thus, a campus tour reactivated the tired and gave an impression of the architectural beauty (or some might say brutality?) of the Duisburg campus. Here, a brick tower caught the attention of our visitors – and in hindsight (and after some research, admittedly) turned out to be a former chimney of the municipal utility services. This was a moment where we could learn something new about our university ourselves – thanks to the interest of our Dutch colleagues. In general, the social aspect was not to be neglected: on the first evening, the VUA invited our staff members to socialize and continue the professional discussions over snacks and drinks. Then, after another three interesting presentations on Friday morning it was sadly already time to leave for our colleagues from Amsterdam. We said goodbye with the sense that fostering a mutual understanding on a professional – as well as personal – level had been a success! With this in mind, we take the enriching experience as an inspiration to organize a visit to the Netherlands in the future.*