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# IS POLITICS PART OF THE UNIVERSITIES' JOB?

Ethical Forum dedicated to honour Honorary Rector VUB Caroline Pauwels



Some reflections (partially base on following sources):

- Position Papers LERU (League Research Intensive Universities)

“How can research inform policy”

“Academic freedom as fundamental right”

“Research Integrity”

- Standpoints METAFORUM (multidisciplinary thinktank KU Leuven)

“Everyone an Expert”: policy recommendations related to health care

- Science is evolving, politicians in charge prefer stability
- Science is (in most cases) evident, its acceptance not (cfr “unconvenient truth”, EBM..)
- Science is emotion poor, its acceptance emotion rich
- Politicians are in a hurry, scientists like time

- Stress typical/unique academic strengths: strong academic freedom (EU Charter art 13, constitution USA, Greece..), multidisciplinary, fundamental and translational research, peer review, fastly alternating generations PhD-Post Docs
- In communication timing and individuals matter (eg Al Gore and climate change)
- Use appropriate and positive terminology (eg ageing vs longevity)
- Engage politicians and citizens (eg dedicated seminars)
- Beware “too soon” and “too little” science, improve quality and integrity control

- Some governments have/support information agencies (eg “Kenniscentrum” ministry of health)
- Still this does not always guarantee proper knowledge transfer (eg Bush admin. And climate change, South Africa and HIV)
- Most universities now have effective TTO’s (tech transfer offices) to assist/promote technological valorisation, analogue PTO’s (policy transfer offices) may assist/facilitate social responsibility
- Stimulate, evaluate but also fund/reward science transfer
- Stimulate formation in science communication and education in science methodology and meaning of statistics
- Government may give quality labels to information channels (websites) giving public information