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## Press Event Media Clusters Brussels – Short summary

**On Thursday March 16<sup>th</sup>, a short debate was organized between Geert De Preeter (Project Director VRT), Bauduin Auquier (Senior Project Leader Reyers 2020), Jan Verheyen (SAU-MSI, Urban Development Corporation) and Florence Le Cam (Chair in Journalism at ULB) about the new media park in Reyerslaan in Brussels, where big national media companies VRT and RTBF currently have their buildings. According to De Preeter the choice to locate this new quarter in Brussels was a deliberate one, as the city is (politically) extremely relevant, and because of its diversity.**

**“At VRT we believe that diversity leads to creativity.** Larger parties, such as VRT and RTBF, can be a motor, but it is the little parties that we need to collaborate with”, says De Preeter. He added that it will be easier for smaller media companies to gain support if they are located at the same site as the big players. Auquier disclosed that **RTBF is also working on plans to construct a college** that will offer media-related courses at the site of the media park. Verheyen mentioned that the media park as a physical project will go hand in hand with a **re-development of the entire media system.** “The current media cluster is a closed system around two big players, but we want to create an open system in which small independent enterprises as well as the largest media institute can be found.” He mentioned the example of Screen Brussels, a cluster strengthening organization established by the Brussels-Capital Region that is currently inventing a **“media house” for TV Bruxelles, an incubator or start-up and a training institute,** all in one building. Such design should set an example for the entire media quarter, in which small and large businesses should reinforce one another. Le Cam confirmed that the smaller media businesses will only benefit from this large media cluster. Moreover, the new buildings will be constructed in such a way that anybody will be able to walk around and even underneath them, which needs to symbolize the new, open character of the media sector. Besides openness as regards the building, transparency in collaboration will be focused on, too. “The number of one-man businesses is getting larger by the day. This benefits creativity, but also means more risks”, De Preeter asserted. He emphasized that VRT, as an important player, will increase efforts to make sure that all journalists and other media workers are treated correctly and that all ethical norms are being respected. “We highly **cherish openness in terms of our buildings but also openness in terms of our activities.** We think that that is largely our responsibility”, said De Preeter. Auquier added that **technological solutions will be applied to establish a continuous connection** between the two prominent players, RTBF and VRT. Also mobility will need to be thoroughly dealt with, in order to make the site better accessible by public transport.

Alongside an entire new look for the media buildings, the quarter will also include housing and entertainment. According to Auquier, **much attention will be paid to the quality of life** on the site, a biotope in which working, living and relaxing need to complement one another. Verheyen says this is exactly the strength of the entire project. Le Cam concluded that the new media quarter does not mean complete new layout, but also an overhaul of the management, work flexibility, workspaces etc. **In short, the media park will benefit the entire media sector. “Working autonomously as well as collaborating with other media companies will become way easier”**, according to Auquier.

Text : Laura Vermeire