

# OUR CANDIDATES

**Mohamed  
Ridouani**  
1st Place



I grew up in a blue-collar neighbourhood in the city centre as the eldest of six children of my parents who came from Morocco to work in Belgium. As a child, I hung around in the neighbourhood house where they taught me to read and write and opened my horizon. Not just my parents, but also other Leuvenaars showed me.

I started higher education and worked in a fast food to pay for my studies. I began my career at Deloitte consultancy and saw the world. But my heart stayed in Leuven: at age 26 I got involved in local politics and became one of the youngest aldermen in the city. I married Geertrui and we are the happy parents of two sons.

I have worked every day to make Leuven a better place, a city where opportunities are given and taken. I care about people. Many people in my life gave me a chance to fulfil my dreams. I want to give this chance to everyone else.

If you want to know more about my story and vision, read my recent book (in Dutch) „Verbinden boven verdelen“ – Bring Together, Don't Set Apart.

**Bieke  
Verlinden**  
2nd Place



As alderwoman for social affairs, I stand for excellent and affordable childcare for every child; financial, social and educational support to families; strong community work; mobility and citizen participation. I want to continue making Leuven a city where everyone feels at home, healthy and supported, where neighbours aren't strangers, where we work together with the Leuvenaars to create green, lively and playful public places, where health and care services are affordable and easily available for everyone who needs them and where our youngest citizens can grow up, play and discover safely and be supported in it.

**Bruno  
Tobback**  
3rd Place



I run for the Leuven city council as current member of the Flemish Parliament. I'm convinced that the sp.a Leuven team has the ideas and energy to keep the city fresh and alive in the decades to come. I want to contribute to it. My priorities are mobility, environment, life quality and culture.

**Denise  
Vandevoort**  
4th Place



As alderwoman for culture, art education, equal opportunities, diversity and development cooperation, I employ myself every day to make Leuven warm, cozy, dynamic and creative. I aim for a just city thinking of everyone, together with everyone, in respect for each other.

**Mich  
De Winter**  
5th Place



As leader of the sp.a group in the Leuven city council, chairman of sp.a in the Flemish Brabant province and organiser of the Café Jardin evenings in Oratoriënhof in the Mechelsestraat, I'm very active in our movement. I work for a Leuven that is social, healthy, safe, open and tolerant where everyone can develop themselves. I focus on affordable childcare and free basic schools, more green in the city, pleasant and lively neighbourhoods and safer space for pedestrians.

**Lalynn  
Wadera**  
6th Place



As a young mom of three sons living in Kessel-Lo, I'm convinced that each child in Leuven must get the chance to develop on all fronts. This is what we stand for in sp.a Leuven.

**Christophe  
Stockman**  
7th Place



I'm a proud Leuenaar since 2009 when I moved from the East Flemish Ronse to my wife's hometown. I was city council member in Ronse and in Leuven I'm the member of the welfare council OCMW. As a sports teacher and father of two sporting children, I know that body movement makes people happier. I want to make Leuven the most active city of Flanders because sport gives energy, improves health and well-being and promotes togetherness.

**Mieke  
Vandermotte**  
8th Place



With a sense of civic activism and with a lot of enthusiasm and energy, I put my efforts in improving life in Leuven. I support investments in a city friendly to all age groups, in cozy and accessible places where all such people can meet. All information from the city must also be accessible in physical, non-digital form in the city office and in mobile neighbourhood offices, or in people's mailboxes.

**Pieter  
Vandenbroucke**  
9th place



I was born in Kessel-Lo, grew up in Heverlee, studied in the city centre to end up living with my family in Wilsele. I enjoyed growing up here and I want to make sure that all children grow up happy and with all opportunities. As member of the council of the welfare authority OCMW, I worked to achieve more social housing, to help financially those on the social housing waiting list, to support for children in poverty and to build a new housing and care centre in Wijgmaal. Equal opportunities and caring for each other: that's what makes us Leuvenaars. With your support, we will continue working to achieve it.

**Lothe  
Ramakers**  
10th Place



As a mom of 3, I always put the focus on children's needs. I want every kid to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. Therefore, we must keep on fighting against poverty, make sure every child has a safe daily trip to and back from school or playground, and give every child the opportunity to develop in every way they can: at school, at home, in the cultural or social area.

**Hannes  
De Geest**  
11th Place



I'm very motivated to help fight against poverty and climate change, and to improve safety on our roads. I want the city to give each family in need a coach to help them solve their problems, to renovate as many buildings as possible to reduce energy consumption, to create more safe bike lanes and to plant a lot of trees in and around lovely Leuven.

**Aynur  
Tasdemir**  
12th Place



I thank all Leuvenaars for the warm welcome 27 years ago. Getting into politics is my unique chance how to give something back to this beautiful global city. I want to show that the harmony in which we live, with over 170 nationalities, requires everybody's lasting commitment. I have worked in the social sector for 16 years. The care for those in need is my major concern, especially better education, tailor-made jobs and adjusted senior care.

**Bert  
Cornillie**  
13th Place



I'm a Professor of Spanish Linguistics at KU Leuven. My mission is to connect people and communities, to strengthen the ongoing projects such as the Buddy Project, Leuven 2030 and Leuven Mindgate and to further renew politics and Leuven by counting on the expertise of citizens, academics and students.

**Dorien  
Meulenijsz**  
14th Place



I live in Sint-Maartensdal and am renovating a house in Leuven to make it wheelchair-accessible. Through my history studies at KU Leuven, culture and art became my hobby and I became a volunteer in the city's M Museum. I work as accessibility advisor for the city of Leuven and am a member of the welfare council OCMW. To me, caring for each other is the basis of our society. I want to focus on fully accessible public transport; tailor-made care, including support for family and friend carers; and to encourage developers and landlords to provide accessible housing.

**Surya  
Dhakal**  
15th Place



In Nepal, I worked as an attorney. In Leuven, I work for Familiehulp, learn Dutch at CVO and follow a training with VDAB. As a father of two, I want to promote job opportunities for everyone, entrepreneurship and the international image of Leuven. I strongly believe in cooperation and commit myself to invest my knowledge and energy for the benefit of all Leuvenaars.

**Jolien  
De Hertog**  
16th Place



After my social work studies I continue studying government management and policy at the KU Leuven. As a young Leuvenaars by birth, I want this city to be a warm home for everyone just like it has been for me. I also think that there is a need for young people to get engaged in shaping policies. As social worker, I see the urgent needs in the care for children, the youth, seniors and people with handicaps. As a city, we have to do more. Everyone must get a chance to work as work gives a sense of contributing to society. Businesses and social economy must be encouraged to give a job also to people who have difficulty one. Leuven must continue to be for everyone, irrespective of their background, a home where people can develop and participate in society.

**Steven  
Meynckens**  
17th Place



I grew up in Boven-Lo, playing in the fields and woods with my friends or playing football in the Korbeek-Sport club. I went to secondary school in the city centre. I went on to study philosophy at the KU Leuven and got a job at the headquarters of the Socialist Health Insurance. I chose my study and work in search of a just society where everyone counts. My political involvement is the next phase of this search. I want to focus on affordable and social housing, support for talents and for event organisers, and easily accessible daycare, schools and associations.

**Sarah  
Mohamed Khalif**  
18th Place



I'm a 20-year-old student in international business and I have Somali roots. I want to give something back to the Leuven community and make a difference in the future. I would like to bring neighbourhoods and inhabitants closer together through activities and projects.

**Tomas  
Carnier**  
19th Place



I'm 18 and a student of history at the KU Leuven. 11 out of those 18 years I have been a scout and later scout leader at the Sint Jacob group in the city centre. I appreciate how the city's history is visible in its streets. The Oude Markt, the Vaartkom, the City Park... are meeting places for all ages. The many festivals and concerts bring extra buzz to this energetic hotspot. I want the city to do more for the youth and our future. I want to contribute to it in Mo's team.

**Claire  
Vanobbergen**  
20th Place



As a young Leuvenaar, I want to be a role model for teenagers and the youth to show how important it is to be active in your community if you want to make a difference. I live in Heverlee – Terbank and study social work. I'm active in the Young Socialists movement since I was 15 and on Sundays, I volunteer as a scouts leader in Egenhoven. In these elections, I want to focus on mental health, especially of the youth.

**Igor  
Vandriessche**  
21st Place



Together with Mo, I will do my best to make Leuven even more pleasant – for everybody. As a Leuvenaar by birth with dad from Ghent and mom from Antwerp, I'm strongly motivated to think about our city together with you. Send me your comments and ideas by sms/WhatsApp to 0476/91 21 75 or by e-mail to [igorvd@live.be](mailto:igorvd@live.be).

**Irma  
De Wolf**  
22nd Place



I'm a pensioner who has lived in in Wilsele-Putkapel and who spent her career working for Philips in Leuven. I'm also a loyal fan of OH Leuven and Olympia Wijgmaal football teams. I want to make my contribution to the well-being of senior Leuvenaars.

**Dirk  
Witters**  
23rd Place



Since my youth I have always been socially active in many associations, often as a board member. Now at age 63, I know how important it is to work together to achieve things; I see that each time when we play in the Concertband Leuven. I want to continue working on the future of the city, to make Leuven even more attractive to everyone, regardless of age, origin or religious conviction.

**Iwona  
Pom**  
24th Place



I studied psychology, design and audiovisual and work as filmmaker and audiovisual designer. I would like to encourage and strengthen cooperation among associations and organisations to improve life quality in Leuven, especially towards innovation, co-creation, inclusion and sustainability.

**Jan  
Schoolmeesters**  
25th Place



I'm art teacher and coach in teachers' training. I stand for sp.a Leuven with conviction and passion because I strongly believe in diversity and justice, in an open and progressive vision for society where optimism and hope prevail and in the many strengths of Leuven.

**Laila  
El Abouzi**  
26th Place



A Leuvenaar by birth, I studied IT at Groep T and work in a bank. I am involved with the city's department for diversity and equal opportunities. After my first term as city council member 2006-2012, I want to re-engage with Leuven, in particular in the areas of education and fight against discrimination.

**Mattias  
Langens**  
27th Place



Leuven is a city that does well and that develops and grows fast. That brings about new challenges, too: housing, mobility, life quality. I want to engage to find positive solutions and to contribute to keeping Leuven a cool, safe and wellfaring city for everyone.

**Ilse  
Heeren**  
28th Place



I'm running for the city council on the sp.a ticket and Mee met Mo – together with Mo – because I have seen with my own eyes the beautiful things that our party has achieved over the past 24 years. I stand for a social, caring and green city, with extra attention to our most vulnerable inhabitants. I want a city that is accessible for the elderly, that helps people out of poverty and that educates all its children.

**Maarten  
Verbiest**  
29th Place



A 34-year-old father of two with a background as social assistant and sociologist, I work at the KU Leuven as sustainability advisor. I want to invest my expertise for my city with which I fell in love when I came here to study. Leuven must become a climate-resilient and CO2-neutral city in a socially responsible way while becoming even more enjoyable to live, work and grow up in. We also want to cherish and strengthen its diversity because that makes our city so open and progressive.

**Valérie  
Dons**  
30th Place



I work for the Flemish Agency for the Interior and study communication. In the evenings and weekends, I help at the city's receptions and events. There, I meet fellow Leuvenaars and listen to their stories to know what lives among them. I want to put my efforts into helping vulnerable groups, into stimulating contacts and communication between people and communities and to represent my city district of Wijgmaal.

**William  
Trappeniers**  
31st Place



I'm an IT guy born in 1980, a proud product of public education. I have always volunteered, earlier as a scout, now for example for Curieus Leuven. I'm a strong believer in a fair society where people contribute according to their capacities. In Leuven, I want to push for better care, pleasant public spaces and affordable housing for everyone. With space for everyone's talents and with smart investment, we will build an even more dynamic Leuven.

**Nancy  
Hamels**  
32nd Place



As a mom and elementary school teacher, I want to help children and teenagers to discover their talents, develop themselves and gain self-confidence. With Mo and the entire sp.a Leuven team, I'm determined to continue building innovative and caring education.

**Patrick  
Sys**  
33rd Place



As a trade unionist, I fight to improve the rights of workers. I also volunteer for charities, the neighbourhood bar in Hal 5 in Kessel-Lo, where I live, and the Volkskeuken (people's kitchen). I want to continue improving the city with our sp.a Mee met Mo team and to build on how our retiring mayor Louis Tobback led it to blossom. We want to go on building this inclusive city where people care for each other.

**Myriam  
Welkenhuysen**  
34th Place



I strive for a social, dynamic, more diverse and cozier Leuven, for more space for youthful experimenting like Hal 5, for more citizen involvement and, above all, for more attention to vulnerable groups, for example neighbourhood evenings and cooking sessions for families and single moms in poverty and for refugees.

**Jiri  
Hladik**  
35th Place



Among my many identities, I'm a European Leuenaar. I studied law in Prague and Leuven, and work as EU public servant. I would like to focus on affordable housing and lively neighbourhoods adjusted for everyone's needs, on chances for all children and on environmental sustainability. I want to be there for Leuenaars, and especially close to those of you living in the centre, the Benedenstad and the Ridderbuurt and Vaartkom neighbourhoods. I want to be your "buurtsos". I strongly believe in cooperation in good faith for a common goal. Check my website (with an English section): [www.jirihladik.eu](http://www.jirihladik.eu)

**Carina  
Govaerts**  
36th Place



I live with my husband André in Kessel-Lo. I have worked for the Royal Museum for Fine Arts in Brussels for almost 30 years. I like reading, walking and dancing and learn English in the evening school. I want to do something good for the Leuenaars: achieve better roads in Kessel-Lo, more social housing and culture accessible for everyone.

**Ludo  
Castro**  
37th Place



I'm a recent pensioner with a career as teacher and federal public servant in the Social Security Administration. Now I can be active again within sp.a and want put my energy into creating a bigger offer of affordable housing at discounted rents, into developing sustainable mobility further and into achieving a city truly without poverty.

**Liza  
Feyaerts**  
38th Place



I work as federal public servant. I was born in Russia and have lived in Leuven for 26 years where my two children were born. I studied pedagogy and languages at KU Leuven and I am also the director of the Russian School in Leuven. I know that Leuven is the perfect place to bring smart and motivated people from different cultures together to achieve great things.

**Dirk  
Staf**  
39th Place



I studied four languages and have worked as a translator, teacher and international project coordinator. My true passion is education as it guarantees a bright future for all children and youngsters. I have six children aged between two and nineteen myself. In addition, as a football coach and referee for pre-school children, I see how important cooperation and teamwork are. Bringing young people together to help them live their dreams is what I stand for.

**Evelien  
Peeters**  
40th Place



I'm a 35-year-old mom of 3 and second mom of 1. I work as urbanist and spatial planner. I want to make sure that all children get good education to be prepared for fabulous future. I also want to achieve more nature and more trees in the city.

**Gunther  
Blauwens**  
41st Place



I'm the general secretary of the Socialist railway union, which I also represent in the European Transport Workers' Federation. I strive for accessible, environmentally friendly and affordable mobility, including for people with disabilities. My other priorities are climate-neutral city, safety and affordable housing. I want to work on a society where everyone gets the chance to develop their talents and where respect and tolerance have a real meaning.

**Daisy  
Kaerts**  
42nd Place



I'm 46 and mom of two daughters. Together with the other 46 candidates I want to work to make Leuven a more caring, green and prosperous city – for everyone. My focus is on affordable housing for all Leuvenaars and more facilities for the youth and youth associations.

**Jaak  
Brepoels**  
43rd Place



As a historian and history teacher, I was always fascinated by the history of our city and of Socialism and the Labour movement. I wrote several books about these topics. I have been city council member since 1982 and was alderman for three terms in Louis Tobback's city governments.

**Myriam  
Fannes**  
44th Place



I'm the city's alderwoman for seniors, green and nature, clean city and piety of cemeteries. I was born in Leuven 60 years ago and grew up in Beneden-Kessel; my husband and I now live in Wilsele. I would like to continue working, together with the entire sp.a team, to make Leuven even more pleasant for everyone.

**Dirk  
Robbeets**  
45th Place



I'm the city's alderman for public works, in my fourth term. A Leuvenaar by birth, I live together with An in Kessel-Lo. Before my political career, I was a teacher in a school for children with special needs. I'm quite tall, so I played basketball in several clubs and am still a committed fan of Leuven Bears. I focus on mobility and transport and would like to see bike holders on electric buses riding through neighbourhoods with fewer cars.

**Marije  
Laffeber**  
46th Place



I am Deputy Secretary-General of the Party of European Socialists ([www.pes.eu](http://www.pes.eu)), the second largest political party in Europe. I'm an EU citizen from the Netherlands. I live in Leuven because it's a vibrant international city, cool for students, with good quality schools for kids and lots of green. Social Democrats from sp.a are in the lead in Leuven. So vote for us to continue investing in a progressive international city!

**Louis  
Tobback**  
47th Place



I have been your mayor for the past 24 years. My wife and I live in the Matadi neighbourhood in Heverlee. Our two sons Bruno, who followed my footsteps as a politician, and Wim, an attorney, have lives of their own. Before my political career, I studied Roman philology and was a secondary school teacher of French in Leuven. In the city, I was city and OCMW council member, alderman and since 1995 mayor. In Belgian politics, I was minister, senator and party chairman. I will retire as mayor after the elections and will study the wonders of mathematics. But first, I engage myself 200 % to support Mohamed, who has my full trust.

