



## **IUC 2026 Call**

### **Stage 1: Expression of Interest and Commitment**

**Restricted access**

**4 July 2024**

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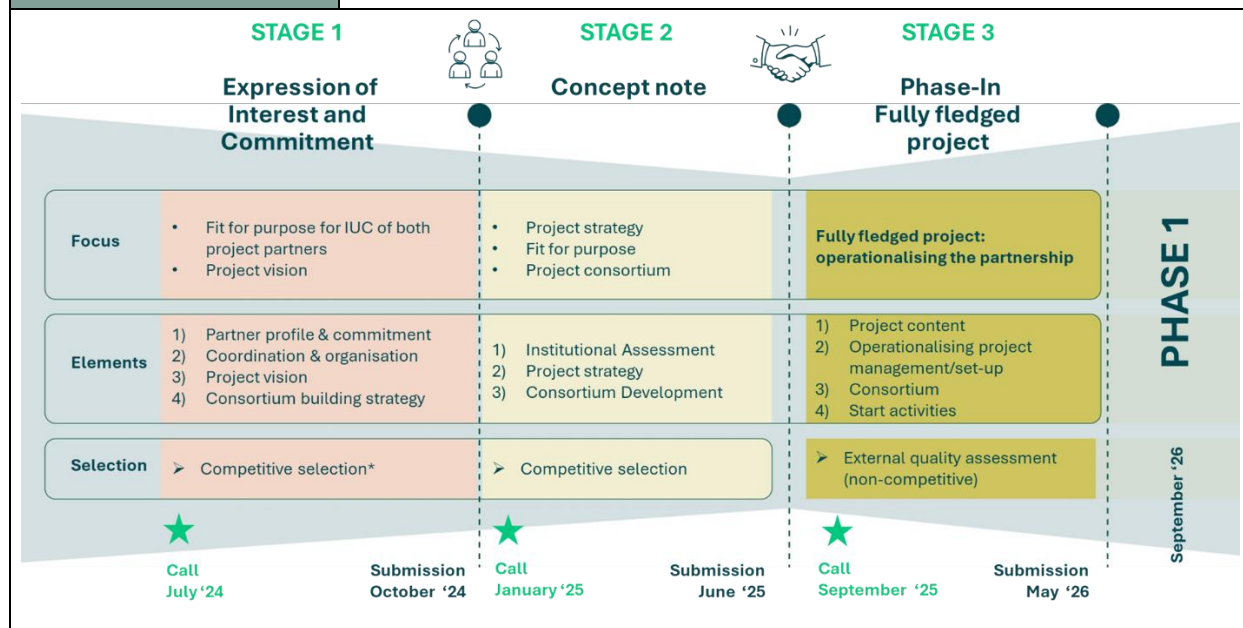
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# Summary

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| Aim of an IUC project    | <p>An Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) partnership is a long-term institutional cooperation project between a university in a partner country and Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts, lasting 12 years.</p> <p>An IUC project strategy is steered by the strategic plan of the partner university and focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enabling a change process within the partner university leading to improved institutional performance via transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects;</li> <li>- strengthening educational and research capacities via different academic theme based sub-projects,</li> </ul> <p>for the partner university to operate as driver of change for global sustainable development in its country, region, and globally.</p> <p>An IUC project targets partner universities with whom one or more Flemish higher education institutions have already collaborated. This ensures trust among project partners and provides experience with each other's governance and management, enhancing results and efficiency. An IUC project aims at taking an already existing partnership to the next level, i.e., the level of a long-term, multi-institutional, and multi-stakeholder partnership with focus on institutional capacity building. Therefore, access to this programme is restricted.</p> |
| IUC project phases       | <p>An IUC project, lasting 12 years, is developed via different phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phase-in</b> (ca. 1 year): project formulation activities, preparing the operational and management modalities/set-up and support structure within the partner and Flemish university's policy framework and governance, and identification of (PhD) scholars.</li> <li>• Two main <b>project phases</b> of 5 years each, with a Phase 1 focusing on capacity building and creating the conditions for uptake, and a Phase 2 focusing on consolidation, uptake, impact, and sustainability.</li> <li>• <b>Phase-out</b> (ca. 1 to 2 years): taking stock of all results; financial and administrative closing; closing event; preparing for search for new funding opportunities to sustain the partnership.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Set-up of an IUC project | <p>An IUC project adopts a Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP) set-up, involving multiple teams of academics and specialists from the partner university, as well as multiple Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts.</p> <p>An IUC project also adopts a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) set-up, involving different stakeholders from society (e.g., governments, civil society organizations, private sector) from the beginning.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| IUC selection procedure  | <p><b>Stage 1 - Expression of Interest and Commitment:</b> focus on fit for purpose for IUC of the project partners and project vision</p> <p><b>Stage 2 - Concept Note:</b> focus on fit for purpose for IUC of the partner university, project strategy &amp; content, and consortium development (MIP and MSP)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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|                                       | <p><b>Stage 3 - Phase-In:</b> focus on fully fledged proposal, operational and management modalities/set-up &amp; support structure</p> <p>A maximum of 10 Expressions of Interest and Commitment will be selected.<br/>A maximum of 6 IUC projects can start on 1 September 2026.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Expression of Interest and Commitment | <p>Applicants are invited to develop a joint (Flemish-partner) Expression of Interest and Commitment. The focus is on selecting partnerships with an inspiring impactful project vision, supported by a partner and a Flemish university that are both fit for purpose for IUC. High-level institutional commitment from their respective academic authorities is essential to ensure the success of the IUC project and institutionally contribute to it.</p> <p>The main elements of the Expression of Interest and Commitment are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Process:</b> how was the proposal developed, who is involved, track record</li> <li>A presentation of the <b>partner university:</b> profile and value framework, track record of cooperation with Flemish higher education institutions, institutional strategy, context analysis, factsheet.</li> <li><b>Project content:</b> a high-level project <b>vision</b></li> <li><b>Project organisation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinators: presentation of the coordinators' team, their track record of cooperation, motivation, justification of fit for purpose.</li> <li>Partner and Flemish institution: organisation of the project, justification of fit for purpose.</li> </ul> <p>Letters of commitment from the rector of the involved institutions for the project, project organization and the coordinator.</p> </li> <li><b>Partnership:</b> approach to broaden and embed the partnership locally and in Flanders as Multi-Institutional and Multi-Stakeholder Partnership.</li> </ol> |
| IUC partner countries                 | Benin, Bolivia, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| IUC partner universities              | <p><u>Profile</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open to all recognised universities located in an IUC partner country. Universities on the 'Top 2000 institutions' of the <a href="#">Webometrics Ranking of Universities</a> list are not eligible.</li> </ul> <p><u>Cooperation track record</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partner university should have been awarded at least one VLIR-UOS project (SI, TEAM, ITP, or JOINT) that started in 2015 or later. In case the VLIR-UOS project has not yet been finalized by 31 August 2024, additional justification of (VLIR-UOS project) management performance must be provided.</li> <li>Former IUC universities are not eligible.</li> </ul> <p><u>Number of applications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A partner university can submit only one application.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| IUC coordinators                      | <p><u>Affiliation and statute of the coordinators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flemish coordinator: professor at a Flemish university with a ZAP statute (Independent Academic Personnel), with a minimum ZAP appointment level of 10% (or equivalent, cfr. KULeuven), and an 80% employment</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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|                                 | <p>status, and with minimum 7 remaining active years at the time of submission. A co-coordinator should be appointed in case the coordinator does not have 7 more active years to go, with the co-coordinator having at least 7 remaining active years and also meeting the eligibility criteria for coordinatorship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner coordinator: professor, with at least an 80% employment status at the partner university</li> </ul> <p><u>Additional criteria</u></p> <p>A Flemish academic can be coordinator of only one IUC project. Flemish coordinators of ongoing IUC projects on the date of submission of the Expression of Interest and Commitment are not eligible.</p> |
| Annual budget of an IUC project | <p>The maximum annual budget of an IUC project is still under revision. Currently it stands at € 600,000, meaning that the budget for a first phase of cooperation is up to € 3,000,000.</p> <p>The final budget will be mentioned in the IUC 2026 Call for Concept Notes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Important dates                 | <p>The Call for Expressions of Interest and Commitment will be launched on 4 July 2024.</p> <p>An online information session will be organised on 8 July 2024, from 14h00 PM to 16h00 PM CET. You can already register <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> for the submission of an Expression of Interest &amp; Commitment is <b>17 October 2024 (17h00 CET)</b>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction to Sharing minds, changing lives

### 1.1.1. Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development

There is an increasing consensus on the importance of strong higher education and science institutions (HE&SIs) and systems in addressing sustainable development challenges. HE&SIs play a key role in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim to end poverty, protect the planet, foster gender equality, defend and promote cultures and cultural understanding, and ensure prosperity for all. In this respect, the Global Sustainable Development Report calls upon all stakeholders to facilitate multidirectional collaboration in science and (transfer of) technology to achieve the SDGs. It considers academic and scientific capacity strengthening and partnerships as one of the four main levers to achieve the 2030 Agenda and implies a strengthened link between higher education institutions, governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Higher education institutions offer disciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching and research as they generate and contribute to the development of new and innovative approaches to global, regional, and local issues.

Through research, HE&SIs play a unique role as drivers of change by producing new knowledge and innovation to address global challenges, by transferring knowledge through training, by providing evidence for informed (public) policy and implementation, and by knowledge mobilisation. Through their teaching, universities and universities of applied sciences and arts empower generations of new leaders and skilled professionals to drive sustainable development. Today's students are the decision-makers and professionals of tomorrow, who think both critically and ethically, have learnt to cope with ethical dilemmas, and who can apply systems thinking approaches to serious and complex societal problems.

HE&SIs have also taken up a central role in providing global citizenship education to nurture a global understanding and a more profound intercultural awareness. Through service delivery and community engagement, HE&SIs work with a rich variety of stakeholders – including governments, the private sector, and civil society – for local, national, regional, and global impact.

### 1.1.2. FYP2 ambitions

VLIR-UOS outlined new ambitions for its Five-Year Programme 2022-2027 where the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development serves as the main reference point. VLIR-UOS is committed to purposefully mainstream the 3 SDG principles of 'Leave No One Behind (LNOB)', 'Interconnectedness' and 'Multi-stakeholder partnerships', throughout its ambitions, policies, programmes, portfolio, partnerships, and scholarships. The focus of Agenda 2030 on meaningful impact through multi-stakeholder partnerships resonates with the ambition of our FYP2, called "Connect4Change". It is our goal to focus on cooperation among and beyond academic actors, on collective learning and mutual inspiration (Connect, Learn, Inspire) and on societal impact (valorisation).

These policy ambitions have been translated into the project selection criteria and descriptors for all our programmes. VLIR-UOS wants new projects to **capitalise** on former and/or other relevant projects as a stepping stone, and to stimulate **multi-institutional cooperation** among and beyond academic actors as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships with at least 1 non-academic actor. It is an added value in the competitive selection of projects when collaborations are sought beyond the academic sector or when different Flemish or partner HE&SIs are involved in a project proposal, be it universities, universities of applied sciences and arts, or both.

A specific objective of VLIR-UOS is to mobilise academics who have no prior experience with VLIR-UOS to engage in "sharing minds, changing lives", with specific focus on young academics, female academics, and

academics with expertise in disciplines that are underrepresented in VLIR-UOS projects (e.g. social sciences). In the framework of IUC, it has been shown that being part of an IUC project as team member, or even team leader, is a very good learning trajectory towards future broader engagement within the academic cooperation for global sustainable development community.

### 1.1.3. Partnership principles

VLIR-UOS expects all parties involved in VLIR-UOS funded partnerships to uphold a number of principles and to apply them throughout the implementation of a project or scholarship.

This consists of:

- respect for human rights and integrity;
- pro-active strategies to ensure diversity, equality, and inclusivity, and that vulnerable groups are included in and benefit from higher education partnerships for sustainable development;
- decent work, research ethics, and research-based education;
- strategies and action to prevent and protect involved people and beneficiaries from risks related to violations in these areas, and adherence to overall fairness, respect, care, and honesty;
- overall, the development of equal and mutually beneficial partnerships.

#### Human Rights' framework:

Universities are the cornerstones of academic education, scientific research and social services. In recent years, these universities have grown to become some of the largest employers, where internationalisation is the rule rather than the exception. This internationalisation is becoming more and more important and is reflected, among other things, in staff and student exchanges, contributions to capacity building in the Global South, international networking, clustering of research capacity and cross-border research cooperation. Universities are also academic safe havens where students can develop into critical citizens and researchers can freely address fundamental issues, applied scientific research, and valorisation. Respect for human rights is inherent to universities' social role.

On the basis of the human rights' framework, developed at the level of VLIR, all Flemish universities have developed a human rights' policy that focuses on the positive impact that universities can have on their partners, partner countries, and society at large. The issues facing academics are not specific to any one university, nor even to academia in general. These are everyday issues that also confront other educational and research institutions, and companies. The university management boards of the Flemish universities hope that this human rights assessment will inspire other organisations and individuals.

In line herewith, all Flemish universities have an institution-specific operational framework to assess human rights' conditions in view of (potential) partnerships with partner universities, at pre-contract level, when assessing whether or not to engage in a partnership, and/or at the level of project implementation. Given the cooperation model of VLIR-UOS, whereby a project agreement is signed by the implementing Flemish and partner HE&SIs that identifies the overall guiding principles, roles, and responsibilities of each participating institution and individual, the human rights' check is not only part of the VLIR-UOS selection system (risk analysis and implementation set-up of the project), but will also be performed by the respective human rights' commission of the Flemish universities. Promoters are advised to reach out to the Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation (ICOS) for more information.

#### 1.1.4. SDG principles as a compass for VLIR-UOS projects

The SDG principles serve as a compass for the VLIR-UOS endeavour of sharing minds, changing lives. As visualised in the Theory of Change (ToC), they are transversally integrated, using a broad interpretation of the principles, to make the activities and change processes SDG proof. Additionally, VLIR-UOS uses the SDG principles as a compass to integrate the principles of “synergy and complementarity” and the integration of transversal and priority themes of the Belgian Development Cooperation into its operations. Integration of these principles is an important element in the selection of projects.



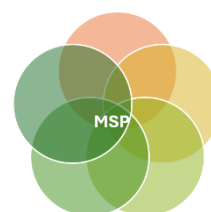
**Interconnectedness:** VLIR-UOS recognises that given the complexity, scale, and interconnectedness of current societal challenges, meaningful social, economic, and ecological transformations can only be realised by approaching the SDGs from a holistic and integrated viewpoint. More precisely, VLIR-UOS strives for holistic transformations by encouraging projects to reflect on their position in the interplay of global challenges and national needs, and to bring together the different types of expertise that are necessary to successfully implement the project. As an essential first step in considering the complexity of societal change, all VLIR-UOS supported projects develop a holistic context analysis that moves beyond sectoral and disciplinary borders and should analyse the positive as well as negative interlinkages between the SDG goals. This also includes paying attention to the transversal themes gender equality and environmental sustainability.

With regard to **gender**, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in *fixing the numbers*, *fixing the knowledge* and *fixing the organisation* in line with the theoretical three-fixes model of Londa Schiebinger (See [VLIR-UOS gender policy document](#)). Projects are expected to align with this threefold gender strategy in their proposal.

With regard to **environment**, project applicants are invited to consider the environment and environmental sustainability during the project identification and formulation phase, as well as to monitor and reflect upon the project's effects on the environment and the risks posed by the environment on their project. Thereby, projects should be guided by the ‘do no harm’ principle to prevent, reduce, and control the risk of environmental harm. Besides integration of gender equality and environmental sustainability concerns within project management, the transversal themes can also feature in the projects' content.

#### **Coherence, multi-institutional collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnerships:**

The complexity, scale, and interconnectedness of the current societal challenges that the SDG framework is seeking to address, requires a concerted effort or collaboration by a wide variety of actors. This need for concertation/collaboration is translated to 3 potential approaches. Proposals are invited to explore these.



- **Coherence:** The Agenda 2030 urges actions to be **coherent** with the actions and networks of other actors and/or other HES4SD initiatives. An analysis of complementary actions by academic and non-academic actors is essential for each partnership (to ensure coherence). VLIR-UOS wants to facilitate coherence and connections between different actors and projects present in a given country and across borders and/or working on the same topics. With these objectives in mind, Country Reference Framework (CRF) documents<sup>1</sup> support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis per country, focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector, and by providing an overview of Belgian development

<sup>1</sup> Country reference frameworks are available for the 17 VLIR-UOS project countries, cf. links at the end of this document.

actors active in one of the project partner countries of VLIR-UOS and of their ongoing projects and partners, as a starting point for context analyses.

- **Multi-institutional collaboration via a Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP):** This concerns a structural collaboration between several higher education institutions at Flemish/Belgian (including the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM)) and/or partner level within the framework of a project, with the aim of obtaining better results by pooling available expertise and making it available to the project and the project partners in a concerted way. The different institutions take up a meaningful and important role in the project. In fact, the Flemish higher education institutions have recently created a platform through their “Associative projects”<sup>2</sup> that are dedicatedly fostering these types of cooperation. It goes without saying that an IUC project is by nature a Multi-Institutional Partnership at the Flemish level, considering that next to the Flemish coordinating university, also other Flemish HEIs are structurally involved.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP):** this concerns a structural collaboration between a university and at least 1 non-academic actor within the framework of a project, in which this actor plays an active role in the project implementation. There is a diversity of possible stakeholders : civil society, private sector, and/or governmental actors, etc. The actors in the MSP work towards a common goal, with a clear division of roles and responsibilities, which are formalised, e.g. in the project agreement. VLIR-UOS takes into account the MSP principle by promoting collaboration between different actors (beyond HEIs) to co-create, share, and mobilise knowledge and expertise across disciplines, sectors, interest groups, and borders. More precisely, VLIR-UOS explicitly puts forward the science-society interface and knowledge uptake, and the importance of strengthening it.



**Leave No One Behind (LNOB):** VLIR-UOS recognises the need for pro-active strategies to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised populations are included and benefit from higher education partnerships for sustainable development. The LNOB principle is taken

into account by looking at partners with whom we work, at beneficiaries for whom we work, and what we focus on in projects. VLIR-UOS encourages projects to take gender and vulnerable groups into account, by putting forward partnerships with mid-range or small-scale institutions, by awarding scholarships to a diversified group of beneficiaries, and by promoting transformative or community-based types of research. More precisely, international top higher education institutions are only considered when they participate as supporting partners in projects, scholarship attribution is not only based on academic excellence in terms of scientific output, and mainstreaming approaches are put in place to consider inclusion and (gender) equality in each project. As mentioned earlier, with regards to **gender**, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in *fixing the numbers*, *fixing the knowledge*, and *fixing the organisation* for gender equality. This is also an important dimension of the Leave No One Behind principle.

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<sup>2</sup> “Associative projects”: VLIR-UOS provides funding for each Flemish university to set-up a minimum policy framework, organisational structure and operation of HES4SD at institutional level. Additionally, through the “associative projects”, each Flemish university commits to offer, in principle and as far as possible, the same or comparable services in the context of HES4SD to the lecturers of the universities of applied sciences and arts (UASA) that are associated with the university, as is offered to the academics of the university, e.g. support when looking for project partners, when submitting project proposals etc. In addition, the “associative projects” aim at intensifying cooperation among the university and the UASA. The scope of the “associative projects” is primarily focusing on the UASA of the university’s association, but should ideally go beyond and also focus on all Flemish UASA, regardless of the association they are affiliated to. Promoters are advised to reach out to the ICOS for more information.

## 1.2. What's new in this IUC 2026 Call?

### 1.2.1. IUC 2026 Call

On the basis of lessons learned from previous IUC calls, conclusions and recommendations from former and ongoing IUC projects following from mid-term and end-of-project evaluations, and a number of IUC review and consultation workshops in 2024, a number of important changes have been introduced for the IUC projects starting in 2026.

The main changes are listed below:

- The IUC programme is a flagship programme of VLIR-UOS, with huge evidence of great impact in the Global South. It is also of great importance for the Flemish higher education institutions as IUC projects can also serve as well-organised and accessible platforms for pioneers to get first time experience and to connect with other projects, as well as in terms of international outreach and networking. This IUC 2026 call recognises, for the first time, the importance of this additional platform, mobilization and connection function and its contribution to facilitating and strengthening multi-institutional partnerships (MIP) at the level of Flemish higher education institutions, academics and students. Therefore, the selection procedure foresees a limited policy intervention in Stage 1 to allow all Flemish universities to develop at least one new IUC project proposal together with a partner university, provided quality standards are met.
- Quality is key, also at the level of the managing institutions and coordinators. An IUC project is a long-term project, with a very large budget, and with great complexity given the set-up of various sub-projects and related local and Flemish stakeholders, and of MIP on the Flemish side. This requires a management capacity both from the partner and the Flemish coordinating university. Also the role of coordinators is crucial: their ability to facilitate change in a partner institution, taking into account local governance, to deal with resistance to change, to mediate conflicts and build consensus, as well as to connect with and build consensus among a very large group of stakeholders, also in Flanders, is crucial to the success of an IUC project. Screening of the fit for purpose of the individual coordinators and their complementarity as a team, as well as the screening of institutional management capacities of both institutions has therefore become an important part of the Expression of Interest and Commitment.
- Given the importance of building MIPs within Flanders, consortium building in the framework of the IUC project proposal has become more important. Therefore, an approach as to how to match expertise in Flanders with expertise needed for the IUC project is now part of the Expression of Interest and Commitment.
- Finally, the position of the IUC programme within the VLIR-UOS portfolio has been clarified : the IUC programme is only accessible to partner universities with substantial prior cooperation experience with one or more Flemish higher education institutions and to proposals and coordinators who have full institutional support from the top management of their university. In this sense, the IUC call can no longer be considered as a call where it is only about individual academics using their academic freedom to take the initiative to individually submit a project. Prior cooperation, high quality standards and full institutional support have become eligibility criteria for new IUC projects. This is why as of now we refer to IUC projects as “the next level” projects.
- VLIR-UOS no longer applies criteria with regard to regional balances at the level of the new projects. Neither is there a maximum number of new IUC projects per country.
- Given present geopolitical situation, attention for human rights and knowledge security has increased at the level of VLIR-UOS and the Flemish higher education institutions. We call upon partner universities to also pay due attention to these topics.
- The call document structure and IUC narrative format were adapted to the new stages and simplified using less sector specific vocabulary and simplifying different sections. In terms of requirements, the detailed Theory of Change (ToC) approach for IUC projects was left out at this stage, however, a request for a high

level vision along the principles of ToC was maintained. A stronger focus has been introduced on evidencing the commitment of involved universities and of quality project management.

Next steps in Theory of Change development are foreseen as of the Concept Note stage and will be fully included in the stage of Fully Fledged proposals. Consequently, VLIR-UOS will provide more methodological support during the next stages of the IUC intake.

### 1.2.2. Upcoming IUC Calls

An IUC call is launched every 3 to 5 years, being 1 or 2 calls per Five-Year Programme. Within FYP2 a second IUC call will be prepared, i.e. the IUC 2028 call. These IUC 2028 projects will be executed in FYP3.

## 2. Key features of IUC projects

### 2.1. Aim

An Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) partnership is a long-term institutional cooperation project between a university in a partner country and Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts, lasting 12 years.

An IUC project strategy is steered by the strategic plan of the partner university and focuses on:

- enabling a change process within the partner university leading to improved institutional performance via transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects;
- strengthening educational and research capacities via different academic theme based sub-projects,

for the partner university to operate as driver of change for global sustainable development in its country, region, and globally.

At a secondary level, an IUC is also important for Flemish HEIs as a platform for mobilization of pioneers and for connecting with other projects, as well as to facilitate and strengthen multi-institutional cooperation at the level of Flemish higher education institutions, academics and students.

### 2.2. Key features

- An IUC project, lasting 12 years, is developed via different phases:
  - **Phase-in** (ca. 1 year): project formulation activities, preparing the operational and management modalities/set-up and support structure within the partner and Flemish university's policy framework and governance, and identification of (PhD) scholars.
  - Two main project phases of 5 years each, with a **Phase 1** focusing on capacity building and creating the conditions for uptake, and a **Phase 2** focusing on consolidation, uptake, impact, and sustainability.
  - **Phase-out** (ca. 2 years, of which year '11' foresees in the core activity): taking stock of all results; financial and administrative closing; closing event; preparing for search for new funding opportunities to sustain the partnership
- An IUC project targets partner universities with whom one or more Flemish higher education institutions have already collaborated. This ensures trust among project partners and provides experience with each other's governance and management, enhancing results and efficiency. An IUC project aims at taking an already existing partnership to **the next level**, i.e., the level of a long-term, multi-institutional, and multi-stakeholder partnership with focus on institutional capacity building and with a sound management system

at the level of both the partner and Flemish coordinating university. Therefore, access to this programme is restricted.

- An IUC project includes a **Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP)** set-up, which is obligatory, involving multiple teams of academics and specialists from the partner university, as well as from multiple Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts. A minimum set up for an IUC project involves minimum 5 Flemish HEIs, including the coordinating university, of which minimum 3 universities and 2 universities of applied sciences and arts, included as part of the team, not necessarily in the capacity of team lead. At least 3 different Flemish HEIs have a mandate, being 1 university with the mandate of coordinator (of the IUC project) + at least 2 other institutions with the mandate of team leader (of subprojects). The number of subprojects is not defined. It can range from 5 to 7 (indicative).
- An IUC project also includes a **Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP)** set-up, involving different stakeholders from society (e.g., governments, civil society organizations, private sector) from the beginning.
- IUC projects are steered by the strategic plan of a partner university, which means that **sustainable institutional commitment** to the project from the academic authorities of the partner university is key.
- IUC projects are expected to structure as well as monitor their activities and deliverables around **six core domains**: (i) education programmes and methods, (ii) research programmes and methods, (iii) individual capacity strengthening, (iv) outreach and policy support, (v) networks and partnerships and (vi) systems, policies and infrastructure.
- The **project strategy** focuses on (i) enabling a change process within the partner university leading to improved institutional performance via transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects, focussing on strategic policy domains and a strengthening of the role as driver of change, (ii) strengthening educational and research capacities through different academic theme based sub-projects, and (iii) contributing to sustainable challenges through a strong science-society link at the level of the region or country of the partner university.

## 2.3. Characteristics of IUC partner universities

### 2.3.1. Institutional characteristics

- Only **universities** in listed partner countries are eligible for IUC funding. Research institutes are not eligible.
- An IUC partner university is not a first tier institution in a country, but a **mid-range institution with sufficient academic capacity** to build upon. Top international institutions are not targeted. As such the top 2000 institutions of the webometrics list are not eligible for participation.
- Preference is also given to universities that because of distance, communication and/or other factors are less privileged in terms of accessing national or international resources. (Leave no one Behind). This could be translated in a **preference for regional versus metropolitan universities**.
- **Preference will be given to public institutions**. However, both public and private universities may be considered insofar as the private universities are able to meet the selection criteria and taking into consideration the recommendations of the higher education policies in the respective countries.

### 2.3.2. A basic institutional capacity is required at the level of policy and operational frameworks and practices

VLIR-UOS is not a funding agency. Therefore, an IUC project is based on academic collaboration, and does not cater for:

- major investments in terms of facilities and infrastructure

- institutional funding (salaries or other recurrent costs)
- basic institutional planning and system development.

Put differently, an IUC partner university is expected to be able to function adequately at all levels, and be able to direct its own institutional destiny in a coherent manner. **This assumes an adequate level of institutional planning and management, and an institutional environment that is transparent.** This also implies in kind funding for the project (e.g. for local scholarships, and exemption of lecturing/other academic duties for PhD candidates). This includes a sufficient exposure to research as well as the availability of trained human resources. There is need for institutional stability, and a minimum of own financial means. It also assumes a readiness to engage in a process of change management.

**English** is the IUC working language. Consequently, potential IUC partner universities will be required to demonstrate a sufficient ability to use English as a working language. However, at the level of local programme implementation, other languages can be used (e.g. French in DR Congo, Spanish in Latin America, ...).

### 2.3.3. Value framework of IUC partner universities

#### Overall commitment

All involved partner universities will be invited to commit to the following which is part of all VLIR-UOS project agreements:

*“Considering that all contracting parties are committed to contributing to the attainment of Agenda 2030 and to streamlining the 3 SDG principles (Leave No One Behind, Multistakeholder partnerships, Interconnectedness) throughout their goals, policies and activities, as they relate to the project that is object of this agreement;*

*Considering that given the complexity, scale and interconnectedness of current societal challenges, meaningful social, economic and ecological transformations can only be realised by starting from a holistic and integrated approach to the SDGs, by producing, sharing and mobilizing knowledge and expertise across disciplines, sectors, interest groups, and borders, and by engaging in equal multi-actor partnerships;*

*Considering that Higher Education and Science Institutions (HE&SIs) are committed to contribute to global citizenship education, fair partnerships, and a broader understanding of sustainable development into their threefold mission: research, education, and service to society.*

*Considering that*

- *research generates new knowledge and ideas that can facilitate the attainment of Agenda 2030;*
- *education provides new generations of engaged, critical, global citizens with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences, as well as motivation to contribute to sustainable development as agents of change;*
- *knowledge mobilization and uptake extend the impact of research and education to a wide array of stakeholders in society and enables them to take action for sustainable development.*

*Considering the need at the level of all contracting parties, throughout project implementation :*

- *for pro-active strategies to ensure diversity, equality and inclusivity, and that vulnerable groups are included in and benefit from higher education partnerships for sustainable development;*
- *to ensure meeting the needs of all people within the means of the planet;*
- *for respect for human rights and integrity;*
- *for decent work, research ethics and research based education;*

- *for strategies and action to prevent and protect involved people and beneficiaries from risks related to violations in these areas, and for adherence to overall fairness, respect, care and honesty.”*

## Policy framework of IUC partner universities

- The IUC partner universities are selected based on their ambition to improve institutional performance with regard to their **threefold mission** (education, research and service delivery) and to be further enabled to operate as driver of change in a national context. This is translated in the fact that priority for IUC partnerships is given to universities that see this role as driver of change as their explicit mission. This goes back to the mission statement of VLIR-UOS university cooperation for development of 2000 referring to the three functions of a university and the role of a university in society: *“The university combines three functions in a unique manner. The university generates knowledge through research. The university disseminates knowledge, inter alia via instruction. The university permanently and critically reflects on the society in which it is situated, and with which it continuously interacts in various ways. Through this combination, which is essential to the university, and by the fact that the university makes the knowledge generated available to society, universities play a specific and fundamental social role.”* *“VLIR-UOS wishes to collaborate with universities in the Global South which adopt the three above-mentioned missions and which attempt to freely disseminate and make accessible the acquired knowledge. These partners are selected both on the basis of their potential with respect to university education and research and for the emancipatory role they play within their society. Priority is given to institutions which make a specific contribution to the development of these countries.”*
- In order to meet the objectives of the IUC programme and ensure local ownership, the IUC project proposal would be expected to **meet the priorities of the institutional development plan / strategic planning documents of the university**. Put differently, VLIR-UOS will not invest in academic fields or needs that are institutionally not considered to be priorities. In order to achieve institutional impact, the Phase 1 Fully Fledged proposals should be sufficiently broad and provide multi-disciplinary opportunities, i.e. not be limited to one department or be very discipline specific.  
While at the level of the selected partner universities this could imply a **preference for so-called ‘complete’ universities, this may not always be possible** (e.g. in countries where universities are organised by discipline) or required in view of the extent to which the concerned partner university is meeting other criteria or considerations.
- An IUC partner university is also expected to have proven track record or potential in terms of uptake, change and **impact on society**. Partner universities should have a track record of working together with other societal actors in their country (embeddedness of education and research, multistakeholder partnerships).
- Partner universities must pursue an active policy of cultural, ethnic, social and philosophical **non-discrimination** and be open to cooperation with any other institution and/or individual who adhere the same values, **and need to have, or work on, a gender, integrity and human rights policy**.
  - An IUC partner university is expected to develop proactive policies taking into account diversity, equality and inclusivity, sustainable development, respect for human rights and integrity, decent work, research ethics and research based education; overall fairness, respect, care and honesty.
  - Referring to the Human Rights policy at level of the Flemish higher education institutions, it is important to mention that also IUC partner universities will be required to subscribe to the general policy and procedures which are part of all VLIR-UOS project contracts: *“All parties pledge to uphold human rights as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. If one of the contracting parties is involved in a serious or systematic violation of human rights, the other party can unilaterally terminate the contract after a dialogue between all in-volved parties has taken place, with*

*the goal of openly discussing problems, concerns, and possible solutions while taking into account each party's context."*

#### 2.3.4. Cooperation track record and potential

An IUC project targets partner universities with whom one or more Flemish higher education institutions have already collaborated. This ensures trust among project partners and provides experience with each other's governance and management, enhancing results and efficiency. An IUC project aims at taking an already existing partnership to the next level, i.e., the level of a long-term, multi-institutional, and multi-stakeholder partnership with focus on institutional capacity building, based on sound management systems at the level of both the partner and Flemish coordinating university. Therefore, access to this programme is restricted.

An IUC project proposal should therefore build upon existing links with one or more Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts. This is translated into the minimal requirement to have been involved in at least one VLIR-UOS project between the partner university and a Flemish HEI.

##### **Eligibility criterion in the IUC 2026 call:**

The partner university should have been awarded at least one VLIR-UOS project (SI, TEAM, ITP, or JOINT) that started in 2015 or later.

In case the VLIR-UOS project has not yet been finalized by 31 August 2024, additional justification of (VLIR-UOS project) management performance must be provided.

IUC projects are vehicles to promote multi-institutional cooperation among Flemish higher education institutions in general, and the participation of Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts in particular. The ability to mobilize broad support among Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts referring to existing links may contribute to the quality of the application.

Also the ability to mobilise within the Global South, national/regional/international south-south networking, is a positive factor such that possible outputs and results may be spread and/or shared with a wider group of institutions in the Global South.

Furthermore, the ambition is, next to working towards the realization of the project results, to also focus more on connecting IUC projects with, in the first place, other VLIR-UOS funded projects, such as Global Minds projects, ICP Connect projects, with possibly the support from the "Associative Projects", to enable more Flemish academics to get involved in academic cooperation for global sustainable development. But connection with other types of projects funded by other donors is also aimed at. IUC projects are regarded as platform for connecting to other projects.

#### 2.3.5. Funding level

Irrespective of size and development stage, a fixed annual budget is availed to IUC partner universities through an IUC project. At the same time a situation of over-funding (risk of over-dependence) or under-funding (no impact) has to be avoided.

As such, VLIR-UOS will give preference to collaboration with partner universities whereby **VLIR-UOS is the most important** or one of the most important **donors** such that impact and a genuine institutional dialogue can be ensured. Evidence from evaluations confirm that IUC projects work best in this context. However, in

order to avoid a situation whereby the level of funding is disproportionate to the level of basic/recurrent (government) funding, only partner universities with a reasonable size can be considered. Indeed, a partner university that is limited in terms of its staff and student body and/or its recurrent budget may draw VLIR-UOS into a collaboration that may not be sustainable in the long run.

### 2.3.6. Overall context

The national context in both political and economic terms must be sufficiently safe and stable to allow for a long term commitment to collaboration with the Flemish higher education institutions.

## 2.4. Budget

The normal maximum annual budget of an IUC project is € 600.000, meaning that the full budget for a first phase of cooperation is up to € 3.000.000 for the whole five-year phase. These amounts are still subject to revision during the preparation of the Concept Note Call.

It is also important to note that depending on the institutional capacity assessment, a lower IUC annual budget can be advised and foreseen.

The [VLIR-UOS financial framework](#) indicates which expenses are allowed in the framework of a project.

The applicable budget lines are:

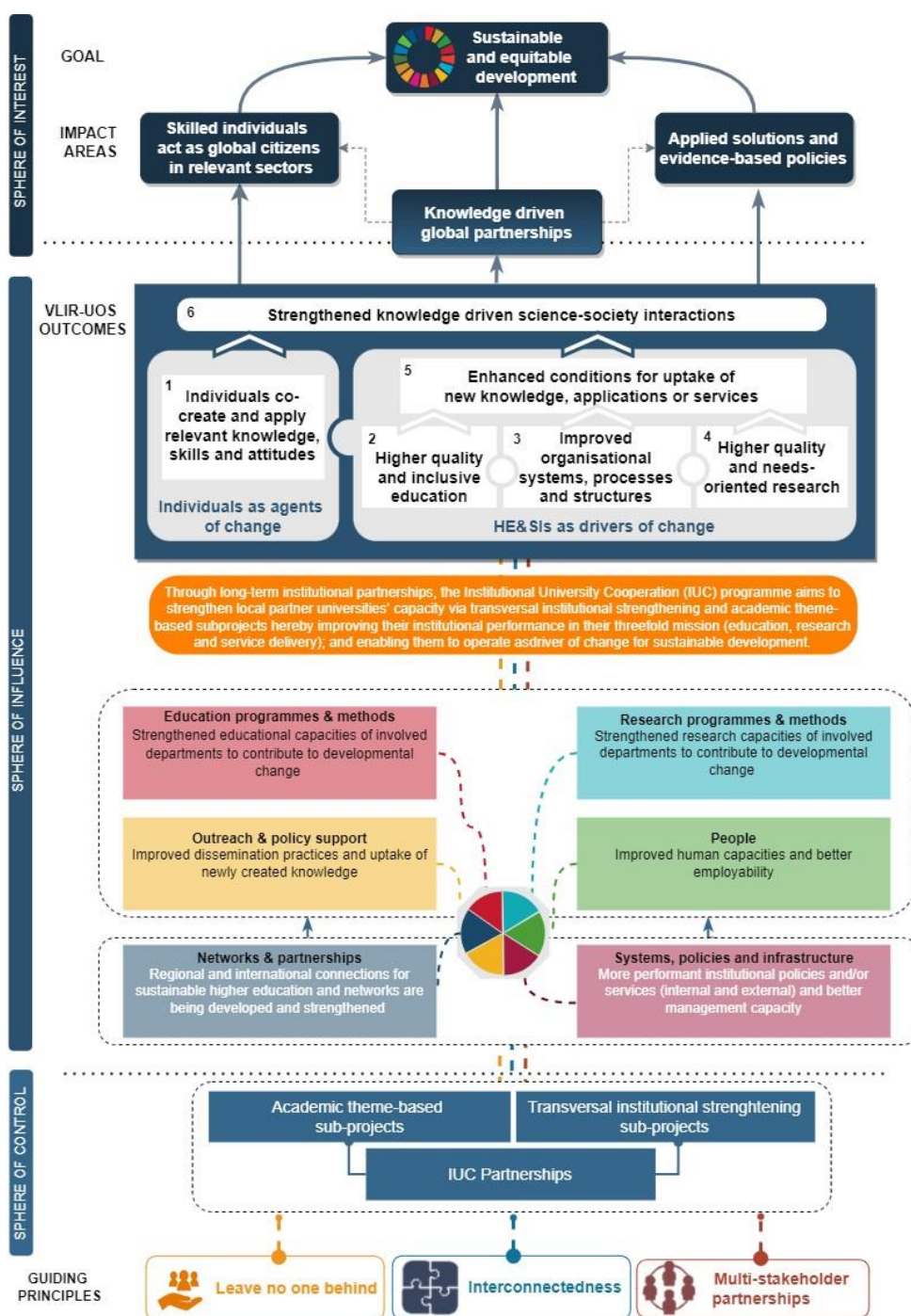
- A. Investment costs (durable goods with a long life that can be depreciated in the accounts over several years)
- B. Operational costs (“project-related” costs incurred for the purchase and/or operational use of goods that are not depreciated in the accounts and costs directly related to a specific project activity)
- C. Personnel costs
- D. Scholarship costs
- E1. Coordination costs at the level of the Flemish university (5% of the sum of budget lines A-D)
- E2. Coordination costs at the level of the partner university (5% of the sum of budget lines A-D)

VLIR-UOS channels all financial transactions via the Flemish coordinating university.

## 3. IUC Theory of Change model

### 3.1. IUC Theory of Change and objectives

The IUC projects’ Theory of Change (ToC) below reflects the general Theory of Change for the VLIR-UOS portfolio and how the objectives of IUC fit into the theory. The VLIR-UOS Theory of Change explains how a given project, or set of projects, is expected to lead to long-term development change. The ToC draws on a causal analysis based on available evidence, clarifying the anticipated pathways to impact. It clarifies how VLIR-UOS wants to make a contribution to Agenda 2030, which changes IUC projects can make, and how they can do so.



### 3.2. Long-term impact

VLIR-UOS considers global engagement for higher education as a goal (SDG 4: Quality Education) and a means for attaining other SDGs. In the long run, the IUC programme, implemented via a number of IUC Partnerships, is expected to contribute to more sustainable and equitable development by fostering:

- **Application of solutions and evidence-based policies:** In short, this refers to the role of higher education in applying new knowledge, insights, and evidence for sustainable development. Effective partnerships are conducive to ensure the relevant stakeholders are engaged and opportunities for uptake are created. This leads to a broader application of new knowledge by end-users and can include policymakers

applying evidence from research in their policies, local communities adapting new practices that address their local needs, and private companies adapting innovative approaches.

- **A global community of skilled individuals who act as global citizens in relevant sectors:** In short, this refers to the potential of HE&SIs to develop generations of new leaders and skilled professionals. These skilled individuals are expected to drive social and economic development with their contributions to relevant sectors. As critical global citizens, they are likely to have a multiplier development effect because of (i) their capacity to understand and question global power structures and to communicate and work/study effectively outside one's local environment, (ii) because of their consideration of interdependence and social concern for others, and (iii) because of their civic engagement in the form of pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour.
- **Knowledge-driven global partnerships:** In short, this refers to the idea that reciprocal partnerships are essential to safeguard knowledge co-creation, exchange, and uptake within and beyond the scope of the supported projects. In line with SDG 17, VLIR-UOS aims for sustainable, effective, and efficient partnerships at various levels, including the individual, institutional, country, and regional levels, both within the HE sector, and with other sectors.

### 3.3. IUC strategic axes and outcomes

To effectively contribute to these generic objectives, VLIR-UOS focuses on **two strategic axes**:

- Enabling HE&SIs to strengthen and take up their role as *Drivers of Change*
- Enabling individuals to act as *Agents of Change*.

Both strategic axes can reinforce one another. For instance, the extent to which HE&SIs take up their role as development actor is likely to affect the embedded scholarship students' development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to effectively act as agents of change within and beyond the setting of the HE&SI.

Along these strategic axes, VLIR-UOS identifies six outcomes. Outcomes refer to the change(s) a project wants to realise by the end of the implementation period, namely:

- (1) **Individuals apply relevant co-created knowledge, skills, and attitudes.** This outcome indicates the co-creation and transfer of state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to individuals who then apply these in their own organisation. The skills and knowledge also include critical thinking, global citizenship skills and attitudes, leadership skills, etcetera.
- (2) **HE&SIs provide higher quality and more inclusive education.** This outcome concerns the improved quality and inclusiveness of education as a result of strengthened educational capacities available at HE&SIs.
- (3) **HE&SIs make use of improved organisational systems, processes, and structures.** This outcome was formulated to highlight the importance of the organisational capacity of HE&SIs to enable changes in terms of research and education capacities. It encompasses improved organisational processes (e.g. ICT/digitalisation), support systems (e.g. quality assurance), and structures as well as human capacities that contribute to HE&SIs' enhanced institutional performance.
- (4) **HE&SIs conduct higher quality and needs-oriented research.** This outcome reflects the VLIR-UOS ambition to strengthen research capacities in order to enable HE&SIs to develop higher quality and needs-oriented research processes and results. This outcome signifies HE&SIs becoming (more) research active

and innovative and being enabled to produce solutions to local and global challenges. It also refers to research that is gender-sensitive and equity-focused as a means for achieving excellence in research.

- (5) **HE&SIs create enhanced conditions for the uptake of new knowledge, applications, or services.** VLIR-UOS identifies this outcome as the production of new knowledge, applications, and services, and the creation of conditions for uptake by relevant external stakeholders. It can involve strategic, uptake-oriented stakeholder management, targeted dissemination, and capacity strengthening of end-users (or intermediaries).
- (6) **HE&SIs and their stakeholders engage in knowledge-driven science-society interactions.** This outcome responds to the growing awareness of the importance of the science-society interface which has been identified as a weakness in recent VLIR-UOS evaluations. It reflects the VLIR-UOS ambition to support networks, partnerships, or platforms that can constitute an eco-system where academic (HE&SI's staff, students and alumni) and non-academic stakeholders (policymakers, ANGCS, donor organisations, private sector, embassies etc.) interact to facilitate the valorisation and uptake of knowledge.

IUC projects aim at contributing to all above mentioned VLIR-UOS outcomes.

### 3.4. How do projects deliver on their outcomes: domains of intermediate change/outputs ?

In general, IUC projects are expected to bring about results in potentially **six (project) domains**: *Research programmes and methods, Education programmes and methods, Outreach and policy support, People, Systems, policies and infrastructure, Networks and partnerships*. The deliverables, processes, and changes in these domains are interlinked and not mutually exclusive. In the case of IUC partnerships the *Systems, policies and infrastructure* and *Networks and partnerships* – implemented primarily via a number of instrumental transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects– constitute the basis or fertile ground for activities and outputs in the other four domains which are primarily implemented via academic theme-based sub-projects creating strengthened and combined research and educational capacity and leading to better conditions for uptake of new knowledge, applications and services.

Depending on the finality of a particular (sub-)project, the domains can be combined in different ways as the needs and priorities identified by the individual (sub-)project co-determine the way and extent to which the project aims to contribute to these domains.

| Domain                           | General description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Research programmes and methods  | Improved (interdisciplinary) methodologies and strengthened quality and relevance of research to allow better knowledge management and high-quality research results serving societal needs                                                                                                                                                          |
| Education programmes and methods | Improved, innovative, and inclusive teaching methods, didactics, and digital approaches. Improved curriculum content to support knowledge co-creation and equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge, ensuring employability after graduation and the ability to tackle global challenges from a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective |
| Outreach and policy support      | Enhanced interaction with relevant public, private, and academic stakeholders to share knowledge, create conditions for uptake, and provide policy advice/support                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Systems, policies, and infrastructure | Better management, information systems, educational and research policies to improve functioning of HE&SIs, including policies on gender and diversity, research integrity and uptake. Improved equipment, laboratories and offices for education and research                                                              |
| People                                | Students, alumni, staff, researchers are trained/sensitised in a supportive learning environment to strengthen knowledge, skills & attitudes in diverse domains (e.g. leadership, global citizenship).                                                                                                                      |
| Networks and partnerships             | Strengthened interactions within reciprocal partnerships and engagements at local, regional, and global levels between HE&SIs, researchers, staff, students, and other stakeholders in society (public actors, private actors, other civil society organisations (CSOs), communities, etcetera) for sustainable development |

## 4. Eligibility criteria for the IUC 2026 call

Eligibility criteria define whether a proposal meets the minimum criteria to be accepted to enter the selection process. Each call for proposals defines its clear eligibility criteria.

A project proposal always includes promoters (in this case of the IUC 2026 call, “coordinators”) from a Flemish university and a university located in a VLIR-UOS project partner country. Eligibility criteria apply to countries, institutions and coordinators.

For the IUC 2026 call, the following eligibility criteria apply:

### 4.1. Eligibility of countries

The following countries are eligible for the IUC 2026 call :

| Africa   |              | Latin-America | Asia        |
|----------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| Benin    | Rwanda       | Bolivia       | Indonesia   |
| DR Congo | South Africa | Cuba          | Philippines |
| Ethiopia | Tanzania     | Ecuador       | Vietnam     |
| Kenya    | Uganda       | Peru          |             |
| Morocco  |              |               |             |

### 4.2. Eligibility of applicants

#### 4.2.1. Eligibility of partner universities

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Profile</b>                  | Open to all recognised universities located in an IUC partner country. Universities among the top 2000 institutions of the <a href="#">Webometrics Ranking of Universities</a> list are not eligible.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Cooperation track record</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The partner university should have been awarded at least one VLIR-UOS project (SI, TEAM, ITP, or JOINT) that started in 2015 or later. In case the VLIR-UOS project has not yet been finalised by 31 August 2024, additional justification of (VLIR-UOS project) management performance must be provided.</li><li>Former IUC universities are not eligible.</li></ul> |
| <b>Number of applications</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A partner university can submit only one application.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

#### 4.2.2. Eligibility of coordinators

##### Affiliation and statute of the coordinators

- Flemish coordinator: professor at a Flemish university with a ZAP statute (Independent Academic Personnel), with a minimum ZAP appointment level of 10% (or equivalent, cfr. KULeuven), and an 80% employment status, and with minimum 7 remaining active years at the time of submission. A co-coordinator should be appointed in case the coordinator does not have 7 more active years to go, with the co-coordinator having at least 7 remaining active years and meeting the eligibility criteria for coordinatorship
- Partner coordinator: professor, with at least an 80% employment status at the partner university involved

The coordinators will be invited to confirm, when submitting the proposal in the VLIR-UOS tool, to meet both the internal and VLIR-UOS eligibility criteria and regulations. In case the coordinator is to retire during the project implementation, they must already indicate who will succeed them.

#### **Additional criteria**

A Flemish academic can be coordinator of only one IUC project. Flemish coordinators of ongoing IUC projects on the date of submission of the Expression of Interest and Commitment are not eligible.

### **4.3. Eligibility of submission**

The proposal must meet the submission requirements as described below:

**What?** A project proposal is only eligible when submitted via the online tool, whereby the format is strictly followed, meaning that all sections are completed and all mandatory annexes are uploaded, as prescribed by the call.

In order to facilitate the preparation of the information to be submitted directly in the tool, VLIR-UOS made available a Word format as a working environment among project applicants. However, only proposals submitted via the online platform will be taken into account.

**How?** A project proposal is only eligible when submitted via the [new tool for the submission of project proposals](#).

**Who?** An application involves a Flemish and partner coordinator. It is the Flemish coordinator who submits the proposal to the ICOS of the Flemish university, for quality control and check with internal regulations related to Flemish promoter eligibility. The ICOS will validate the proposal in the online submission tool and submit it to VLIR-UOS.

#### **Deadline?**

- Proposals must be submitted to the ICOS of the Flemish university. For internal deadlines at the level of the Flemish university, check with your ICOS.
- The final deadline for submission to VLIR-UOS by the ICOS is **17 October 2024 (17h00 CET)**.

### **4.4. Roles and responsibilities in the eligibility check**

It is the responsibility of the ICOS to submit the proposal, thereby checking

- whether the proposal is complete and in line with both internal and VLIR-UOS regulations;
- with specific attention for the following: whether the Flemish coordinator is allowed to act as project promoter and budget holder within their own institution.

The ICOS do so by performing a check of the respective relevant internal regulations.

The Flemish IUC coordinator will be invited to confirm to meet both the internal and VLIR-UOS eligibility criteria and regulations when submitting the proposal in the VLIR-UOS tool.

## 5. Timeline and support

### 5.1. Timeline Stage 1

The IUC intake process is a multi-stage process with 3 main selection stages, each consisting of several steps in the procedure. The following table provides further detail with regard to Stage 1 - Call for Expression of Interest and Commitment.

| STEP IN PROCESS                                                              | RESPONSIBLE                  | DATE                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Launch call                                                                  | VLIR-UOS Team                | 4 July 2024                                                                                                   |
| Information session (live in Brussels, with hybrid participation facilities) | VLIR-UOS Team                | 8 July 2024                                                                                                   |
| Deadline for submission to ICOS                                              | Flemish coordinators         | Please contact the ICOS or GEO of the Flemish institution (university association level, see contact details) |
| Deadline for submission by the ICOS to VLIR-UOS                              | ICOS                         | 17 October 2024 ( <b>17h00 CET</b> )                                                                          |
| Eligibility check and decision, and notification in case of non-eligibility  | VLIR-UOS Team and Bureau UOS | 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of October 2024                                                                          |
| IUC Selection Commission meetings                                            | VLIR-UOS Team                | Week of 9 December 2024                                                                                       |
| Notification of selection                                                    | VLIR-UOS Team                | Week of 16 December 2024                                                                                      |

### 5.2. Application support

The ICOS are the contacts for VLIR-UOS at the Flemish universities. The Global Engagement Officers (GEO) are our main contacts at the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts (UASA). ICOS and GEO inform academics, specialists and lecturers about opportunities for cooperation. They help with formulating project proposals and provide support for the execution of the projects.

Specifically in the framework of project calls it is to be noted that the main responsibilities related to Application Support (submission, eligibility check internal regulations) rely on the ICOS of the Flemish university association. The ICOS of the university association function as liaison between the VLIR-UOS Team and the individual Flemish institutions and academics/lecturers. The ICOS are the first line of contact to assist applicants with the elaboration of their project proposal (eligibility check, explanation of the financial framework, assistance in filling out the project modules, etc).

As a general principle, support will be provided in a multi-stage process, in which applicants first contact the ICOS at the level of their institution/university association. Where needed, the ICOS will cluster and forward the questions they cannot answer to VLIR-UOS.

Questions related to the VLIR-UOS project tool can be sent or forwarded to [info@vliruos.be](mailto:info@vliruos.be).

All relevant information to elaborate a Stage 1 Expression of Interest and Commitment proposal, is included in this call document, and will also be available on the VLIR-UOS website.

An online information session will be organized on **8 July 2024, from 14h00 PM to 16h00 PM CET**. You can register [here](#).

### 5.2.1. Contact addresses of the ICOS

| University Association                          | Name                          | Address                                                                                                            | Email and phone number                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KU Leuven Association                           | Tupac Calfat                  | International Office, VLIR-UOS projects, Naamsestraat 63 - bus 5001, 3000 Leuven                                   | <a href="mailto:Tupac.Calfat@kuleuven.be">Tupac.Calfat@kuleuven.be</a><br><a href="mailto:icos@kuleuven.be">icos@kuleuven.be</a><br>+32 16 37 94 40 |
| Associatie Universiteit & Hogescholen Antwerpen | Team internationale projecten | International Relations Office Gratiekapelstraat 10, 2000 Antwerpen                                                | <a href="mailto:icos@uantwerpen.be">icos@uantwerpen.be</a><br>+32 3 265 44 07                                                                       |
| Ghent University Association                    | Steven Schoofs                | Dienst Onderzoeksaangelegenheden – Team Partnerships Global South; Building 06.10, Universiteitstraat 8, 9000 Gent | <a href="mailto:Steven.schoofs@ugent.be">Steven.schoofs@ugent.be</a><br>+32 9 264 82 23                                                             |
| Associatie Universiteit-Hogescholen Limburg     | Liesbeth Oeyen                | Dienst Internationalisering en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (DIOS), Campus Hasselt, Martelarenlaan 42, 3500 Hasselt   | <a href="mailto:liesbeth.oeyen@uhasselt.be">liesbeth.oeyen@uhasselt.be</a><br>+32 11 26 80 66                                                       |
| Universitaire Associatie Brussel                | Christophe Goossens           | Vrije Universiteit Brussel International Relations and Mobility Office, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussel                  | <a href="mailto:christophe.goossens@vub.be">christophe.goossens@vub.be</a><br><a href="mailto:icos@vub.be">icos@vub.be</a><br>+32 2 614 80 66       |

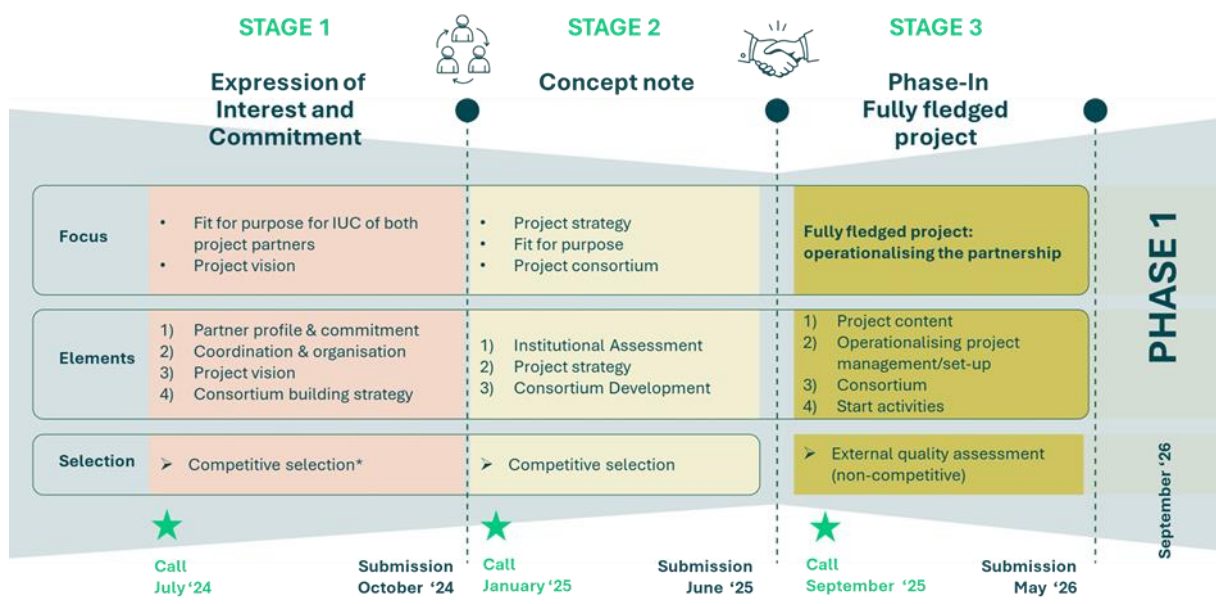
If needed, the contact details of the respective GEO per university of applied sciences and arts can be obtained via our [website](#).

### 5.2.2. Contact at VLIR-UOS

| Topic                                                                                                     | Name and function                                         | Email and phone number                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| General info IUC Call<br><br>Country-specific info for Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Vietnam and Ethiopia | Peter De Lannoy<br><i>Global Partnerships Coordinator</i> | <a href="mailto:Peter.Delannoy@vliruos.be">Peter.Delannoy@vliruos.be</a><br>+32 2 550 19 64<br><br>(not available between 10 July and 21 August 2024)    |
| Country-specific info for Benin, DR Congo, Morocco and Uganda                                             | Kathleen Wuytack,<br><i>Global Partnerships Manager</i>   | <a href="mailto:Kathleen.Wuytack@vliruos.be">Kathleen.Wuytack@vliruos.be</a><br>+32 2 289 05 55<br><br>(not available between 20 July and 7 August 2024) |
| Country-specific info for Tanzania and Kenya                                                              | Geraldine Mabbe<br><i>Global Partnerships Manager</i>     | <a href="mailto:Geraldine.Mabbe@vliruos.be">Geraldine.Mabbe@vliruos.be</a><br>+32 2 550 19 62<br><br>(not available between 20 July and 18 August 2024)  |
| Country-specific info for Rwanda, South-Africa, Indonesia and the Philippines                             | Laura Uwase<br><i>Global Partnerships Manager</i>         | <a href="mailto:Laura.Uwase@vliruos.be">Laura.Uwase@vliruos.be</a><br>+32 2 289 05 59                                                                    |

## 6. Stages within the IUC 2026 Call

IUC projects are long-term partnerships that are developed during different stages. Through an incremental approach, sustainable multi-institutional partnerships are created. The three key stages in the IUC 2026 call are shown below here.



### Stage 1 –Expression of Interest and Commitment

#### What you should know about Stage 1 - Expression of Interest and Commitment ?

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus:    | <p>The focus of the Expression of Interest and Commitment is on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presenting a first project vision, aligned to the Global South partner's institutional strategy and profile</li> <li>demonstrating the commitment and fit for purpose for IUC of both institutions and coordinators</li> <li>developing an approach to develop a broad consortium: Multi-Institutional Partnership in Flanders and a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership in the partner country</li> </ul> |
| Timing:   | <p>Call: July 4, 2024</p> <p>Submission: October 17, 2024</p> <p>Selection: week of December 9, 2024</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Selection | Competitive selection (*) by the IUC selection commission. A maximum of 10 proposals will be selected                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Applicants are invited to develop a joint (Flemish-partner) Expression of Interest and Commitment. The focus is on selecting partnerships with an inspiring, impactful project vision, supported by a partner and a Flemish university and team of coordinators that are fit for purpose for IUC. High-level institutional commitment from their respective academic authorities is essential to ensure the success of the IUC project and institutionally contribute to it.

The main elements of the Expression of Interest and Commitment are:

1. **Process:** how was the proposal developed, who was involved, track record, etc.
2. A presentation of the **partner university:** profile and value framework, institutional strategy, track record of cooperation with Flemish higher education institutions, context analysis, factsheet, match with “characteristics of IUC partner universities”.
3. **Project content:** a high-level project **vision**, with a first indication of the broad theme and underlying challenges that will be the starting point for the elaboration of detailed outcomes and subproject themes in the next Stages of IUC project development.
4. **Project organisation**
  - Coordinators: presentation of the coordinators’ team, their track record of cooperation, motivation, match with profile, etc.
  - Partner and Flemish institution: organisation of the project, institutional commitment and management capacity, match with profile

Letters of commitment from the rector of the involved institutions for the project, project organization and the coordinator.

5. **Partnership: approach to broaden and embed the partnership locally and in Flanders as a Multi-Institutional and Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (cf. consortium development):**

Given the policy priority to actively focus on recruitment of pioneers and on MIP and MSP collaboration, the involvement of academics from all Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts and other societal actors sufficiently early in the project formulation process, and thus the process to realize this involvement and the transparency of it, have become more important. The process for determining the content of projects and their implementers must be tailored to this increased importance of MIP and MSP.

Thus, the matchmaking process has become more important. It is important for persons to meet and get to know each other personally and professionally, building mutual trust and respect. In-person meetings and open personal conversations as well as site visits can lay the foundation for mutual acquaintance based on a good understanding of each other (expertise, ambitions, contextual factors) and mutual trust, a condition to start with when then moving on to the phase of developing a shared dream and translating it into a joint project thereby guaranteeing the project ownership and commitment of all parties.

IUC partnerships are multi-institutional by design. They involve multiple teams of academics and specialists at the level of the partner university on the one hand, and at the level of the Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts on the other. At Flemish level, there is a compulsory Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP) set-up to enable to pool all relevant expertise in the Flemish HE sector and mobilise expertise for the IUC partner university. For this purpose, every project is expected to present a **strategy**, as part of the Expression of Interest and Commitment, to develop such a multi-institutional partnership set-up in the Concept Note stage and beyond, i.e. an approach to identify and mobilize the necessary expertise, potential team leaders and project members. This is done by matching skills/expertise needed, and available skills/expertise available in the Flemish HEI. Applicants need to explain what strategy they will use to identify and activate available and possibly interested experts within the Flemish HEIs in order to come to a multi-institutional project set-up.

After launching the IUC 2026 call, VLIR-UOS will engage with Flemish HEI and exchange over how HEIs and VLIR-UOS can organise themselves in view of consortium building (cf. links with “Associatieve projecten” and Global Minds).

The strategy as to how the IUC project partners will reach out to civil society actors, government and/or private partners is integrated in the Concept Note stage, but will be more prominent in the phase-in (formulation) and the later implementation.

## Stage 2 – Concept Notes

### What you should know about Stage 2 – Concept Notes ?

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus:    | <p>The focus of the Concept note is on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fit for purpose of the partner university, on the basis of the institutional assessment (self-evaluation+ external review)</li> <li>• developing a project strategy, in line with the institutional capacities of the partner university</li> <li>• implementing the approach to develop a broad project consortium.</li> </ul> |
| Timing:   | <p>Call: January 2025</p> <p>Submission: June 2025</p> <p>Selection: September 2025</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Selection | Competitive selection by the IUC selection commission. A maximum of 6 proposals will be selected.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

Applicants are invited to develop a joint (Flemish-partner) Concept Note. In this stage, the focus is on developing a comprehensive project strategy, taking into account the institutional capacities of the partner university, and consortium development (MIP and MSP). The Concept Note also needs to take into account the recommendations of the IUC Selection commission from Stage 1.

The Concept Note includes clear choices in the strategy and content of the IUC project, including first high-level Theory of Change development, identifying subthemes (subprojects) linking up with the proposed project outcomes and developing transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects, based on institutional priorities and with input from the Institutional Assessments which will be a support in making strategic choices as to the most important capacity strengthening elements to be tackled at institutional level (e.g. strengthening of research/educational policies; developing data management capacities, strengthening services to society role with specific focus on uptake, and possibly tech transfer, ...) while also providing an evidence base for current capacities and fit-for-purpose.

### Institutional Assessment

Part of the Stage 2 process is the Institutional Assessment which serves 3 purposes:

- Inform the Selection Commission in view of the selection of IUC partner universities
- Inform the development of the concept note in order to tackle blind spots in the institutions' capacities
- Provide VLIR-UOS with an evidence-based baseline of institutional capacities.

The Institutional Assessment draws from the Core Capabilities model (cf. ECDPM, European Centre for Development Policy and Management) and identifies an institution's strengths and weaknesses, and conducts targeted data collection to have a well-documented baseline of the partner's capabilities. It looks at 5 core capabilities that are further divided into domains and descriptors.

The Institutional Assessment (IA) consists of two phases: (a) a self-assessment by the university of its institutional capacity and (b) a joint assessment of the university's institutional capacity by external assessors. The same framework is used for both phases of the assessment. The IA involves discussing, assessing and documenting each criterion, or domain, including the identification and justification of the current maturity level, rated on a scale from 1 (absent or extremely weak) to 6 (a role model).

Each IA, facilitated by external assessors, includes a preparation phase, a field phase and a reporting phase. The field phase, in its original concept, involves a visit of about 1 week to the candidate IUC partner university by a lead assessor (international expert) accompanied by a 2nd assessor, being a national/regional expert. The whole process of the institutional assessments should run between January and March 2025.

The Concept Note stage is also a critical stage for developing the consortium that will implement the IUC project, with a focus on the Multi-Institutional set-up at the level of Flemish HEIs, and - in this phase to a lesser extent - on MSP development at the level of the partner university with non-academic stakeholders. MSP development is expected to be more prominent in the Phase-In and formulation Stage.

### Stage 3 – Phase-In and Phase 1 Fully Fledged proposals

#### What you should know about Stage 3 - Phase 1 Fully Fledged proposals ?

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus:    | <p>The focus of the Phase-In and Phase 1 Fully Fledged proposals is the further operationalization of this partnership and preparing the necessary structures/processes for full implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First activities</li> <li>• Formulation of a fully fledged project (project content)</li> <li>• Completing the project consortium</li> <li>• Developing the organizational set-up of the project, the project support unit (PSU), (checking) internal procedures, developing a management manual</li> </ul> |
| Timing:   | <p>Call: September 2025</p> <p>Submission: May 2026</p> <p>Selection: June 2026</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Selection | Assessment by the IUC Assessment Commission (meeting thresholds, non-competitive)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

The focus in Stage 3 is the Phasing-in of the IUC partnership in the development of a Phase 1 Fully Fledged IUC proposal. Project teams get the chance, based on the recommendations of the IUC Selection Commission, and supported by VLIR-UOS, to engage in a collective formulation procedure, leading to a final Fully Fledged IUC proposal for a 1<sup>st</sup> Five-Year phase of cooperation from 2026 to 2031, and to prepare the operational and managerial set-up and support structure (Project Support Unit) of the IUC partnership.

During this phase, a kick-off event will be organized by VLIR-UOS, aiming at training, connecting the new IUC projects among each other and with the other ongoing IUC projects, creating a platform for interested academics to participate in non-supporting roles on the basis of other project funds (e.g. Global Minds, ICP Connect projects, ...), and interacting with DGD, Enabel, ARES, ITM, and other parties.

In terms of main steps, the Phase-in consists of:

- Further development/broadening of the IUC teams (Flemish/partner/joint);
- Set-up and installation of the IUC management systems and the Project Management Support Unit (PSU): organizational set-up goes hand in hand with complementary checks of various systems and procedures at level of (financial) management, selection of PhDs, communication policies, purchase policies, etc. The Project Support Unit is created as a minimal management structure for the IUC, embedded in the partner university, and an IUC management manual is developed in which the main managerial processes and procedures are outlined (financial and operational procedures, communication, scholarship procedures, agreements on publications, procurement policy, etc.)
- Formulation travel of the Flemish team (coordinator, team leaders, ICOS, selected team members) to the IUC partner university, and jointly elaborate the Fully Fledged IUC proposal, with further developed and clear subproject outlines and budgets. This also foresees in detailed operational planning and budgeting at project and subproject level. This travel not only serves proposal development but is an excellent opportunity to get acquainted and create the renowned IUC team spirit.
- Start with the organisation of PhD trajectories (incl. arrangements on timing and organisation of PhD selections), and in case relevant/applicable the start of preparatory selection procedures and Pre-PhD programmes as recommended by the IUC final evaluations and the IUC events of 16 and 23 April 2024.

More details will be provided in the calls for the next stages of this IUC 2026 call.

## **7. Selection of the Expressions of Interest and Commitment**

### **7.1. Selection range**

The maximum number of selectable IUC Expressions of Interest and Commitment will be 10 projects. The maximum number of new IUC projects starting on 1 September 2026 will be 6.

### **7.2. IUC Selection Commission**

The IUC Expressions of Interest and Commitment will be selected by the IUC Selection Commission, consisting of 5 international experts. The commission will be composed in the coming months.

### **7.3. Selection criteria and descriptors**

Per VLIR-UOS programme the descriptors for each selection criterion are aligned with its conceptual framework and specificity. The descriptors provide an objective interpretation of the criteria for the IUC

selection / assessment commission. The descriptors have been adapted to suit the specific characteristics of the IUC programme. A differentiation is made between selection stages, and with the adaptation of the procedure for the Call 2026, the following applies for the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of Expression of Interest and Commitment.

| Criteria                                      | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Relevance and coherence of the project</b> | The extent to which the proposal responds to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies (relevance) and fits with the programme Theory of Change (ToC) and within the institution/context (coherence). | <p>1.1 The proposal aligns with the Agenda 2030, regional, national and local policies and priorities, as well as with the IUC programme Theory of Change.</p> <p>1.2 The proposed partner university aligns well with the profile of an IUC institution, a.o. it is less privileged in terms of accessing national or international resources, applies the necessary policy frameworks and values (e.g. gender, human rights, decent work, ...) and has the mission and potential for playing the envisaged role of driver of change in society.</p> <p>1.3 The proposal demonstrates local ownership at the level of the academic authorities of the partner university and of the partner coordinator, and is in line with the partner university's institutional strategy and priorities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Quality of the project design</b>          | The extent to which a proposal presents a convincing project strategy.                                                                                                                                                               | <p>2.1 The proposal is in line with the IUC Programme Theory of Change, and presents a compelling, convincing, high level project vision.</p> <p>2.2 The proposal presents a strategy to build a broad consortium with the potential for inclusion of different Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts and/or partner universities in the broader IUC team.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Implementation set-up of the project</b>   | The extent to which the proposal presents a strong plan and partnership for the execution of the project.                                                                                                                            | <p>3.1 The proposed coordinators have a highly adequate profile, motivation, skills and vision to make the coordination of the IUC a success. The proposed coordinators match well with the profile set out in the call both individually and as a team. The proposed coordinators are supported by their institutions as fit for purpose as IUC coordinator on the basis of their track record and motivation.</p> <p>3.2 The proposal includes a convincing organisational set-up at the level of the partner and Flemish institution, assuring a solid foundation to successfully deliver all project results and to manage the international IUC project and consortium efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>3.3 There is a clear vision on how the necessary resources/inputs (financial, personnel, ..) and information and communication systems will be put in place to implement a successful IUC partnership, taking into account the international, multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder set-up.</p> <p>3.4. In case the partner university did not yet manage VLIR-UOS funds: the partner university is fit for managing VLIR-UOS funds, on the basis of its track record with other funding agencies and management plan.</p> |

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Potential impact and sustainability | The extent to which the project is likely to produce positive long-term effects (impact) and benefits which will be continued after the project duration (sustainability). | <p>4.1 The proposal has the potential to create a significant impact, both organizational and societal, and is likely to lead to institutional embeddedness within the partner organization and involved Flemish HEIs and with relevant local, national, international networks and stakeholders, which will allow the benefits to continue after the funding (institutional and financial sustainability).</p> <p>4.2 The partner university is experienced in successfully working together with external stakeholders (e.g. local communities, policy makers, local industry, etc)</p> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The selection descriptors for the Stage 2 IUC Concept notes and the Stage 3 Fully Fledged proposals will be made available when launching the IUC Concept Note Call.

## 7.4. Scoring of the criteria

All proposals are assessed by the selection commission members, guaranteeing equal treatment and triangulation.

The assessment by the commission will be based on the revised scoring system with focus on the qualitative assessment of each individual proposal, focussing, if necessary, on identifying recommendation for improvement, or remediation ( if applicable).

The **scoring** of each of the criteria is done using a qualitative interval scale:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>A: Very good (no revisions are needed)</p> <p>B: Good (minor revisions might be needed)</p> <p>C: Weak (major revisions are needed, hence the proposal cannot be selected. Proposal can be remediated towards a next submission)</p> <p>D: Very weak</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Stage 1 – Expression of Interest and Commitment

During the selection commission meeting, the selection commission will – on the basis of individual scoring – formulate an agreed-upon score for each criterion. In order to be ‘fundable’, a proposal should obtain an A or B score on each criterion. In case a proposal is awarded with a C or D score for 1 criterion, the proposal is not discussed any further. For fundable projects, the more As the better, and the following selection criteria are applicable in declining order of priority: 1. Relevance and coherence 2. Quality of the project 3. Potential impact and sustainability 4. Implementation set-up.

The commission will make a limited policy intervention when going over the ranking of fundable projects. It is envisaged that for each Flemish university with a high-quality proposal, an opportunity will effectively be given to develop a concept note, provided quality standards are met. This implies that the selection commission may decide to rank a lower-ranked, high-quality project outside the selection range of 10 proposals higher. Thus the selection is competitive, but with a limited policy intervention. This is why we refer to it as competitive selection (\*).

Only project proposals considered of high quality will be taken into account.

The selection commission will select a maximum of 10 Expressions of interest and commitment.

## **Stage 2 – Concept Notes**

During the selection commission meeting, the selection commission will – on the basis of individual scoring – formulate an agreed-upon score for each criterion. In order to be ‘fundable’, a proposal should obtain an A or B score on each criterion. In case a proposal is awarded with a C or D score for 1 criterion, the proposal is not discussed any further. For fundable projects, the more As the better, and the following selection criteria are applicable in declining order of priority: 1. Relevance and coherence 2. Quality of the project 3. Potential impact and sustainability 4. Implementation set-up.

The selection in Stage 2 will be purely competitive, with no policy intervention.

The selection commission will select a maximum of 6 Concept Notes.

## **Stage 3 - Phase 1 Fully Fledged proposals**

This concerns an assessment procedure, whereby the commission can decide that certain recommendations need to be incorporated to increase quality and performance as compared with the VLIR-UOS and IUC policy framework, in order to assure overall quality standards.

The assessment of a proposal can lead to:

- Selection
- Selection, however, with need for major revisions that require major revisions and re-assessment by the selection commission.

All projects will be requested to report on how they coped with the recommendations of the commission in the first Annual Progress report of the project phase, by means of a management response.

More details about the VLIR-UOS selection system can be found on the VLIR-UOS website.

## 8. Application format and compulsory annexes

Formats that are available on our website and have to be submitted:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Format for a project proposal<br>(offline working document)                                                                                                                                        | Main proposal document. All information in this working document will need to be included directly in the online project submission tool.                                                                                                                                                        |
| Annex 1:<br>IUC 2026 – Institutional Fact Sheet                                                                                                                                                    | This format is used for the input of limited general institutional data, as part of the project application.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Annex 2:<br>(a) Statutes of the partner university<br>(b) Latest strategic/institutional plan of the partner university;<br>(c) Financial statements of the last 3 years of the partner university | Original documents (if available in English this is preferred) and to be uploaded via the submission tool.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Annex 3:<br>(a) Cv partner coordinator<br>(b) Cv Flemish coordinator                                                                                                                               | A full cv, max. 5 pages, to be uploaded via the submission tool.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Annex 4:<br>Letter of commitment rector partner university                                                                                                                                         | Letter of commitment from the rector/president with reference to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proposal</li> <li>internal capacity to manage an IUC project</li> <li>support for the fit for purpose of the coordinator</li> </ul> Document to be uploaded via the submission tool. |
| Annex 5:<br>Letter of commitment rector Flemish university                                                                                                                                         | Letter of commitment from the rector with reference to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proposal</li> <li>internal capacity to manage an IUC project</li> <li>support for the fit for purpose of the coordinator</li> </ul> Document to be uploaded via the submission tool            |

## 9. Background information

The following documents are available on the VLIR-UOS website:

|                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">VLIR-UOS financial framework (including programme specific rules for IUC projects)</a> | This document provides an overview of the budget lines that are applicable and indicate what expenses are allowed within the framework of VLIR-UOS projects and has a specific section with rules for IUC projects. The document also refers to the <a href="#">scholarship framework</a> and the current list of <a href="#">Hotel and international per diem allowances (version 15 Feb 2023)</a> available on the VLIR-UOS website. |
| <a href="#">IUC Management Structure and profile IUC Coordinators (partially updated)</a>          | This document provides an overview of the IUC Management structure and IUC mandates, as designed for the IUC intake 2019, with focus on the IUC Coordinators, proposed as part of the Expression of Interest and Commitment.<br><u>Partially updated version, a next update will become available in the next stage of the IUC 2026 Call.</u>                                                                                          |
| <a href="#">Webometrics support document, info per partner country</a>                             | This document provides an overview of universities listed in the top 2.000 per partner country (version January 2024). Full list also available online (Top 2000 institutions of the <a href="#">Webometrics Ranking of Universities</a> list are not eligible).                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Generic VLIR-UOS <a href="#">background document Theory of Change and methodological handbook</a>  | This document can be handy when starting with the reflection process for a high level vision on the IUC project proposal, and also to learn about the integration of SDG principles in a VLIR-UOS project proposal. A fully Fledged Theory of Change will be part of the later stages of IUC proposal development.                                                                                                                     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>On the Country pages on the VLIR-UOS website, you can find informative <b>Country Reference Framework</b> documents. These documents provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) an overview of VLIR-UOS projects within the current Five-Year Programme (updated on a Yearly basis). Latest update was in 2023.</li> <li>(ii) summary info on a partner country's approach towards Agenda 2030 and the SDGs;</li> <li>(iii) general info on the higher education sector and on proposed activities of Belgian cooperation actors, with a focus on the non-governmental cooperation.</li> </ul> | <p><a href="#">Benin</a>; <a href="#">Bolivia</a>; <a href="#">Cuba</a>; <a href="#">DR Congo</a>; <a href="#">Ecuador</a>; <a href="#">Ethiopia</a>; <a href="#">Indonesia</a>; <a href="#">Kenya</a>; <a href="#">Morocco</a>; <a href="#">Peru</a>; <a href="#">Philippines</a>; <a href="#">Rwanda</a>; <a href="#">South Africa</a>; <a href="#">Tanzania</a>; <a href="#">Uganda</a>; <a href="#">Vietnam</a>.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Looking for more inspiration?

Check out the [Community talks](#), the publication [20 years of Impact - Sharing Minds, changing Lives](#), the [Synthesis Report IUC Final evaluations 2023-2024](#) and individual reports ([publications](#)).

If you need inspiration for [cooperation with an external actor](#), then you could have a look at some ideas from other actors (e.g. Belgian non-governmental actors) for collaboration with Higher Education and Science Institutes in the framework of VLIR-UOS projects.

# Abbreviations

|          |                                                                                            |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ANGC     | Belgian Actor of Non-Governmental Cooperation                                              |
| ATP      | Administratief en Technisch Personeel (Administrative and Technical Personnel)             |
| CRF      | Country Reference Framework                                                                |
| DGD      | Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid                       |
| FYP      | Five-Year Programme                                                                        |
| GEO      | Global Engagement Officer at level of a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts    |
| HE&SI    | Higher Education and Science Institution                                                   |
| HEI      | Higher Education Institution                                                               |
| ICOS     | Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation                                      |
| ITM      | Institute of Tropical Medicine                                                             |
| IUC      | Institutional University Cooperation                                                       |
| JSF      | Joint Strategic Framework                                                                  |
| MIP      | Multi-Institutional Partnership                                                            |
| MSP      | Multi-Stakeholder Partnership                                                              |
| SI       | Short Initiative project                                                                   |
| TEAM     | TEAM project                                                                               |
| ToC      | Theory of Change                                                                           |
| tJSF     | Thematic Joint Strategic Framework                                                         |
| UASA     | Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts                                                  |
| UOS      | Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (University Cooperation for Development)           |
| VLIR     | Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (Flemish Interuniversity Council)                          |
| VLIR-UOS | VLIR-Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (VLIR-University Cooperation for Development) |
| ZAP      | Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel (Independent Academic Personnel)                          |