IUC blueprint management structure and mandates, and procedure for IUC 2026 team composition

Updated version of January 2025, valid for IUC 2026 Stage 2. A next update will be made available at the start of the IUC 2026 Stage 3 Call.

Table of Content

IUC blueprint management structure and mandates, and procedure for IUC 2026 team composition 2

1. Introduction IUC management structure 2

2. Mandates in an IUC partnership 3

2.1. Flemish IUC coordinator 3

2.2. IUC Partner Coordinator 6

2.3. Project Manager 7

2.4. ICOS 8

2.5. Composition of IUC sub-project teams 9

2.5.1. Team Leader (general profile) 9

2.5.2. Team Members (general profile) 11

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1. Introduction IUC management structure

The success of an IUC will depend upon the development of a **strong partnership** between the local partner institution and the involved Flemish HEIs. The partnership is jointly managed by the partner institution and the Flemish coordinating university according to the blueprint management structure for an IUC governed by a tripartite contract agreement clarifying the main contractual responsibilities, further outlined in this document where it concerns the overall management structure for an IUC.

A sound management structure, with as much as possible alignment and integration into local systems and procedures, is key to success. Therefore, it is important that the involved institutions –and not only the coordinators in person- know each other very well. In particular at the local level, involvement of the university leadership / management (decision making structures in the university) in the formulation and implementation of the successive IUC partnership phases is crucial. This also implies that vertical linkages between the IUC partnership management and the decision-making structure of the local partner institution should be foreseen.

The IUC management system is based on the following distribution of roles and responsibilities:

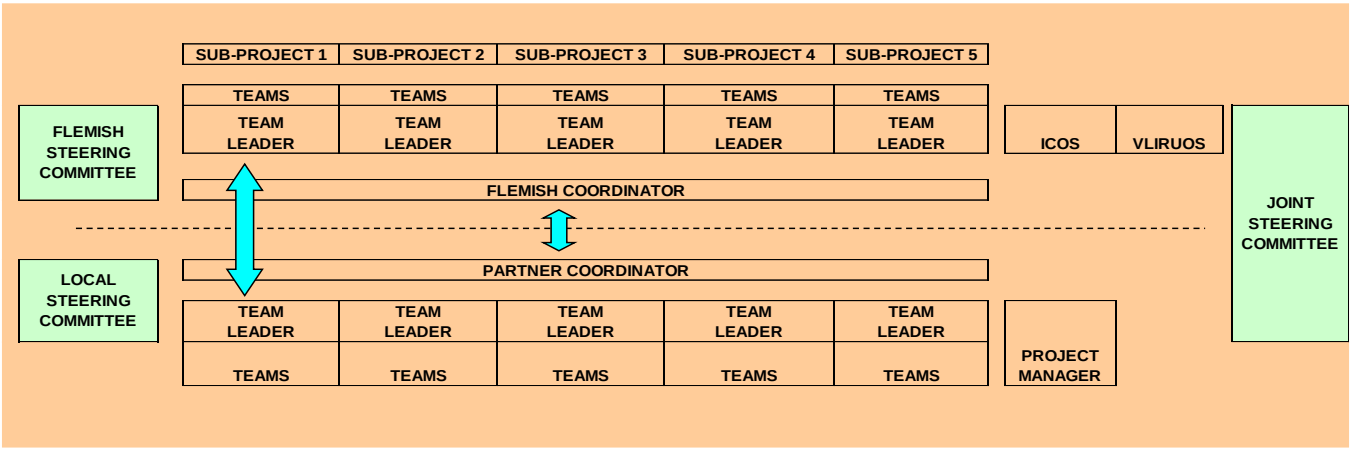
- **VLIRUOS** is responsible for the overall management of the IUC Programme Cycle - including the organisation of partnership Calls, the disbursement of funds to the Flemish coordinating universities, the follow-up and methodological support of ongoing IUC partnership projects and the organisation of the monitoring and evaluation framework. VLIRUOS is accountable to the Belgian government through coordinated financial and progress reporting to DGD;
- **VLIRUOS** confirms, as part of the IUC selection procedure, the **Flemish coordinators (of the IUC partnership)** and **Flemish team leaders (of the sub-projects)**, based on the IUC proposals assessed by the IUC Selection and Assessment Commission (profile/status of IUC Coordinators is part of Stage 1 of the Selection procedure, IUC Team Leaders of sub-projects are proposed in Stage 2 of the Selection procedure, and the full team is confirmed as part of the IUC Fully Fledged proposal in Stage 3 of the procedure).
- The coordination at Flemish level is taken up by the **Flemish university** of the proposed Flemish coordinator, thus acting as the Flemish coordinating university of this institutional university cooperation (IUC) partnership between Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts (UASA) with the local partner university in a VLIRUOS partner country;
- the university of the Flemish coordinator and the IUC partner university are jointly responsible for the day-to-day management of the IUC partnership based on the terms of execution and expected commitments (e.g. making available facilities, deloading of staff for research, ..) as defined in a tripartite agreement signed by the Flemish coordinating university, the IUC partner university and VLIRUOS.
- the Flemish coordinator receives as part of the IUC management structure at the level of the Flemish coordinating university the support of an institutional coordinator for development cooperation (ICOS) and other relevant central or decentral services of the Flemish coordinating university.
- **VLIRUOS** confirms, as part of the IUC selection procedure, the **local partner coordinators (of the IUC partnership)** and **local partner team leaders (of the sub-projects)**, based on the IUC proposals assessed by the IUC Selection and Assessment Commission (profile/status of IUC Coordinators is part of Stage 1 of the Selection procedure, IUC Team Leaders of sub-projects are proposed in Stage 2 of the Selection procedure, and the full team is confirmed as part of the IUC Fully Fledged proposal in Stage

3 of the procedure). It is the local **partner university** which appoints the local IUC coordinator (of the IUC partnership) and the local partner (=local) team leaders (per sub-project), since they are all affiliated to the same partner institution which is different at Flemish side. However, we expect that before nominations, the Flemish coordinator and team leaders are consulted since IUC is about teams working on the basis of respect and trust;

- at the level of the local **partner university** a **full-time manager (IUC project manager)** is to be appointed in order to support the local coordinator in the various management duties associated with the implementation of the IUC partnership project;
- both in Belgium and the partner university a **steering committee** is established to coordinate the implementation of the IUC partnership project. Both committees meet at least annually in the form of a **Joint Steering Committee Meeting** (JSCM). Given the new practice of online meetings, more participative approaches in these two types of meetings can be used. A good practice is also the organisation of a 2nd annual JSCM in online modus.

  At the level of sub-projects there are also teams for which separate fora for information sharing and/or meetings are functioning, at local and Flemish level that also have joint meetings. They are not included in the picture below.

Blueprint structure of the IUC partnership



The IUC Partnership structure is to be seen as a partnership broad institutional university cooperation project consisting of a number of sub-projects contributing to the overall IUC process of (institutional) change.

2. Mandates in an IUC partnership

An IUC partnership is jointly led by a Flemish coordinator and a local partner coordinator. They are both appointed by VLIRUOS as part of the validation of the final selection of the project.

The Flemish institution, to which the Flemish coordinator is affiliated, acts as the Flemish coordinating university on behalf of the participating Flemish institutions, and assumes, together with the partner institution, final responsibility for the management and implementation of the IUC Partnership project.

2.1. Flemish IUC coordinator

For each IUC partnership a Flemish coordinator of the cooperation with the partner university is appointed by VLIRUOS, as part of the validation of the final selection of the project.

The Flemish coordinator

Main tasks of the Flemish coordinator are:

- responsibility for the overall coordination, management and implementation of the partnership project, in line with the approved project in its different phases, ensuring also adequate monitoring and reporting, jointly with the local partner coordinator
- to lead and coach together with the local partner coordinator, and assisted by the full-time manager for the partnership and ICOS, the core team of the IUC partnership. Locally this support structure is organised via the Project Support Unit (PSU); together with the local partner coordinator and project manager;
- creating broad multi-institutional embedding and support at level of the Flemish HEIsto chair the Flemish steering committees and co-chair the Joint steering committees and implement its decisions;
- to strive for follow-up of VLIRUOS policy priorities such as reenforcing the IUC partnership concept and the fit within the VLIRUOS theory of change, as also alignment with transversal and priority themes, identification of possible synergies, networking and external funding opportunities;
- central focal point for the IUC partnership for VLIRUOS and other parties, on behalf of the Flemish stakeholders

Formal requirements for the Flemish coordinator

The Flemish coordinator must meet both the internal criteria and regulations as to project promotership of their institution and the minimum conditions set by VLIRUOS, as well as meet the required profile as laid down in required competences and expertise

The minimum conditions set by VLIRUOS for an IUC coordinator **from a Flemish university** to submit a proposal are the following:

- professor at a Flemish university with a ZAP statute (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum appointment level of 10% (or equivalent), and a 80% employment status;
- postdocs cannot submit;
- have authorisation from his / her university to enter into financial undertakings on behalf of the institution;
- have the appropriate academic and managerial competence and experience to coordinate the partnership;
- be affiliated with the Flemish institution at least for the coming 7 years as of 2024, as long as the duration of an IUC Phase 1 (5 years; 2026-2031) preceded by the phase in as of 2025, and preferably for the entire IUC project cycle (10 years + Phase in and Phase Out).
- emeriti cannot apply, and in case the emeritus status will be reached before the end of a first phase of cooperation a successor must also be proposed. This successor is to be identified as part of the IUC proposal, and can be included as a co- coordinator that will be able to take over full responsibilities when the proposed coordinator retires. This deputy coordinator needs to fulfil the same formal requirements.
- the position of IUC coordinator cannot be combined with team leadership of a sub-project within the same partnership in order to avoid conflict of interest. IUC coordinators can take part as academic team member in one or more IUC sub-projects (e.g. in particular in the transversal institutional strengthening projects connecting with institutional policies and procedures) and be promoter of PhDs;
- an academic can only coordinate 1 ongoing IUC partnership. An overlap with a team leader position in another IUC partnership is possible. This means that a current IUC coordinator in case he/she applies for a new IUC coordinator position, will not be able to continue the current mandate;
- members of the Bureau UOS cannot apply for the position of IUC coordinator.

Required competences and expertise of Flemish coordinators

Required skills & experience

- Relevant experience with leadership 'People's manager' (coaching, motivating teams and individuals, teambuilding, conflict remediation), and effective and intercultural communication skills;
- Relevant experience with Institutional planning and management;
- Relevant experience with higher education cooperation for development or international cooperation in general;
- Relevant experience in working in the partner country where the IUC partnership is to start is recommendable but not mandatory
- Academic excellence in related domains as proposed in the Expression of Interest and Commitment, and future Concept Note proposal is recommendable but not mandatory;
- Ample availability to take up a mandate of IUC coordinator, or have the guarantee of the own university that administrative and lecturing support will be given.
- Each year a compensation lump sum is foreseen for the academic unit of the Flemish coordinator

Along with the management skills and policy experience as listed above, a coordinator needs to have a range of interpersonal soft skills.

Ideal profile of an IUC coordinator/expectations:

He/she needs to be:

- empathetic and curious, open and patient
- willing to learn and involved/committed
- communicative, transparent (without overload in communication) and trustworthy
- close to the university authorities esp. for the partner coordinator, Flemish and partner coordinators need having a shared vision and leadership, need to share the vision with PM, ICOS and TLs
- willing to move between roles and positions and keeps an overview
- neutral in the sub-projects management/coordination
- someone who does not compete for funds or competes with TLs and team members (perhaps someone at the end of his/her academic career, also timewise)

He/she needs to know:

- how to identify opportunities
- how to coordinate the TLs, PM and ICOS in getting the work done but who can also let go, who knows when to intervene and when not (including activities and (not) spent budget)
- the context beyond IUC

He/she needs to have:

- sufficient authority to take decisions (being decisive but also humble)
- sufficient intrinsic motivation to be a driving force and have affinities with the partner country and partner university
- networking skills, with fostering synergies – internal & external; connecting and coaching skills
- management competencies, who has an eye for managerial practical issues and who can help with budget and financial reporting, who can manage/ prevent conflicts, is able to put difficult issues on the table
- intercultural sensitivity and a sense of humor

- awareness of (financial) power imbalance.

2.2. IUC Partner Coordinator

The local coordinator must meet both the internal criteria and regulations as to project promotership of their institution and the minimum conditions set by VLIRUOS, as well as meet the required profile as laid down in required competences and expertise.

Main tasks of the partner coordinator are:

- Together with the Flemish coordinator, he/she forms the core team of the IUC partnership
- To be accountable to respectively VLIRUOS and partner university
- To ensure high level communication (internally with management, and externally with policy makers and others as required), including the contacts with the Flemish coordinator and VLIRUOS
- To ensure overall leadership, coordination, management, monitoring and reporting, together with the Flemish coordinator
- To co-chair the Joint steering committees together with Flemish coordinator and implementing the decisions
- To chair the local steering committee meetings, and facilitate decision making and team building among local team leaders at all stages of project design and implementation
- To ensure that the IUC partnership is continuously linked with the strategic priorities of the partner university
- To represent the management and to act as spokesperson on behalf of the partner university
- To identify possible synergies, networking and external funding opportunities

Skills & experience

- Leadership and effective communication
- Motivation of the teams and conflict remediation => 'people's manager' and necessary intercultural skills, connecting and coaching skills
- Team builder with experience in institutional planning and management
- Affinity with the core content of the IUC partnership proposal
- Experience with N-S cooperation

Institutional Position/ formal requirements

- (Academic) Position that allows direct access to top management
- Executive charged with institutional planning or other aspects of institutional management
- Appointed academic staff member
- **Minimal formal requirement: professor, with at least an 80% employment status at the partner university involved**

Appointment procedure

- The partner university proposes a candidate, as part of the Expression of Interest and Commitment.
- In principle, VLIRUOS confirms the position together with the Phase-In proposal based on the collaboration experience between both coordinators during the concept note development
- The local partner coordinator is an appointed academic staff member and remuneration is provided by the local partner university which might, if considered appropriate, provide incentives from the overhead budget E2

2.3. Project Manager

To be appointed by the IUC partner institution.

Main tasks:

- Coordination of the Project Support Unit (PSU) team:
  - financial officer, accountant, clerks, drivers
  - administrative support
- Guarantee adequate managerial, administrative and financial follow-up of the IUC partnership at level of the local institution, in support of the IUC partner coordinator
- Act as a resource person towards the project leaders and provide a general technical, methodological and management support
- Provide administrative support for the local and Joint steering committee meetings, provide follow-up and implementation of its decisions
- Coordinate and facilitate compilation of proposal, planning and reporting documents at the local level
- Prepares and facilitates the mobility for scholars from the partner university to Belgium, and in case of other international missions. In the case of mobility from Belgium to the partner country he/she will also facilitate where needed.

Insight in relation of typical task division between the Project Manager (operational management) and the Partner coordinator (strategic management) at level of the IUC partner institution

Position	Core task	Position	Appointment and/or re-cruitment process	Remuneration/IUC budget
IUC Partner Coordinator	Overall academic leadership and coordination. Operational management is not his/her principal task	Existing academic staff member (management or faculty level).	Local authorities of the partner university with advice from Flemish coordinator and VLIRUOS	Incentives provided by the partner university. (own co-funding or coordination costs E2)
Manager of the Partnership (Project Manager)	Management of the IUC and PSU. Provides methodological facilitation organises support and administrative structures of the IUC This position is in principle full-time.	New position; newly recruited or existing staff that is assigned to the IUC partnership.	Partner university with advice from Flemish coordinator (and VLIRUOS, if requested)	Remuneration as per the local salary scales. Fundable by the IUC budget.

2.4. ICOS

The Flemish coordinator receives as part of the IUC management structure at level of the Flemish coordinating university the support of an institutional coordinator for development cooperation (ICOS) and depending on the institution also other financial and administrative staff provide support to the IUC Partnership.

The typical ICOS tasks for an IUC Partnership consist of:

- Administrative and managerial support of the IUC Partnership within the coordinating Flemish university, in support of the Flemish IUC coordinator
    - Administrative and logistic support (including procurement procedures)
    - Mobility, including link with student affairs in the context of scholarship mobility
    - Financial follow-up in close collaboration with the financial department of the Flemish coordinating university
    - Provide methodological support with the proposal, planning and reporting documents, theory of change, intervention logic, etc.
    - To organise the communication and to prepare Flemish steering committee meetings, and provide follow-up and implementation of the decisions taken
- Direct counterpart at the Flemish level of the IUC project manager

2.5. Composition of IUC sub-project teams

An important part of the IUC Phase-in, symbolising the preparation phase of an IUC partnership, is the composition of the Flemish (sub)project teams.

In the 3-step intake procedure for this IUC Call 2026 there will be no will be **no 'open call' for Flemish Team Leaders**, but instead the IUC coordination teams are expected to come up with a proposal of Flemish and partner team leaders for the IUC partnership Phase 1. A first proposal is to be included as part of the IUC Concept Note proposal, and further developed during the Stage 3 of IUC Fully Fledged proposals, meeting a number of requirements (which will be further detailed in the Stage 2 IUC Call for Concept Notes), and with a justification as to how expertise in Flanders has been looked for and mobilised, and why the suggested persons are best placed for these mandates.

The **requirements as to the composition of the team of team leaders consist** -next to the general requirements related to the profile of Team Leaders (see below)- of :

- An IUC project adopts a Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP) set-up, involving multiple teams of academics and specialists from the partner institution, as well as multiple Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts. A minimum set up for an IUC project involves minimally Five 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 condition of team lead).
- At least 3 different Flemish HEIs have a mandate, being 1 university with the mandate of coordinator + at least 2 other institutions with a mandate of team leader.
- VLIRUOS strives for diverse teams and highly encourages the teams to have attention for minimum 1/3 gender balance in project teams (incl. team leaders and members). In case this is not possible to achieve, an explanation on the reasons why it is difficult should be provided, as well as how this will be translated in specific actions during project implementation.
- Justification is to be provided as to the process followed and the persons proposed.
- The provided templates for team leader composition and related motivation of the proposal of FTL will be revised and provided as soon as possible
- emeriti cannot apply, and in case the emeritus status will be reached within five years as of confirmation of the mandate (September 2025), then a successor Team Leader must also be proposed. This successor is to be part, as a team member, of the IUC proposal, and does not need to be from the same Flemish institution. The person should meet the same formal requirements as the proposed Team Leader.

2.5.1. Team Leader (general profile)

The team leader is in charge of the implementation of an IUC sub-project (academic theme based or transversal institutional strengthening) within an IUC partnership phase.

Main tasks of the IUC sub-project Team Leader

- Academic team leadership, coordination of the Flemish sub-project team
- Starting from the mapping of interest/expertise during the Concept Note stage, responsible for further sourcing of required Flemish expertise at level of universities and universities of applied sciences and arts, composition of team of experts (in view of PhD/Master promotership, lecturing, expert visits, etc.)
- Facilitate relevant networking and linkages at the level of the sub-project
- Project management of the sub-project (mainly contents but also budget follow-up in collaboration with the PSU)
- (Co-)promoter of PhDs/Masters within the sub-project, if applicable
- Participation in steering committee meetings at Flemish level and together with local team leader act as spokesperson for sub-project team members at the Joint Steering Committee meetings
- Facilitating communication within the sub-project team (local/Flemish), and with the IUC coordination level

- Team-building within the sub-project team, and as part of the broader IUC team

Formal requirements & skills at the level of the IUC sub-project Team Leaders

- Professors, researchers and lecturers, who are affiliated with a Flemish university or university of applied sciences and arts. For certain projects of transversal strengthening also technical or operational staff (e.g. ICT, library, …) from universities and universities of applied sciences and arts can apply;
- Academic/technical competence needed to carry out and/or guide the sub-project.
- Be affiliated with the Flemish institution at least as long as the duration of an IUC phase I (5 years; 1 September 2026- 31 August 2031)
- For candidates affiliated to Flemish universities, the following applies:
  - in the case a professor with a ZAP statute (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum ZAP appointment level of 10% (or equivalent);
  - ATP members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, depending on the nature of the project.
  - emeriti cannot apply;
  - Postdocs cannot apply.
- For candidates affiliated to Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts, the following applies:
  - one must be professor or lecturer.
  - ATP members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, depending on the nature of the project
  - retired staff cannot apply.
- Persons that are already a Team Lead in another IUC, can apply. No maxima apply for the number of Team Lead mandates in the framework of this call, except that within one IUC, not more than one Team Leader mandate can be taken up.
- A member of the Bureau UOS cannot apply for a Team Leader mandate, but can be part of an IUC sub-project/project team.

<u>Skills & experience</u>

- Leadership and effective communication
- Team builder and necessary intercultural skills
- Academic excellence in the field proposed in the sub-project (in case of technical projects related technical expertise)

<u>Availability and return</u>

- Expected availability to take up a mandate of IUC Team Leader:
  - the Flemish and local partner Team Leader interact on a regular basis -on average bi-weekly/monthly follow-up- and take up leadership for the content preparation and implementation of an IUC sub-project (academic theme based or transversal institutional strengthening).
  - during the Phase In year efforts will focus on the scouting for other suitable Flemish team members in coordination with the local team leader, participation in the formulation mission and editing of the sub-project documents.
  - Once the IUC project starts, the level of implication on the Flemish side is rather guiding, advisory since the sub-project takes place mainly locally, but it does include regular follow-up meetings with the team (once a month or per trimester) during implementation, selecting and jointly supervising students with other team members, participating in the annual steering committees, reviewing and discussing the annual progress reports prepared by the sub-project team, etc. This also includes on average one travel per year to the partner country.

- In return, you are part of a highly challenging international and multidisciplinary partnership which strengthens professional networks and hopefully brings rewarding benefits for the academic/professional career. A limited sub-project team leader allowance of 2.000 EUR/activity year is foreseen for compensation of basic expenditure.

2.5.2. Team Members (general profile)

Local and Flemish teams are to be constituted according to the project objectives defined during the formulation process. As opposed to the Team Leaders, the team members are not formally appointed by VLIRUOS.

The process of matchmaking and team composition will facilitate the first mapping of the interest of academics/lecturers/staff in collaborating as team member in IUC sub-projects. This will also assist the appointed team leaders in mapping the other existing interest and expertise at the level of the Flemish universities and UASA when composing a relevant Flemish team. As such, a pre-formulation mission team composition will be available, which is to be confirmed after the formulation missions. The appointed Flemish team leader will aim at composing a team of academics and technical specialists to take part in an IUC (sub-)project for the course of project duration. It is the responsibility of the appointed Team Leader to compose his/her interinstitutional -Flemish HEIs represented- team.

Possible tasks and profile of team members in an IUC sub-project

- Responsible for at least 1 activity contributing to the achievement of sub-project results & goals (lecture, expertise input, staff development through master & PhD promoters, etc.)
- Academics and other relevant university staff (ICT, library, management personnel,…), but also staff of a variety of organisations (NGOs, government representatives and in some cases consultants…) and if relevant also academics from non-Flemish/Belgian universities or ITM can join as team members, as long as similar conditions prevail

<u>Return</u>

- no fees are paid