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sharing minds, changing lives

Ecuador

Country Reference Framework

(Updated version of March 2026)

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Country reference framework Ecuador

Background

In FYP1 the VLIRUOS country strategies presented the strategic niche for future VLIRUOS cooperation in a specific country, leading to strategy-based calls for proposals. These country strategies created a framework for project formulation, but could limit project identification to geographical and/or thematic foci and/or to a limited number of partner institutions. Country strategies also aimed at enabling synergy and complementarity between VLIRUOS projects and projects from other (Belgian) stakeholders working in that country.

In FYP2, however, we shift towards an approach whereby a country reference framework provides information rather than strategic guidance. The country reference frameworks will be used mainly to support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector in a given country, and by providing an overview of Belgian actors, their ongoing projects and partners in that country in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity.

The country reference frameworks consist of three components:

(i) overview of VLIRUOS projects in the country;
(ii) context analysis focused on the Agenda 2030 framework and the higher education sector;
(iii) overview of Belgian actors (ANGCs involved in thematic or geographic JSFs & Enabel), their local partners and their regional/thematic focus.

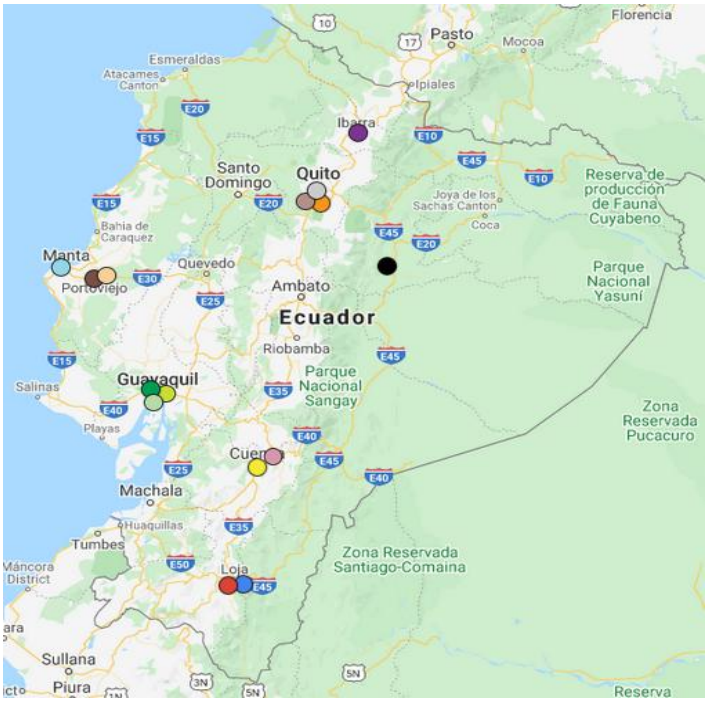
The frameworks have been elaborated based on information available at the time of drafting this actor programme and through consultations with both Flemish and local project promotors and with geographic JSFs, when applicable, to ensure relevant information for coherent project formulation is included.

Prior to the launch of competitive calls, the ANGCs active in the country/region will be invited to list a number of research themes/questions that can be addressed by HE&SIs in the framework of VLIRUOS funded projects or scholarships. Synergy and complementarity will be integrated as an element in the selection of project proposals, more in particular when discussing the (developmental) relevance and coherence of the proposals and the extent to which the multi-stakeholder partnership principle has been reflected in the project's implementation set-up. By this mode of operation, the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development links up with the other geographic JSFs.

Evidently, the frameworks will be updated regularly in consultation with the HEI&SI stakeholders and with the respective geographical JSFs and, where appropriate, also with ARES, and especially prior to the launch of competitive calls by VLIRUOS, to be compatible and responsive to evolving/emerging needs and priorities of academic and international actors active in the country/region/sector.

1. VLIRUOS in Ecuador

1.1. Overview projects & scholarships (2003 – 2025)



Legend

- Universidad de Cuenca
- Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral
- IKEAM
- Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja
- Universidad San Francisco de Quito
- Universidad Técnica del Norte
- Universidad Politécnica Nacional
- Universidad de Guayaquil
- Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar
- Universidad Regional Amazónica IKIAM
- Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
- Universidad del Azuay
- Universidad casa Grande
- Universidad San Gregorio de Portoviejo
- Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE

Projects 1999-2025			Scholars 2004-2025			
Type	**Budget (€)**	**Number**	**Scholarship Type**	**Finished**	**Ongoing**	**Total**
Total	***26.004.449***	***101***	**ICP**	84	17	101
IUC	10.903.937	3	**ICPPHD**	1		1
NETWORK	2.610.433	1	**ITP/KOI**	52		52
TEAM	6.788.079	24	**SRS**	10		10
SI	3.322.739	50	**TEAM/IUC**	1		1
ITP	479.756	5	**Total**	148	17	165
JOINT	655.814	4				
Crosscutting	1.243.690	14				

Ecuador is a longstanding partner of Flemish HEIs and one of the top VLIRUOS partner countries. From 1999 to 2025 VLIRUOS spent 26 million Euros in project cooperation with Ecuador, including 3 long-term institutional partnerships: the IUCs with Escuela Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL) and University of Cuenca (UCuenca), and an inter-institutional NETWORK project on biodiscovery and national resources, coordinated by ESPOL, in collaboration with EPN, UTN and Ucuenca. Recently a new IUC partnership with Universidad Técnica del Norte (UTN) has started. More detailed information can be found on the VLIRUOS website vliruostats (statistics).

1.2. Ongoing FYP 2 projects

VLIRUOS projects within FYP 2022-2027						
Type	**Runtime**	**Title**	**Flemish promoter**	**Local promoter**	**Local institution**	**Total budget (FYP 2) (€)**
IUC	2025-2026	Institutional University Cooperation with Universidad Técnica del Norte: Phase-in	Annemie Spooren (UH)	María José Romero	Universidad Técnica del Norte	140000
Networks	2019-2023	Network Biodiversity Ecuador (biodiscovery and water resources) – Phase 2 (2019-2022) (ESPOL, UCuenca, UTN and EPN) + Phase Out (2023)	Peter Goethals (Ghent University)	P. Herrera	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	290.000
Subproject 1		*Enhancing national capacities in biodiscovery*	*W. Vanden Berghe (University of Antwerp)*	*J.M.C. Cevallos*		
Subproject 2		*Enhancing Ecuadorian national capacities on water management*	*G. Wyseure (KU Leuven)*	*L. Dominguez*		
Subproject 3		*Enhancing national capacities in education and outreach innovation*	*P. Goethals (Ghent University)*	*P. Herrera*		
TEAM	2019-2022	Innovative governance systems for built cultural heritage, based on traditional Andean organizational principles in Ecuador	Koenraad Van Balen (KU Leuven)	F. Cardoso	Universidad de Cuenca	59.637
TEAM	2022-2027	A Comprehensive Investigation on the Rationale of Corruption and its Liabilities in Ecuador (CIRCLE)	Siegfried Dewitte (KUL)	Paúl Arias-Medina	Universidad de Cuenca	299.997
TEAM	2022-2027	Enhancing the AGRi-fOod Supply chain towards Industry 5.0 (AGRO5) in the Ecuadorian Andes	Alexandra Van den Abbeele (KUL)	Lorena Sigüenza Guzmán	Universidad de Cuenca	299.998
TEAM	2022-2027	Sustainable water management under climate change in Southern Ecuador	Patrick Willems (KUL)	Ana Ochoa-Sánchez	Universidad del Azuay	299.992
TEAM	2022-2027	Community engagement and novel technologies: a winning team for the integral management of cervical cancer in a rural context.	Veronique Verhoeven (UA)	Bernardo Vega	Universidad de Cuenca	279.059

TEAM	2022-2027	Recovery and conservation of Andean tropical mountain forest to benefit livelihood of local communities	Hans Verbeeck (UG)	Selene Baez	Escuela Politécnica Nacional	296.692
TEAM	2022-2027	A multidisciplinary approach to design active, safe and inclusive parks in the Andean region of Ecuador	Delfien Van Dyck (UG)	Angélica Ochoa Avilés	Universidad de Cuenca	280.000
TEAM	2022-2027	Sharing Insights in Statistical Thinking. A Roadmap towards Integrated Data Science Approaches in Research.	Luc Duchateau (UG)	María Nela Pastuizaca Fernández	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	234.014
TEAM	2024-2029	Nature-based solutions for sustainable sanitation in Ecuador (NATURESS)	Diederik Rousseau (UG)	Andrés Alvarado Martínez , María Belén Arévalo Durazno	Universidad de Cuenca , Universidad del Azuay	299196
TEAM	2024-2029	Data-Driven Conservation Initiative for high Andean ecosystems in the Antisana Natural Reserve	Patrick Vandewalle (KUL)	Esteban Valencia	Escuela Politécnica Nacional	299908
TEAM	2024-2029	Enhancing Children's Liveability of Ecuadorian urban neighbourhoods	Giovanni Circella (UG)	Daniel Augusto Orellana Vintimilla	Universidad de Cuenca	300000
SI	2022-2024	Multi-stakeholder and Sustainable Expansion of the Ecuadorian Transmission Power System	Dirk Van Hertem (KUL)	Santiago Torres	Universidad de Cuenca	69.903
SI	2022-2024	Preventing/mitigating water and mudflows and floods in urbanized mountainous hydrological catchments through avoidance of deforestation of critical tree covered locations and afforestation of critical tree-less locations	Jos Van Orshoven (KUL)	Pablo Vanegas Peralta	Universidad de Cuenca	70.000
SI	2022-2024	A high-impact professionalization trajectory for UTN (and PXL)-lecturers to promote educational inclusion while respecting 'cultural identity'.	Dorien Jansen (PXL)	Ramiro Núñez Gómez	Universidad Técnica del Norte	70.000
SI	2022-2024	The interaction of Indigenous Local Knowledge and scientific knowledge as a catalyst for sustainable development. The case of food systems in the Ecuadorian Amazon.	Joost Dessein (UG)	Maria Gabriela Zurita Benavides	Universidad Regional Amazónica IKIAM	69.978
SI	2022-2024	Ecuadorean chocolates: Implementation of a sensory panel for the design of fine flavored chocolates.	Xavier Gellynck (UG)	Julio Bonilla	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	69.839

SI	2022-2024	Development of local devices for telemedicine services in remote areas of Ecuador	Johan Stiens (VUB)	Federico Dominguez	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	69.806
SI	2023-2025	On the prediction and prevention of toxic algae blooms in a tropical setting - AlgaePredict	Christine Van der heyden (HoGent)	Julio Bonilla	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	69.971
SI	2023-2025	Wastewater Valorisation through biological trEatment and Reduction of its impact on the aquatic enviRonment (WAVERR)	Bjorge Decostere (HoGent)	Jorge Celi	IKIAM	69.903
SI	2023-2025	Critical problems, opportunities and good practices to prevent and respond to gender-based violence against students in higher education institutions - Ecuador	Veerle Draulans (KUL)	Fernanda Soliz	Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar	69.974
SI	2023-2025	Stimulating Ecuadorian preschoolers' and kindergartners' mathematical development: learning-supportive interactions using picture books	Hilde Van Keer (UG), Joke Torbeyns (KUL)	Gina Bojorque	Universidad de Cuenca	70.000
SI	2023-2025	Smart Farming methodology for efficient and sustainable cultivation of dragon fruit in Ecuador's Amazon: Pilot evaluation of the impact of technology on poverty and inequality reduction	Patrick Vandewalle (KUL)	Esteban Valencia	Escuela Politécnica Nacional	69.999
SI	2023-2025	Revaluation of Andean ancestral knowledge on medicinal herbs through the development of a phytotherapeutic product	Yvan Vander Heyden (VUB)	Eugenia Peñaherrera-Wilches	Universidad de Cuenca	70.000
ITP	2023-2026	Enabling HEI educators and professionals to advance urban design and planning justice through socio-ecological sustainability	Viviana d'Auria (KUL)	Edgar Gonzalo Gordillo Gordillo	Universidad Politécnica Salesiana (Cuenca)	149.881
ITP	2024-2027	Data Science & Data Management Training	Christelle Maeyaert (KUL)	Fernanda Soliz Torres	Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar	149984
SI	2025-2026	Nature-based solutions to improve water security in a tropical headwater basin in Ecuador -NBS4security	Tine Compernolle (UA)	Natalia Samaniego	Universidad Nacional de Loja	68758,8
SI	2025-2026	Exploring the Interplay Between Water, Communities, and One Health in Ecuador's Chocó Andino (WACO CHOCO)	Andrée De Cock (UG)	Valeria Ochoa-Herrera	Universidad San Francisco de Quito	69993

SI	2025-2026	EcoHydroShield: Autonomous Climate-Adaptive System for Wildfire Prevention in Protected Ecological Areas	Toon Goedemé (KUL)	Juan Carlos Almachi Nacimba	Escuela Politécnica Nacional	69996,3
SI	2025-2026	Warmi Kallpa: A Method for Developing Risk Identification Kits for Women in Situations of Violence	Sofie Pollin (KUL)	Irene Cedillo	Universidad de Cuenca	69979,14
SI	2025-2026	Empowering Ecuadorian Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers to Provide Effective Mathematics Education (ETEME)	Joke Torbeyns (KUL)	Gina Bojorque	Universidad de Cuenca	69982
SI	2025-2026	Mollusc depuration in Ecuador for food safety and market expansion	Annelies Declercq (UG)	Félix Morales	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	69993
SI	2025-2026	SUMBIO: Sustainable Urban futures with Modular BIO-sourced solutions in Ecuador	Sarah Moeremans (TM Kempen)	Grace Yepez	Universidad de las Américas	69876,74
ITP	2024-2027	Seeding Sustainability: Training for trainers in mangrove conservation and ecological restoration in UNESCO biosphere reserves.	Tom Van der Stocken (VUB)	Alba Calles Procel	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral	149795

Abbreviations (type): SI=Short Initiatives, TEAMS=TEAM projects, ITP= International Training Programmes. Abbreviations (Flemish institutions): KUL= Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; UG=Ghent University; UA=University of Antwerp; UH=University of Hasselt; VUB=Vrije Universiteit Brussel, PXL=PXL University College.

Competitive calls for new projects will be launched and announced on our website. Nationals of Ecuador are eligible[1] to apply for VLIRUOS scholarships within the International Master Programmes (ICP Connect).

[1] Admission requirements, application procedures and selection procedures differ across the programmes and host institutions.

2. Ecuador and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2.1. Ecuador and the Sustainable Development Goals

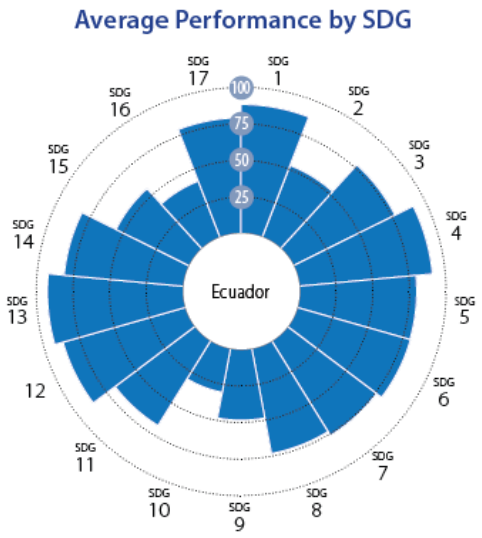
Promising to leave no one behind, Ecuador reaffirms its commitment to the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals by presenting for a third time its **Voluntary National Review 2024** VNR 2024 (in Spanish and executive summary in English) and its National Development Plan (2024-2025).

According to the VNR, Ecuador's submission emphasized intercultural, intersectoral, and life-course approach policies to address complex, multisectoral challenges. The review highlighted renewed policies related to SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, addressing security concerns and the need for economic stability), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). It noted efforts to promote culture as a tool for development, including providing learning grants to community leaders for local projects aimed at poverty reduction.

The National Development plan, guided by the principles of "Buen Vivir" (Good Living) and participatory governance, aims to align public policies, programs, and investments with national priorities. It is structured around four pillars: (1) social development; (2) economic development; (3) infrastructure, energy, and environment; and, (4) institutional and risk management. On climate change, the plan integrates mitigation and adaptation actions into key sectors to foster low-emission, climate-resilient development. It emphasises conserving and restoring natural resources, promoting sustainable land use, and adopting circular economy models to reduce environmental contamination. Additionally, it strengthens disaster risk reduction frameworks and promotes the resilience of critical infrastructure to climate-related hazards. Water security is a key focus, with efforts to expand access to potable water, irrigation, and sanitation in the context of climate vulnerabilities. Equally, the plan sets measurable climate goals, including increasing land under hydrological protection, reducing climate vulnerability through enhanced adaptive capacity, and improving waste recovery rates.

Taking into account the global aspect of the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Report assesses where each country stands with regard to achieving the SDGs. Ecuador ranks 78 out of 167 countries included in the report. The Ecuador Country Profile shows that most goals remain with challenges. However, Ecuador is improving in a number of SDGs such as clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, sustainable cities, climate change action and quality of education.





As an umbrella organisation that works with calls for proposals, VLIRUOS supports interventions for and through higher education institutes, supporting them in the areas of education, research and uptake and thereby strengthening them in their role as development actor. Doing so, the impact of the interventions supported by VLIRUOS can be found in a large variety of sectors. In line with its major intervention area, VLIRUOS positions itself within the education sector, especially focused on higher education, research and innovation (SDG 4 and 9). However, through its interventions, VLIRUOS intervenes in different sectors as well. VLIRUOS recognises 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. When translated into SDGs, the projects that were financed by VLIRUOS in Ecuador covered mainly, apart from SDG 4 and 9, SDGs 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 15. Top sectors for VLIRUOS in this country for the past decade are health, biodiversity/environment and natural resources (in particular water resources), quality of education and innovation.

More background information and context analysis on Ecuador can be found in the **geographic Joint Strategic Framework** for Ecuador, which will be shared with (potential) project promotors when new calls are launched.

Additional sources on progress related to higher education & science (SDG 4)

- UNESCO-UIS: overview data resources indicators related to SDG4
- Our World in data:
    - Indicators related to educational mobility and inequality
    - Indicators related to tertiary education
    - Indicators related to projections of future education (demand)
    - Indicators related to science and research

2.2. Higher education landscape in Ecuador [2]

Higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics and, at non-university level, "Institutos Pedagógicos" and "Institutos Técnicos Superiores". All universities whether public or private, are autonomous. Higher education institutions are now supervised by CES / SENESCYT , but an important stepping stone to the preparation of a thorough reform of the higher education sector was the 2008 CONEA report (National Council on Evaluation and Accreditation). Indicators used by CONEA for the assessment of Universities and other higher education establishments were: (i) Teacher training, (ii) Budget for scholarships, (iii) Mobility of students and credit acknowledgment, (iv) Investment in libraries, (v) Financial resources and budget performance, (vi) Coherence between academic processes and mission and objectives of the University, (vii) Use and creation of extensions to guarantee academic quality and infrastructure (classroom spaces).

Subsequently, in November 2009, CONEA's final report was published. In this report, five categories were distinguished for the classification of 68 universities and poly-technical high schools. The CONEA evaluation ranked all 73 universities in five categories A to E.

A new Law on Higher Education LOES, which was issued in October 2010, which promotes the democratization of access, quality and relevance of higher education, strengthening of scientific research and the link with the private sector, demanded the closure of the 26 institutions in the poorest category E within 18 months. Besides the closure of the weakest universities, the new law also calls for an evaluation (accreditation) of all existing careers, every five years; a university categorisation in 1) Universities of Teaching; 2) Universities of Teaching and Research and 3) Research Universities. In order to be accredited, Education and Research University, 60% of university staff must in two years have full time appointments (now an average 3%) and 60% must have a PhD degree within 7 years (this percentage is now under 10%).

As of 2012, free higher education for Ecuadorian students was implemented. Higher education in the country brings together technical institutes, universities and polytechnic schools and the intention of the measure is to increase equal opportunities to access university (Rivera, 2019).

The Consejo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior (CACES) cancelled the categorisation of universities in A-E and replaced by 'accredited' or 'not accredited', according to the quality of the three functions: teaching, research, and community outreach. Currently there are 52 public universities and 30 private ones. In recent years, various reforms have been implemented in the higher education system with the aim of improving quality and equity in education, including coverage and access. Some of these reforms included the following:

Private higher education enrollment increased by 10% while public enrollment fell by 3% and students from vulnerable sectors have been affected by the difficulty of accessing higher education. High school completion rate increased to 97% and demographic pressures on access to higher education. Therefore, since 2012, an average of 200,000 students finished high school and seek to achieve a place, above all, in public educational institutions (Ramos, 2023). While students can enter public universities only if they pass standardized exams (in 2022, new SENESCYT regulations offer greater autonomy to universities in relation to entrance exams), private universities diversified the offer and student loans. In addition, due to the exams, the admission of students from vulnerable, rural, low-income and ethnic minority sectors to both public and private higher education was strongly affected.

Regarding Ecuadorians studying abroad, the scholarships included the requirement of returning to the country for a few years, leading young professionals to accumulate debt as they decided not to return due to the increase in unemployment in Ecuador and the increase in opportunities abroad. The lack of competitiveness of wages, the difficulty that scholarship holders face to get a job when they return to the

[2] Information updated with info from the Final Evaluation report of the Network programme Ecuador, coordinated by ESPOL, and funded by VLIRUOS. Report elaborated by Leandro Echt and Montserrat Creamer.

country, and the disparity between the scholarship holder's area of knowledge and the job they get once they finish their studies are critical issues. These factors have affected reaching the objective of training human capital that generates favorable conditions for the productive sector of the country (Vaca, 2021).

While research in higher education institutions has increased, no research agenda aligned with country needs was established. Moreover, the scholarship holders were not institutionalized as professors of the national higher education system (Ramos, 2023). SENESCYT scholarships are focused on postgraduate studies abroad, which means that the research carried out is not necessarily focused on offering solutions to the country's problems. On the other hand, at the end of the studies and returning to the country, there are no follow-up, support and reinsertion mechanisms in the academic system in order to strengthen the academic quality and national research projects. In Ecuador, there is insufficient link between higher education and the external environment, limited quality of academic activity, low levels of self-management, scarce university financing; and lack of social accountability (Silva-Tarqui, 2022).

In this context, CES presented in 2021, together with SENESCYT and CACES, the Plan of the Higher Education System 2021-2026. Its main objectives are to establish mechanisms to improve student access to universities, with more and better opportunities; with the promotion of scientific research and technologies that generate innovations with a social impact; the empowerment of public policies aimed at the needs of the productive and economic sectors, prioritizing sustainable development, among others. In turn, in 2018 and 2019 there have been partial reforms to the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES) with the common objective of promoting university autonomy, access and research. In addition, the Intercultural University of Nationalities and Indigenous Peoples was created. In 2021, President Guillermo Lasso presented the LOES reform project to the National Assembly, with the aim of strengthening university autonomy, the academic offer and the admission processes. However, it was shelved by a majority vote in the National Assembly in 2023 due to lack of political support and ideological differences regarding issues such as quality and financing.

An interesting development is the recent agreement (Senescyt News, June 2021) of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (Senescyt) and the European Union to create new Higher educational technological centres in eight provinces of the country. Seven of the institutes, which will be financed by the European Investment Bank, will be located in Atacames, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Riobamba, Sucúa, Quito and Quevedo; while the eighth, which will be in the city of Portoviejo, will be built with funds from the Latin America Investment Facility. The total investment exceeds 80 million dollars.

In terms of Higher Education Institutes, Webometrics provides the ranking of Ecuadorian universities worldwide. 2 universities (Escuela Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL) and Escuela Politécnica Nacional (EPN)) rank in the top 2000 worldwide. ESPOL is a former IUC partner university and EPN is also a longtime partner in a NETWORK and other projects. No specific recommendations can be drawn from this apart from the fact that regional and local institutions away from the Guayas, Azuay and Pichincha (Quito) regions often received less funding and are situated in environments of more structural poverty (Esmeraldas, Amazonas).

2.3. Leaving no one behind

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged to leave no one behind and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. The principle of leaving no one behind can be defined as a three-part imperative: to end absolute poverty in all its forms, to stop group-based discrimination that results in unequal outcomes for disadvantaged populations, and to take action to help the furthest behind.

Specifically for Ecuador the concept of reducing inequalities in a multi-diverse society with strong indigenous roots and a variety of populations, including well-being, education access for all and zero hunger are a top political priority. Also the national development plan 2017-2021 'Toda Una Vida' which

makes a strong reference to the importance of an inclusive society and the principle of plurinationality. Leaving 'no one behind' is strongly integrated in those concepts.

In 2024, a document regarding 'leaving no one behind' in the workplace was published, aiming to reveal the inequalities in occupational health generated by the new Regulation for Workplace Health Promotion in Ecuador, thereby including small and micro-enterprises (Equity in the Ecuadorian Micro-enterprises).

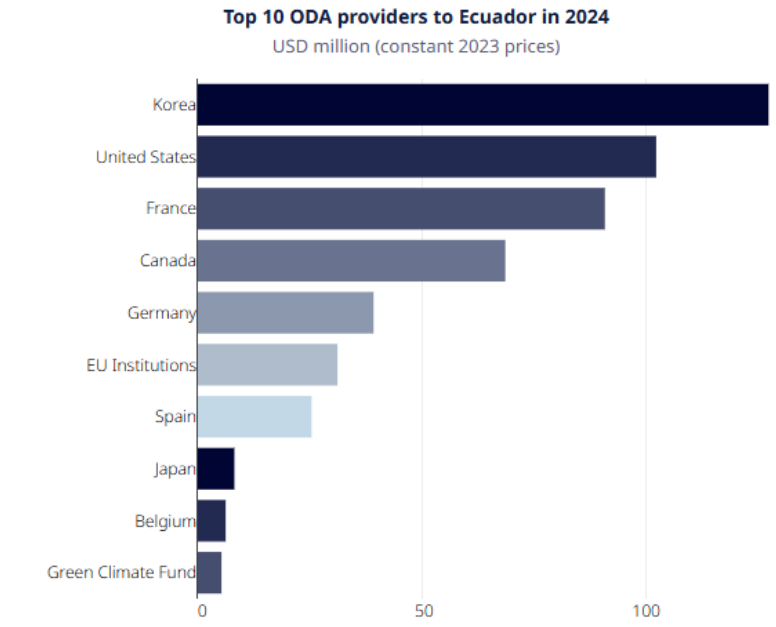
In the LNOB Evaluation for 2030, the creation of strategic partnerships to strengthen a national evaluation system was put forward to ensure adequate development of evaluation in Ecuador through strengthening the leadership of 'Planifica Ecuador' as the governing body and coordinator of all evaluation activities. Thereby, it is essential to develop and strengthen the technical capacity of civil servants for monitoring and evaluation to obtain the best possible results and to put greater emphasis to local governments. Also the role of organized civil society and academia must be strengthened to ensure that the sustainability of measures does not depend on political willpower alone.

2.4. Multistakeholderpartnership - Stakeholder analysis

The complexity, scale, and interconnectedness of the current societal challenges that the SDG framework is seeking to address, requires a concerted effort of a wide variety of different stakeholders. As such, the principle of multistakeholderpartnership – which promotes cooperation and partnerships at different stages and spanning the boundaries of civil society, private sector, government, and academia – is ubiquitous across the 2030 Agenda. An analysis of these stakeholders is essential for each partnership.

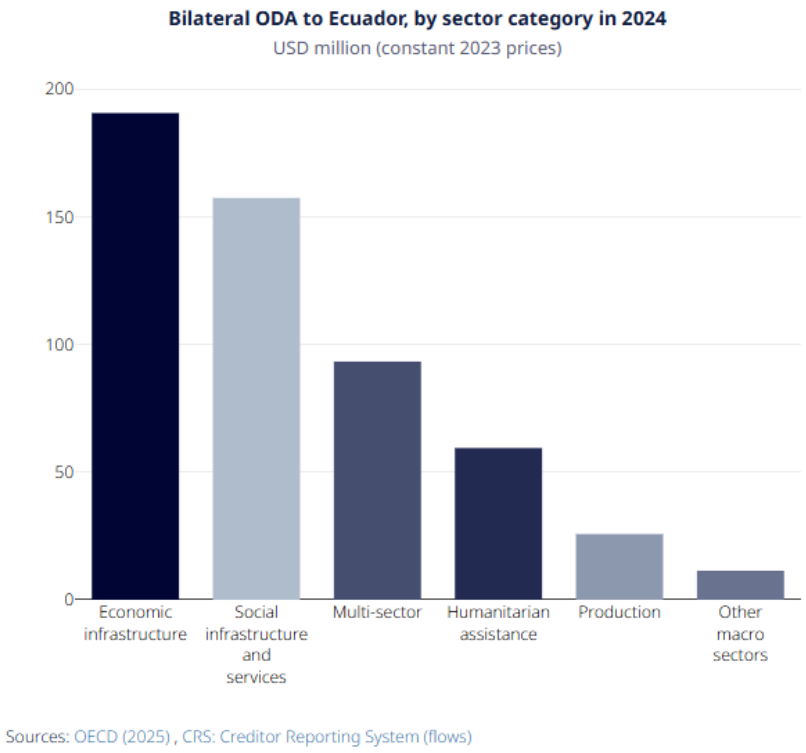
An analysis is included in the geographical JSF and all national documents reflect strongly the decentralised character of the Ecuadorian territorial and societal organisation, referring strongly to the different societal actors and emphasizing the importance of inclusion and plurinationality.

Looking at the international **partners** of Ecuador, Korea is the main donor of gross official development aid (ODA) in Ecuador, followed by the USA, France, Canada, Germany and EU institutions. Also Belgium is in the top 10 of ODA providers for Ecuador. With the withdrawal of USAID funds since the Trump administration took over in 2025, this situation is expected to change in the following years.

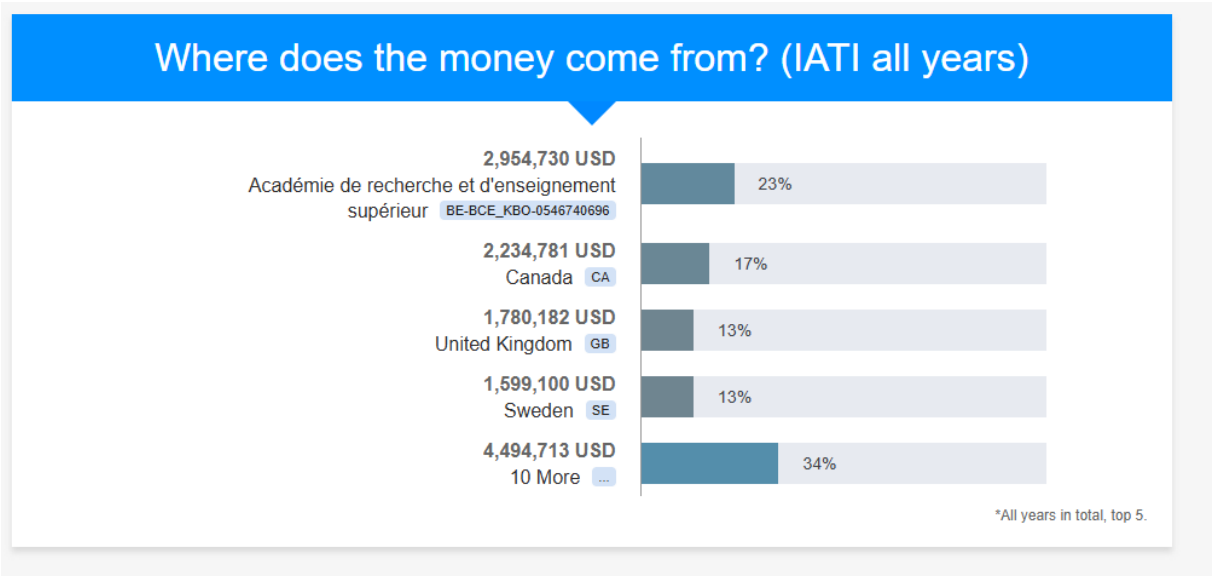


Source: https://www.oecd.org/en/data/dashboards/official-development-assistance-at-a-glance.html

The sectors receiving the biggest funding are Economic infrastructure and Social Infrastructure and Services.



Based on [data from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)](), ARES is the main donor in the higher education sector, followed by Canada, UK and Sweden. VLIRUOS is not appearing because its projects are coded along different OCDE DAC codes.



VLIRUOS contributes to the 2030 agenda by realizing a societal impact, implying an impact on local communities, civil society, governments, private sector or other higher education institutions. In what follows we list the role and the desired change among the main actors involved in the change process that VLIRUOS envisages to support through *its interventions*.

Actor	Role and interest/influence
Higher Education Institutions in Ecuador	HEIs in Ecuador are important boundary partners in the realization of VLIRUOS outcomes in terms of its contribution to Agenda 2030, and the potential contribution to local sustainable development. As project owners they are expected to contribute to HEIs' enhanced institutional performance in the core tasks relating to education, research and societal service delivery strengthening the HEI's visibility and recognition as a centre of excellence. In the long-term, partner HEIs are also expected to have a multiplier effect on the higher education system and development sector in the country or region through their engagement in (global) knowledge-driven partnerships with academic and non-academic stakeholders.
DGD (incl. Belgian embassies in partner countries)	DGD has an advisory role in the VLIRUOS selection commissions and follows-up on the VLIRUOS portfolio and the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development. The Belgian Embassies (e.g. for Andes Embabel Lima – Peru) can play a role in facilitating the uptake of knowledge, the identification, mobilisation and relation building with other stakeholders (e.g. links with European Union, national government, other donors), the contextual updates etc.
Students, professionals, and alumni	**Students** can be direct (e.g. as a recipient of a PhD scholarship within a project) or indirect beneficiaries (e.g. enjoying improved/innovative didactical approaches) of the projects. As direct beneficiary, their

	changed role will be about the generation and use of newly acquired knowledge, competences (e.g. global citizenship) and networks in view of sustainable development. Alumni from VLIRUOS-projects in Ecuador will be important stakeholders in connecting VLIRUOS projects with each other, with other actors, etc.
Academics/researchers	As direct beneficiaries of the projects, academics and researchers affiliated within Flemish and partner HE&SIs play an important role in co-creating, disseminating and creating conditions for uptake of knowledge relevant to the achievement of the SDGs in line with the needs, policies and priorities of the partner HE&SIs, local/national or regional stakeholders.
Members of the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development	VLIRUOS, ITM and ARES have initiated the JSF on HESD4SD to further unlock the developmental potential of higher education and science cooperation for sustainable development and make it accessible to other local, Belgian and international partners as scientific advisor to other partners' projects, partners or policy bodies, as a platform for sharing state of the art scientific results, information, expertise and experience and for exploration of possibilities for synergy and complementarity. In Ecuador ARES and VLIRUOS are present.
Belgian Actors of the Non-governmental Cooperation	VLIRUOS continuously tries to identify and encourage synergy and complementarity between Belgian ANGCs and academic stakeholders. Through the uptake of research results, mobilisation of local stakeholders, participation in trainings or courses, identification and communication of relevant research questions/opportunities, hosting of international internships, facilitating student mobility… these actors play a critical role.
Belgian bilateral cooperation (BIO & Enabel)	VLIRUOS will regularly exchange with Enabel and BIO to identify and communicate opportunities for synergy and complementarity with academic projects of the partner HEIs (e.g. through country reference frameworks, JSF platform). In the case of Ecuador however bilateral cooperation and Enabel activities are already outphased but quite some important bilateral contacts remain and potential links with BIO can be further investigated.
International organizations and other donors (e.g. WHO, UNESCO, World Bank, European Commission…)	Interventions undertaken by international organisations like UN agencies such as FAO or international donors active in higher education cooperation can be complementary in the achievement of the objectives of projects. They can, for instance, play a role in the use and upscaling of new knowledge or practices or serve as seed money for bigger interventions financed by these international organisations.
Academic/science (inter)national and regional networks	Regional or (inter)national academic/science networks (e.g. CAMES, IUCEA) are among the potential indirect beneficiary as targeted HE&SIs strengthened in their research/educational capacities can improve the functioning of the networks they are part of through the co-creation, exchange and uptake of knowledge among academic stakeholders. Similar effects can be realized in the case of alumni and scholarship networks/associations when former scholarship students act as agents of change within these networks.

Public sector: Local or central government and political community	Engage in evidence-based governance that puts knowledge to the test by being a stakeholder in the co-creation of inclusive (innovative) solutions and effective user of research results to foster good governance for sustainable and coherent policies.
State owned/Private sector	To ensure that the resource-led sustainable industrialization process is both sustainable and beneficial, the government will work closely with the **private sector**. This includes developing both the private sector and human capital to build an educated, skillful, and productive labor force to drive industrialization.
Civil society, social movements and local communities	Civil society actors, social movements and local communities are expected to co-create, access and use the knowledge and research products generated within the framework of *projects* thereby making a potential contribution to the entire range of SDGs.

3. Synergy and Complementarity with other (Belgian) actors in Ecuador

3.1. VLIRUOS approaches to synergy and complementarity

Drawing upon their longstanding common history, VLIRUOS, ARES and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) jointly developed the thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (JSF HES4SD). Through cooperation with civil society, private and public sector, the JSF initiators[3] aim to further unlock the huge developmental potential of higher education and science cooperation for sustainable development and make it accessible to other Belgian, local and international partners, in different ways: as partner in a multi-actor partnership, as scientific advisor to other partners' projects, partners or policy bodies, as a knowledge broker for sharing state of the art scientific results, information, expertise and experience and for exploration of possibilities for synergy and complementarity. This reference framework for Ecuador will feed into to the **platform** that the initiators of the JSF HES4SD plan to create to proactively communicate opportunities and facilitate such cooperation.

More precisely, the platform can be used to:

(i) communicate about the launch and results of competitive calls for projects;
(ii) communicate other opportunities for projects or scholarships;
(iii) gather/exchange on collaboration opportunities (e.g. requests for scientific advice);
(iv) share information about ongoing projects, events and seminars in the country/region.

3.2. Bilateral cooperation (Enabel) in Ecuador

The bilateral cooperation agreements between Ecuador and Belgium were outphased. However, Ecuador has a longstanding history of cooperation with Belgium at level of bilateral cooperation and the country continues to be a very important country in the Belgian indirect cooperation. Belgium ranks 9th on the ODA for Ecuador.

[3] The three JSF initiators represent 60 Belgian higher education institutions (HEIs), being 11 universities, 32 university colleges, 16 school of arts, and ITM.

3.3. Belgian actors of the non-governmental cooperation in Ecuador

3.3.1. Thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science

Together with ARES and ITM, VLIRUOS forms a thematic joint strategic framework on higher education and science for sustainable development (JSF HES4SD): hes4sd.be

However, ITM has no projects in Ecuador. More info specifically about ARES in Ecuador can be found on Moove ARES

Collaboration with the geographic JSF of Ecuador will be facilitated by systematically sharing information on projects and grants, by allowing Belgian ANGC to submit their needs in applied research or training, and by encouraging multi-stakeholder partnerships through competitive calls for proposals (VLIRUOS/ARES).

3.3.2. Ecuador Joint Strategic Framework

	Description of the strategic goal	ANGCs (active members)
SG1	Human rights and gender equality/equity (Derechos humanos – DDHH y equidad igualdad de género) ➢ Contribuir en la defensa y promoción de los **derechos humanos y la igualdad/equidad de género**[4] e incentivar la participación e implicación activa de todos los actores en esta defensa (NNA, mujeres, hombres, comunidades, instituciones y sociedad civil organizada).	11.11.11, Trias, Rikolto, VVOB, Plan Internacional, ACTEC
SG2	Environmental and climate justice (Justicia ambiental y climática) ➢ Contribuir al manejo equilibrado de los bienes y recursos naturales preservando la biodiversidad y previniendo la degradación de los ecosistemas, hacia nuevas formas de economía y sociedad con base en la **justicia ambiental y climática.**	11.11.11, Trias, Rikolto, VVOB, ACTEC
SG3	Agro-food systems (Sistemas agro-alimentarios) ➢ Contribuir a la creación de **sistemas agro-alimentarios** sostenibles e inclusivos fomentando una agricultura familiar climáticamente inteligente que genera un ingreso digno para productores al tiempo de contribuir	Trias, Rikolto, VVOB, Plan Internacional

[4] Para Plan Internacional la igualdad de género significa que todas las personas, de manera independiente de su género, ejercen todos sus derechos, acceden a todos los servicios (alimentación, educación, salud –incluidos los SSSR), son valoradas/os de la misma manera en las familias y en la sociedad; y, tienen las mismas oportunidades para ser autónomas a nivel social y económico. Tener una perspectiva interseccional nos permite identificar y trabajar para las personas que se encuentran en situaciones de mayor vulnerabilidad, por cómo se articulan ciertas condiciones sociales de exclusión como: el género, la edad, la situación socioeconómica, étnica, geográfica, identidad de género y orientación sexual, entre otras. Por esto, en el centro de nuestro trabajo están las niñas y mujeres jóvenes de los sectores más empobrecidos en el país. Para alcanzar la igualdad de género, es decir, que ellas tengan vidas dignas, es necesario garantizar que inicien sus vidas en entornos saludables para ser resilientes, crezcan sin violencia para ser libres, incrementen sus habilidades para liderar en todos los espacios, desde las familias hasta instancias formales de poder y tengan todas las herramientas para ser emprendedoras y autónomas.

	a garantizar el derecho de alimentación sana para todos y todas.	
SG4	Economical justice and distribution of wealth (Justicia economica y redistribucion de la riqueza) ➢ Impulsar, junto con otras organizaciones y actores de la sociedad civil, programas y acciones orientados a fortalecer la **justicia económica y la redistribución de la riqueza** como parte de una estrategia que permita desarrollar una economía puesta al servicio de los derechos.	11.11.11., Rikolto
SG5	Educational system (Sistema Educativo) ➢ Aportar al sostenimiento de un **sistema educativo** de calidad, inclusivo, accesible, seguro, equitativo e innovador que mitigue los altos niveles de deserción escolar, que incluya la participación activa de los diferentes actores de la sociedad y que contribuya a la incorporación en el mundo laboral de jóvenes y adultos, considerando las necesidades del mercado laboral.	TRIAS, Rikolto, VVOB, Plan Internacional, ACTEC

3.3.3. Other Thematic Joint Strategic Frameworks

Besides collaboration with the **thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science**, there is also collaboration with the **thematic JSF Sustainable cities. Thematic JSF Decent Work** is not present in Ecuador.

Los ANGS belgas	Organización asociada de los ACNG belgas en Ecuador	Grupo objetivo	Enfoque/tema operativo	Persona de contacto
Rikolto	Cooperativa de consumidores y productores de Quito y su región Organizaciones de la sociedad civil	Consumidores en Quito-Sur Organizaciones de agricultores Gobiernos locales (Conquito) Ciudadanía en la provincia de Manabí Organizaciones de consumidores Gobiernos locales	Sistemas Alimentarios locales y sustentables Ambiente alimentario Dieta sostenible	Ricardo Garcés
VVSG	Hermanamientos entre autoridades locales de Bélgica y Ecuador: - Bierbeek – San Felipe de Oña - Evergem – Guaranda	Functionarios, hombres políticos y la sociedad civil de Oña y Guaranda	El manejo sostenible de agua y tierra	Katharina Verstraelen