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sharing minds, changing lives

Call Global Minds (GM), Association-based Project (AP) & Organisational Support (ORG) 2027 – 2032

Call for proposals



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1. Introduction

1.1. A world in transition

The world order in which we operate is fundamentally changing. Geopolitical tensions, globalisation and successive crises, from pandemics to war and climate change, have changed the international cooperation. New economic powers are gaining influence, while Europe's global influence is declining.

The different global challenges such as climate change, inequalities or health-threats are rarely limited to only one country or region but have concrete impacts everywhere, including in Belgium. While many of our partner countries have to brace for impacts of geopolitical or climate crises, states in Western-Europe have to now build new forms of resilience towards challenges that have long been perceived as (figuratively or literally) remote to our reality. Knowledge for such resilience often exists in other parts of the world and can be furthered through international partnerships.

In sharp contrast to the increasingly networked and globalised reality, political and societal discourse to refocus on "our own" is gaining momentum and political decisiveness in Western democracies is perceived to be crumbling.

Agenda 2030 and the post-2030 Agenda. Higher education, science, and innovation are central drivers of sustainable development, equipping societies with the knowledge, skills, and solutions needed to address complex global challenges. By fostering inclusive education, advancing research, and building multi-actor partnerships, higher education institutions (HEIs) not only contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also strengthen democratic values, social cohesion, and international cooperation. Their role in training future leaders, supporting evidence-based policy and promoting democracy, positions them as key actors in reducing inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind. Higher Education Institutions are uniquely positioned: HEIs often contribute to innovations that can drive change, they provide the research, insights and expertise needed to address societal challenges and achieve the SDGs.

At the same time, higher education institutions worldwide are facing shared challenges, including financial constraints, increasing demand for access and skills development, brain drain, geopolitical shifts, and the disruptive effects of digitalisation and artificial intelligence. These pressures are particularly acute in many partner countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America due to limited resources and structural inequalities. However, Belgian institutions are also confronted with underfunding and growing barriers to internationalisation. Though international academic cooperation cannot solve all systemic issues, it remains a critical lever. Higher education remains a long-term investment and a vital force for dialogue, diplomacy, and shared solutions in a rapidly transforming world.

As the 2030 deadline approaches, attention is shifting to the next global development phase. The process of building a successor is underway alongside several other international frameworks. A pivotal document is the UN's "Pact for the Future" (adopted in September 2024). Its primary role is not to replace the current SDGs, but to ensure their completion and lay the foundation for the Post-2030 global agenda. The Pact sees Higher Education and Science as being central to this.

Element	The Pact's Role in the Post-2030 Context
Higher Education and Skills	It demands investments in future-oriented skills and lifelong learning opportunities. HEIs are therefore the critical hubs for developing the human capital—the critical thinkers, researchers, and innovators—needed to deliver on scientifically ambitious global goals.

Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI)	The Pact explicitly establishes STI and Digital Cooperation as a central pillar, committing to bridging the "STI Divide." This institutionalises the role of science as an engine of equity and mandates better governance of emerging technologies (e.g., AI), signalling that the next agenda will be highly dependent on scientific capacity.

Beyond the Pact, important regional agendas are also emerging, including Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the EU's Global Gateway, etc. which are all confirming the important role of Higher Education and Science. For instance, the EU's Global Gateway focuses on sustainable infrastructure and strategic investments, guided by themes like digitalisation, climate/energy, transport, health, and education/research. It is a 'values-driven' and security-focused framework that promotes democratic values, good governance, and respect for human rights. Crucially, the Global Gateway emphasises a "Team Europe" approach to cooperation among EU actors and partner countries, with mutual benefit at its core.

From aid to trust, cooperation in a changing world. The rapidly changing global context is dramatically altering the traditional aid paradigm. There is a clear shift from traditional aid to strategic partnerships, emphasising a "win-win" approach where the focus is no longer solely on "impact in the Global South," but on shared, mutual benefits. In this context, the role of international (development) cooperation is also changing. As *Koen Doens* observed, it is "no longer the fuel that drives growth, but the oil that makes cooperation possible"[1]. In fact, development cooperation was never properly equipped or funded to serve as the primary engine of socio-economic development. Instead, it increasingly acts as a connecting and diplomatic lever that builds trust, facilitates dialogue and strengthens partnerships. This evolution takes place against a backdrop of persistent power and resource imbalances, both between and within countries. While these challenges make global solidarity more necessary than ever, development cooperation budgets are coming under growing pressure. At the same time, the traditional division between 'donor' and 'recipient' is fading, as partner countries rightly demand greater ownership, participation and equality. Cooperation is therefore increasingly understood as co-creation between mutually reinforcing institutions. Since co-creation has long been the default approach in academia, academic cooperation is particularly well suited to this new context and, by staying close to its core mission, naturally fosters genuine and mutually beneficial partnerships.

1.2. Five-Year Programme 2027-2032 (FYP3)

1.2.1. Strategic priorities for VLIRUOS' FYP3

In response to a changing global context, evolving policy priorities and a budget reduction, VLIRUOS made strategic choices regarding the FYP3 portfolio, countries and budget allocation. These choices are reflected in FYP3 through a balanced combination of continuity, renewal, flexibility and innovation within the new political and financial framework.

FYP3 is more closely aligned with Belgian development policy and diplomacy and places greater emphasis on collaboration with other Belgian actors. This positions VLIRUOS more explicitly as a strategic instrument for knowledge diplomacy, operating within a Team Belgium and Team Europe approach through joint positioning and communication. Bilateral relations with priority partner countries are also strengthening.

The common thread throughout FYP3 is stronger collaboration: among Flemish higher education institutions, with higher education institutions in our partner countries, with non-academic actors, and with other Belgian (e.g. Enabel) and European actors (e.g. DAAD, Expertise France), alongside ARES and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM).

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1 Koen Doens, Director-General of DG INTPA, MO interview, April 2025. https://www.mo.be/interview/ontwikkelingshulp-is-niet-langer-de-brandstof-maar-de-olie-van-onze-samenwerking

FYP3 is guided by a policy framework that combines **thematic concentration** through the integration of Global Public Goods into projects, with **geographical concentration** through a reduction in the number of partner countries and a clear focus on Africa. Two new exploration countries were strategically selected based on their relevance to Belgium. Cooperation between higher education institutions (MIPs) and with non-academic actors (MSPs), with special focus on the private sector, will be further strengthened, with additional emphasis on scaling up, improving efficiency and leveraging matching funds.

IUC, TEAM and ICP Connect remain the core programmes, with Global Minds and institutional engagement by Flemish higher education institutions serving as essential enabling conditions, now embedded through association-based projects. SI and ITP will be phased out. GROW is a new programme with a strong focus on the application and valorisation of knowledge. A limited number of ICP Connect projects will be given the opportunity to implement a third phase aimed at consolidating their alumni networks and linking them more closely to Team Belgium and Belgian diplomacy, in line with the Team Belgium alumni policy currently under development. No new ICP Connect projects will be launched for the time being. While funding levels for TEAM, GROW, IUC and BE-Link are largely maintained, significant budget reductions are envisaged for ICP Connect and Global Minds.

BE-Link is positioned as a connecting instrument. It will place a strong focus on the Team Belgium approach, policy support, the development of new strategic partnerships, and knowledge networks linking institutions, academics, students and alumni. It will also provide room for experimentation to engage with the humanitarian-development nexus. Through the principles of “connect and multiply”, “scout and initiate” and responsiveness, BE-Link aims to create added value for VLIRUOS and, where possible, for Team Belgium as a whole.

To enable these strategic choices, administrative simplification and innovation in both operations and instruments will be essential, supported by a relationship of trust with government as a key enabling condition.

1.2.2. Belgian policy priorities and the Global Public Goods (GPG)

In the context of major geopolitical shifts and increasing budgetary constraints as described above, the Belgian government is pursuing a more strategic and integrated approach to international cooperation through the **3D framework (Defence, Diplomacy and Development)**. International cooperation is expected to contribute not only to poverty reduction and sustainable development, but also to stability, security and Belgium's broader strategic interests.

Within this evolving policy context, knowledge institutions, alumni and academic networks are recognised as valuable assets for Belgian diplomacy and international positioning. Global academic cooperation is therefore increasingly seen as a strategic instrument of knowledge diplomacy, strengthening international partnerships and networks, supporting evidence-informed policymaking, and promoting dialogue on shared global challenges.

For the 2027-2032 programming period, Belgian development actors are expected to demonstrate clear strategic choices, focus and added value. Particular emphasis is placed on alignment with the government's thematic priorities, namely three Global Public Goods: **climate and biodiversity, global health, and stability**, supported by three cross-cutting accelerators: **women and youth, innovation, and skills development and institutional capacity strengthening**. A geographical focus on **Africa** is encouraged, but cooperation with other regions remains possible where justified.

Within the current policy framework, Belgian development cooperation actors are encouraged to make clear thematic and geographical choices, align their interventions with broader policy priorities, and seek opportunities for synergy, complementarity and collaboration.

While these priorities are primarily intended to guide the strategic orientation of Belgian development cooperation, project promoters are also encouraged to take them into account, to the extent possible and where relevant, when designing and implementing their initiatives.

Accordingly, applicants for **VLIRUOS-funded projects**, including **Global Minds projects submitted by Flemish higher education institutions**, are invited to demonstrate how their proposed instruments and subprojects will contribute to or align with these broader policy priorities. This may include, for example, addressing one or more of the thematic priority areas, contributing to innovation and skills development, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships, strengthening academic cooperation with Africa, or promoting collaboration and synergies that enhance impact.

To ensure consistency with the evolving Belgian policy framework, these priorities have been translated into the **VLIRUOS selection criteria** and will be taken into consideration during the appraisal and selection of project proposals. The intention is not to impose a uniform approach on all projects, but rather to encourage applicants to position their proposals within the broader strategic context of Belgian international cooperation and to demonstrate their potential contribution to sustainable and impactful partnerships.

The Global Public Goods that have been put forward as priorities of Belgian development cooperation are briefly outlined below. Furthermore, a fourth, transversal Global Public Good—Knowledge—has been identified by VLIRUOS. The Global Minds Programme should clearly indicate whether, how, and to what extent its activities contribute to or relate to these Global Public Goods.

GPG 1: Climate and Biodiversity — An Integrated Approach

Climate change and biodiversity loss are among the most urgent global challenges of our time. Addressing these challenges requires an integrated approach that combines climate adaptation, resilience building, and ecosystem protection, particularly in contexts that are highly exposed to climate impacts. Sustainable food systems are an important component of this agenda. Ecologically sound and socially just food production can contribute to climate and biodiversity objectives while also advancing poverty reduction, nutritional security, and social stability.

GPG 2: Global Health — A Shared Responsibility

Global health is a Global Public Good, based on universal and equitable access to quality health goods and services, medicines, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Because health threats and systemic vulnerabilities transcend national borders, effective responses require solidarity, cooperation, and resilient systems.
A broad and interdisciplinary understanding of global health recognises the deep interconnectedness between human, animal, and environmental health through a **One Health approach**. This perspective highlights the need for integrated solutions to complex and interrelated health challenges.

GPG 3: Stability — Resilience, Justice and Sustainable Societies

Stability is a precondition for sustainable development, peace, and human dignity in a context of uncertainty, inequality, and migration. Societies need the capacity to absorb shocks, manage transitions, and address the root causes of fragility.
A comprehensive approach to stability encompasses three key dimensions: inclusive governance and the rule of law; rights-based approaches to human mobility; and local economic development that creates opportunities and strengthens social resilience. Particular attention is given to the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls as essential contributors to resilient and sustainable societies.

GPG 4: Knowledge — A Cross-Cutting Global Public Good

Knowledge is recognised as a fourth, cross-cutting Global Public Good because of its central role in addressing complex global challenges such as climate change, health crises, fragility, and inequality. Rather than constituting a separate thematic area, knowledge serves as a strategic enabler across all thematic priorities.
As a public good, knowledge gains value when it is shared, reused, adapted, and co-created among diverse actors, including governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society. It supports innovation, education, evidence-informed policymaking, shared values, and societal transformation. However, access to knowledge remains unequal. Strengthening research capacity, digital infrastructure, higher education systems, and inclusive learning environments is therefore essential, alongside efforts to promote more equitable and decolonised approaches to knowledge production and exchange.

1.2.3. Agenda 2030 and its underlying principles

As described above, the Agenda 2030 deadline approaches. Nevertheless, the SDG principles remain an important compass for the VLIRUOS work.

First, **interconnectedness** requires moving beyond sectoral and disciplinary silos. VLIRUOS projects should analyse how different SDGs interact, including both synergies and trade-offs, and should integrate transversal themes such as gender, diversity & equity and environmental sustainability. VLIRUOS advocates multidisciplinarity in its projects to guarantee that complex problems are analysed from different perspectives and that solutions are also conceived from that same multi-layered perspective.

Second, **Leave No One Behind** means looking not only at what a project delivers, but also at who participates and who benefits. This includes attention to institutional diversity, vulnerable groups, first-generation students, local ownership and the agent-of-change potential of scholars and partners. The LNOB principle has been used by VLIRUOS when defining its framework for preferential countries, partner institutions and individuals (academics and students) thus catering for those who are at risk to be left behind.

Third, **coherence, multi-institutional partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships** address complex societal challenges, for which VLIRUOS asks proposals to apply three collaborative approaches that strengthen synergy and impact:

- **Coherence:** VLIRUOS promotes alignment with Agenda 2030 by connecting partnerships with relevant initiatives within and across countries. Country Reference Framework documents support teams with country context analyses and mappings of Belgian development actors and projects. Moreover, VLIRUOS actively stimulates projects to connect to one another, beyond countries, disciplines, themes and programmes, to make the VLIRUOS programme more coherent.
- **Multi-institutional partnerships (MIPs):** MIPs involve structural collaboration between several Flemish/Belgian and/or partner higher education institutions to pool expertise and thus improve project results by covering the entire knowledge chain and to increase cost-effectiveness. Clear roles and responsibilities help strengthening cooperation across institutions.
- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs):** MSPs involve structural collaboration with at least one non-academic actor, such as a civil society, government or private sector actor, who actively contributes to project implementation. They strengthen the science-society interface, needs' orientation, knowledge uptake and cross-sector collaboration towards a shared goal.

Fourth, **universality** of the SDGs means that sustainable development is not a one-way act of support from developed to developing countries, but a shared investment in systems on which all countries depend. As global challenges are interconnected, progress in one context can create benefits elsewhere: stronger resilience, reduced risk, new knowledge, stable partnerships and long-term economic value. For VLIRUOS, this reframes international cooperation also as mutual investment. Partnerships with higher education and science institutions address development challenges while also generating knowledge, innovation, networks and capacity that benefit all partners involved and strengthen the collective ability to respond to global challenges and safeguarding our mutual wellbeing and economic prosperity. This has always been a principle of Agenda 2030 and a guiding principle for global academic cooperation.

1.3. Global Minds within FYP3

The Global Minds programme will continue to strengthen the institutional capacity of Flemish higher education institutions, as well as that of academics, departments and students. While maintaining its core functions of partnership exploration, innovation, consolidation and global citizenship, the programme's strategic focus and finality will be sharpened in response to the evolving political and budgetary context, as reflected in its updated Theory of Change. As a **strategic institutional instrument**, Global Minds will continue to **create the enabling conditions** for global academic cooperation in general and for VLIRUOS programmes in particular, while positioning itself more explicitly within and contributing to the broader VLIRUOS portfolio.

In line with the feedback provided by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DG-INT) following the mid-term evaluation of Global Minds under FYP2, continued attention will have to be given to mainstreaming the global dimension across the core missions of Flemish higher education institutions, including education, research and societal engagement. Global citizenship, international engagement and cooperation with academics in our partner countries should become increasingly embedded in institutional policies and practices rather than remaining confined to standalone initiatives. At the same time, greater emphasis will be placed on

outcome and impact management, with stronger attention to defining, monitoring and demonstrating results at outcome and impact level, thereby ensuring meaningful and sustainable change as well as clear evidence of added value and effectiveness.

Global Minds within FYP3 introduces several refinements: Global Minds funding will be linked to a minimum level of **institutional commitment**, and for four of the five Flemish higher education associations, activities will be supported by association-based projects. The programme will place **greater emphasis on institutional capacity strengthening**, strategic embedding, collective learning and collaboration within the VLIRUOS community. It will further strengthen its role as a **connector and multiplier** by fostering collaboration among Flemish institutions, institutions in our partner countries, and Belgian and European actors, while promoting scaling-up, cost-efficiency and the mobilisation of matching funds. Additional attention is given to key actors, such as policymakers within HEI's, alumni and potential funding partners.

Global Minds will also align more closely with the VLIRUOS policy of thematic and geographical concentration. Activities will be expected to contribute to the stronger focus on Africa and to address themes related to Global Public Goods and Belgian policy priorities. Furthermore, networking, knowledge diplomacy and the Team Belgium approach will become more prominent features of the programme. Initiatives will be encouraged to contribute to the development of strategic partnerships, sustainable networks and, where relevant, to the strengthening of the VLIRUOS position within Team Belgium and Team Europe.

The reduced resources will require institutions to make more selective strategic choices regarding the instruments and activities they deploy. Fewer instruments and subprojects are likely to be supported, placing a stronger emphasis on coherence, complementarity, impact and value for money. In this sense, Global Minds is evolving from a relatively broad and autonomous instrument into a more integrated and strategically focused programme. At the same time, participating institutions and consortia will continue to have sufficient space to build on their own strengths, expertise and priorities, while contributing to the broader objectives of VLIRUOS, knowledge diplomacy and international cooperation.

1.4. The interconnectedness of GM, AP and ORG

To strengthen institutional commitment to global academic cooperation and ensure a minimum level of engagement across all Flemish higher education institutions (HEIs), VLIRUOS provides co-funding through three complementary mechanisms. Together, these projects and structures contribute to the policy frameworks, organisational capacity and institutional incentives required for sustainable international engagement.

- **Global Minds (GM)** supports the institutional capacity of individual Flemish HEIs for global academic cooperation. The programme enables institutions to integrate global perspectives and address global challenges through education, research and societal engagement. By fostering global citizenship, international partnerships and cooperation with actors in our partner countries, Global Minds helps create the enabling environment for long-term engagement in academic cooperation for sustainable development. As such, it plays a pivotal role within the VLIRUOS portfolio, as the impact of global academic cooperation ultimately depends on the ability of HEIs to initiate, sustain and leverage partnerships through which knowledge is co-created, shared and translated into societal value and to also activate staff and students to do so.
- **Association-based Projects (APs)** strengthen collaboration within and across the Flemish university associations. Through these projects, universities provide expertise, services and support to universities of applied sciences and arts (UASAs), thereby enhancing the collective capacity to engage in global academic cooperation. The projects build on existing structures and services supported through ORG funding and may be complemented by other institutional or external funding sources.
- **Organisational Support (ORG)** supports Flemish universities and UASAs in developing and maintaining the institutional foundations required for global academic cooperation. This includes the establishment of policy frameworks, governance arrangements, support services and operational capacities that enable institutions to effectively manage international partnerships and implement their global engagement strategies. Together with Global Minds and the association-based projects, ORG contributes to a coherent and sustainable institutional ecosystem for global and international academic cooperation.

2. Modular approach for Global Minds, AP & ORG

2.1. Introduction

In line with the VLIRUOS' aspiration for more coherence, an integrated call and selection process for Global Minds (GM), Association-based Projects (AP) and Organisational Support (ORG) has been developed.

The call seeks to facilitate a stronger link between the GM projects and the association-based projects. This approach aims to strengthen collaboration between institutions participating in Global Minds and association-based projects, within and beyond the association, while ensuring that the support structures of both programmes are used as cost-effectively as possible.

Association-based projects offer potential additional benefits in this regard. They have the potential to pool resources and broaden access to instruments, expertise and partnerships. They may also enabel a more strategic and needs-based allocation of resources than fixed institutional allocations. Additionally, shared coordination and management structures can contribute to more operational efficiency by reducing duplication of efforts and generating economies of scale. A consortium approach also helps to spread risks, making it easier to adapt priorities and activities when circumstances change. By bringing institutions together around shared objectives, consortium projects can strengthen strategic coherence and visibility, improve alignment with broader programme goals, and increase the overall impact of investments and partnerships.

To meet the need for a proportionate and user-friendly process for institutions, a modular system has been adopted.

The modules are as follow:

- **Part A – Institutional Commitment (per institution):** Have the necessary enabling conditions been established within the institution to ensure the continuation and further development of global academic cooperation during FYP3?
- **Part B – Global Minds Project (per consortium / KU Leuven / University of Applied Sciences & Arts of KU Leuven association):** What do you propose to strengthen the institutional capacity of Flemish higher education institutions to engage in sustainable global academic cooperation and integrate global perspectives into their education, research and societal engagement ?
- **Part C – Association-based Project (AP):** How will the institutions, brought together within an association-based project, foster collaboration across the VLIRUOS portfolio, within and beyond the association, and strengthen global academic cooperation more broadly? And how will this collaboration be organised operationally?
- **Part D – Organisational Support (ORG):** Which structures and activities will be put in place at the level of universities to support the engagement of staff and students in global academic cooperation in general, and VLIRUOS in particular ?

The modular approach enables institutions to submit the different modules jointly, which is encouraged. Institutions that prefer not to do so, may submit the modules separately. The content of the four modules has been aligned to ensure consistency and avoid duplication. If a particular question has already been addressed in another module, the information does not need to be repeated; instead, applicants may simply refer to the relevant section in the other module.

2.2. Part A: Expression of institutional commitment

The assessment of institutional commitment serves as a basis for demonstrating the value and impact of Global Minds towards DG-INT and as a mechanism to support institutional strategic reflection and strengthen internal ownership within each Flemish higher education institution. Institutions are invited to elaborate on their strategic framework for global academic cooperation.

To be eligible for Global Minds funding, participating institutions must demonstrate a minimum level of commitment across three key domains, proportionate to their size and profile. Institutions are expected to describe how they address each domain, how their approach has evolved over time, and the strategic considerations that have shaped these choices.

- **Policy framework**: The institution has a formal policy on global academic cooperation that is embedded within its broader strategic and internationalisation framework. Evidence is provided that this policy is actively implemented, periodically reviewed, and adjusted where necessary to respond to changing priorities and contexts.
- **Recognition and engagement of staff and students**: The institution creates opportunities for staff and students to initiate, contribute to and participate in global academic cooperation initiatives and policy development. Such engagement is recognised as a meaningful component of their institutional responsibilities and is appropriately valued and rewarded. Any internal conditions, restrictions or approval procedures that may affect participation should be clearly described, e.g. personnel cost requirements.
- **Institutional commitment and resources**: The institution demonstrates a tangible commitment to global academic cooperation through the allocation of financial, human and organisational resources. It should be able to provide evidence of these investments and demonstrate that the Global Minds project is embedded within a broader institutional strategy and portfolio of international engagement, rather than operating as a standalone initiative.

In addition, institutions are required to submit a **Letter of Commitment**, signed by the Rector, Director or equivalent institutional leader, formally endorsing the Global Minds proposal and confirming the institution's commitment to the programme's objectives and principles.

This section should describe the institutional preconditions that each institution is expected to put in place. These should be defined in light of the institution's specific context and ambitions, while also taking into account the resource constraints it faces, particularly in the case of universities of applied sciences and arts.

Equal treatment and institutional ownership will be ensured: all applicants will follow the same procedure, and each proposal must be validated at an appropriate institutional level, as determined by the institution itself.

2.3. Part B: Global Minds Project

2.3.1. Context

Global Minds builds institutional readiness and commitment in Flemish higher education institutions. Global Minds strengthens the capacity, commitment and strategic readiness of Flemish higher education institutions to engage in global academic cooperation. It enables universities and universities of applied sciences and arts to integrate global perspectives and address global challenges through their core missions of education, research and service to society.

Global Minds offers Flemish higher education institutions a flexible policy framework to explore new partnerships, consolidate existing cooperation, target specific audiences and connect people, projects, networks and funding opportunities. Its modalities and instruments are shaped by each participating institution or consortium within the common VLIRUOS framework.

2.3.2. Project proposal

The institutional commitment should be ensured and endorsed by each individual institution. The Global Minds project proposal itself should be submitted at institution/consortium level. The proposal should specify which project components will be implemented individually by consortium members or groups of members, and which will be carried out jointly by the consortium.

2.3.3. Theory of Change

The Theory of Change reflects the generic Theory of Change for the VLIRUOS portfolio and shows how the generic objectives of Global Minds projects fit within that. The illustration and guiding text below explain how VLIRUOS foresees change to happen within the Global Minds programme, along the three questions. Individual institutions are expected to further elaborate and operationalise this within their Global Minds projects, together with their project partners.

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Theory of change
Global Minds

Global Minds projects empower Flemish higher education institutions to deepen and strengthen their institutional commitment, expertise and involvement, to make strategic choices, and to transform to and act as drivers of change through mutually beneficial partnerships.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Why?
Sphere of interest

Knowledge-driven global partnerships & networks advance **knowledge, health, climate resilience, and stability** as essential global public goods. This contributes to a more sustainable, equitable and resilient world.

IMPACT

IMPACT AREAS

- Scaling innovations in policies, sectors and society
- Skilled individuals act as professionals & global citizens in the labour market and wider society
- Strengthened higher education ecosystems, fostering science diplomacy

WIDER SOsocietal UPTAKE & USE

OUTCOMES

6 Interconnected networks drive knowledge mobilisation, new partnerships and science diplomacy

NETWORKS as multipliers of change

What?
Sphere of influence

1 Individuals apply relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes

5 Enhanced conditions and stakeholder engagement for the uptake of knowledge, in **service to society**

3 Higher quality and inclusive **education**

4 Higher quality and needs-oriented **research**

2 Improved institutional policies, systems and processes

INDIVIDUALS as agents of change

HE&SIs as drivers of change

PROJECT DOMAINS

How?
Sphere of control

Education programmes & methods
Integrating global perspectives in education programmes, didactics and approaches

Research programmes & methods
Integrating global and interdisciplinary perspectives in research methodologies and methods

Partnerships & networks
Strengthening reciprocal multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder partnerships

Outreach & policy support
Strengthening knowledge sharing and policy support with relevant stakeholders

People
Strengthening Flemish students, alumni, staff and academics in global academic cooperation and global citizenship

Policies, systems & infrastructure
Strengthening Flemish institutional systems, policies and infrastructure for global academic cooperation

ROLES VLIRUOS

Global Minds projects

- **Grant manager**
- **Platform**

OVERARCHING APPROACH

Mutually beneficial partnership model

a. Why it matters? The long-term impact of the VLIRUOS portfolio

The VLIRUOS portfolio is dedicated to achieving long-term impact. This impact is realised when knowledge is effectively translated into policy and practice by relevant societal actors. By strengthening higher education and science ecosystems, VLIRUOS fosters the global partnerships and networks necessary to advance knowledge, health, climate resilience, and stability as essential global public goods for a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient world.

As part of the VLIRUOS portfolio, Global Minds aims to strengthen the role of Flemish higher education institutions in addressing global challenges and contributing to sustainable development. Global Minds does not aim to generate this impact through isolated activities, but by creating the institutional conditions that make sustained global academic cooperation possible. The programme therefore strengthens the readiness of Flemish institutions to engage in the VLIRUOS portfolio and global academic cooperation, while also ensuring that global perspectives are embedded in education, research and societal engagement in Flanders.

By doing so, Global Minds contributes to the **3 impact areas of VLIRUOS**:

1. Scaling innovation in policies, sectors and society.

Global Minds promotes the use of knowledge and innovation to address local and global challenges and improve policies and practices. Global Minds contributes by embedding global academic cooperation and international solidarity in institutional strategies, education, research and service to society, while strengthening partnerships and stakeholder engagement to facilitate knowledge sharing and uptake.

2. Skilled individuals act as professionals & global citizens in the labour market and wider society.

Global Minds empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to contribute to sustainable development as professionals and global citizens. Global Minds contributes by strengthening the competences, critical awareness and engagement of students, alumni and staff to participate in global academic cooperation and act as global citizens.

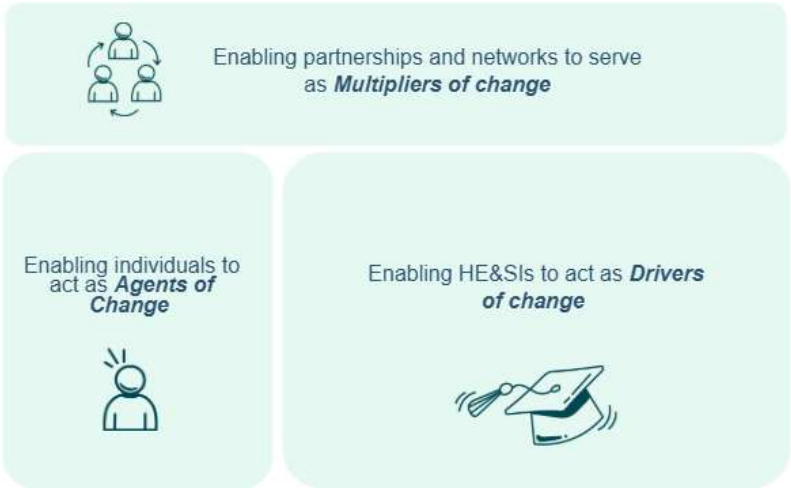
3. Strengthened higher education ecosystems, fostering science diplomacy.

Global Minds strengthens higher education ecosystems through sustainable mutually beneficial partnerships and networks that foster knowledge exchange, collaboration and science diplomacy. Global Minds contributes by enabling Flemish higher education institutions to establish and strengthen long-term partnerships and networks, supporting sustained global academic cooperation.

b. What do Global Minds projects aim to achieve?

Global Minds empowers Flemish higher education institutions to deepen and strengthen their institutional commitment, expertise and involvement of staff and students and, where relevant, the wider public, to make strategic choices, and to transform to and act as drivers of change through mutually beneficial partnerships. It strengthens the capacity of Flemish HEIs to integrate global perspectives and address global challenges through education, research, and service to society. In doing so, Global Minds creates the enabling environment for HEIs and individuals to further engage in global academic cooperation.

It does so by strengthening three interconnected transformation pathways (with a focus on the Drivers of Change):



1. Enabling individuals to act as *Agents of change*

Equipping students, staff and alumni with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to engage in global academic cooperation and contribute to sustainable development.

2. Enabling HE&SIs to act as *Drivers of change*

Strengthening institutional policies, capacities and practices to integrate global perspectives into education, research and service to society.

3. Enabling partnerships & networks to serve as *Multipliers of Change*

Building and strengthening sustainable international partnerships and networks that foster knowledge exchange, joint learning, collaboration and coordinated action.

Within the three transformation pathways, VLIRUOS identifies six interconnected **outcomes**. These outcomes describe medium-term effects of the VLIRUOS portfolio on the direct or in some cases indirect beneficiaries and portray *what* projects aim to achieve. Some of the outcomes will typically be found in combination with other outcomes as they may be mutually reinforcing and/or are situated along the same transformation pathway. **Each of the 6 VLIRUOS outcomes could be relevant in Global Minds projects, depending on the priorities and needs of higher education institutions.**

These outcomes and their specific focus for Global Minds can be found in the table below.

	Outcome description
Agents of change	**1. Individuals apply relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes** This outcome reflects the co-creation and exchange of state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to individuals, who then apply these in their organisations, networks and communities. The skills and knowledge also include critical thinking, global citizenship skills and attitudes, and leadership skills. *Global Minds strengthens the capacities of students, staff and alumni and in some cases the wider public, through active engagement in global academic cooperation. It enables individuals to co-create and apply knowledge, while fostering critical thinking, leadership, and global citizenship, positioning them as agents of change.* ***Note: Global Citizenship Education** initiatives form an integral part of Global Minds. However, Global Minds encompasses a much broader set of objectives and activities that extend beyond Global Citizenship Education alone.*
Drivers of change	**2. Improved institutional policies, systems and processes** This outcome highlights the importance of strengthening the organisational capacity of HE&SIs to enable improvements in research, education and service in and with society. It encompasses institutional leadership and management, as well as strengthened policies (institutional rules and frameworks guiding decision-making), systems (organisational structures and tools supporting operations) and processes (procedures through which activities are implemented). Together with enhanced human capacities, these elements contribute to improved institutional performance.

	Global Minds reinforces institutional commitment to academic cooperation for sustainable development by supporting policy development and implementation within HEIs. It seeks to strengthen the capacities of Flemish HEIs to design, implement, and further develop coherent global academic cooperation strategies aligned with their institutional priorities and societal engagement objectives and to create an institutional enabling environment for its staff and students to engage in global academic cooperation.
	3. Higher quality and inclusive education This outcome concerns the improved quality and inclusiveness of education resulting from strengthened educational capacities available at HE&SIs (e.g. integrating global perspectives, adopting innovative educational approaches). It also refers to education which is inclusive by taking into account the LNOB principle. *Global Minds supports the integration of global perspectives into education and promotes inclusive and innovative learning and teaching approaches.*
	4. Higher quality and needs-orientated research This outcome signifies HE&SIs becoming (more) research active and innovative and being enabled to develop higher quality and needs-oriented research processes and results that produce sustainable solutions to local and global challenges. It also refers to research which is gender sensitive and equity focused as a means for achieving excellence. *By fostering partnerships and linking research to societal needs, Global Minds contributes to more context-relevant, interdisciplinary and solution-oriented research that addresses global challenges. It also promotes gender sensitive and equity-focused research as a means to achieving excellence in research.*
	5. **Enhanced conditions and stakeholder engagement for the uptake of knowledge, in service to society** Through *service to society*, HE&SIs work with a rich variety of stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, and civil society, for ensuring local, national, regional and global impact. This outcome refers to developing and adopting strategies to ensure the conditions for uptake of new knowledge, applications and services are created. It involves strategic, uptake-oriented stakeholder management, targeted dissemination, capacity strengthening of end-users (or intermediaries), etc. *Global Minds enhances the conditions for knowledge uptake and to enable the active involvement of non-academic actors, including not-for-profit organisations, private sector partners, governmental actors, and other societal stakeholders, by developing institutional strategies and partnerships for interacting with such stakeholders.*
Multipliers of Change	6. **Interconnected networks drive knowledge mobilisation, new partnerships and science diplomacy** This outcome reflects the ambition of VLIRUOS to foster a broad knowledge ecosystem consisting of robust, sustainable networks and platforms among academic and non-academic stakeholders. These networks serve as the structural foundation for knowledge mobilisation (including sharing knowledge, translating knowledge to usable forms, connecting knowledge to end-users and stimulating the application of knowledge), for reinforcing the visibility of Belgian global academic cooperation withing the broader Team Belgium and Team Europe approaches, while also contributing to science diplomacy. For example by connecting alumni or thematic networks in support of Belgium diplomacy. This shared commitment to act as a unified system whenever strategic opportunities arise, reinforces cooperation and coherence, avoids fragmentation and enhances Belgium's collective leverage on the international stage. *Global Minds facilitates the exploration, connection and consolidation of partnerships and networks. It enables joint initiatives and pooled funding, while strengthening alumni networks and fostering coordination, scalability and collective impact within both the Belgian and international academic cooperation ecosystems, both at the level of the individual GM projects linking up with one another, and at the level of complementarity between individual GM projects and VLIRUOS & Team Belgium initiatives.*

c. How do GM projects realise this?

VLIRUOS projects generally deliver results around **six project domains (outputs)** listed below, which illustrate *how* projects create change.

Depending on their objectives and institutional context, projects may combine different project domains and contribute to several outcomes. **Projects are not expected to address all outcomes or project domains.** They should identify the changes they aim to achieve, explain why these changes matter in their institutional context, and demonstrate how their proposed activities will contribute to them.

The table below presents the six project domains with the specific focus for GM projects and a non-exhaustive indicative list of deliverables and activities that individual projects can undertake.

Project domain	Examples of GM activities (non exhaustive list)
Research programmes & methods Improved (interdisciplinary) methodologies and strengthened quality and relevance of research to allow for better knowledge management and high-quality research results serving societal needs. ***Within <u>GM projects</u> this concerns integrating global and interdisciplinary perspectives in research methodologies and methods.***	• *Outgoing mobility for academics, staff and students to partner countries for research work* • *Incoming mobility for academics, staff and students from partner countries for research work* • *Research grants for junior, PhD and Postdoctoral researchers (incl. pre-doctoral scholarships)* • *Organisation of international congresses, conferences etc. on Sustainable Development (SD)-related topics, with involvement of researchers, technical staff, students from partner countries*
Education programmes & 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 and ensuring their employability after graduation, their ability to tackle global challenges from a holistic interdisciplinary perspective and to act as critical and resilient global citizens. ***Within <u>GM projects</u> this concerns integrating global perspectives in education programmes, didactics, teaching and learning and approaches.***	• *Outgoing mobility for academics, staff and students to partner countries for credit acquisition (e.g. internships, group travels, ...), curricula development, ...* • *Incoming mobility for staff and students from partner countries for guest lecturing, curricula development ...* • *Integration of Sustainable Development (SD)-related course components and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) pedagogical approaches in curricula* • *Interdisciplinary (elective or extracurricular) courses focusing on SD-relevant topics* • *Specialised SD-relevant training programmes* *For all outgoing mobility of students affiliated with Flemish higher education institutions, adequate preparatory training as well as feedback sessions are mandatory and must be integrated into the mobility trajectory.*
Policies, systems & infrastructure Better management, information systems, educational and research policies, financial and HR policies etc., to improve functioning of HE&SIs, including policies e.g. on gender and diversity, research integrity and uptake, equal partnerships, integrity, green office, doctoral schools,.... Improved equipment, laboratories and offices for education and research. ***Within <u>GM projects</u> this concerns strengthening Flemish institutions (systems, policies and infrastructure) for global academic cooperation.***	• *Support mechanisms (including policies) for visiting staff and students from partner countries* • *Initiatives to implement SD-related policies and commitments (e.g. Green Office, Human Right Due Diligence,...)* • *Support of platforms/working groups on internationalisation and sustainable development within HE&SIs* • *Target group policies, e.g. LNOB* • *Study work relevant for global academic cooperation, e.g. supervision of interns, of PhD students, tracer study, ...*
Outreach & policy support Enhanced interaction with relevant public, private and academic stakeholders to share knowledge, create the conditions for uptake and provide policy advice/support. ***Within <u>GM projects</u> this concerns strengthening knowledge sharing and policy support with relevant stakeholders.***	• *Regional & Thematic networks and platforms on SD-relevant issues* • *Multi-stakeholder projects* • *Awareness raising events and/or initiatives targeting the wider public (in the framework of GCE)*
People Students, alumni, and staff are trained/sensitised in a supportive learning environment to strengthen their knowledge, skills & attitudes in diverse domains and activated to take action in society accordingly (e.g. leadership, global citizenship, voicing partners, ...).	• *Individual Travel grants in the context of formal educational programmes* • *Preparatory and follow-up seminars, workshops etc. for travel grant recipients, for outgoing academics, ...* • *Student group mobility* • *Awareness-raising campus events and/or initiatives for stud*ents and staff (in the framework of GCE)

Within <u>GM projects</u> this concerns strengthening students, alumni, staff and researchers in academic cooperation and global citizenship.	• *Targeted GCE initiatives at institutional, multi-institutional* • *LNOB fund: for travel grantees, scholars at risk, …*
Partnerships & networks Strengthened interactions within mutually beneficial partnerships and activities at local, regional and global levels between HE&SIs, staff, students and other stakeholders in society (public actors, private actors, other CSOs, communities, etc.) for sustainable development. Strengthened interactions within Team Belgium, fostering coordination, knowledge exchange and collective action. ***Within <u>GM projects</u> this concerns strengthening reciprocal multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks.***	• *Organisation of international congresses, conferences etc. on SD-related topics, with involvement of staff and students from partner countries or alumni* • *Pilot projects with non-academic stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society, governmental and non-governmental actors,…* • *Alumni-oriented activities* • *Exploration/formulation visits and exchanges*

In line with the feedback provided by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DG-INT) following the mid-term evaluation of Global Minds under FYP2, continued attention should be given to mainstreaming the global dimension across the core missions of Flemish higher education institutions, including education, research and societal engagement. Global citizenship, international engagement and cooperation in our partner countries should become increasingly embedded in institutional policies and practices rather than remaining confined to standalone initiatives. This recommendation from DG-INT should be duly considered by all institutions, while leaving them discretion as to how it is implemented in their specific context.

d. What is expected of the Theory of Change in Global Minds project proposals?

Projects should develop a project-specific Theory of Change that explains how their proposed instruments/activities will contribute to the objectives of Global Minds.

The broad structure of the VLIRUOS Global Minds Theory of Change can be used for this, where institutions can further illustrate their project in the Theory of Change. Three questions in the format will help to describe the project strategy in detail (Why, What, How-questions).

Projects should focus on the outcomes and project domains most relevant to their institutional priorities. They are not expected to contribute to all six outcomes or to undertake activities in all six project domains.

2.3.4. Global Minds country list

The geographical scope of GM covers 15 project countries, complemented by 10 scholarship countries, and 3 additional countries that are specifically meant to be explored by Global Minds.

15 project countries	Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Philippines, Kenya, Palestine, Peru, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, South Africa
10 scholarship countries	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Indonesia, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Zimbabwe
3 Global Minds countries	Rwanda, Ghana, Namibia

Ghana and Namibia are two additional countries, listed for further exploration. Both are African countries with strong links to Belgian diplomatic and economic priorities, including the opening of a Belgian embassy in Namibia, the presence of Belgian companies in Ghana, and significant EU and Belgian investments in both countries.

Rwanda is currently not included in the list of project and scholarship countries. Following the restoration of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Rwanda in September 2026, no decisions have yet been taken regarding a possible restart of bilateral cooperation. The situation is under close review.

Rwanda does, however, remain eligible under the Global Minds programme. Initiatives may be undertaken, provided due consideration is given to the current context, including the absence of a Belgian embassy. Should conditions evolve favourably, Rwanda may be reinstated as an eligible project and/or scholarship country, subject to approval by DG-INT.

2.4. Part C: Association-based Project

This part describes how the institutions, brought together within an association-based project, promote collaboration in the context of Global Minds, as well as across the wider VLIRUOS portfolio, and beyond, and how this collaboration will be organised .

2.4.1. Purpose of Association-based Projects and link with ORG

Through the association-based projects, Flemish universities commit to pursuing two main objectives in collaboration with universities of applied sciences and arts (UASAs):

Providing support to UASA staff: Offering the same or comparable services as those available to university academics, within the limits of existing capacities and expertise. This includes support for project application and implementation and access to broader university expertise, such as legal expertise, expertise relating to human rights, international mobility,...

Strengthening collaboration between universities and UASAs: Proactively identifying, facilitating and encouraging cooperation, both among association members and beyond, while promoting exchange of respective expertise and good practices.

To support these objectives, VLIRUOS provides Organisational Support (ORG) funding to Flemish universities to (partially) finance these activities. Existing policy frameworks, organisational structures and services developed through ORG funding should be used as much as possible and may be complemented by initiatives financed through other sources. ICOS play a proactive role in supporting UASA staff and identifying opportunities for collaboration, both among association members and beyond, in the context of VLIRUOS-funded projects and other initiatives.

2.4.2. Organisation, governance and monitoring

Within each association-based project, universities and universities of applied sciences and arts jointly draw up an organisational structure and an action plan. These clearly define the services to be provided, the deployment of staff and the terms of cooperation, whilst allowing sufficient room for the further organic development of the consortium.

At a later stage, indicatively by the end of September 2027, these arrangements are set out in a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among the association based members, as an update to the MoU that was signed for FYP2. This MoU is to be monitored by a consultative body with a balanced composition. The association-based project plays a coordinating role in this regard and facilitates collaboration between the institutions involved and other relevant partners.

Targeted monitoring is used to track the collaboration, its dynamics and the results. Any bottlenecks at one or more institutions are discussed and, where necessary, remedial measures are taken.

2.4.3. Indicative list of activities and approaches

Based on the previous years' reporting and the ORG/AP services survey of 2026, a distinct set of categories of activities and approaches have been identified. The categories and approaches are listed below and could be considered as a non-exhaustive longlist that helps describing and planning AP related activities.
The list of activities and approaches is indicative only.

The activities offered in the context of the association-based project, can be grouped into eight main categories:

1. **Information sharing & Awareness-Raising:** Sharing information, knowledge, opportunities and awareness about international cooperation in general and guidance on VLIRUOS calls particularly.
2. **Proposal Development & Project Support:** Supporting the development, submission and management of project proposals, including project reporting.
3. **Training & Professionalisation:** Providing training, workshops and capacity-building activities for staff and students.
4. **Matchmaking & Consortium Building:** Connecting partners and supporting the establishment of consortia, e.g. IUC, PSP, ICP Connect, alumni, ...
5. **Partner & Networking Activities:** Organising networking events, missions and knowledge exchange with international partners.
6. **Global Citizenship & Student Mobility:** Initiatives promoting global citizenship and supporting international student mobility.
7. **Policy, Administrative, Financial, Legal and Communication Support:** Providing information, advice and support on policy (e.g. M&E, integrity, equal partnerships, ...), administrative, financial, mobility and legal (e.g. human rights, high-risk destinations, integrity, ...) matters related to international projects, including support in communication about policies, projects and impact.
8. **Policy Information, advice & Advocacy:** Monitoring policy developments, sharing relevant policy information and advocating for common interests, e.g. preparing BUOS meetings, attending WG meetings, ...

The ORG/AP survey identified **five main approaches** to provide support:

a. Personalised advice (one-on-one sessions)
b. Sessions to exchange experiences and learn from other projects
c. Feedback sessions to learn from the results of selected projects after funding calls
d. Invitations for events or travels organised by the university
e. Networking and/or matchmaking events

2.5. Part D: Organisational Support

2.5.1. Purpose and setup

Through Organisational Support (ORG), VLIRUOS contributes to the structural costs of institutional coordinators for international cooperation (ICOS), who facilitate and coordinate global academic cooperation activities. This arrangement promotes an efficient division of responsibilities between HEIs and VLIRUOS, based on the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity. VLIRUOS funding is provided on a co-funding basis and is therefore not intended to cover the full cost of the organisational support.

Together, the ICOS and the VLIRUOS team raise awareness of global academic cooperation across the Flemish higher education community and provide professional administrative, financial, logistical and organisational support. This should enable academics and lecturers to focus primarily on the academic and educational aspects of cooperation. The aim is to professionalise global academic cooperation and enable all actors to contribute according to their expertise.

Each Flemish higher education institution (HEI) appoints an ICOS as its primary operational liaison and central point of contact for the VLIRUOS on matters relating to global academic cooperation. They are responsible for disseminating information, coordinating requests and delegating tasks within their institution in accordance with its internal organisation.
Each institution determines its own governance and operational structure. The positioning, mandate and responsibilities of the ICOS must be clearly defined, including their coordination with relevant institutional services (such as policy boards, finance, human resources, international mobility, admissions, legal affairs, communications, ...) and the division of tasks among ICOS.

For Flemish universities, these arrangements are formalised in an overarching Organisational Support Agreement (ORG Agreement) with VLIRUOS, which defines the responsibilities of the parties and governs the allocation of ORG funding. This agreement serves as the umbrella contract for individual project agreements and provides additional structural compensation for the administrative workload associated with global academic cooperation.

The scope of university ICOS extends beyond their own institution to include associated UASAs. In consultation with these UASAs, universities are expected to develop and optimise an association-wide policy framework, organisational structure and operational support for global academic cooperation.

2.5.2. ORG within the VLIRUOS portfolio

ORG provides guaranteed, multiannual structural funding to Flemish higher education institutions (HEIs), enabling them to establish and maintain a minimum policy framework, organisational structure and operational capacity for global academic cooperation, in accordance with the rights and obligations set out in the Organisational Support Agreement.

3. Submission modalities

3.1. Who?

3.1.1. Global Minds

The **project promotor** of a Global Minds project coordinated by a university must be an academic staff member holding a ZAP appointment of at least 80% and occupying a managerial position within the institution.

If the project is coordinated by a consortium of universities of applied sciences and arts, the promotor must hold a managerial position within the institution.

The promotor bears formal responsibility for the project and is responsible for overseeing its overall strategy and direction at institutional/consortium level.

Each project must appoint one promotor. In the case of consortium projects, co-promotors can be appointed. However, the total number of promotors and co-promotors may not exceed the number of institutions participating in the consortium.

One person must be designated as the **Global Minds Coordinator**, who is responsible for the day-to-day coordination and management of the project. The coordinator should be affiliated to the same institution as the promotor, and serves as the main point of contact for the VLIRUOS team and the other Global Minds projects. The coordinator is a member of the Global Minds Working Group.

How the consortium is organised internally, including the role of any institution-specific co-promotors, is determined by the participating institutions and should be described in the project proposal.

3.1.2. Association -based Project (AP) and Organisational Support (ORG)

The organisational support (ORG) needs to identify an institutional responsible acting as **promotor** (e.g. director of international office), and a **SPOC** (Single Point of Contact).

The SPOC serves as the main point of contact for the consortium partners, the VLIRUOS team and the APs of the other associations. The SPOC facilitates collaboration within and beyond the association-based project, ensures coordination and consultation between participating institutions, and supports the development and implementation of joint initiatives. The SPOC also facilitates access to VLIRUOS funding opportunities, guides and supports academic staff in preparing and submitting project proposals, and promotes knowledge exchange and collaboration across association-based projects.

3.2. Eligibility of submission

This is a **restricted call.**

For Part A. Institutional Commitment:

- Maximum 18 proposals are expected: five from universities and thirteen from universities of applied sciences and arts to be submitted as part of the Global Minds project.
- In the case of consortia, the Institutional Commitments must be submitted by the coordinator of the consortium proposal.

For Part B. Global Minds Projects

6 Global Minds projects proposals are expected to be submitted:

- 1 project from Ghent University (UGent) and its association partners;
- 1 project from the University of Antwerp (UAntwerp) and its association partners;
- 1 project from Hasselt University (UHasselt) and its association partner;
- 1 project from Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and its association partner;
- 1 project from the universities of applied sciences and arts of the KU Leuven Association;
- 1 project from KU Leuven;

For Part C: Association-based projects: 5 project proposals are expected to be submitted by the institutions involved in the 5 existing associations.

For Part D: Organisational Support: 5 proposals are expected to be submitted by the Flemish universities.

Project proposals must be **submitted** by email to **info@vliruos.be** no later than Thursday 25 March 2027, at 23h59 (CET).

For questions, kindly reach out to:

- Laura Uwase, Global Networks Manager: laura.uwase@vliruos.be
- Arne Willems, Global Partnership Manager: arne.willems@vliruos.be

4. Budgetary framework

4.1. Available budget

4.1.1. Global Minds

Global Minds projects, AP and ORG all have a duration of five years, running from 1 September 2027 to 31 August 2032. Within this period, projects are expected to achieve their institutional objectives.

The total FYP3 budget for the **Global Minds call** is 15.518.515 EUR. The Flemish HEIs agreed to allocate the Global Minds resources for the 2027-2032 programme by means of an interuniversity allocation formula. The overall budget available for each institution is summarised in the table below. The breakdown across the various activity years in the table is indicative.

	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	TOTAAL FYP3
KULeuven	813.190	813.190	813.190	813.190	813.190	**4.065.949,37**
Ugent	740.592	740.592	740.592	740.592	740.592	**3.702.961,68**
Uantwerpen	348.858	348.858	348.858	348.858	348.858	**1.744.289,84**
VUB	349.102	349.102	349.102	349.102	349.102	**1.745.507,92**
Uhasselt	184.417	184.417	184.417	184.417	184.417	**922.086,18**
Hogescholen	667.544	667.544	667.544	667.544	667.544	**3.337.720,00**
Antwerp Maritime Academy	2.222,78	2.222,78	2.222,78	2.222,78	2.222,78	**11.113,91**
Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen	79.137,35	79.137,35	79.137,35	79.137,35	79.137,35	**395.686,73**
Arteveldehogeschool	66.513,99	66.513,99	66.513,99	66.513,99	66.513,99	**332.569,96**
Erasmushogeschool Brussel	26.436,92	26.436,92	26.436,92	26.436,92	26.436,92	**132.184,59**
HOGENT	70.159,51	70.159,51	70.159,51	70.159,51	70.159,51	**350.797,56**
Hogeschool PXL	45.109,86	45.109,86	45.109,86	45.109,86	45.109,86	**225.549,32**
Hogeschool VIVES Noord	19.528,16	19.528,16	19.528,16	19.528,16	19.528,16	**97.640,82**
Hogeschool VIVES Zuid	53.835,46	53.835,46	53.835,46	53.835,46	53.835,46	**269.177,32**
Howest	41.070,23	41.070,23	41.070,23	41.070,23	41.070,23	**205.351,16**
Karel de Grote Hogeschool	56.881,94	56.881,94	56.881,94	56.881,94	56.881,94	**284.409,69**
LUCA School of Arts	13.789,92	13.789,92	13.789,92	13.789,92	13.789,92	**68.949,59**
Odisee	48.459,80	48.459,80	48.459,80	48.459,80	48.459,80	**242.299,00**
Thomas More Kempen	34.433,42	34.433,42	34.433,42	34.433,42	34.433,42	**172.167,08**
Thomas More Mechelen-Antwerpen	41.515,58	41.515,58	41.515,58	41.515,58	41.515,58	**207.577,89**
UC Leuven	43.801,42	43.801,42	43.801,42	43.801,42	43.801,42	**219.007,09**
UC Limburg	24.647,66	24.647,66	24.647,66	24.647,66	24.647,66	**123.238,29**
TOTAAL	**3.103.703**	**3.103.703**	**3.103.703**	**3.103.703**	**3.103.703**	**15.518.515**

Consortium/Institution	Total Budget FYP3
UAntwerpen Consortium	2.435.500,17
UGent Consortium	4.591.680,37
UHasselt Consortium	1.147.635,50
VUB Consortium	1.877.692,51
UASA's of KU Leuven Consortium	1.400.057,08
KU Leuven	4.066.759,63
TOTAL	**15.518.515,00**

4.1.2. AP and ORG budget

The budget for AP and ORG in FYP3 is 5.895.175 EUR. The overall budget available for each institution is summarised in the table below.

Consortium	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	TOTAL
ORG/AP Leuven	324.390	334.122	344.145	354.470	365.104	**1.722.230**
ORG/AP Antwerpen	159.240	164.017	168.937	174.005	179.226	**845.425**
ORG/AP UGent	308.274	317.523	327.048	336.860	346.965	**1.636.670**
ORG/AP UHasselt	159.240	164.017	168.937	174.005	179.226	**845.425**
ORG/AP VUB	159.240	164.017	168.937	174.005	179.226	**845.425**
TOTAL	**1.110.383**	**1.143.695**	**1.178.006**	**1.213.346**	**1.249.746**	**5.895.175**

4.2. Financial Framework

4.2.1. Global Minds

The VLIRUOS financial guidelines for GM projects indicate what expenses are allowed in the framework of a project, how budgets are to be made, and how expenses have to be accounted for.

The applicable **budget categories** 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**: This cost includes personnel costs for those responsible for carrying out specific activities within the project.
D. Scholarship costs
E. **Coordination cost in Belgium** (10% lump sum from A to D)

Management costs: The project budget allows for management costs covering staff dedicated to the overall coordination and management of the Global Minds project (e.g. project coordinator, mobility officer, financial officer). These should be distinguished from personnel costs linked to specific project activities, as management costs cover the coordination and management of the Global Minds programme as a whole.

The rules for budgeting & spending rates will be determined in the coming months by the Bureau UOS (foreseen 11/12) and will be communicated thereafter.

4.2.2. Association-based Project (AP) and Organisational Support (ORG)

The rules for budgeting & spending rates will be determined in the coming months by the Bureau UOS (foreseen 11/12) and will be communicated thereafter.

5. Assessment

5.1. Introduction

For this call for proposals, a framework that ensures a qualitative, coherent and transparent assessment has been developed, with attention for consistency between the various components of a proposal. The assessment framework is based on the existing VLIRUOS selection system, with a number of targeted adjustments to reflect the specific context and the FYP3 framework. The assessment of institutional commitment, the Global Minds project, the association-based project (AP) and the organisational support (ORG) will be organised within a single assessment committee.

In line with the VLIRUOS selection procedure, members of the assessment commission will receive a briefing and training on the call and the assessment process, review the submitted proposals and prepare their individual assessments ahead of the assessment commission meeting. These are the modules and their possible outcomes.

Module		Possible outcome
Part A	Expression of Institutional Commitment Per institution	• **Positive**: The institution's commitment is considered sufficient in all three domains, making the institution eligible for Global Minds funding. • **Negative**: The institution's commitment is considered insufficient in at least one of the three domains, resulting in the institution being excluded from Global Minds funding.
Part B	Global Minds project Per consortium/institution	• **Approval without conditions**: Institutions will be expected to address the recommendations and report on the actions taken after the first year of activities. • **Conditional approval**: Institutions will be given three months to make the necessary adjustments and submit a revised proposal in writing, no later than 30 September 2027.
Part C	Association-based projects (AP)	• **Assessment without points for attention:** The association-based project and the proposed support structure are clearly and coherently presented, with a sound rationale, and demonstrably meet the respective objectives of intensifying collaboration both within and beyond the boundaries of the institution's own association and providing support within the framework of VLIRUOS and beyond. • **Assessment with points for attention**: The proposed structure and collaboration are approved and funding is granted, but the committee provides specific qualitative recommendations or suggestions, e.g. regarding the practical implementation of support services for universities of applied sciences and arts or operational coordination within the association-based project, or, more broadly, opportunities for collaboration within the VLIRUOS community.
Part D	Organisational Support (ORG)	

5.2. Assessment of the institutional commitment and Global Minds project

As part of the assessment procedure, Global Minds project coordinators will be invited to present their project proposals in person and to respond to questions from the assessment commission. In the case of consortium projects, representatives of the other consortium partners may also participate, subject to a maximum number of participants to be specified.

The assessment commission will first determine whether each participating institution meets the minimum requirements for institutional commitment. In a second step, it will assess the quality of the Global Minds project proposals.

5.2.1. Assessment of institutional commitment

As explained earlier, the participating institution should demonstrate a minimum level across three domains, proportionate to the scale of the institution: (1) policy framework, (2) recognition for staff and students, and (3) resources for global academic cooperation.

In terms of assessment of **Part A**, there here are two possible outcomes:

1. **Positive**: The institution's commitment is deemed sufficient for all 3 domains and the institution will have access to Global Minds funding.
2. **Negative**: The institution's commitment is deemed insufficient for at least 1 domain and the institution will be excluded from Global Minds funding.

Note:

- This decision only affects the institution concerned in terms of its access to Global Minds funding and has no impact on other VLIRUOS funding. It also does not affect the consortium proposal.
- The budget initially allocated to the institution concerned will be redistributed according to the applicable allocation key (universities or universities of applied sciences and arts, respectively).

5.2.2. Criteria and Descriptors for Global Minds

For **Part B**, the Global Minds assessment procedure entails a qualitative assessment of each individual proposal, focussing on identifying suggestions for improvement and, if necessary, recommendations for remediation. The members of the commission will use the following criteria and descriptors to assess each Global Minds proposal.

Criteria	Definition	Descriptors	
1. Relevance and coherence of the project	The extent to which the proposal fits with the VLIRUOS GM programme Theory of Change and responds to the institutional needs in global academic cooperation (including policy level, staff, students and partner HEIs)	1.1	The proposal aligns with the VLIRUOS Global Minds programme Theory of Change and demonstrates awareness of, and a clear positioning towards, the priorities of the Belgian government regarding international cooperation (Global Public Goods; Africa).
		1.2	The proposal builds on lessons learned (including the GM mid-term evaluation & management response to it) and the track record of the preceding GM projects of the involved partners (including earlier assessments and evaluations) and other relevant projects and initiatives, ensuring synergies, complementarities and added value.
		1.3	The proposal provides a strategic answer to the current challenges and the strategic ambitions and priorities of the Flemish institution(s) to provide an enabling environment for its staff, students and alumni to act as critical global citizens and for itself to act as driver of change. The link between the proposal and the Flemish institutions'('s) own policy ambitions and strategy in terms of higher education for global sustainable development is convincing.
2. Quality of the project design	The extent to which a proposal presents a convincing project strategy	2.1	The proposal presents a coherent, complementary and evidence-based set of instruments, that convincingly demonstrates how the different instruments of the different partners, if applicable, contribute to the intended outcomes and impact.
		2.2	The proposal targets an appropriate mix of groups (staff, students, alumni, ...) and adequately integrates the LNOB-principle, ensuring both the successful delivery of the project and the enhanced capacity of various target groups to act as critical global citizens and skilled professionals who contribute to sustainable and inclusive development.
3. Implementation set-up of the project	The extent to which the proposal presents a strong plan and partnership for the execution of the project	3.1	The proposal presents a clear and effective project governance structure that is aligned with the composition and set-up of the consortium, if applicable, with well-defined roles and responsibilities, and appropriate mechanisms for coordination and steering (including budget reallocation), information sharing, communication and decision-making among involved partners and within the participating institution(s).
		3.2	The Flemish institution(s) demonstrate(s) that they use transparent selection and monitoring systems and procedures and clearly describe how these are applied and where necessary adapted, across the different Global Minds instruments

		3.3	The proposal demonstrates a clear, balanced and feasible allocation of the budget to the various instruments and partners, ensuring the delivery of intended outcomes.
4. 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)	4.1 4.2 4.3	The proposal clearly elaborates on its long-term envisaged impact. The proposal envisages organisational capacity strengthening and is likely to realise institutional embeddedness which will allow the benefits to endure beyond the project 's lifecycle. The proposal explains how the project strategy, and the different instruments go beyond generating outputs by explaining how they will create the conditions for impact (e.g. uptake of knowledge, changes in attitudes, changes in policies, follow-up funding, etc.) at the level of direct and indirect beneficiaries (including external actors).

The written assessment provides a 'score' per criterion using a qualitative interval scale:

A: Very good (no revisions are needed)

B: Good (minor revisions might be needed)

C: Weak (major revisions are needed, hence the proposal cannot be selected. Proposal can be remediated towards a next submission)

D: Very weak Score

These scores are only meant to facilitate discussion among the commission members and will not be shared with the applicants.

For **Part B**, the Global Minds project, there are two possible outcomes:

- approval without conditions or
- approval subject to conditions.

In the former case, institutions will be asked to implement the recommendations and to report on how they have done so after the first year of activities. In the latter case, the institution concerned will be given the opportunity to make the necessary amendments within three months and to submit a revised proposal in writing by 30 September 2027 at the latest. In the meantime, the project may already start activities. This proposal will then be reassessed by the chair of the assessment committee or the full committee, including an oral defence.

5.3. Assessment of AP and ORG

For AP and ORG a simple qualitative assessment has been chosen. The Assessment Committee assesses the proposals solely on their overall coherence and feasibility, with two possible outcomes:

- **Assessment with no points for attention**: The association based project (AP; Part C) and the proposed organisational support (ORG; Part D) are clear, coherent and effectively substantiated, and very clearly meet the respective objectives of intensifying cooperation both within and beyond the boundaries of the partnership itself, and providing support within the framework of VLIRUOS. The application is approved without conditions.
- **Assessment with points for attention**: ORG and AP are approved and funding is granted, but the committee provides specific qualitative recommendations or suggestions (e.g. regarding the practical implementation of support services for universities of applied sciences or operational coordination within the association-based project, or, more broadly, opportunities for collaboration within the VLIRUOS community).

  The institution/consortium does not need to resubmit the application but must liaise with the VLIRUOS team, dealing with these recommendations and demonstrate in the annual progress report how these recommendations have been addressed.

This approach ensures continuity, whilst keeping the administrative burden to a minimum as no further selection criteria or descriptors are required. Furthermore, this encourages a constructive dialogue in which the committee

can provide valuable feedback, which is then followed up via the regular reporting cycle and/or discussed in the ORG/AP working group.

5.4. Assessment commission

The composition of the assessment commission consists of a panel of international experts, to be assigned by the Bureau UOS. The commission meetings will be chaired by one of the members in view of maximum impartiality.

DG-INT is invited to participate in the assessment commission meetings.

6. Timeline & Deadlines

Step in progress	Responsible	Deadline
Launch Call	VLIRUOS	24 November 2026
Deadline for Submission to VLIRUOS	ICOS & GEO	25 March 2027
Assessment Commission	VLIRUOS	Mid-May 2027
Confirmation by BUOS	Bureau UOS	Shortly after mid-May 2027 (preferably via an extra online BUOS meeting)
Notification of result of the Assessment	VLIRUOS	End of June 2027
Follow-up and contract preparations	VLIRUOS and Flemish institution	July & August 2027
Start of Global Minds & AP & ORG Project	VLIRUOS and Flemish institution	1 September 2027
MoU for association-based project (AP)	Flemish institutions	30 September 2027
End of Global Minds & AP & ORG Projects	VLIRUOS and Flemish institution	31 August 2032

7. Project formats

Part A – Expression of Institutional Commitment	Letter of expression of institutional commitment (own template)
	Narrative format (available on website)
Part B – Global Minds Proposal	Narrative format (available on website)
	Organigram (own template, optional)
	Theory of Change visual (own template)
	Activities & Budget format (available on website)
Part C – Association-based Project	Narrative format (available on website)
Part D – Organisational Support	Narrative format (available on website)
	Budget format (available on website)