



South Africa Strategy Document

As discussed by the Bureau UOS
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Foreword

Framework for programming and selection

A country strategy reflects the objectives and the choices of instruments for university cooperation for development between the country in question and Belgium/Flanders. A country strategy serves as a reference framework for programming, leading to strategy-based calls for proposals.

A strategy assures relevance and complementarity. Relevance because it focuses on the needs and priorities of the partner country, and complementarity because it takes into account what other development partners do. As such, a strategy starts from the needs of the partner country, and in particular the national priorities in terms of poverty reduction and national policies for Higher Education. Furthermore it will take into account the ambitions, capacities, expertise, and interest for cooperation among the Flemish academic community.

The country strategy represents the strategic niche for future VLIR-UOS cooperation in a specific country. A strategic framework is designed for an indicative period of 12 years. A strategy can contain a geographical and/or thematic focus. It should be multidisciplinary and include an optimal balance between the different programme types and levels of intervention of VLIR-UOS¹.

Country Strategy Process

The process of country strategy identification was rolled out by VLIR-UOS in the context of the implementation of the Political Agreement signed in 2010. In this agreement, VLIR-UOS committed itself to formulate a strategy for each of its 20 VLIR-UOS partner countries. This will be done in a phased manner. Identification missions are being conducted by country teams consisting of two experts (one international and one local expert), a member of the Bureau UOS, and the VLIR-UOS country desk officer.

A country strategy is the result of numerous inputs and consultations with a wide spectrum of actors in Flanders and the country in question. Following a desk study on key documents, we also organise a broad-based enquiry into the priorities of future cooperation with and in the country and we consult the Flemish stakeholders.

Each country engagement results in a country strategy paper. This is a policy document that will be used by VLIR-UOS to guide its funding decisions.

Time frame

The development of academic capacity requires a long-term framework that is often precluded by current policy dynamics, which are characterized by constant changes and shifts at the international and country level in both North and South.

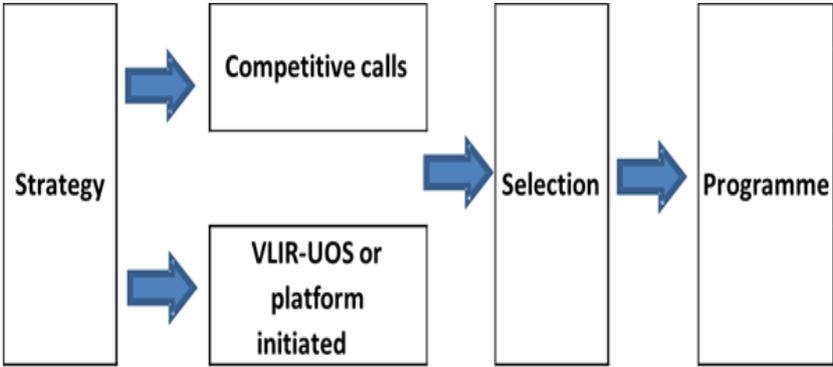
¹ VLIR-UOS is the letterword for Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad – Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking or Flemish Interuniversity Council – University Cooperation for Development

Therefore, VLIR-UOS has opted for a strategic framework covering, in principle, 12 years. Obviously, contextual changes (national policies, donor positions, VLIR-UOS country priorities, etc.) may necessitate changes throughout this period.

From country strategy to country programme

The country strategy paper is the basis for working out a fully-fledged country programme. A country programme consists of a portfolio of specific cooperation projects according to different intervention types.

In order to achieve this, both competitive open calls and strategically earmarked partner selection will take place as appropriate.



A country programme will consist of a portfolio of different intervention types – mainly as existing today in VLIR-UOS, complemented by national-level initiatives where required.

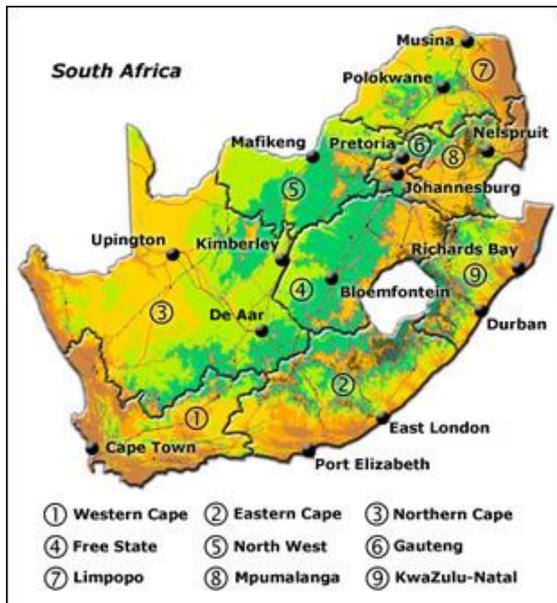
LEVEL OF RESULTS AND INTERVENTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF COUNTRY STRATEGY			LEVEL/NEED/OBJECTIVE
National Network University Cooperation, Research platforms and other national-level projects			More direct contribution to country-level priorities and capacity building
	Institutional University Cooperation (IUC)		Institutional strengthening and capacity building
		TEAM and South Initiatives	Strengthening and capacity building at departmental or faculty level
		Scholars	Re-enforcing the individual

Country level objectives and results

VLIR-UOS facilitates academic partnerships and related initiatives within the context of a long-term country strategy with a general objective. Furthermore, VLIR-UOS has defined a range of indicators (Key Result Areas) on the basis of which individual initiatives are expected to report. Apart from tangible key result areas, VLIR-UOS also tracks more qualitative results. In a country programme, results from individual projects are brought together in order to come to a set of clear country-level results.

1. Introduction

1.1. General Info



According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 2011, South Africa ranked 123 among 187 countries, with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.619. South Africa's HDI is at approximately the same level as its north western neighbouring countries Namibia (0.625) and Botswana (0.633), but far higher than the rest of its neighbours, Zimbabwe (0.376), Mozambique (0.322), Swaziland (0.522), and Lesotho (0.45).

South Africa is ranked as an upper-middle income economy by the World Bank. It has the largest economy in Africa, and the 28th largest in the world. It is a middle-income, emerging market with an abundant supply of natural resources; well-

developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transport sectors; a stock exchange that is the 18th largest in the world; and modern infrastructure supporting a relatively efficient distribution of goods to major urban centres throughout the region.

In spite of an improved financial account, increased spending in social services, and a significant increase in GDP growth, South Africa continues to face daunting challenges – both structural and social. South Africa is a dual economy with great inequality. South Africa's Gini coefficient of 0.58 illustrates that there is a significant social and economic divide. It is hoped that the growth of small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) will boost the second economy and reduce unemployment.

South Africa is also facing important environmental challenges. Its available freshwater resources are already almost fully utilised and under stress. Many water resources are polluted by industrial effluents, domestic and commercial sewage, acid mine drainage, agricultural runoff, and litter. At currently projected population growth and economic development rates, and with the increasing impact of climate change, projected demand for water resources is unlikely to be sustainable. Limits on both water supply and quality are thus likely to restrain the country's further socio-economic development.

For more information on the country we refer to the country fact sheet, available on the VLIR-UOS website².

² [Country Sheet South Africa](#)

1.2. Development priorities

Of the nine key challenges identified as facing the country, the National Development Plan, Vision for 2030 concludes that unemployment and poor quality of education are most critical. Further, the plan establishes a causal relationship between high levels of unemployment and the poor quality of education for the majority of the SA population. Education in general is acknowledged as having potential to facilitate society's ability to solve problems, develop competitively, eliminate poverty, and reduce inequality. Within this, universities are identified as key pillars for national development in their role as producers of high-level, skilled human resources, production of new knowledge and use of existing knowledge, and opening up opportunities for people. Research councils, institutes and state-owned enterprises are highlighted as being other conduits of knowledge production and application³.

According to Official Development Aid (ODA) figures, South Africa received 1.3 billion US Dollars in 2011. Amongst its main donors are the EU, France, Germany, and Denmark. Belgium invested a mere 62 million EUR between 2007 and 2011 in South Africa, its main focal sectors being safety and security, health and land reform .

A second Indicative Cooperation Programme (ICP) between the Belgian and South African government started in 2007 for a period of four years. The budget of 24 million EUR was to be invested in health, land reform, Belgian and local scholarships, support to civil society, and micro-intervention programmes. A new ICP will be announced by 2014.

Flanders too has an ICP running with South Africa (2012-2016), which concentrates mainly on food security through small scale agriculture and job creation through development of small and medium enterprises. It focuses on the provinces of the Free State, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal.

In October 2011, VVOB started a multi-year programme in South Africa. This programme focuses on improving the pedagogical, methodological, and professional knowledge and skills of lecturers in Further Education and Training (FET) colleges.

³<http://www.npconline.co.za/medialib/downloads/home/NPC%20National%20Development%20Plan%20Vision%202030%20lo-res.pdf>

2. Country Strategy

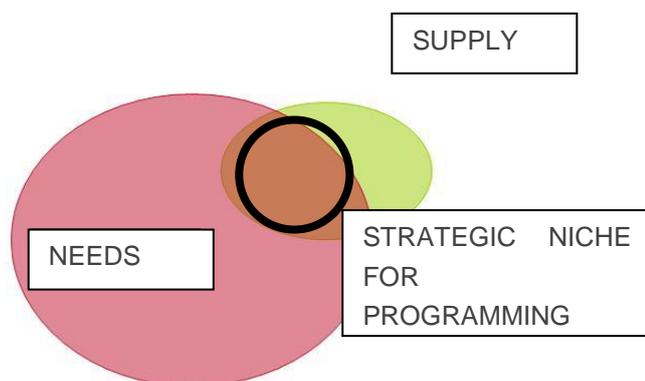
2.1. Background

2.1.1. South Africa country strategy formulation process

A VLIR-UOS strategy represents an informed policy choice that serves as a framework for programming. This framework must be sufficiently broad to ensure that a sufficient number of quality partnerships can be formed and projects formulated on the basis of the VLIR-UOS operating modalities. However, because the means of VLIR-UOS, both in terms of financial and human resources, are limited, a relatively broad strategy may result in a modest programme.

VLIR-UOS funds partnerships of willing academics on themes that are developmentally relevant and emerge from a shared interest. Interventions may be in the form of scholarships or projects at institutional or sub-institutional level. Capacity development aimed at furthering the ability of HE institutions to serve as actors in development is at the centre of the VLIR-UOS programme. Flemish academics offer their time on a voluntary basis.

Country strategies are policy documents that guide funding decisions of VLIR-UOS and allow for strategically coherent and contextually relevant impact-based programmes. This is reflected in the following diagram, where supply and needs (demand) are catered for within a strategic programming niche.



After engaging in five country strategy identifications in 2011-2012 (Cuba, Ecuador, Tanzania, Uganda and Vietnam) and conducting a similar process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa was identified as one of two countries to engage next in a country strategy development (the other being Ethiopia).

Preparatory work consisted of a survey of Northern and Southern institutions and a desk study of various South African and international (policy) documents. In addition, interview sessions were held with key players from various Flemish institutions of higher education involved in programmes of cooperation with South Africa. On 15 March 2013, a North Seminar was organised in Brussels,

attended by some 80 participants representing a variety of different interests. All the information collected – including the results of a survey among academic stakeholders in Flanders – resulted in a consolidated South Africa Fact Sheet and a Status summary Report with thematic/geographical overviews of present VLIR-UOS cooperation as compared to national and HE priorities. These documents, as well as further information on the preparatory work can be found on the VLIR-UOS South Africa webpage⁴.

2.1.2. Higher education and research: policy environment

Higher Education and research: Status and policy environment

In South Africa, the Minister of Higher Education and Training is responsible for higher education. A Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established in May 1998 and is responsible for policy advice, issues of quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, and enhancing higher education quality. The Higher Education Act of 1997, Education White Paper 3 on HE (1997), and the National Plan for HE (2001) are the basis for the transformation of the public HE sector. Following the National Plan, the HE landscape has been transformed by amalgamating universities and former ‘technikons’ into 23 larger tertiary institutions (previously 36). The new institutional landscape for HE consists of three different types of institution: Traditional Universities (11), Universities of Technology (6), and Comprehensive Universities (6). More than half of all students study at the ‘comprehensive’ or ‘new generation’ universities, which combine academic and vocational oriented higher education. HE is also offered at accredited private institutions (numbering 76 as of mid-2007, with some 20,000 students) that mostly provide short, flexible, market-related courses, as well as distance education in areas such as business/management and tourism.

In 2009 the National Department of Education was split into two ministries – Department of Basic Education (DBE), responsible for general education and training and the schooling aspect of further education and training; and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), responsible for FET colleges, higher education, and sector education and training authorities (Setas).

Interaction with other HE actors and donors, including local stakeholders

International partners in HE development include DGD (Belgium), Austria, CIDA, the Carnegie Corporation, DANIDA, DFID, EU, FINIDA, GIZ, USAID, JICA, NORAD, SIDA, SDC, the Ford Foundation, IDRC, Irish Aid, the Netherlands, the Rockefeller Foundation, the United Nations and USAID. However, numerous of these partnerships are phasing out.

Besides the DHET, several other South African government departments participate actively in the higher education sector. Key departments include the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of Science and Technology (DST), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

DBE feeds the higher education system from basic education. The quality of education at this level is partly blamed for poor retention and throughput in higher education. DBE has developed an Action

⁴ https://www.vliruos.be/en/countries/africa/south_africa/222

Plan to 2014 outlining how the education sector can be improved, with strategies including employing younger and motivated teachers and professionalizing teaching.

The DST has several programmes that offer opportunities for higher education involvement through the development of a ten-year innovation plan, funding or co-funding of postgraduate students...

DTI funds the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP), managed by the National Research Foundation (NRF). It is a partnership programme that challenges companies to match government funding for innovative research and development in South Africa.

2.2. Views and themes expressed (based on survey, interviews, seminars and mission report)

South Africa has been a crucial partner for the Flemish University Cooperation for Development. Between 2006 and 2012, VLIR-UOS invested some 8.5 million euro in its cooperation programmes with South African higher education institutions. In 2011, VLIR-UOS spending represented about 13% of total Belgian ODA to South Africa. The overall objective of the university cooperation is to strengthen universities in their performance in education, research, and community engagement. Scientific and academic partnerships are mainly in the following areas:

- Food security;
- Environment and rural development;
- Health and social sciences;
- ICT and institutional strengthening.

As part of the university cooperation with South Africa, there has been collaboration with a wide range of actors, including the Belgian Embassy in South Africa, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD), the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), the European Union (EU), the Belgian Research Foundations (FWO and FNRS), and the Belgian Science Policy.

2.2.1. Expressions of interest by the Flemish (academic) stakeholders

Six provisional -thematic areas were identified by Flemish academics:

- 1) Food security and agriculture;
- 2) Climate change and improved adaptation strategies;
- 3) Economic and social development (livelihoods);
- 4) Medicine and Primary Health Care;
- 5) Institutional strengthening, capacity building, and human resource management; and
- 6) Water resource management.

Cross-cutting (transversal) themes identified included:

- ICT applications and modelling;

- Governance, institutional strengthening, democracy;
- Social and historical dynamics;
- Service delivery and linguistic impediments

Reference is made to the strategy status summary (including a strategy grid) elaborated before the mission on the basis of present cooperation and interest in South Africa (see annex 1).

2.2.2. Expressions of interest by the South (government and academic stakeholders)

The needs expressed by the South African partners pretty much followed the interests that were defined at the north seminar. Several additional priority areas have been recognised for the future, including:

- Increasing the level of academic qualifications of staff and students;
- Improved project management (to manage large grants and joint programmes);
- Provision of support to disadvantaged students through bursary schemes and effective mentoring;
- Retention of staff through appropriate incentives;
- Development of networks in Africa and the rest of the world; and
- Ongoing review of North-South and South-South relations in a rapidly changing global context.

There is a clear shift in the discourse with South African universities away from traditional donor-driven initiatives towards internally driven activities, guided by both national and institutional priorities. This shift reflects South Africa's status as a middle-income country, which is increasingly self-reliant financially but still has clear capacity gaps. There appear to be many initiatives where funding is available to develop the higher education sector, but additional capacity is required, highlighting this as a potential gap for Flemish universities to fill. Specific challenges that surfaced in the mission included:

- Capacity of academics, both in terms of actual availability of suitably qualified staff and in relation to constraints on capacity imposed by heavy administrative and teaching workloads.
- The need for co-supervision of postgraduate students in order to expand the supply of qualified people to move into academia;
- The importance of creating suitably funded and mentored vehicles for appointments of post-doctoral positions (post-docs), as a critical first step in creating career pathways for future academics (noting particularly the problem of an increasingly ageing academy);
- Growing demand for foundation programmes and extended degrees to accommodate students whose schooling careers have left them under-prepared for university studies (while noting that extending the undergraduate studies of many disadvantaged students is economically problematic, as they are often under pressures to be able to earn money to support themselves and family members); and
- The need for international exposure of different kinds, as a key incentive to entice young people into academic careers.

Moreover, with a middle-income country like South Africa, the guiding principle should be a shift from “money changing hands “ to “shared minds changing lives”. Within this context, the following principles should be emphasized:

- Government partners act as a facilitator, with implementation by partners (i.e. partner driven);
- Emphasis on capacity building and institutional support;
- Exchange of expertise via diverse actors;
- Support for civil society;
- Coherence between development cooperation and economic and cultural cooperation; and
- Regional cooperation.

2.3. Strategy framework and implementation

2.3.1. Areas of focus (thematic, regional, partners)

Regional and institutional focus

Basically, there are no limitations of regional or institutional nature in possible future cooperation models. However a focus on the rural areas should be prioritised and as such collaboration should be sought with universities in those rural areas. Existing VLIR-UOS programmes with South African HET institutions should be used as a guide to any new initiatives and maximally integrated within the country programme.

Traditional universities can be recommended as important hubs for regional postgraduate training initiatives. Comprehensive Universities and Universities of Technology would be better targeted for the purposes of staff capacity development aimed at raising academic attainment levels of their younger members of academic staff. This would imply involvement of the latter types of universities in South Initiatives (SI) and TEAMS or Interuniversity Cooperation programmes.

Themes

The greatest concentration of efforts (i.e. the highest priority) in university cooperation between South Africa and Flanders is likely to be partnerships which support one of the following activities: postgraduate training, multidisciplinary research, increases in research output of high international standard, and/or extension workshops in climate change, primary health care, good governance and local community development. With respect to human resource development, this will continue to have a high priority in primary health care and family medicine, good governance, and service delivery in the contexts of one or more of the four thematic areas:

- 1) Food Security;
- 2) Environment;
- 3) Health; and
- 4) Social Sciences.

Transversal needs and opportunities

Special attention should go to cross-cutting issues such as institutional strengthening (including research policy and -methodology), capacity building (including teacher training and doctoral schools), service delivery, ICT and modelling applications, social and historical dynamics, land reform, democracy, governance, multilingualism, improving vocational and skills-based training. Research output is expected to be a top priority for most of the identified thematic research areas, whilst extension activities should be focussed on resilience and climate change, primary health care delivery, good governance, and local community development.

In most of the above activities, VLIR-UOS interventions should be jointly funded so that all of the cooperating parties, whether or not they are partners based in South Africa, Flanders, or in other SADC countries, can register and retain a strong level of joint ownership based on an equal partnership platform.

2.3.2. Country Strategy Framework

The table below summarizes the potential domains in which the aforementioned themes and sub-themes could be pursued in a programme of VLIR-UOS supported cooperation. It also takes into account where the Flemish interests lie, as articulated in the North seminar on South Africa and subsequent interviews. Reference is also made to annex 3 where the various possible domains of intervention are listed.

Table : Country Strategy Framework – strategic niche of cooperation considering South African demands and Flemish interest/expertise for cooperation

Themes	Sub-theme areas
Food Security	Biotechnology
	Aquaculture
	Food Production & Value Chain
	Animal Sciences & Production
Environment	Water Resource Management
	Climate Change
Health	Primary Health Care
	Public Health
	HIV/AIDS
Social Sciences	Good Governance

	Urban Development
	Communication
	Local Community Development
	Language development
Transversal Subjects	
Institutional strengthening	Institutional Policy
	Academic Learning
	Research Policy and Culture (incl. Statistics for research)
ICT	E-Learning & Distance Learning
	Network Development

2.3.3. Partnership modalities (portfolio of intervention types)

The countrywide strategy now being proposed for South Africa has the following characteristics: it is multidisciplinary and sufficiently broad to ensure a sufficient number of quality partnerships; it has developmental relevance and sustainable capacity building; it employs a timeframe of around twelve years in the cases of IUC or NETWORK modalities, with a possibility of strategic revision every six years; and it is balanced through a good mix of interventions (national, institutional) and with a wide portfolio, i.e. it is both theme- and region-based. Interventions involve a set of agreed themes and incorporate the possibility of a regional SADC component in potential postgraduate training and advanced research activities.

What is also important about future cooperation strategy between South Africa and Flemish institutions of Higher Education and Training is a strong sense of ownership both in the South and in the North. In addition, there is a need for both institutional potential and basic capacity, as well as opportunities for joint capacity building (for example, through credit exchange, double degrees, and co-funding) as has been experienced in partnerships with other regions of the world by either Flemish or South African partners.

This country strategy needs to build on existing linkages, without inhibiting new partner relations and new project development. It should also have potential to link up with support provided by other facilitating agencies apart from VLIR-UOS and mainly from South African partners (for example: DST, NRF, DHET...). In most cases, VLIR-UOS interventions would be expected to be equally funded by South Africa agencies and VLIR-UOS through the establishment of appropriate MoUs and other

agreements. This will mean that all of the cooperating parties, whether or not they are based in South Africa, Flanders, or other SADC countries, are required to register strong levels of joint ownership, which is likely to lead to more sustainable forms of university cooperation and joint academic activities.

Partnership modalities (portfolio of intervention types)

Level	Remarks
National	Large potential with strong IUC-partners (UWC and UL) and explicit thematic components (social sciences and environment). Within this context, regional and international cooperation needs special attention.
Transversal	Continue and strengthen dialogue with DHET, DST, NRF, and other key-players in HET, within the framework of important emerging policies in this area. Possibly consider developing MoUs with these key stakeholders.
Institutional	Good potential for IUC detected in a number of rural universities. Emphasis on low-scale IUC programmes with a major focus on institutional support and on the HET supply chain in particular.
Sub-institutional	Although there are differences between the universities in terms of quality, accessibility, and outreach towards community, most universities would be eligible for TEAMS or South Initiatives, in one or more of the prioritised themes. Given the growing demand for foundation programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, there are potential opportunities for further integrating Flemish University Colleges in VLIR-UOS cooperation programmes.
Individual (scholarships)	Scholarships continue being a key-stone tool in HET development. Any University cooperation between Flemish and South African universities should maximally sign in into the existing South African programmes that support scholarships both nationally and internationally.

2.3.4. Collaboration within networks

Both North and South stakeholders emphasised the importance of academic networks within South Africa through which the benefits of international cooperation could be shared between HEIs and national collaboration in research can be encouraged. It is clear that a NETWORK strategy for VLIR-UOS support and Flemish cooperation with South African HEIs can be diverse and around several

topics. Important would be to build in particular on the strengths and achievements of the existing IUC programmes, amongst other national and institutional initiatives.

Past and current VLIR-UOS interventions should be fully integrated in the Country Strategy and previous partners should be regarded as potential platforms for the development of research and training hubs in a NETWORK type of North-South-South cooperation modality that would be well-placed to extend out to neighbouring SADC countries in appropriate multidisciplinary research themes.

The Comprehensive Universities and the Universities of Technology still have a substantial amount of ground to make up on their Traditional University counterparts in South Africa, both in terms of the levels of basic and applied research activities being conducted and the standards and amounts of high impact scientific publication output generated. It is therefore preferable that VLIR-UOS takes account of these differences and create a strategic tendency to give priority to cooperation partnerships (involving scholarships, Southern and TEAM initiatives) between Flemish academics and academic staff based at Comprehensive Universities and at the Universities of Technology. The Traditional Universities on the other hand can play a very effective role in supporting regional postgraduate (masters level) joint training and possibly joint degree programmes should these prove to be mutually advantageous.

2.3.5. Contribution and opportunities for Flemish non-university HE institutions

There is a growing demand for foundation programmes at both the undergraduate level (to meet the challenges associated with the secondary-tertiary education transition) and at the postgraduate level. These will be important situations for potential linkages between Flemish University Colleges to be involved as partners with FET Colleges and universities for the purposes of advancing curriculum development and language skills, notably. The roles which distance education and open learning resources can assist in addressing some of these gaps are relevant because of the extensive experience of many Flemish university and associated college groups in e-learning.

With particular focus on Flemish University Colleges, but also on universities, topics which fall under the four thematic areas and which incorporate considerations of key cross cutting socio-economic issues could very well form the bases of many useful cooperation programmes with universities and FET Colleges in South Africa which have complementary research and teaching interests in activities such as HET course development for disabled persons, multilingualism, and training activities for school teachers, young university lecturers, nurses and primary health care workers.

These experiences could lead to the development of courses and teaching environments that are increasing more likely to lead to highly employable graduates since their university or college training will be more closely aligned to the needs of industrial enterprises and small businesses. The involvement of several Flemish academics with science parks and business incubation activities in South Africa have great potential to foster many potentially important partnerships between Flanders and South Africa in downstream research projects with possibly increased potential for commercial development of new products and processes.

ANNEXES

1. Pre-mission Strategy Framework (see VLIR-UOS website – http://www.vliruos.be/media/3572712/country_strategy_framework_south_africa_v1.xlsx)
2. Country Fact Sheet (see VLIR-UOS website – [Country Fast Sheet South Africa](#))
3. Country Strategy grid

Annex 3 - Country Strategy grid

Themes	Sub-theme areas	Domains of Intervention								
		Education			Research		Extension		Management	
		Master	PHD	Short training / recycling	Multidisciplinary research	Research output	Collaborative training	Workshops /societal activity	HRD	Int'l networking and linkages
Food Security	Biotechnology	X	X		X				X	X
	Aquaculture	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
	Food production & value chains	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
	Animal Sciences & production	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Environment	Water Resource Management	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
	Climate change	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Health	Primary health care	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Public Health	X	X		X				X	
	HIV/AIDS	X	X		X				X	X
Social Sciences	Good Governance	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Urban Development	X	X		X			X	X	
	Communication	X	X		X			X	X	

	Local Community Development	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	Language development	X	X		X			X	X	
Transversal Subjects										
Institutional strengthening	Institutional Policy	X	X		X				X	
	Academic Learning	X	X	X	X				X	
	Research Policy and Culture (incl. Statistics for research)	X	X		X				X	
ICT	E-learning & distance learning	X	X	X	X				X	
	Network Development	X	X	X	X				X	