



Call for

ICP Connect 2022

Fully Fledged Proposals

Stage 2 – Assessment

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Summary

Programme	ICP Connect 2022 – 5-year funding 2022-2027
Link with VLIR-UOS Outcomes	(1) 'Individuals apply newly acquired state-of-the-art knowledge and skills'; (2) 'Higher quality and more inclusive education'; (4) 'Higher quality and needs-oriented research'.
Description (objective, project strategy)	Through an ICP Connect project, a selection of accredited international study programmes organized at one or more Flemish universities and focusing on subjects in line with the Agenda 2030 and SDG principles are supported to integrate global perspectives and strengthen the global south and network dimension into existing international study programmes. This implies a strategy that aims to spur the internationalization and networking of the programme by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adapting content, didactics and approaches; - foreseeing modalities to enhance the quality of the learning process and engage participation of international students; - linking it with the local context of one or more partner countries by means of student and / or professor mobility and/or partial delocalization of the programme to (one or more) partner institutions; - staying connected with graduates of the programme, and by connecting alumni with each other and with students and (network) partners, at providing learning opportunities and support mechanisms to alumni.
Duration - budget	Selected study programmes can receive funding for max. 2x5 years. This call is for a second phase of 5 years funding . 1-year study programme can apply for max 500 000 EUR (5y) – 2-year study programmes can apply for max 750 000 EUR (5y) In addition, positive assessment implies entitlement to an annual intake of 10 new 1 st year scholarships per programme per academic year during a five-year period (2022-2027)
Who can apply for funding ?	Only the 15 existing, accredited English master programmes of 60, 90 or 120 credits, organised at a Flemish university, that received incremental funding between 2017-2021 and received a fit for purpose assessment during Stage 1
Countries	- Master programme organised at one or more Flemish universities (BE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Partnerships with institutions from partner country list o Scholarships for students from scholarship country list
ICP Connect 2022 – 2 stage procedure: This Call = Stage 2 – Assessment - Fully Fledged Proposals	
Stage 2 – Assessment	
Launch call Stage 2	9 December 2021
Information session	16 December 2021 (13:30-15:00)
Submission deadline	12 April 2022
Selection commission meeting	week of 9 May 2022
Ratification of selection results by BUOS	20 May 2022
Follow-up and contracting	June-August 2022
Start ICP Connect 2022	1 September 2022

1. Background and context

1.1. FYP 2 ambitions, what's new?

VLIR-UOS has not launched any calls since 2019, this call is one of the first ones within the new FYP2, guided by the new FYP2 ambitions and lessons learned from Covid-19.

Covid-19 changed the world drastically, highlighting the role of science and international cooperation to tackle global and local problems, with data and digitalization creating new opportunities for equal partnerships.

Similar to the previous FYP, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as the main reference point. VLIR-UOS is committed to meaningfully mainstreaming the 3 SDG principles of leaving no one behind, interconnectedness and multi-stakeholder partnerships, throughout its ambitions, policies, programme, portfolio, partnerships and scholarships. The focus of Agenda 2030 on meaningful impact through multi-stakeholder partnerships resonates with the FYP2 ambition “Connect4Change” to focus on cooperation among and beyond academic actors (CONNECT), societal impact (valorisation), and collective learning.

Policy themes have become more important: the VLIR-UOS gender policy was translated into a guiding framework for mainstreaming gender throughout all new VLIR-UOS projects. A similar policy framework will be developed for environmental sustainability. The universal nature of Agenda 2030 provides entry points for Higher Education and Science Institutions (HE&SIs) to incorporate global citizenship education, decolonization, and a broader understanding of sustainable development into their threefold mission: research, education, and service to society.

These policy ambitions have been translated in the project selection criteria and descriptors for all programmes. VLIR-UOS wants new projects to capitalize on former and/or other relevant projects in the same context or topic, and to stimulate interinstitutional cooperation among and beyond academic actors. It will be an added value in the competitive selection of projects if different Flemish or partner HE&SIs will be involved in a proposal, either universities, universities of applied sciences and arts or both and when collaborations are sought beyond the academic actors.

Finally, a specific objective of FYP2 is to mobilize young/new academics to engage in “*sharing minds, changing lives*”.

Over the course of FYP2 VLIR-UOS will contribute - through platform-initiated and policy support projects – to capacity and knowledge strengthening in priority themes both within the VLIR-UOS community and the thematic Joint Strategic Framework with ARES and ITM, as with DGD and other development actors. Priority themes include climate change and environmental topics but also human rights, gender, decent work, decolonisation and global citizenship education. The FYP2 policy ambitions (connect, valorisation, collective learning) as well as the SDG principles and transversal and priority themes have been translated in the project selection criteria and descriptors for all programmes. VLIR-UOS wants new projects to **capitalize** on former and/or other relevant projects in the same context or topic, and to stimulate **interinstitutional cooperation** among and beyond academic actors. It will be an added value if different Flemish or partner HE&SIs will be involved in a proposal, either universities, universities of applied sciences and arts or both and when collaborations are sought beyond the academic actors.

1.2. Context

There is an increasing consensus on the role of strong higher education institutions and systems in addressing sustainable development challenges. Through their threefold mission, higher education institutes (HEIs) in Flanders and VLIR-UOS partner countries play a key role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aiming to end poverty, protect the planet, foster gender equality, defend and promote cultures and cultural understanding, and ensure prosperity for all.

In this respect, the Global Sustainable Development Report¹ calls upon all stakeholders to facilitate multidirectional collaboration in science and (transfer of) technology for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It considers academic and scientific capacity strengthening and partnerships as one of the four main levers for achieving the 2030 Agenda and implies a strengthened link between higher education institutes, governments, civil society organisations and the private sector (the quadruple helix).

Furthermore, the 2019 UN Global Sustainable Development Report highlights the indispensable role of higher education and science institutions in the creation, exchange and transfer of knowledge to inform the achievement of six systemic transformations for sustainable development, namely (1) human well-being and capabilities, (2) sustainable and just economies, (3) food systems and nutrition patterns, (4) energy decarbonization with universal access, (5) urban and peri-urban development and (6) global environmental commons. Each of the six transformations is synergistic with others and constitutes an entry point into the underlying systems needed for the achievement of the Agenda 2030. The framework underscores the need for complexity-oriented, cross-sectoral and holistic approaches that pay due attention to the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and the interlinkages between the goals.

In Flanders and elsewhere, HE&SIs are increasingly acknowledging their pivotal role in contributing to the necessary changes for the global goal of sustainable development. Higher education offers disciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching and research and HE&SIs generate and contribute to the development of new and innovative approaches to global, regional and local issues. Through research, HE&SIs play a unique role, as drivers of change, by producing new knowledge and innovation to address global challenges, by transferring knowledge through training, by providing evidence for informed (public) policy and implementation, and by knowledge mobilization. Through teaching, universities develop generations of new leaders and skilled professionals who will drive sustainable development. HE&SIs provide lifelong learning, and train today's students, decision-makers and professionals to think both critically and ethically, to learn to cope with ethical dilemmas and apply systems-thinking approaches to serious and complex societal problems. HE&SIs have also taken up a central role in the provision of global citizenship education to nurture a global understanding, intercultural awareness and values that enable students to assume active roles in resolving global challenges. Through service delivery and community engagement, HE&SIs work with a rich variety of stakeholders – including governments, the private sector, and civil society – for local, national, regional and global impact. As such, higher education has a direct impact on the sustainable development of every country. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will not be achieved without partnerships with and contributions from HE&SIs.

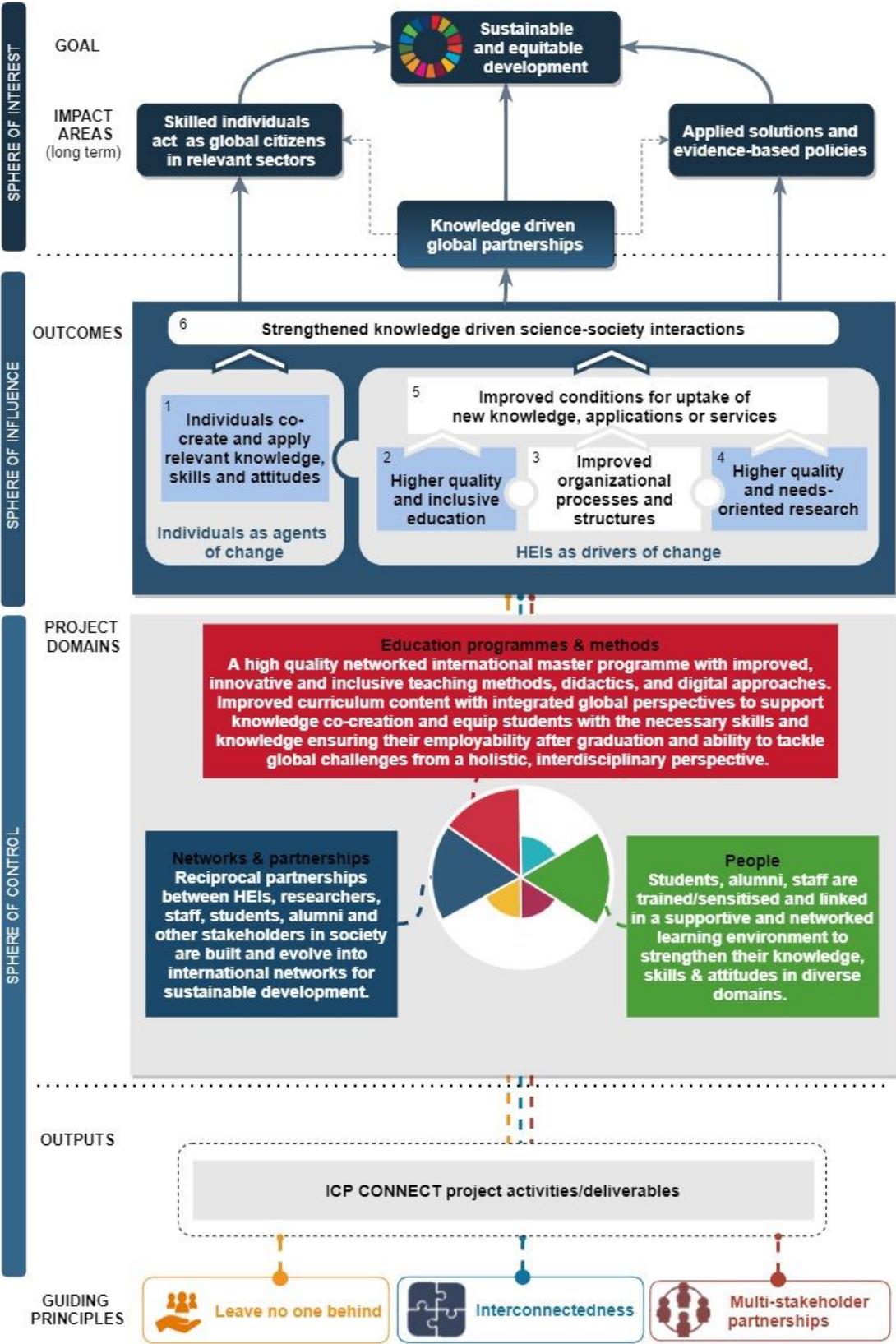
Globally, however, Higher Education Institutes and their stakeholders (i.e. staff, students and alumni) still face challenges among others in terms of access, capacity and uptake to unlock the full potential of

¹ UN (2019) - Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 The Future is Now - Science for Achieving Sustainable Development <https://doi.org/10.18356/5d04ad97-en>

higher education for sustainable development. Scholarship programmes and global partnerships in the field of higher education are considered essential in mitigating various of these challenges. They offer opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and research, strengthen the organisational capacities of higher education institutions, foster political and economic relationships through their scholars, mitigate financial and capacity constraints and accommodate the growing demand for equitable access to higher education services.

2. Theory of change and objectives

2.1. Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects



The above Theory of Change reflects the generic Theory of Change for the VLIR-UOS portfolio and shows how the generic objectives of ICP Connect projects fit within that.

VLIR-UOS considers global engagement for higher education as a goal (SDG 4: Quality Education) and a means for attaining other SDGs through knowledge co-creation, transfer and valorisation. In the long run, ICP Connect projects are expected to contribute to more sustainable and equitable development by fostering:

- Application of solutions and evidence-based policies
- A global community of skilled individuals who act as global citizens in relevant sectors
- Knowledge-driven global partnerships

The first impact area relates to the role of higher education in contributing to innovation and the valorisation and application of new knowledge, insights and evidence for sustainable development. Effective partnerships are deemed conducive to ensure engagement of relevant stakeholders and creation of opportunities for uptake that can lead to a broader application of this new knowledge by end-users. This can include policymakers applying evidence from research in their policies, local communities adapting new practices that address their local needs, private companies adapting innovative approaches, etc.

The second impact area aligns with the evidence provided in the UN Global Sustainability report 2019 which highlights the potential of HE&SIs to develop through their teaching generations of new leaders and skilled professionals. These skilled individuals are expected to drive social and economic development through their contributions in relevant sectors. As critical global citizens they are likely to have a multiplier development effect because of (i) their capacity to understand and question global power structures, communicate and work/study effectively outside one's environment, (ii) their consideration of interdependence and social concern for others and (iii) their civic engagement in the form of pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour[49]. Moreover, the realization of this impact area can equally benefit from the strengthened partnerships (see impact area 3) that facilitate the creation of networks between tomorrow's change agents and leaders and the in-flow of strengthened human capital in the labour market.

The third impact area draws upon the idea that reciprocal partnerships are essential in safeguarding knowledge co-creation, exchange and uptake within and beyond the scope of the supported projects. In line with SDG 17, VLIR-UOS aims for sustainable, effective, and efficient partnerships at various levels, including the individual, institutional, country, and regional levels. Additionally, the partnerships may involve academic actors (e.g. Higher Education Institutes) as well as other societal players (e.g. private companies, policy makers, civil society organisations). VLIR-UOS further believes that HE&SIs might have a multiplier effect on other HE&SIs in the country or region. As such, the strengthened partnerships are instrumental in achieving the other impact areas but can also directly contribute to the goal of sustainable and equitable development.

2.2. Generic VLIR-UOS Outcomes & ICP Connect

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

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

Both strategic axes can reinforce one another. For instance, the extent to which HE&SIs take up their role as development actor is likely to affect the embedded scholarship students' development of

knowledge, skills and attitudes that should enable them to effectively act as agents of change within and beyond the setting of the HE&SI.

In order to achieve the envisaged impact of FYP2, VLIR-UOS has identified 6 main outcomes along these strategic axes. Contributing to the attainment of the main VLIR-UOS impact areas are a number of outcomes. These are the medium-term effects of an intervention on the level of the direct (incl. staff and students at HE&SIs, individual students and professionals) or in some cases indirect beneficiaries. The outcomes are beyond the sphere of control of an intervention but fall within its sphere of influence. ICP Connect aims to more systematically integrate global perspectives and strengthen global south and network dimensions into existing master's programmes. By doing so, the projects aim at contributing to a number of outcome areas of which the following three are defined as the main ones²:

- (1) **'Individuals co-create and apply relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes'**: This outcome indicates the co-creation and transfer of state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to individuals who then apply these in their own organisation. The skills and knowledge also include critical thinking, global citizenship skills and attitudes, leadership skills, etc.
- (2) **'Higher quality and more inclusive education'**; This outcome concerns the improved quality and inclusiveness of education resulting from strengthened educational capacities available at HE&SIs.
- (4) **'Higher quality and needs-oriented research'**: This outcome reflects the VLIR-UOS strive to strengthen research capacities in order to enable HE&SIs to develop higher quality and needs-oriented research processes and results. This outcome signifies HE&SIs becoming (more) research active and innovative and being enabled to produce solutions to local and global challenges. It also refers to research which is gender sensitive and equity focused as a means for achieving excellence in research.

ICP Connect projects contribute to a number of these outcomes and impact areas. Each ICP Connect project focuses on these outcomes depending on its priorities and main objectives, meaning that some might focus more on (1) and (2) while others focus more on (1) and (4) for example. Individual projects may choose to focus on a sub-selection depending on priorities and needs of local stakeholders. Yet, projects are required to document their choices through their project-specific Theory of Change to ensure alignment with the programme's vision towards change as set out in this document. In the long term, all ICP Connect projects combined, contribute to development changes (cfr. Sustainable and equitable development via the SDGs and Agenda 2030), resonating with the impact areas of the general theory of change of VLIR-UOS.

More detail can be found in the generic Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects (see Background Annex 3).

² The conceptual framework for ICP Connect projects mainly focusses on VLIR-UOS outcomes 1, 2 and 4. This does not mean that ICP Connect projects do not contribute to other outcomes (e.g. 'science society interface) but the starting point and emphasis is on higher quality and more inclusive education, individuals applying new skills and knowledge and higher quality and needs-oriented research'.

2.3. Specific Objective of ICP Connect projects

The specific objective is that through educational networks (ICP Connect), and scholarships HE&SIs aim to systematically integrate global perspectives hereby creating a supportive, inclusive and networked learning environment in which individual scholarship students, professionals and academics acquire transversal competencies and state-of-the-art knowledge on sustainable development enabling them to become experts and critical global citizens motivated to act as change agents in their network.

2.4. Domains of intermediate change and outputs for ICP Connect

An ICP Connect project can focus on different **project domains** that contribute to the different outcomes, with 'Education programme and methods', 'People' and 'Networks and partnerships' being the main ones. The most important changes resulting from ICP Connect projects and examples of deliverables for these three domains are outlined in the table in background annex 3. It is possible that ICP Connect projects focus on one or more of the other project domains (outreach and policy support; research programmes and methods; systems, policies and infrastructure) and if this would be the case, promoters are then invited to clarify their focus on one of these additional domains. It is important to state that their choices and envisaged changes will be documented through a project-specific ToC. Minimally, focus should however be on the three defined main domains:

Education programmes and methods

Part of an ICP Connect project is the focus on the **content, didactics, lecturers and curriculum components** of the **educational programme**. This also entails that a **positive learning environment** is created, allowing for skills development and acquisition of broad knowledge and competences, thereby reinforcing understanding of the interconnected challenges of the SDGs/Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and increasing employability in relevant sectors. It also means that students find themselves in a **supportive environment** improving their well-being and motivation with for example access to sources like the library or online databases, organisation of extra-curricular activities, offering of networking opportunities, stimulation of exchange and collective knowledge generation, opportunities to co-create learning environments, additional supporting systems for students with special needs, support to the transition from education to employment, etc. These initiatives also stimulate **interaction between diverse student profiles**.

People

Closely linked to the educational programme is the focus on the 'students', more specifically **ensuring quality participation** and **personal and professional development of international students** and especially VLIR-UOS scholarship holders. Students participate in a high quality programme and gain **transversal competences** (attitudes, knowledge and skills) such as global citizenship, critical thinking, leadership skills apart from top-of-the art scientific knowledge, enabling them to become experts and critical world citizens who are capacitated and motivated to engage in global society (Change Agents). A first aspect in this regard is the **selection of scholarship holders**. A programme develops a specific **scholarship selection strategy** in line with the project objectives and aligned with the overall VLIR-UOS scholarship selection criteria (see background annex 2 and 5). Programmes can for example actively promote their programme and the scholarship opportunity in specific countries/at specific (potential) partner institutions in order to build or strengthen partnerships there. It is noteworthy to explicitly mention the SDG principle of 'Leaving No-one Behind' since scholarships can be an important tool to

empower students who are traditionally overlooked by or have less opportunities in higher education (e.g. minorities, women, students with disabilities,...). During the study, the ICP Connect project helps build/maintain a qualitative and relevant master programme that capacitates students with broad skills and knowledge, whereby support measures are in place. As part of ICP Connect projects, measures are also taken to **stay connected** with graduates of the master programme, at connecting **alumni** with each other and with students and (network) partners, at providing **learning opportunities** and create **support mechanisms** for alumni.

Networks and partnerships

Within ICP Connect projects, reciprocal partnerships and networks with relevant educational or research institutions, as well as other organisations (e.g. NGOs, private sector) or institutes (e.g. government bodies) are built or strengthened, allowing for **co-teaching, co-creation of courses and curricula components, co-organization of (online) courses, co-hosting of fieldwork and thesis research, co-planning of major curricular and extra-curricular activities, shared responsibilities in double degrees, mutual involvement in boards, etc.** These partnerships not only enrich, reinforce and engage the programme (team) at the Flemish institution, thereby also increasing the visibility of teaching staff and their educational/research topics in their institute and adding to the profile of the institution. Moreover, they also allow for capacity building of the partner institutions. In the longer term this leads to the **creation of broad international thematic networks** of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and alumni, possibly with involvement of research institutes and other organisations and with a central core in Flanders. As part of these partnerships and networks, additional funding can be framed and research capacities of involved departments can be strengthened. This e.g. can lead to collaborative research projects with involvement of alumni and students to contribute to positive societal change.

2.5. SDG principles

The SDG principles serve as a compass in VLIR-UOS endeavour of sharing minds, changing lives. As visualised in the ToC, they are transversally integrated to render the activities and change processes SDG-proof.



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



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

of academic as well as non-academic stakeholders (private sector, government, NGO/Civil Society, international donors...) is essential for each partnership. VLIR-UOS takes into account the MSP principle by promoting collaboration between different partners and stakeholders to co-create, share and mobilize knowledge and expertise across disciplines, sectors, interest groups, and borders. More precisely, VLIR-UOS explicitly puts forward the science-society interface and the importance of strengthening this. ICP Connect projects, in particular, are expected to seek for synergy and complementarity with various academic and non-academic stakeholders (state actors, community organisations, private sector, NGOs, ..) when generating and facilitating the uptake of the development-relevant knowledge. All individual projects are therefore required to submit a thorough stakeholder analysis and management strategy as an essential step. Realising social networks is pivotal with respect to bringing 'multi-stakeholder partnerships' into practice. Through ICP Connect, VLIR-UOS supports participants from partner countries who can contribute to the development of their home country or other countries after having participated and this through the impact that the scholarship holders can achieve during their professional activities after graduating. The individual performance of the scholars has increased and this manifests itself in behavioural changes of these change agents: better higher education, better research, a more efficient private sector, better policy, leadership, entrepreneurship, social engagement, innovation, local technologies, etc. Offering quality educational programmes to people from partner countries is a lever to development itself because it also constitutes the training of politicians, government officials, NGO workers, researchers; thus the people who govern and build a country. That both women and men need to participate within the higher education programmes is evident in view of reaching gender equity and network building.



Leave no one behind: VLIR-UOS recognises the need for pro-active strategies to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised populations are included in and benefit from higher education partnerships for sustainable development. The LNOB principle is taken into account by looking at partners with whom we work, at beneficiaries for whom we work and at what we focus on in projects. VLIR-UOS encourages projects to take gender and vulnerable groups into account, by putting forward partnerships with mid-range or weaker institutions, by awarding scholarships to a diversity of beneficiaries and by promoting transformative or community-based types of research. More precisely, international top higher education institutions are considered only when participating as supporting partners in projects, scholarship attribution is not only based on academic excellence in terms of scientific output, and mainstreaming approaches are put in place to consider inclusion and (gender) equality in each project.

2.6. Transversal and priority themes

ICP Connect projects are expected to take gender and the protection of the environment and natural resources into account as transversal themes that are put forward by the Belgian regulatory framework for development cooperation.

With regards to **gender**, VLIR-UOS has developed a gender policy reflecting how to contribute to gender equality by mainstreaming gender in higher education for sustainable development. Upon advice of the gender expert group, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in fixing the numbers, fixing the knowledge and fixing the organisation for gender in line with the theoretical three-fixes model of Londa Schiebinger. To operationalise this threefold strategy, guidance and tools will be offered (e.g. checklist for scholarship selection, information sheet for gender mainstreaming, training on gender analysis in research, training for selection commission members).

With regards to **environment**, VLIR-UOS adheres to the strong and active sustainability model (also known as the Doughnut model of social and planetary boundaries) which aims to ensure meeting the needs of all people within the means of the planet. This implies that ICP Connect project proposals and reporting formats urge project applicants to consider environment and environmental sustainability during project identification & formulation as well as to monitor and reflect upon the project's effects on the environment and the risks posed by the environment on their project. Thereby, ICP Connect projects should be guided by the 'do no harm' principle to prevent, reduce and control the risk of environmental harm. Further, VLIR-UOS retains the possibility to develop measures related to environment, in line with its environmental policy which will be updated during the next FYP 2022-2027.

Global citizenship education (GCE) is a priority theme for FYP2, including ICP Connect. VLIR-UOS seeks to contribute to a global community of critical, solidary global citizens that are and feel capacitated and motivated to act in view of sustainable development. The education activities of ICP Connect projects, supported by research and knowledge-driven partnerships, are an obvious pathway for promoting global citizenship among students. Through research and service delivery to society, global citizenship can be promoted in the broader academic community (e.g. staff, alumni, networks). Global citizenship (education) remains a contested notion, resulting in a proliferation of educational approaches that can be divided in three broad categories: competency-based, moral, or critical educational approaches. The ICP Connect projects should articulate how they plan to integrate global citizenship, in line with their own priorities, ambitions, expertise and networks. This also includes addressing concerns about GCE as a Northern-driven discourse and set of practices, due to the ongoing conversations within the Flemish higher education sector, and beyond, about decolonization.

Finally, VLIR-UOS identifies Digital for Development (D4D) and decolonisation as priority themes which play an important role in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Respect for decent work and human rights are also important policy areas for the entire VLIR-UOS portfolio and projects, calling for action to prevent and protect involved people and beneficiaries from risks related to violations in these areas. Specifically for Digital for development (D4D) a D4D flash card was developed during FYP1 to support project promoters in formulating project proposals and annual reports.

We expect all projects to be based on a genuine and evidence-based context and stakeholder analysis with attention to gender, vulnerable people and the environmental impact. In their approach projects should have attention for gender and vulnerable groups and respect for decent work and human rights. Projects should address the interconnectedness of the sustainable development challenges through e.g. multidisciplinary or systems approaches, and have a clear valorisation strategy focussing not only on scientific impact, but more importantly also on societal impact.

2.7. Coherence

FYP2 has one overarching Theory of Change that is connected to the thematic Joint Strategic Framework (tJSF). This ensures that each of the outcomes, including ICP Connect, is aligned with the overall strategic orientation i.e. contributing to sustainable and equitable development, thereby safeguarding the complementarity between the various programmes in the VLIR-UOS portfolio. The approach facilitates long-term partnerships drawing on personal interaction and was found to enhance research uptake & impact.

By embedding ICP Connect within the broader conceptual framework of FYP2, VLIR-UOS strengthens the internal coherence of ICP Connect by providing a clearer framework for results' orientation. Crucial in that regard, and unlike the preceding 5-year programme, is that there is no longer a North/South

distinction within the VLIR-UOS portfolio, thus ensuring coherence between ICP Connect and the broader portfolio of programmes. Since ICPs already exist for a long time, many SI, TEAM, IUC projects have been initiated by ICP alumni through ICP based networks. Since ICP Connect focuses on network building, network partners are often ongoing or former IUC/SI/TEAM HE&SIs. VLIR-UOS provides guidance on project formulation approaches, policy priorities and local contexts, leading to internal coherence among ICP Connect projects. VLIR-UOS will facilitate collective learning events and processes, including formulation and monitoring of standard indicators, a mid-term and end-term evaluation of ICP Connects, and the support for communication platforms through which project teams can interact on lessons learned, pool and share project results and seek for expert advice and support. Scholarships are beneficial for the coherence and network component of ICP Connect and ITP and the VLIR-UOS network.

As for external coherence, VLIR-UOS will stimulate multi-stakeholder partnerships. To support coordination and exchange among and between Flemish HEIs and (Belgian) development actors, VLIR-UOS will provide reference frameworks for Belgium as well as the 17 project partner countries. These frameworks will be updated regularly. Together with the members of the tJSF, VLIR-UOS will facilitate exchanges among academics and other Belgian actors, and has the ambition to set-up a communication platform to exchange and interact on opportunities for collaboration.

2.8. Synergy and complementarity (S&C)

The focus of Agenda 2030 on meaningful impact through multi-stakeholder partnerships resonates with the FYP2 ambition “Connect4Change” to focus on cooperation among and beyond academic actors (CONNECT), societal impact (valorisation), and collective learning. VLIR-UOS wants new projects to capitalize on former and/or other relevant projects in the same context or topic, and to stimulate inter-institutional cooperation among and beyond academic actors, as a means to more impact but also as a goal in itself.

Synergy and complementarity (S&C) can improve the impact of development cooperation interventions and is a top priority of the Belgian minister of Development Cooperation and encouraged by the reform of non-governmental cooperation in 2016.

VLIR-UOS revised its country approach towards an ‘Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development’ centred approach. Moreover, VLIR-UOS wants to facilitate connections between different actors and projects present in a given country, and cross-borders within the broader framework of the thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (tJSF HES4SD), meaning cooperation between academic actors and all other types of actors (NGOs, public and private organisations, private sector, ...), starting from a research question, working on the same theme or in the same country, ...

With these objectives in mind, Country Reference Framework (CRF) were developed for each of the 17 VLIR-UOS project partner countries to support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis per country focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector, and by providing an overview of Belgian development actors active in the country (Enabel, ANGC), their ongoing projects and partners, in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity. For the ICP connect projects, this could be relevant in case of specific activities in partner countries, or in link with themes related to the thematic JSF which are also listed.

When launching competitive calls, the ANGCs active in Belgium/the country/region/thematic JSFs will be invited by VLIR-UOS to list a number of research/educational/networking themes/questions that can be addressed by HE&SIs in the framework of VLIR-UOS funded projects or scholarships. Synergy and complementarity will be integrated as an element in the selection of project proposals, more in particular when discussing the relevance and coherence of the proposals and the extent to which the multi-stakeholder partnership principle has been reflected in the project's implementation set-up.

The country reference frameworks were elaborated in 2021 for the 17 countries + Belgium in the VLIR-UOS project partner country list. (see links at the end of this document).

3. Key features of ICP Connect projects

3.1. General description

The ICP Connect Call 2022 consists of 2 procedural stages leading to the start of ICP Connect projects on 1/9/2022 as part of the Five-Year-Programme 2022-2027 (FYP2). The present **call for assessment** is the second stage in the ICP Connect intake process. In stage 2, proposals will be assessed against the four new VLIR-UOS criteria, aligned with the ICP Connect conceptual framework. This assessment is aimed at optimising the proposals, as the guarantee of funding will already have been given. Special attention will be given to sustainability. The ICP Connect projects should not be a pure continuation of what they already did/do; there should be a shift towards delocalisation and sustainability. This assessment focuses on a quality assessment, formulating, if so necessary, optimisation recommendations and will result in the start of a 2nd phase of ICP Connect funding as of 1 September 2022.

ICP Connect projects aim to more systematically integrate global perspectives and strengthen global south and network dimensions into existing master's programmes. This implies a strategy that aims to spur the internationalization and networking of the programme by:

- adapting content, didactics and approaches;
- foreseeing modalities to enhance the quality of the learning process and engage participation of international students;
- linking it with the local context of one or more partner countries by means of student and/or professor mobility and/or partial delocalization of the programme to (one or more) partner institutions;
- staying connected with graduates of the master programme, and by connecting alumni with each other and with students and (network) partners, at providing learning opportunities and support mechanisms to alumni.

3.2. Scholarship framework

Each master programme that is selected in the framework of ICP Connect is also awarded with 10 **scholarships** for 1st year students from one of the VLIR-UOS scholarship countries annually. Part of the ICP Connect projects thus focus on supporting scholarship beneficiaries (and broader international students) in terms of learning environment, stimulating exchange and collaboration, network opportunities and strategies and initiatives to support them in taking an active role as change agent during and after completion of the study. The ICP scholarships also fit into the general VLIR-UOS scholarship

framework whereby scholars are seen as potential agents of change that can contribute to societal change in their home country (or region) after finishing their studies.

Scholars get embedded in a coordinated network of students, alumni, staff, partner institutions (HE&SIs) and possible other partners (e.g. NGOs, private sectors), allowing them to build long-term collaborations and contribute to positive change. On the other hand, scholarships are also supportive to help realize (parts of) the incremental project strategy³. Scholarship beneficiaries often have a broader experience horizon, since many have relevant prior work experience often beyond academia. This often positively affects the learning processes and potential learning outcomes of all students, as well as the quality level of collaborative (research) projects with a societal impact. It also leads to altering or experimenting with other didactic styles and methodologies as to allow for more participative class interaction and more adequately valorize the “wisdom of the class”. Scholarship beneficiaries are also often networked in their country/region, which can lead to collaborative projects with alumni and part of their network.

3.3. Phase 1 vs. Phase 2

The partnerships and networks that were initiated/developed in the framework of a Flemish master programme, require a solid basis and consolidation which goes via long term support. Therefore a project cycle is foreseen in different phases, up to 10 years max. in order to ensure that partnerships can develop and consolidate into solid educational networks. A master programme can receive funding for maximum 2 project phases (2x 5 years), subject to positive evaluation by a VLIR-UOS selection commission.

Phase 1 and phase 2 of ICP connect projects have distinct results and activities, especially with regard to partnerships and alumni.

- **Phase 1:** Master programmes selected for an ICP Connect project are expected to **develop a solid strategy** to gradually strengthen/build the global South a dimension of the ICP through cooperation via HEI partnerships. This first phase also includes strategy implementation, e.g. from detecting potential partners to realizing concrete agreements/MoU and involvement of partners in different aspect of the educational programmes; prepare a delocalization of curriculum components; develop an alumni strategy and policy with first initiatives to stay connected with alumni and develop an alumni network etc. How far-reaching first implementation can be, evidently depends on whether the ICP Connect projects can build upon existing partnerships/networks. Programmes are however expected to keep in mind the longer term objectives and anticipate on network- and capacity building of/with partner institutions and creating a true partnership context from the very beginning.
- **Phase 2 (Current call):** A second 5-year phase builds on the results of the first cycle and focuses on **consolidation and sustainability**. Programmes no longer focus on strategy-development but intend to implement and consolidate, **further strengthen** procedures and connect partners with each other in a broad educational network building upon innovations, learning opportunities and alumni initiatives and networks that were developed during the first phase of the project. Programmes also aim at realizing **sustainability** of different aspects of the ICP Connect project (e.g. delocalized curriculum components, fieldwork for students, ...). This does not necessarily mean that the network must be financially self-sufficient. It can generate revenue for example by commercializing products and services, introducing membership fees, encourage in-kind contributions, but can also still rely on (non-VLIR-UOS) donor support for some of the financial resources.

³ Ace Europe (2020). Mid-term evaluation of the incremental funding.

3.4. Partnerships

An important aspect of ICP Connect is building and strengthening partnerships that can lead to the establishment and operationalisation of international networks. Partners involved in the ICP Connect projects not only contribute to the further strengthening of the Flemish master programme but they are also active partners that co-create, co-design, co-host etc. Partners could e.g. organise curriculum components, courses, or even master programmes themselves, for national and international students at their institution working together with the Flemish master programme and their network.

Partnerships for an ICP Connect project are partners/institutions/programmes etc. in a VLIR-UOS partner country that have an explicit role in the execution of the project that is beyond ad-hoc interventions or the support of individual academic colleagues (for e.g. for master thesis supervision) and with whom a strong interaction and collaboration with focus on capacity development is envisaged in the project. The first phase of ICP Connect projects allows for developing such a vision, exploration of partners, developing a shared strategy, setting-up small-scale mutual collaborative projects, setting-up agreements and management structures etc. During the second phase, partnerships can be further strengthened, expanded in terms of topics and involvement of different partner institutions and consolidated. Responsibilities can also shift gradually creating the conditions for more ownership. The partner(s) could take up more tasks and responsibilities during the last 5 years of ICP Connect Projects and involve their own network.

It has already proven fruitful to (further) develop partnerships that can build upon existing or former links between institutions in one of the partner countries and one or more Flemish universities (e.g. former IUC partners, former NETWORK partners, alumni, former PhD students, Erasmus Mundus partners, etc.)⁴. Building further on (already) existing long-term relations, that have created trust, is an important factor contributing to the elaboration of the project and also to support synergy and complementarity between different VLIR-UOS projects and programmes.

It is important to involve potential partners from the very beginning of the development of the ICP Connect project in order to create clarity and understanding of the mutual expectations, tasks and responsibilities and to give partners sufficient ownership. Strong and supportive academic environments are essential to enable ICP Connect projects, especially if delocalization of curriculum components would be envisaged.

4. Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria define whether or not a proposal can be accepted to enter the assessment process. In terms of eligible programmes it is clear that **this call only addressed the ICPs selected during Phase 1** who received confirmation during Stage 1 of this procedure. No other programmes can apply. Each call for proposals defines clear eligibility criteria, using the following sections where appropriate. This practice is common within the academic community. In case of VLIR-UOS calls for proposals, the following eligibility criteria apply:

Eligibility of applicants (= Who can apply?)	Eligibility of Flemish (co)promoters and partner promoters (if applicable)
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⁴ Ace Europe (2020). Mid-term evaluation Incremental Funding.

Eligibility of budget and implementation period	<p>Maximum budget is not exceeded.</p> <p>Maximum implementation period is not exceeded</p>
Eligibility of countries	List of eligible countries and scholars.
Eligibility of submission modalities	Timely and complete submission, and respect for formats and other possible formality guidelines (max. number of pages, font, ...).

The proposal must meet the application and submission requirements as described in section 7 of this call ‘Application modalities’. Non-compliance with the mandatory format could lead to non-acceptance of the proposal.

4.1. Eligibility of applicants

In terms of eligible programmes it is clear that **this call only addresses the ICPs selected during stage 1** of this procedure. No other programmes can apply.

Affiliation of the promoters:

- Flemish promoter: employed as a professor/lecturer/specialist at a Flemish university or university of applied sciences and arts;
- Partner promoter: employed at a recognized higher education institution or national public (not for profit) research institute located in a VLIR-UOS project partner country” (if applicable)

At the level of the partner institutions, no further criteria apply.

The promoter(s) and budget holder do not have to be the same person(s) as during Phase 1 and should meet the following criteria.

Promoter

- Professors, researchers and lecturers, who are affiliated with a Flemish university, can apply to this call on the condition that:
- they will remain affiliated with the institution for at least the scheduled duration of the project;
- they are authorised to submit a project proposal (this does not mean they have to be able to enter into financial commitments on behalf of the institution, see budget holder);
- they have the required competences to successfully manage and lead the project;

The Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation (ICOS) of the applicant’s university will translate these criteria to the various academic statutes.

The tasks can be divided among several professors, researchers or lecturers, providing that there is a written statement of each promoter in which he/she agrees with the division of tasks.

Budget holder

The budget holder is the person who will be mandated to make financial engagements on behalf of the institution. This person can be but is not necessarily the same person as the promoter. If this is not the case, the budget holder will sign the contract together with the promoter and is therefore, together with the promoter, responsible for the implementation of the project.

It is the responsibility of the Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation (ICOS) of the association (see [8.3.1.](#)) to check whether the Flemish project promoter is allowed to act as a project holder within his/her own institution, and to check if the project promoter will be affiliated with the institution for the duration of the project. It is also up to the institution to check who will be the budget holder for the project.

4.2 Eligibility of budget and implementation period

The budget and implementation period will be checked with the included boundaries in the call. The max. budget is 500 000 EUR (1-year masters) or 750 000 EUR (2 year masters) and the max. implementation period is 5 years.

4.3 Eligibility of countries and scholars

4.3.1 Partner Countries

The master programme that receives the ICP Connect funding is organized in Belgium, at one or more Flemish universities. Activities as part of the ICP Connect phase 2 project can be organized in collaboration with / in the 17 VLIR-UOS partner countries only: Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, Rwanda, South-Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam. Phase 1 ICP Connect partnerships in countries that are no longer on the project country list but are on the scholarship list can be further supported, without budget restrictions, such as Mozambique, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, because phase 2 is a consolidation phase. However no new activities can be started in these countries. In the case of new partnerships, the FYP2 project country list has to be used.

4.3.2 Participants

Scholarship candidates have to be a national and resident of one of the VLIR-UOS scholarship countries.

For FYP2 a new opportunity emerged of harmonizing the scholarship country lists within the thematic JSF, with a limit of 30 countries, including Belgium. The JSF country list was composed on the basis of the 3 respective partner country lists of VLIR-UOS, ARES and ITM, on the basis of which the VLIR-UOS scholarship country list was revised in 2021.

VLIR-UOS approved a new scholarship country list with only a small deviation from the HES4SD country list. Nepal and Tunisia would not be retained for VLIR-UOS cooperation but instead Palestinian Territories and Nicaragua were added given the existing linkages through ICP Connect projects, and thus maintained as scholarship countries. Only Guatemala and Mali dropped out as scholarship countries comparing to FYP1. Partnerships that exists in countries that are no longer on the project country list (e.g. Mozambique, Nicaragua) can be further supported, but for new partnerships, reference is made to the project country list.

VLIR-UOS scholarship country list 2022-2027 (29):

- **Africa:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroun, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe
- **Asia:** Cambodia, Indonesia, Palestine, Philippines, Vietnam

- **Latin America:** Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Peru

More information on the eligibility and selection criteria for ICP master scholars can be found [here](#).

The 'selection procedure for ICP scholars' details the process from selection to start of the programme. A new version will be provided in February 2022 the latest. The organizing HE&SI(s) is (are) responsible for the academic selection of the ICP scholarship participants. The ICP defines the **required academic criteria**. Only candidates who are academically admitted, can receive a scholarship. The selection is thus organized decentralized. VLIR-UOS monitors the intake at distance, and provides links to the ICP's website or the website of its organising university on its own website. The ICP's organising committee is responsible for a targeted communication strategy in order to recruit participants, as well as for the organisation of the application by and selection of the participants/scholarship candidates. It is up to the applying ICP programme to develop their own communication strategy for the recruitment of participants. The scholarship selection made by the ICP organizers will be validated by VLIR-UOS and informed to DGD. In order to monitor the application and selection of scholars, the ICP's have to provide VLIR-UOS with relevant data in this regard.

4.4 Eligibility of submission modalities

The proposal must meet the application and submission requirements as described in [section 8. 'Application modalities'](#). All compulsory annexes are to be enclosed. Non-compliance with the mandatory format could lead to non-acceptance of the proposal.

5 Budgetary framework and implementation

5.1 Project budget

The funding guarantee means a guarantee of of maximum 5 years funding within FYP2 of the project and associated grantees, provided that the recommendations of the commission are effectively taken to heart in the elaboration of the fully fledged proposal, and subject to FYP2 approval by DGD.

One-year masters can apply for max 500 000 EUR (100 000/year), two-year masters can apply for max 750 000 EUR (150 000/year) for this second phase.

The VLIR-UOS financial guidelines for ICP Connect 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. VLIR-UOS is currently in the process of optimizing its budget formats and financial guidelines with a view to harmonizing and simplifying project administration. The final proposal will, of course, be subject to formal approval by DGD. At the moment this optimization process is still ongoing. However a template budget proposal is expected to be ready by end of December 2022 (see further).

5.2 Scholarships

Positive assessment also implies entitlement to an annual intake of 10 scholarships per programme per academic year during a five-year period (2022-2027). The scholarships aim to facilitate participation of attendants coming from the VLIR-UOS scholarship country list. A reasonable cross-section of scholars

from different countries and regions is targeted, provided there are sufficient qualified candidates. In case of equally qualified candidates, preference will be given to candidates from vulnerable groups (Leave No One Behind). A balance 40%- 60% gender ratio as overall guideline between male and female candidates awarded ICP Connect scholarships is targeted. VLIR-UOS strongly encourages female candidates to apply. Read more about our gender policy [here](#). ICP Connect projects need to develop a policy concerning the communication, promotion and recruitment for scholars.

The corresponding scholarship amounts are transferred by VLIR-UOS to the central administration of the Flemish university in the framework of an institutional agreement between VLIR-UOS and the Flemish university. The Flemish university is responsible for the payments to the scholarship holders, for their reception, housing, organising of insurance and their general guidance. Therefore, the management of these scholarships generate coordination costs, which are covered within the scholarship agreement with the university at a rate of 10% of the total scholarships expenses.

At the moment of this call, scholarship guidelines are not yet available due to the ongoing negotiations with DGD. These guidelines are formulated in agreement with DGD and have a mandatory nature. They aim at harmonizing the different types of grants supported by DGD in function of the duration and finality of the scholar's stay, irrespective of the training he/she conducts and irrespective of the body governing the DGD funds. Scholarship costs may change in line with government funding decisions. Detailed figures are not yet available.

The present call refers to the five-year period 2022 - 2027. More specifically, after positive evaluation, ICP Connect funding will be provided for the period 1/09/2022 – 31/08/2027. Both the project funding and the scholarships are linked to the academic years with a first intake of 10 scholars in September 2022 (AJ 2022-2023), a second intake in September 2023 (AJ 2023-2024) etc. up until the last intake in September 2026 (AJ 2026-2027).

It is up to the applicants – in the light of the specificity of each ICP Connect – to select the elements they feel are most appropriate for their specific programme with a view to strengthening their partnerships, and to clarify the choices made in their application.

6 Assessment

6.1 Assessment criteria

Up until 2021, VLIR-UOS has been applying the same set of **6 selection criteria** for all its calls for project proposals, including Stage 1 of this call. However, from FYP2 **4 new generic selection criteria and descriptors** were approved. Per programme the descriptors for each selection criterion were adjusted in line with its conceptual framework and specificity. The specificity of ICP Connect lays on consolidation and making the network more sustainable. The descriptors provide an objective interpretation of the criteria, for the ICP Connect selection commission⁵. The descriptors have been adapted to suit the specific characteristics of the ICP Connect programme.

⁵ Based on the ERC (European Research Council) and OECD-DAC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee) definitions.

Criteria	Definition	Descriptors
Relevance and coherence of the project	<i>The extent to which the proposal responds to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies (relevance) and fits with the programme Theory of Change (ToC) and within the institution/context (coherence)</i>	<p><i>The proposal aligns with the Agenda 2030 and the ICP Connect programme ToC.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal is based on a genuine and evidence-based context and stakeholder analysis with attention to gender, vulnerable people (LNOB) and the environment.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal is compatible/links up with or capitalizes on other relevant initiatives with-in the context of HE4SD and seeks for synergies and/or complementarities (INT & MSP).</i></p> <p><i>The proposal demonstrates ownership of the involved local partners in the ICP Connect network, and is in line with the local partners' priorities.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal contributes to improving the relevance of an accredited master programme, in line with the needs of the direct and indirect beneficiaries (students, partner organisations, alumni, public/private/civil actors), especially vulnerable groups (LNOB). The proposal demonstrates a marked ability to attract a diverse and international student population.</i></p>
Quality of the project design	<i>The extent to which a proposal presents a convincing project strategy</i>	<p><i>The proposal presents a realistic and applicable Theory of Change (ToC) narrative, outlining the change desired, the needs to be addressed, the intended pathways toward change, and makes underlying assumptions or preconditions explicit (e.g. risk analysis)</i></p> <p><i>Linked to the ToC narrative, the proposal articulates a convincing project logic with a clear and realistic flow between a long-term sustainable development objective (overall goal/impact level)the outcomes expected from the project, and the envisaged intermediate changes (=results) by formulating activities/identifying deliverables linked to one or more of the six standard VLIR-UOS project domains .</i></p> <p><i>The proposal is original, creative, innovative (scientific, academic or pedagogical excellence) in:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>(i) sustaining the introduced global focus and networking component in an existing master programme</i> <i>(ii) facilitating the employability and (re)insertion of graduates and their effective acting as agents of change</i> <i>(iii) sustaining the capacity built within the partner universities at the level of both the local educational programmes and local staff, and in sustaining the global network.</i> <p><i>The proposal elaborates an appropriate and feasible (scientific, academic or pedagogical) methodology or approach which recognizes/addresses the interconnect-edness of the sustainable development challenges (e.g. multidisciplinary or systems approaches) (INT).</i></p>
Implementation set-up of the project	<i>The extent to which the proposal presents a strong plan and partnership for the execution of the project</i>	<i>The project ToC is translated into a clear planning (which will facilitate effective project execution, follow-up and monitoring through a convincing set of indicators) and adequate measures to deal in an adaptive way with the most important uncertainties (assumptions/risks), with attention to gender, vulnerable groups and environment.</i>

		<p><i>The proposal is cost-effective, the budget is reasonable and justified.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal involves an appropriate mix of partners (persons and their organisations) (MSP) (with the required profile, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project (quality of the partnership) and clarifies an adequate and equitable distribution of the roles and tasks for all involved partners, demonstrating the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations (incl. coordination and communication between the involved partners).</i></p> <p><i>It is an added value if in the proposal different (Flemish or partner) HE&SIs are involved, either universities, universities of applied sciences and arts or both, especially if this cooperation enables pooling of expertise and/or cost-effectiveness.</i></p>
<p>Potential impact and sustainability</p>	<p><i>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)</i></p>	<p><i>The proposal has potential to contribute to applications/policies/services responding to the needs of direct and indirect beneficiaries, with attention for gender, vulnerable people (LNOB) and the environmental impact.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal presents a convincing stakeholder management plan to facilitate stakeholder engagement, with attention to gender and vulnerable people (LNOB).</i></p> <p><i>The proposal has a clear uptake strategy with attention to gender and vulnerable people (LNOB) so as to increase the likelihood of knowledge uptake and innovation within all involved HE&SIs.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal is likely to enable the master programme to be firmly embedded in the university/ies involved, with meaningful ownership of and commitment by all participating institutions, allowing capacity to be built among all HE&SIs involved at the level of both academic content and pedagogics, and individuals, institutions and networks. The proposal is likely to enable the partnership to evolve into a network and the network activities to continue after the VLIR-UOS funding has come to an end. The partners are challenged to develop and implement a sustainability strategy which may lead to shifting roles and responsibilities among partners in the course of phase 2.</i></p> <p><i>A convincing after-graduation policy, including measures on how to support graduates to be active global citizens / agents of change and follow-up on them, is in place.</i></p>

Also qualitative criteria and their underlying principles are integrated in the VLIR-UOS selection system: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, expected impact, sustainability, partnership strategy, synergies and learning

For phase 2 the ICP Connect proposals will be assessed, by the same committee, on the basis of the four new VLIR-UOS criteria, aligned with the conceptual framework for ICP Connect.

This assessment is aimed at optimizing the proposals, as the funding guarantee has already been given. Since this is not a selection but an assessment procedure, the focus lays on giving recommendations.

6.2 Scoring of the criteria

All proposals are assessed by all commission members, thereby guaranteeing equal treatment and triangulation.

The **scoring** of each of the criteria is done 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

In order to meet the minimum criteria, a proposal should obtain an A or B score on each criterion. The more As the better and the following selection criteria are applicable in declining order of priority:

1. Relevance and coherence
2. Quality of the project
3. Potential impact and sustainability
4. Implementation set-up

More details on the selection criteria, track record and scoring and decision making are to be found in the Selection System (policy & guidelines) document⁶ of VLIR-UOS that still will be updated (see background document 2).

6.3 Selection commission

In 2019 the ICP&ITP Selection Commission was recomposed to assess the proposals for ICP and ITP projects selection rounds. The ICP selection commission meeting for the Stage 1 Selection round took place in October 2021. The selection commission assessed the proposals and checked whether they were fit for purpose and reached the minimum requirement for the formulation of a fully fledged proposal. Doing so the commission formulated a binding advice as to the funding of both the ICP projects and associated scholarships. The funding of an annual intake of 10 new scholars as of academic year 2022-2023 is guaranteed, up until 2026-2027. The Bureau UOS ratified the selection advice during its meeting of 22 October 2021.

With the selection to move to stage 2, the funding of the ICP Connect project is guaranteed. The funding guarantee means a guarantee of funding within FYP2, both of the project and associated scholarships, provided that the recommendations of the commission in stage 1 are effectively taken to heart in the elaboration of the fully fledged proposal in stage 2. The budget still has to be justified in line with the stage 2 objectives and related activities and will be assessed by the commission and is subject to FYP2 approval by DGD.

In this stage the commission will assess the fully fledged proposals. The commission will check whether their recommendations have been given relevant follow-up in the new proposal, whether the ICP Connect proposal fits with the new ICP Connect conceptual framework and whether the proposed budget is sufficiently accounted for. The commission may decide that certain recommendations still need to be

⁶ An updated Selection System policy document is available on the VLIR-UOS website.

incorporated in order to make the proposal more effective and more closely aligned with the new policy framework. In this way quality is guaranteed. Thus two assessment results are possible:

- Selected : there is no reservation; supervisors can still adapt their project to the suggestions from the selection commission before the start, or during the first year;
- Selected with recommendations : remediation is necessary. After the start (September 2022) the programme will be given six months to submit an amended proposal to VLIR-UOS, i.e. by the beginning of March 2023. This amended proposal will then be submitted to the assessment commission by written procedure. If desired, VLIR-UOS can provide assistance with the reformulation/optimization of the project proposal.

In the context of monitoring and learning, all ICP Connect projects will be asked to report on how they acted on the commission's recommendations during their first Annual Progress Report.

7 Application modalities

7.1 Methodological approach and formulation guidelines

All projects need to be identified and formulated following the general principles of the Theory of Change approach and the Managing for Development Results paradigm. The principles of the VLIR-UOS Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy were translated into a basic guide for the formulation of VLIR-UOS supported projects. The formulation of a project is much more than writing a document. It is a participative process in which partners co-create a project based on a shared vision of change, and a shared understanding of the current situation.

A project formulation guide (background annex 1) specific for ICP Connect projects provides practical and operational support and information on the different modules that need to be developed to arrive at a qualitative project proposal. The development of these interrelated modules is explained in a step-wise process. The modules form the basis for the online project development tool.

The guide consists of 8 Modules⁷ as demonstrated below:

⁷ The modules are inspired on the PRINCE2 methodology and themes for project management.



The added value is that the modules are linked to each other, for example based on the context analysis in Module 1 a theory of change is formulated, alignment is sought with the generic VLIR-UOS Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects and the standard project domains (of intermediate change) are selected. These domains are then used to plan activities in Module 5 and define the indicators in Module 7. Finally, the modules will make it possible in a future online environment to be used as a tool not only for planning, but also for reporting whereby switching between modules will be possible in a swift manner. These guidelines provide a clear and succinct overview of what is expected from the formulation process and provides ample examples. Use of these guidelines is strongly advised.

See [section 8 for the project formats](#).

7.2 Submission modalities

7.2.1 Who?

The Flemish promoter of one of the 15 existing ICP's which received a fit for purpose during Stage 1 submits its proposal to the ICOS of the Flemish university for quality control. The ICOS will validate and submit to VLIR-UOS.

7.2.2 How?

Project applications are submitted online via the new tool for the submission of project proposals. Please note that, although you will be granted access to the VLIR-UOS online tool, the format for filling out a project proposal will not be made available until February 2022. In the meantime, you can use the Word and Excel formats.

7.2.3 Deadline

This concerns the deadline that applicants should respect when submitting to the ICOS. **Fully fledged proposals must be submitted to the ICOS of the Flemish university** via the online tool (specific arrangements on how to proceed might be made at the level of your institution, check with your ICOS how your institution deals with this internal procedure):

The deadline of submissions is April 12 2022 at **23h59 CET (Central European Time)**.

7.3 Application support

The ICOS function as liaison between the VLIR-UOS secretariat and the individual Flemish institutions and academics/lecturers. The ICOS are the first line contact persons to assist the promoters with the elaboration of their project proposal (eligibility check, explanation of the financial guidelines, assistance in filling out the project modules, etc).

As a general principle support will be provided in a multi-stage process, in which applicants first contact the ICOS on the level of their institution. Where needed, the ICOS will cluster and forward those questions they cannot answer to VLIR-UOS. Questions related to the VLIR-UOS project tool can be sent or forwarded to data@vliruos.be.

In the case of this call at least 1 general online information session will be organised on December 16 (13:30-15:00) with different parts focussing on the Call info/ formats and technicalities of the online platform. Training session(s) on renewed guidelines and formats can also be organised on request. During the spring of 2022 an platform session will be organized for all ICP programmes to share and exchange experiences so each programme can elaborate on their individual ICP Connect projects.

Organization	Name	Phone	Email
ICOS KU Leuven	Tupac Calfat	+32 16 37 94 40	Tupac.Calfat@kuleuven.be
	Anse Heeren	+32 16 32 43 13	anse.heeren@kuleuven.be
ICOS Universiteit Antwerpen	Jiska Verbouw	+32 3 265 35 07	Jiska.Verbouw@uantwerpen.be
ICOS Ghent University	Nancy Terryn	+32 9 264 98 14	Nancy.Terryn@ugent.be
ICOS VUB	Annabel Van Damme	+32 2 614 80 76	Annabel.Lieselot.Van.Damme@vub.be
ICOS Universiteit Hasselt	Sara Schaeken (on pregnancy leave)	+32 11 26 85 76	sara.schaeken@uhasselt.be
	Eva Rodiers		eva.rodiers@uhasselt.be
Programme Manager VLIR-UOS	Ise De Smet	+ 32 2 550 19 67	ise.desmet@vliruos.be

8 Project formats and background documents

8.1 Project formats

Formats that are enclosed and which have to be submitted:

Format for a project proposal	<i>This format is to be followed when drafting the project proposal and includes the guiding questions for the narrative sections per module.</i>
Annex 1: Format project proposal	<i>This excel format is used for the input of essential project data and certain project modules.</i>
Annex 2 & 3: Budget format and Financial guidelines for the development of a project budget	<i>VLIR-UOS will provide the following documents in the course of December 2022.</i>

8.2 Background documents

Following background documents can be downloaded from the VLIR-UOS website when formulating a project proposal (background doc 1 to 5 generic guidelines for project formulation; background doc 6 – document per country):

<u>Background document 1:</u> 1.1. Introductory powerpoint formats and guidelines for ICP Connect project proposal writing 1.2. Formulation Guidelines for ICP Connect	<i>This document provides you with explanation on the M&E concepts that are to be applied when elaborating a project proposal. More information on the transversal and priority themes can also be found in the document</i>
<u>Background document 2:</u> VLIR-UOS Selection System – Policy and Guidelines and specific aspects for ICP Connect	<i>The selection system document describes the selection modalities for all VLIR-UOS calls for proposals, and relevant here is the chapter on the regional selection commissions and calls for ICP Connect projects.</i>
<u>Background document 3:</u> Generic Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects	<i>This document is the Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects.</i>
<u>Background document 4:</u> Mid-term evaluation of IF	<i>Mid-term evaluation of the Incremental Funding to International Master programmes (ICP)</i>
<u>Background document 5:</u> VLIR-UOS' scholarship strategy	<i>VLIR-UOS' scholarship strategy</i>
<u>Background document 6:</u> Country reference framework documents	<i>Links to country reference framework documents (with information on the country's SDGs, higher education and Belgian ACNGs) for each project partner country.</i>

Benin
Bolivia
Burundi
Cuba
DR Congo
Ecuador
Ethiopia
Indonesia
Kenya
Morocco
Peru
Philippines
Rwanda
South-Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
Vietnam

Abbreviations

ANGC	Belgian Actor of the Non-Governmental Cooperation
DGD	Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid
FYP	Five Year Programme
HEI	Higher Education Institution
GCE	Global citizenship education
HE&SI	Higher Education and Science Institution
HES4SD	Thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development
ICOS	Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation
ICP	International Course Programme
IUC	Institutional University Cooperation
JSF	Joint Strategic Framework
ToC	Theory of Change
tJSF	Thematic Joint Strategic Framework
UOS	Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (University Cooperation for Development)
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (Flemish Interuniversity Council)
VLIR-UOS	VLIR-Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (VLIR-University Cooperation for Development)
ZAP	Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel (Independent Academic Personnel)