



Call for ICP Connect Projects

Phase 1
Stage 1 - Concept note

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Summary

<p>Aim</p>	<p>ICP Connect projects aim to more systematically integrate global perspectives and strengthen partnership and network dimensions into existing educational programmes. This implies a strategy that aims to spur the internationalization and networking of the programme by:</p> <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 de-localization of the programme to (one or more) partner institutions; - staying connected with graduates of the study programme, and by connecting alumni with each other and with students and (network) partners, at providing learning opportunities and support mechanisms to alumni. <p>Through educational networks (ICP Connect), and scholarships HEIs aim to systematically integrate global perspectives. In doing so, they create a supportive, inclusive and networked learning environment in which individual scholars, professionals and academics acquire transversal skills and state-of-the-art knowledge on sustainable development. This enables them to become experts and critical global citizens, motivated to act as change agents in their network.</p>
<p>Key features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium- and long-term results to be achieved within the project duration of a maximum of 10 years, divided by 2 phases of 5 years. • Existing programmes taught in English accredited by the Flemish ministry of Education and organized by and (at least partially) at a Flemish university or a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts resulting in a diploma: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Master or Advanced Master programmes with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 120 ECTS; ○ Professional or Advanced Bachelor programmes with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 ECTS; ○ Bachelor of Arts programmes organised by a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 ECTS. ○ Programmes that are already accredited at the time of submission that will be organised for the first time during academic year 2023-2024 and meet the criteria outlined above. • Other Academic Bachelor's and postgraduate programmes are not eligible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No thematic restriction as to a specific scientific field but on a subject relevant to sustainable development (relevance in relation to Agenda 2030 in a rapidly changing world with emerging challenges and opportunities) • Building and strengthening partnerships that can lead to the establishment and operationalisation of international networks
Who can apply?	<p><u>Affiliation of the promoter</u></p> <p>When submitting a project proposal, a promoter must meet both the internal criteria and regulations as to project promotership of their institution and the minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS.</p> <p>For the Flemish universities (1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one must be able to be an account holder within one's own institution; • one must have a ZAP¹ status (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum appointment level of 10%; • postdocs can also submit, depending on the Flemish institution's internal criteria and on condition that a ZAP member with at least 50% appointment of the institution with whom the contract will be signed is included in the project team as co-promoter; • ATP² members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, depending on the nature of the project and provided they can be account holder within their own institution, without a ZAP member with minimum 50% appointment as co-promoter being part of the project team. <p>For the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts (2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant must be a professor/lecturer. <p><u>Additional criteria:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 1 project proposal per Flemish lead promoter can be submitted. • Promoters of a current ICP (2022-2027) cannot submit an ICP 2025 project. They can, however, be a co-promoter or be part of a project team. • Current ICP Connect projects (2022-2027) cannot submit a new proposal for the educational programme on which the project is based. • ICPs that received funding before 2017 but were not selected for ICP Incremental Funding from FYP1 (2017-2022) onwards may apply.

¹ ZAP: Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel (Independent Academic Personnel)

² ATP: Administratief en technisch personeel (Administrative and Technical Personnel)

Eligible countries	<p>Partnerships with institutions from partner country list:</p> <p>A partner institution should be a higher education or science institution located in one of our 17 project partner countries: Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam</p> <p><i>This list of possible network partners' countries should be considered when creating the ICP Connect project strategy.</i></p> <p>Scholarships for students from scholarship country list:</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>This list of potential scholars' countries should be considered when creating the ICP Connect project strategy.</i></p>
Budgetary Framework	<p>Selection is valid for a five-year period, with conditional renewal for another five-year term.</p> <p>The project budget amounts to a maximum yearly budget of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • € 150,000 (for programmes of 120/180 ECTS); • € 125,000 (for programmes of 90 ECTS); • € 100,000 (for programmes of 60 ECTS), <p>with flexibility in budgeting over the 5 years, starting from the respective maximum of €750,000, € 625,000, € 500,000.</p> <p>One-time bonus for inter-institutional programmes: a complementary budget of 20,000 EUR</p> <p>The scholarship budget amounts to a maximum yearly intake of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual intake of 12 / 10 new 1st year scholarships per study programme per academic year (Phase 1/2) (for programmes of 60-90-120 ECTS); • Annual intake of 8 / 7 new 1st year scholarships per programme per academic year (Phase 1/2) (for programmes of 180 ECTS)
Project duration	<p>2 x 5 years - maximum of 10 years in total.</p> <p>Phase 1 focuses on exploration and the development and implementation of the ICP Connect strategy. Phase 2 focuses on consolidation, valorisation and sustaining the network.</p> <p>Projects can move to Phase 2 on the condition of good performance, as will be assessed during a mid-term evaluation and on the basis of the assessment of a Phase 2 project proposal.</p>

Two-stage procedure	<p>Project submission in two stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1 - Concept note: focus on a narrative description of the sustainable development challenges the project wishes to address, overall strategy for the integration of global perspectives, partnership and network dimensions into the educational programme, project objectives and scientific approach (research and pedagogical methods, type of multidisciplinary and community-based approach,...). No operational and budget details. Max. 10 selected projects go to Stage 2. Stage 2 - Final proposal: fully developed Theory of Change, intermediate changes and activities, risk and stakeholder analysis, roles and responsibilities, and budgeting. Max. 6 selected ICP Connect projects. 																								
Important dates	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Stage 1 – Concept note</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Launch Stage 1 call</td> <td>27 April 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deadline submission of concept notes</td> <td>13 October 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Selection by Selection Commission</td> <td>November 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ratification of Selection by BUOS</td> <td>December 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Stage 2 – Fully Fledged Proposals</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Launch Stage 2 call</td> <td>December 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deadline submission of fully fledged proposals</td> <td>End of April 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Selection by Selection Commission</td> <td>June 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ratification of Selection by BUOS</td> <td>June 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start communication campaign for scholarships</td> <td>1 September 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start ICP Connect Projects 2025</td> <td>1 September 2025</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Stage 1 – Concept note		Launch Stage 1 call	27 April 2023	Deadline submission of concept notes	13 October 2023	Selection by Selection Commission	November 2023	Ratification of Selection by BUOS	December 2023	Stage 2 – Fully Fledged Proposals		Launch Stage 2 call	December 2023	Deadline submission of fully fledged proposals	End of April 2024	Selection by Selection Commission	June 2024	Ratification of Selection by BUOS	June 2024	Start communication campaign for scholarships	1 September 2024	Start ICP Connect Projects 2025	1 September 2025
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How to submit a proposal?	<p>Who? An application involves a Flemish promoter. The Flemish promoter, both from a Flemish university or Flemish university of applied sciences & arts, submits the application to the Institutional Coordinators for Development Cooperation (ICOS) of the Flemish university (association) for quality control. The ICOS will grant access to the submission tool to the promoter, and validate and submit the proposal to VLIR-UOS.</p> <p>How? Project applications are submitted via the VLIR-UOS online submission tool.</p> <p>Deadline for submission 13 October 2023 at 17:00hrs.</p>																								
Assessment procedure	<p>All project proposals will be assessed by the VLIR-UOS Selection Commission for ICP Connect/ITP based on four standard selection criteria: Relevance and coherence of the project; Quality of the project design; Implementation set-up of the project; Potential impact and sustainability.</p> <p>Since ICP Connect projects emerge from accredited study programmes, the emphasis is on the strategy to delocalize study material to local partners and to establish an international network</p>																								
Start of the project	<p>Selected projects will be able to start as of 1 September 2025. The communication campaign for scholarships for the academic year 2024-2025 can be launched from June 2024 onwards.</p>																								

1. Introduction

1.1. Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (HES4SD)

There is an increasing consensus on the role of strong higher education and science institutions (HE&SIs) and systems in addressing sustainable development challenges. Higher education and science institutions play a key role in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim 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 Report calls upon all stakeholders to facilitate multidirectional collaboration in science and (transfer of) technology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It considers academic and scientific capacity strengthening and partnerships as one of the four main levers to achieve the 2030 Agenda and implies a strengthened link between higher education institutions, governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Higher education institutions offer disciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching and research as they 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 mobilisation. Through their teaching, universities and universities of applied sciences and arts empower generations of new leaders and skilled professionals to drive sustainable development. Today's students are the decision-makers and professionals of tomorrow, who think both critically and ethically, who have learnt to cope with ethical dilemmas, and who can apply systems thinking to serious and complex societal problems.

HE&SIs have also taken up a central role in providing global citizenship education to nurture a global understanding and a more profound intercultural awareness. 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.

1.2. FYP2 ambitions

VLIR-UOS outlined new ambitions for its Five-Year Programme 2022-2027 (FYP2) where the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development serves as the main reference point. VLIR-UOS is committed to purposefully mainstream the 3 SDG principles of 'Leave No One Behind (LNOB)', 'Interconnectedness' and 'Multi-stakeholder partnerships', throughout its ambitions, policies, programmes, portfolio, partnerships, and scholarships. The focus of Agenda 2030 on meaningful impact through multi-stakeholder partnerships resonates with the ambition of our FYP2, "Connect4Change". It is our goal to focus on cooperation among and beyond academic actors, on collective learning and mutual inspiration (Connect, Learn, Inspire) and on societal impact (valorisation).

These policy ambitions have been translated into the project selection criteria and descriptors for all our programmes. VLIR-UOS wants new projects to **capitalise** on former and/or other relevant projects as a stepping stone, and to stimulate **interinstitutional cooperation** among and beyond academic actors. It is an added value in the competitive selection of projects when collaborations are sought beyond the academic sector or when different Flemish or partner HE&SIs are involved in a project proposal, be it universities, universities of applied sciences and arts, or both.

A specific objective of VLIR-UOS is to mobilise academics who have no prior experience with VLIR-UOS to engage in “sharing minds, changing lives”, with a specific focus on young academics, female academics, academics with expertise in disciplines that are underrepresented in VLIR-UOS, etc. This is why the number of projects (proposals) per promoter has been limited for ICP Connect. In case of an ex aequo ranking in the selection of projects, preference will be given to academics without prior experience with VLIR-UOS, to projects coordinated by academics from the underrepresented gender in their sector, and/or to gender-specific projects.

Second objective is to intensify interinstitutional cooperation among Flemish HEIs, especially between universities and universities of applied sciences and arts. The Flemish universities will support the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts and their lecturers through “*associatieve projecten*” when submitting and/or implementing VLIR-UOS projects. The universities and universities of applied sciences and arts will also jointly actively promote, facilitate, and activate mutual cooperation through specific initiatives.

1.3 SDG principles as a compass for VLIR-UOS projects

The SDG principles serve as a compass for the VLIR-UOS endeavour of sharing minds, changing lives. As visualised in the Theory of Change, they are transversally integrated, using a broad interpretation of the principles, to make the activities and change processes SDG-proof. Additionally, VLIR-UOS uses the SDG principles as a compass to integrate the principles of “synergy and complementarity” and the integration of transversal and priority themes of the Belgian Development Cooperation into its operations. Integration of these principles is an important element in the selection of projects.



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 approaching the SDGs from a holistic and integrated viewpoint. 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 that are necessary 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 that moves beyond sectoral and disciplinary borders and should analyse the positive as well as negative interlinkages between the SDG goals. This also includes attention for the transversal themes gender equality and environment sustainability. Regarding **gender**, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in *fixing the numbers*, *fixing the knowledge*, and *fixing the organisation*, in line with the theoretical three-fixes model of Londa Schiebinger (See [VLIR-UOS gender policy document](#)). Projects are expected to align with this threefold gender strategy in their proposal. Regarding **environment**, project applicants are invited to consider the environment and environmental sustainability during the project identification & formulation phase, 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, projects should be guided by the ‘do no harm’ principle to prevent, reduce, and control the risk of environmental harm. Besides integration of gender equality and environmental sustainability concerns within project management, the transversal themes can also feature in the projects’ content.



Coherence, interinstitutional collaboration, and 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 or collaboration by a wide variety of actors. This need for concertation/collaboration is translated to 3 potential approaches. Proposals are invited to explore them.

- **Coherence:** The Agenda 2030 urges actions to be **coherent** with the actions and networks of other actors and/or other HES4SD initiatives. An analysis of complementary actions by academic and non-academic actors is essential for each partnership (to ensure coherence). By mobilising and staging the available expertise in our broad community, we enable and motivate our partners to tap into each other's knowledge and create new insights, tools, and knowledge. By pooling that expertise on topics related to the impact of higher education on global development, we claim thought leadership in research areas that we care deeply about. By monitoring and supporting them throughout the grant management process, we help to make our partners' projects and partnerships more coherent, inter-institutional, and interconnected. Putting international cooperation, mutual capacity development, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and collective learning high on our agenda, we endeavour to bring together driven and committed changemakers to find solutions to global, regional, and local challenges from different perspectives.
- **Interinstitutional collaboration:** This concerns a structural collaboration between several higher education institutions at Flemish and/or partner level within the framework of a project, pooling available expertise, with the aim of obtaining better results by combining scientific and practice-oriented approaches.
- **Multistakeholder partnership (MSP):** this concerns a structural collaboration with at least 1 non-academic actor (= multi-stakeholder; civil society, private sector, governmental actors, etc.) in which this actor plays an active role in the project implementation. VLIR-UOS takes into account the MSP principle by promoting collaboration between different actors (beyond HE&Sis) to co-create, share, and mobilise knowledge and expertise across disciplines, sectors, interest groups, and borders. More precisely, VLIR-UOS explicitly puts forward the science-society interface and knowledge uptake, and the importance of strengthening it.



Leave no one behind: VLIR-UOS recognises the need for proactive strategies to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised populations are included 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 on what we focus in projects. VLIR-UOS encourages projects to take gender and vulnerable groups into account, by putting forward partnerships with mid-range or small-scale institutions, by awarding scholarships to a diversified group of beneficiaries, and by promoting transformative or community-based types of research. More precisely, international top higher education institutions are only considered when they participate 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. As mentioned earlier, regarding **gender**, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in *fixing the numbers*, *fixing the knowledge*, and *fixing the organisation* for gender equality. This is also an important dimension of the Leave No One Behind principle.

2. Different stages and phases

2.1 Two-stage procedure

The ICP Connect 2025 call consists of 2 phases throughout the 10-year duration of the ICP Connect project. The current **call for concept notes** is the first stage in the ICP Connect intake process of Phase 1, leading to the start of ICP Connect projects on 01/09/2025.

The ICP Connect projects will be selected through 2 selection stages:

Stage 1 call and Selection of Concept notes.

This stage 1 call focuses on a narrative description of the sustainable development challenges the projects wish to address, the project objectives and their scientific approach (e.g. research and pedagogical methods, type of multidisciplinary and community-based approach). Neither operational nor budget details will be required during this first submission. A maximum of 10 projects will be selected to advance to Stage 2.

In this call document, further explanation will be given about the Stage 1 requirements, such as formats and the selection commission (see [7. Selection](#)).

Stage 2 call and Selection of Fully fledged proposals.

The selected Stage 1 concept notes will advance to the 2nd stage of the selection procedure, which starts with a call for Fully Fledged ICP Connect proposals. This final project proposal requires a fully developed Theory of Change. A fully fledged proposal builds upon the concept note submitted in Stage 1 and goes much deeper into the Theory of Change concept and the related project logic (outcome statement, intermediate changes and activities), risks, stakeholder analysis, and budgeting.

Maximum of 6 selected ICP Connect projects.

2.2 Phase 1 versus Phase 2

The partnerships and networks that were initiated/developed within the framework of a Flemish study programme require a solid basis and consolidation, necessitating long-term support. Therefore, a project cycle is envisioned in different phases, lasting a maximum of 10 years, in order to ensure that partnerships can develop and consolidate into strong educational networks. A programme can receive funding for a maximum of 2 project phases (2 x 5 years), depending on a positive evaluation by a VLIR-UOS selection commission.

Phase 1 focuses on exploration, and the development and implementation of the ICP Connect strategy. Phase 2 focuses on consolidating, valorising, and sustaining the network. Phase 1 and phase 2 of ICP connect projects have their own distinct results and activities, especially regarding partnerships and alumni. Projects can move to Phase 2 on the condition of good performance, as will be assessed during a mid-term evaluation and on the basis of the assessment of a Phase 2 project proposal.

- **Phase 1 (current call):** Selected programmes are expected to **develop a solid strategy** to gradually strengthen/build the partnership dimension of their ICP Connect project, through cooperation with HEI partners. This first phase also includes a strategy implementation, e.g. detecting potential partners, realising concrete agreements or a Memorandum of Understanding, or realising the involvement of partners in different aspects of the educational programmes. In this strategy implementation, the projects can prepare a delocalisation of curriculum components, develop an alumni strategy and policy with the initiative to stay connected with alumni and/or develop an alumni network. How extensive this first strategy imple-

mentation can be, evidently depends on whether the ICP Connect projects can build upon existing partnerships/networks. Programmes are, however, expected to keep the longer-term objectives in mind and anticipate on network- and capacity building of or with partner institutions, and create a true partnership context from the very beginning.

- **Phase 2:** 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 now implement, consolidate, and **further strengthen** the procedures laid down in phase 1, and connect partners with each other in a broad educational network. In doing so, the project builds upon innovations, learning opportunities, and alumni initiatives and networks that were developed during the first phase of the project. Programmes also aim at making different aspects of the ICP Connect project more sustainable (e.g. delocalised curriculum components, fieldwork for students). This does not necessarily mean that the network must be financially self-sufficient. It can generate revenue by, for example, commercialising products and services, introducing membership fees, and encouraging in-kind contributions. The network can also rely on (non-VLIR-UOS) donor support for some of the financial resources.

2.3 Scholarship framework

Thus, part of the ICP Connect projects focus on supporting scholarship candidates (as well as other international students) in terms of providing a learning environment, stimulating exchange and collaboration, creating network opportunities, and conceive strategies and initiatives to support them in taking an active role as change agent during and after the study. The ICP Connect scholarships also fit into the general VLIR-UOS scholarship framework, in which scholars are seen as potential agents of change who can contribute to societal change in their respective home country (or region) after finishing their studies.

Scholars are embedded into 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/networks and contribute to positive change. On the other hand, scholarships are also supportive to realise (parts of) the project strategy. Scholarship beneficiaries often have a broad experience, since many have relevant prior work experiences, often also outside of academia. This positively affects the learning processes and potential learning outcomes of all students, as well as the quality of collaborative (research) projects with a societal impact. It also leads to teaching methods where other didactic styles and methodologies are being experimented with, allowing for more participative class interaction and the ability to more adequately valorise the “wisdom of the class”. Scholarship beneficiaries are also often networked in their respective country/region, which can lead to collaborative projects with alumni and people from their network.

2.4 Partnerships

An important aspect of ICP Connect projects is building and strengthening partnerships that can lead to the establishment and operationalisation of international networks. Partners involved in the ICP Connect projects contribute to the strengthening of the educational programme and are active partners that co-create, co-design, and co-host. Partners themselves can, for example, organise curriculum components, courses, or even study programmes for national and international students at their institution who work together with the Flemish programme and their network.

Partnerships for an ICP Connect project are partnerships with partners, institutions, or programmes in a VLIR-UOS partner country that have an explicit role in the execution of the project and with whom there is a strong interaction and collaboration with focus on capacity development. Their role goes beyond ad-hoc interventions or the support of individual academic colleagues (for example thesis supervision). The first phase of ICP Con-

nect projects allows for, e.g. developing such a vision, exploring partners, developing a shared strategy, setting-up small-scale mutual collaborative projects, agreements and management structures. During the second phase, the partnerships can be consolidated and strengthened further, while the topics and involvement of different partner institutions are expanded. 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 build upon existing or former links between institutions in one of the partner countries and one or more Flemish HEIs (e.g. former IUC partners, former NETWORK partners, alumni, former PhD students, Erasmus Mundus partners, a link with a previous VLIR-UOS project)³. Building on (already) existing long-term relations that have created trust, is an important factor that contributes to the elaboration of the project and that supports 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 clarify 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 delocalisation of curriculum components is to be envisaged.

It is up to the applicants – in light of each ICP Connect project's distinct nature – to select the elements they feel are most appropriate for their specific programme, with the aim to strengthen their partnerships and to clarify the choices made in their application.

³ Ace Europe (2020). Mid-term evaluation Incremental Funding.

3. Eligibility

Eligibility criteria define whether a proposal meets the minimum criteria to enter the selection process. Each call for proposals defines its clear eligibility criteria, using the following sections where applicable. This practice is common within the academic community.

In case of VLIR-UOS calls for proposals, the following eligibility criteria apply:

3.1. Eligibility of applicants: who can apply?

Affiliation and statute of the promoters:

When submitting a project proposal, a promoter must meet both the internal criteria and regulations as to project promotership of their institution and the minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS.

The minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS for a lead promoter **from a Flemish university** to submit a proposal are the following:

- one must be able to be an account holder within one's own institution;
- one must have a ZAP status (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum appointment level of 10%;
- postdocs can also submit, depending on the Flemish institution's internal criteria and on condition that a ZAP member with at least 50% appointment of the institution with whom the contract will be signed is included in the project team as co-promoter;
- ATP members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, depending on the nature of the project and provided they can be account holder within their own institution, without a ZAP member with minimum 50% appointment as co-promoter being part of the project team.

The minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS for a lead promoter **from a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts** to submit a proposal are the following: one must be a professor/lecturer.

The lead promoter will be invited to confirm, when submitting the proposal in the VLIR-UOS tool, to meet both the internal and VLIR-UOS eligibility criteria and regulations.

Additional criteria:

- Only 1 project proposal per Flemish lead promoter can be submitted.
- Promoters of a current ICP project (2022-2027) cannot submit an ICP 2025 project. They can, however, be a co-promoter or be part of a project team.
- Current ICP Connect projects (2022-2027) cannot submit a new proposal for the educational programme on which the project is based.
- ICP projects that received funding before 2017 but were not selected for ICP Incremental Funding from FYP1 (2017-2022) onwards can apply.

Related to the eligibility check, it is in principle the responsibility of the Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation (ICOS) or GEO of the association (see [6 contact addresses](#)) to check whether the Flemish promoter is allowed to act as a project promoter and as budget holder within their own institution. They do so by performing a check of the respective relevant internal regulations. However, given the diversity in staff statutes at the different Flemish HEIs and given the time constraints to perform checks, it was decided that the lead promoter will be invited to confirm to meet both the internal and VLIR-UOS eligibility criteria and regulations

when submitting the proposal in the VLIR-UOS tool. In case of a postdoc submitting, they also have to confirm that the ZAP member taking up the role of co-promoter also meets the criteria.

The importance of transparency of the respective roles and responsibilities of the main actors in the project is key. At the level of the Flemish institutions, the distinction is always made between a promoter (and 'main' Flemish institution via which a proposal is submitted) and co-promoters (linked to the same or multiple Flemish HEIs), whereas at the level of the partner institutions (if any) in the partner countries, the promoter role can be taken up by multiple people and institutions. Next to the role of promoters and co-promoters, a variety of experts can be part of a project team (with team members).

It is the responsibility of promoters or co-promoters who are not only affiliated to a Flemish university or university of applied sciences and arts, but also to an institution that is eligible for DGD funding (e.g. the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp) on a project or structural basis, to assess and confirm that the selection of the proposal by VLIR-UOS would not contain a conflict of interest or overlap with DGD funded projects and hence imply double funding by DGD.

It is up to the Flemish associations to decide whether only the ICOS or both the ICOS and GEO will be mandated to check and submit project proposals to VLIR-UOS. Please contact [your ICOS for more information](#).

3.2. Eligibility of educational programmes

Programmes that are eligible for the ICP Connect 2025 call are existing programmes taught in English that are accredited by the Flemish ministry of Education and organised by and (at least partially) at a Flemish university or a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts. These programmes have to result in a diploma. These are thus:

- Master or Advanced Master programmes with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 120 ECTS;
- Professional or Advanced Bachelor programmes with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 ECTS;
- Bachelor of Arts programmes organised by a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 ECTS.
- Programmes that are already accredited at the time of submission that will be organised for the first time during academic year 2023-2024 and meet the criteria outlined above.

Other Academic Bachelor programmes and postgraduate programmes are not eligible.

3.3. Eligibility of budget and implementation period

The budget for this call allows for a maximum of 6 projects. This is the only ICP Connect call within FYP2. The selection is valid for a five-year period, with a conditional renewal for another five-year term.

The funding guarantee means the project and associated scholars will be funded for a guaranteed period of maximum 5 years, provided that the recommendations of the commission are effectively taken to heart when elaborating the fully fledged proposal. This is also subject to the approval by DGD of the next five year plan (FYP3 2027-2032).

More details concerning the budget can be found [here](#).

3.4. Eligibility of countries and participants

2.3.1 Partner Countries

The educational programme that receives the ICP Connect funding has to be (at least partly) organised in Belgium at one or more Flemish HEI (Flemish universities and Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts).

A partner institution should be a higher education or science institution located in one of our 17 project partner countries: Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, Rwanda, South-Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam.

2.3.2 Participants

Scholarship candidates have to be a national and resident of one of the 29 VLIR-UOS scholarship countries.

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

3.5. Eligibility of submission

The proposal must meet the submission requirements as described below:

- **What?** The proposal needs to use and contain all information, including annexes as requested in the call document (see [format section 9](#)). Without the requested information (formats), we cannot accept the proposal.
- **Who?** An application involves a Flemish promoter who submits to the ICOS of the Flemish university (association) for quality control. The ICOS will validate the proposal and submit it to VLIR-UOS.
How? Project applications must be submitted to the ICOS of the Flemish university association via the [tool for the submission of project proposals](#).
- **Deadline?**
 - Proposals must be submitted to the ICOS of the Flemish university association. For specific internal deadlines at the level of the association, check with your ICOS. Whether proposals must be submitted to an institution's own body before they can be submitted to VLIR-UOS, is mapped out with the help of ICOS and GEO. This transparency is important from the point of view of potential promoters and also in function of interinstitutional proposals.
 - The final deadline for submission to VLIR-UOS by the ICOS is **13 October 2023 at 17h00 CET (Central European Time)**.

Note: the **call for final proposals** will only be directed to selected concept notes and will be launched in December 2023.

4. Budget

4.1. Available budget

In this call, no budget needs to be provided, this is purely informational.

The project budget amounts to a maximum yearly budget of:

- € 150,000 (for programmes of 120/180 ECTS);
- € 125,000 (for programmes of 90 ECTS);
- € 100,000 (for programmes of 60 ECTS),

With a flexibility in budgeting over the 5 years, starting from the respective maximum of €750,000, € 625,000 or € 500,000.

There is a one-time bonus for inter-institutional programmes: a complementary budget of 20,000 EUR

The scholarship budget amounts to a maximum yearly intake of:

- Annual intake of 12 / 10 new 1st year scholarships per study programme per academic year (Phase 1/2) (for programmes of 60-90-120 ECTS);
- Annual intake of 8 / 7 new 1st year scholarships per programme per academic year (Phase 1/2) (for programmes of 180 ECTS).

Both previously mentioned amounts can alter during FYP2 as a result of implementation decisions made by either DGD or VLIR-UOS, taking into account the indexation.

It is possible to make use of matching funds such as Erasmus Mundus, European university networks, etcetera. Our financing is also a matching fund: The actual education cost is assumed to be covered by funding from the Flemish government and/or tuition fees. We finance the project associated with the educational programme.

4.2. Implementation

After the selection of projects in Stage 2, VLIR-UOS will inform the project promoters on the selection decision and perform a check of essential data (personal data, budget, etc.) in light of the contracting procedure. During the contracting procedure, VLIR-UOS will draft an agreement between VLIR-UOS, the partner institution (if this applies), and the Flemish institution with which the promoters of the selected project are affiliated, to establish rules governing the management, responsibility, and use of the allocated resources.

Selected projects will be able to start as of 1 September 2025 and run for 5 activity years (1 September 2025 until 31 August 2030). Projects can move to Phase 2 (5 activity years) on the condition of good performance, as will be assessed during a midterm evaluation.

4.3. Scholarships

Each educational programme that is selected within the framework of ICP Connect is awarded **scholarships** for an annual intake of 1st year students from one of the VLIR-UOS scholarship countries. This selection also implies an entitlement to an annual intake of scholarships per programme per academic year during a five-year period (2022-2027). These are full scholarships that cover the whole educational programme and, depending on the type of educational programme, last for 1/2/3 academic years (with a max. of 36 months).

The scholarships aim to facilitate the participation of attendants from the VLIR-UOS scholarship country list. The target is to have a reasonable cross-section of scholars from different countries and regions, provided there is a sufficient amount of qualified candidates. In case of equally qualified candidates, preference need to be given to candidates from vulnerable groups (Leave No One Behind). A targeted gender balance applies of 40% male to 60% female as an overall guideline for candidates that have been awarded ICP Connect scholarships. VLIR-UOS strongly encourages female candidates to apply. Read more about our gender policy [here](#). ICP Connect projects are required to develop a policy concerning the communication, promotion, and recruitment for scholars. To develop this policy, it is good practice to work together with (future) partners.

The corresponding scholarship amounts are transferred by VLIR-UOS to the coordinating Flemish HEI. The Flemish HEI is responsible for the payments to the scholarship holders, for their reception, housing, organising of insurance, and their general guidance, as described in the [‘Framework for scholarships in Belgium’](#) and contract. Therefore, the management of these scholarships generate coordination costs (10% of the total scholarships expenses). This necessitates a collaboration between the ICP Connect project and the Institution to which it belongs.

The scholarship framework is formulated in agreement with DGD and has a mandatory nature. It aims at harmonising the different types of grants supported by DGD, in function of the duration and finality of the scholar’s stay, irrespective of the educational programme they conduct and of the body governing the DGD funds. Scholarship costs may change in line with government funding decisions.

After positive evaluation, ICP Connect funding will be provided for the period 1/09/2025 – 31/08/2029. Both the project funding and the scholarships are linked to the academic years with a first intake of 10 scholars in September 2025 (AY 2025-2026), a second intake in September 2026 (AY 2026-2027), etcetera up until the last intake in September 2029 (AY 2029-2030).

5. Timeline

STEP IN PROCESS	RESPONSIBLE	DATE
Stage 1- Concept Note		
Launch Stage 1 call	VLIR-UOS Team	27 April 2023
Information session (online) – register here	VLIR-UOS Team	4 May 2023, from 13:00 until 15:00 CET
Training sessions (on campus): VLIR-UOS will offer a number of hands-on training sessions	VLIR-UOS Team	To be determined in consultation with the ICOS/GEO, period: June 2023
Deadline for submission to ICOS	Flemish promoters	Most likely around 2 weeks before the VLIR-UOS deadline, but please contact the ICOS or GEO of the Flemish institution (university association level, see contact details)
Deadline for submission by the ICOS to VLIR-UOS	ICOS	13 October 2023 (17h00 CET)
Eligibility check and decision, and notification in case of non-eligibility	VLIR-UOS Team and Bureau UOS	20 October 2023
Selection Commission meeting	VLIR-UOS Team	November 2023
Ratification of selection	Bureau UOS	December 2023
Notification of selection	VLIR-UOS Team	December 2023
Stage 2 – Fully Fledged proposals		
Launch Stage 2 call	VLIR-UOS Team	December 2023
Deadline for submission by the ICOS to VLIR-UOS	ICOS	End of April 2024
Selection Commission meeting	VLIR-UOS Team	June 2024
Ratification of selection	Bureau UOS	June 2024
Start of revision process	VLIR-UOS Team and promoters/ICOS	June-September 2024
Start Scholarship Communication Campaign	Project team	1 September 2024
Start of projects	Project team	1 September 2025

6. Application and submission modalities

A project formulation presentation ([call annex 1](#)) specifically for ICP Connect projects provides practical and operational support and information on how the proposal needs to be developed in order to write a qualitative project proposal.

The ICOS function as a liaison between the VLIR-UOS team and the individual Flemish institutions and academics/lecturers. The ICOS are the first line of contact to assist the promoters with the elaboration of their project proposal (e.g. eligibility check, explanation of the framework, assistance in filling out the project proposal).

As a general principle, support is provided in a multi-stage process, in which applicants first contact the ICOS at the level of their institution. Where needed, the ICOS will cluster and forward the questions they cannot answer to VLIR-UOS. VLIR-UOS will provide a “Questions and Answers” section relating to the ICP Connect call on their website.

Questions related to the VLIR-UOS project tool can be sent or forwarded to info@vliruos.be.

In the case of this call, one general online ICP Connect information session will be organised on **4 May 2023, from 13:00 to 15:00 CET** focusing on the call info, formats, and guidelines. All relevant information is included in this call document but will also be provided on [the call page on the VLIR-UOS website](#).

VLIR-UOS also offers specific hands-on training session(s), at the level of the Flemish associations in June (timing to be determined in consultation with ICOS). Please check our [website](#) or consult the ICOS for updates.

6.1. Contact at VLIR-UOS

Topic	Name and function	Phone	Email
ICP & Scholarship policy	Ise De Smet <i>Mobility and Scholarships Coordinator</i>	+32 2 550 19 67	ise.desmet@vliruos.be

6.2. Contact addresses of the ICOS

University Association	Name	Address	Phone	Email
KU Leuven Association	Piet Wostyn (KU Leuven)	International Office, VLIR-UOS projects, Naamsestraat 63 - bus 5001, 3000 Leuven	+32 16 32 43 21	piet.wostyn@kuleuven.be
	Caroline Deneweth (Associatie Hogescholen)		+32 16 32 77 45	caroline.deneweth@kuleuven.be
Associatie Universiteit & Hogescholen Antwerpen	Yana Shokh Truyken Ossenblok	International Relations Office Gratiekapelstraat 10, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium	+32 3 265 44 07	yana.shokh@uantwerpen.be truyken.ossenblok@uantwerpen.be icos@uantwerpen.be
Ghent University Association	Tom Broeks Nancy Terryn	Dienst Onderzoeksangelegenheden – Afdeling Onderzoekscöördinatie Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25, 9000 Gent	+32 (0) 9 264 79 68	tom.broeks@ugent.be nancy.terrbyn@ugent.be
Associatie Universiteit-Hogescholen Limburg	Sara Schaecken	Dienst Internationalisering en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (DIOS), Campus Hasselt, Martelarenlaan 42, 3500 Hasselt'	+32 (0)11 26 85 76 +32 (0)484 61 70 28	sara.schaecken@uhasselt.be icos@uhasselt.be
Universitaire Associatie Brussel	Annabel Van Damme	Vrije Universiteit Brussel International Relations and Mobility Office Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussel	+32 (0)2 614 80 66	Annabel.Lieselot.van.Damme@vub.be icos@vub.be

6.3. Contact addresses of the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts - GEO (Global Engagement Officer)

Email	Function
international@hzs.be	<i>GEO Antwerp Maritime Academy</i>
international@ap.be	<i>GEO Artesis Plantijn University College Antwerp</i>
axelle.marrannes@arteveldehs.be	<i>GEO Artevelde University College Ghent</i>
hilde.van.lindt@ehb.be	<i>GEO Erasmus University College Brussels</i>
goforimpact@howest.be	<i>GEO Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen</i>
maayke.nabuurs@kdg.be	<i>GEO Karel de Grote University College</i>
veerle.vandersluys@luca-arts.be	<i>GEO LUCA School of Arts</i>
nele.vermeulen@odisee.be	<i>GEO Odisee University College</i>
international@pxl.be	<i>GEO PXL University College</i>
inge.vervoort@thomasmore.be	<i>GEO Thomas More University of Applied Sciences</i>
international@ucll.be ezra.charlier@ucll.be	<i>GEO UC Leuven-Limburg</i>
kathleen.vanheule@hogent.be	<i>GEO HOGENT University of Applied Sciences and Arts</i>
elke.denys@vives.be	<i>GEO VIVES University of Applied Sciences</i>
charlotte.christiaens@vlhora.be	<i>Charlotte Christiaens (VLHORA)</i>

7. Selection

7.1. Selection criteria

Each call for proposals will apply the same set of four selection criteria. These four criteria are further defined and translated into a non-exhaustive list of descriptors that are illustrative but provide an objective interpretation of the criteria, both for the applicant as well as for the selection commissions.⁴

Next to the criteria mentioned in the table below, their underlying values are also important in the VLIR-UOS selection system: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, expected impact, sustainability, partnership strategy, synergies and learning.

Criteria	Generic 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.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal aligns with the VLIR-UOS strategy (Theory of Change) for ICP Connect.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal is based on a genuine and evidence-based context, needs analysis and stakeholder analysis with attention to gender, vulnerable people (LNOB), and the environment. This analysis takes into account the already existing educational offer in Flanders / Belgium, the VLIR-UOS partner countries, and VLIR-UOS community, having its own unique added value.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal is compatible/links up with or capitalises on other relevant initiatives.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal contributes to improving the relevance of an accredited educational 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 convincingly demonstrates a potential 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 is original, creative, innovative (scientific, academic or pedagogical excellence) in:</i></p> <p><i>(i) developing the introduced global focus and networking component in an existing educational programme, both in terms of content and didactics.</i></p> <p><i>(ii) facilitating the employability and (re)insertion of graduates and their effective acting as agents of change and developing an alumni policy and network.</i></p> <p><i>A number of potential partners are identified. The proposal presents a clear approach for network development, exploration & expansion and the gradual involvement of potential</i></p>

⁴ Based on the ERC (European Research Council) and OECD-DAC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee) definitions.

		<p>partners in line with their priorities and local ownership, e.g. delocalisation of specific courses.</p> <p>The proposal elaborates an appropriate and feasible (scientific, academic or pedagogical) approach which recognizes/addresses the interconnectedness of the sustainable development challenges (e.g. multidisciplinary or systems approaches).</p>
Implementation set-up of the project	<p>The extent to which the proposal presents a strong operational plan to implement the project strategy.</p>	<p>The proposal involves an appropriate mix of potential partners (persons and their organisations) and clarifies an adequate and equitable distribution of roles.</p> <p>The proposal has a clear approach for adjusting the educational programme to the modified international student group, to receive this type of students and to create a supportive environment.</p> <p>It is an added value if in the proposal different (Flemish or partner) HE&SIs are involved, especially if this cooperation enables pooling of expertise and/or cost-effectiveness (interinstitutional cooperation).</p>
Potential impact and sustainability	<p>The extent to which the project is likely to positive long-term effects (impact) and benefits which will be continued after the project duration (sustainability)</p>	<p>The proposed project, with its change agents, the programme and network, 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.</p> <p>The proposal has the potential to enable the educational programme to be firmly embedded in the HE&SIs involved, with meaningful ownership of and commitment by all participating institutions in the long run. It has potential to create the necessary enabling environment for the project partners to engage and evolve into a real network.</p>

7.2. Scoring of the criteria

All proposals are assessed by the commission members, 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 concept note cannot be selected. Proposal can be remediated towards a next submission)
- D: Very weak

During the selection commission meetings, the experts will – on the basis of individual scoring – formulate an agreed-upon score for each criterion. The scoring of each of the criteria is done using a qualitative interval scale:

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

More details about the VLIR-UOS selection system can be found on the [VLIR-UOS website](#).

7.3. Selection commission

7.3.1. Composition

The Educational (ITP & ICP Connect) Selection Commission consists of 4 independent international experts. All VLIR-UOS Selection Commissions have been recomposed beginning of 2022. The president of the commission is a member of the Bureau UOS who, together with the VLIR-UOS secretariat, monitors the correct application of rules and procedures. The Commission decides in principle by consensus.

7.3.2. Follow-up of selection commission meeting

The selection meeting for the first ICP Connect concept notes stage will take place in November 2023. During this meeting, the promoters are not expected to orally defend their proposal. The Bureau UOS will ratify this selection.

Once the Bureau UOS has made the final decision about the project proposal selection, all promoters will be informed of the outcome of the selection process and the reasons for approval or rejection of their proposal(s). Transparency and justification will be given regarding the reasons for selection or non-selection.

Considering the expected high numbers of proposals, more time is envisaged for the elaboration of the concept note. A maximum of 10 selected projects will go to Stage 2 which starts with a call for Fully Fledged ICP Connect proposals in December 2023.

8. Theory of change and objectives

8.1 Aim and key features of ICP Connect projects

Aim:

ICP Connect projects aim to more systematically integrate global perspectives and strengthen partnership and network dimensions into existing educational 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 study programme, and by connecting alumni with each other and with students and (network) partners, at providing learning opportunities and support mechanisms to alumni.

Through educational networks (ICP Connect), and scholarships HEIs aim to systematically integrate global perspectives. In doing so, they create a supportive, inclusive and networked learning environment in which individual scholars, professionals and academics acquire transversal skills and state-of-the-art knowledge on sustainable development. This enables them to become experts and critical global citizens, motivated to act as change agents in their network.

There is no a priori thematic restriction concerning the scientific fields in which ICP Connect projects should be situated but on a subject relevant to sustainable development (relevance in relation to Agenda 2030 in a rapidly changing world with emerging challenges and opportunities). Which developmental challenges the proposed project claims to address and how it intends to do this for the targeted group of VLIR-UOS scholarship candidates, should be clearly motivated in the application. Whether the arguments provided are sound and sufficient, however, is to be assessed by the selection commission.

Key Features:

- Medium- and long-term results to be achieved within the project duration of a maximum of 10 years, divided by 2 phases of 5 years.
- Building and strengthening partnerships that can lead to the establishment and operationalisation of international networks
- Existing programmes taught in English that are accredited by the Flemish ministry of Education and organised by and (at least partially) at a Flemish university or a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts. These programmes have to result in a diploma. These are thus:
 - Master or Advanced Master programmes with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 120 ECTS;
 - Professional or Advanced Bachelor programmes with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 ECTS;
 - Bachelor of Arts programmes organised by a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts with a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 180 ECTS.
 - Programmes that are already accredited at the time of submission that will be organised for the first time during academic year 2023-2024 and meet the criteria outlined above.
 - Other Academic Bachelor programmes and postgraduate programmes are not eligible.

- ICP Connect projects integrate Global Citizenship in raising awareness for the link between the specific content of the educational programme and the global challenges of the SDGs; with those acquired transversal skills, scholarship candidates will be equipped to become agents of change, stimulating their professional organisations to become drivers of change.
- Well-defined strategies towards selection of scholarship candidates, including multi-stakeholder partnerships and the ‘Leave no one behind’ (LNOB) principle.
- ICP Connect projects seek interinstitutional cooperation (between HEIs in Flanders) or synergy and complementarity with other (Belgian) development actors whenever possible to increase the impact potential.

8.2 Target groups, recruitment strategy, and selection procedure

Scholarship candidates must be: a national and resident of one of the **29 [VLIR-UOS scholarship countries](#)**. More information on the current eligibility and selection criteria for ICP Connect scholars can be found [here](#).

The ‘selection procedure for ICP Connect scholars’ details the process from selection to start of the programme. The organizing HE&SI(s) is (are) responsible for the academic selection of the scholarship participants. The ICP Connect project defines the **required academic criteria**. Only candidates who are academically admitted, can receive a scholarship. The selection is thus organised decentralised. VLIR-UOS monitors the intake at distance, and provides links to the ICP Connect project website or the website of its organising university on its own website. The ICP Connect project’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 project to develop their own communication strategy for the recruitment of participants. The scholarship selection made by the ICP Connect project organisers will be validated by VLIR-UOS and informed to DGD. In order to monitor the application and selection of scholars, the ICP Connect projects have to provide VLIR-UOS with relevant data in this regard.

The precise target group(s) (and criteria) aimed at by the applying programme needs to be specified in the application, together with preliminary information on the possible participants and a description of the recruitment strategies that will be used (incl. the partners/stakeholders that could be involved in this strategy). The selection criteria must match with the content of the educational programme and must consider the country context of the potential scholarship candidates (with a specific attention for the extent to which the newly acquired knowledge can be applied).

8.3 Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects

The ICP Connect projects’ Theory of Change below reflects the general Theory of Change for the VLIR-UOS portfolio and how the objectives of ICP Connect fit in the theory. The VLIR-UOS Theory of Change explains how a given project, or set of projects, is expected to lead to a long-term development change. The ToC draws on a causal analysis based on available evidence, clarifying the anticipated pathways to impact. It clarifies how VLIR-UOS wants to contribute to Agenda 2030, which changes ICP Connect projects can make, and how they can do so. We provide this ICP Connect ToC as a conceptual framework, it is only expected in Stage 1 to explain your proposal and justify your fit with the ICP Connect ToC.

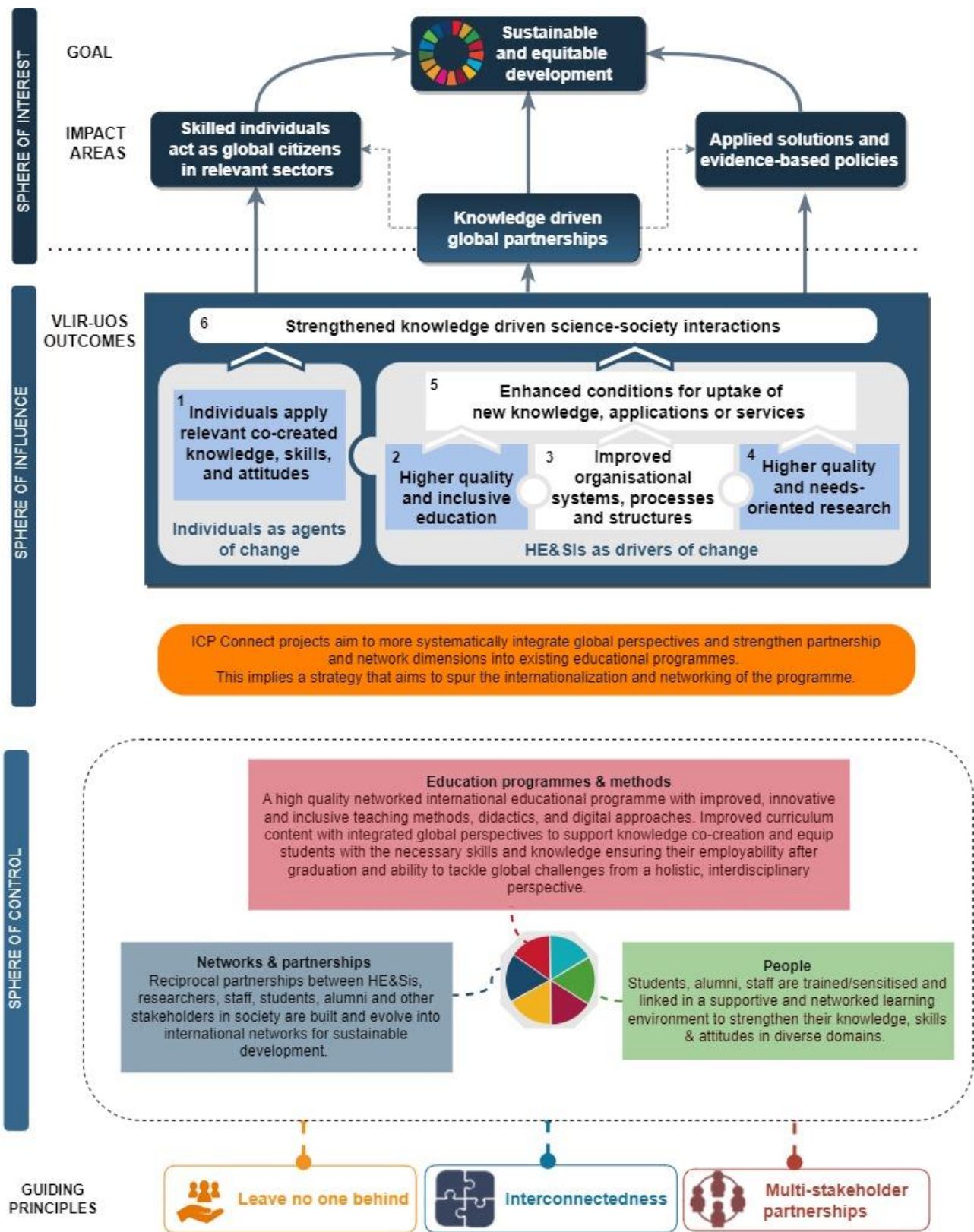


Figure 1 Schematic representation Theory of Change associated with ICP Connect projects

8.3.1 Long-term impact

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

In the long run, ICP Connect projects are expected to contribute by fostering:

- **Application of solutions and evidence-based policies:** In short, this refers to the role of higher education in applying new knowledge, insights, and evidence for sustainable development. Effective partnerships are conducive to ensure the relevant stakeholders are engaged and opportunities for uptake are created. This leads to a broader application of new knowledge by end-users and can include policymakers applying evidence from research in their policies, local communities adapting new practices that address their local needs, and private companies adapting innovative approaches.
- **A global community of skilled individuals who act as global citizens in relevant sectors:** In short, this refers to the potential of HE&SIs to develop generations of new leaders and skilled professionals. These skilled individuals are expected to drive social and economic development with their contributions to 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 and to 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. Moreover, the realisation of this impact area can equally benefit from the strengthened partnerships 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. This second impact area also fits well within the ICP Connect concept as they integrate global perspectives and focus on skilled individuals who can drive social and economic development.
- **Knowledge-driven global partnerships:** In short, this refers to the idea that reciprocal partnerships are essential to safeguard 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, both within the HE sector, and with other sectors. This final impact area also matches the ICP Connect concept, as ICP Connect projects enable the development/strengthening of networks of professionals in various sectors, academia, etc., thereby unleashing the full potential of partnerships.

8.3.2. The difference ICP Connect projects make: project outcomes

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 enable them to effectively act as agents of change within and beyond the setting of the HE&SI.

Along these strategic axes, VLIR-UOS identifies **six outcomes**. **Outcomes refer to the change(s) a project want to realise by the end of the implementation period**. For ICP Connect projects the outcomes (1), (2) and (4) are the main ones, namely:

(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 professional context. 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 that is gender sensitive and equity focused as a means for achieving excellence in research.

Each ICP Connect project focuses on these outcomes depending on its priorities and main objectives. For example, some projects might focus more on (1) and (2) while others focus more on (1) and (4). However, the starting point and emphasis lays on higher quality and more inclusive education, individuals applying new skills and knowledge, and higher quality and needs-oriented research in a volatile world with changing needs, emergencies and opportunities. Yet, projects are required to document their choices to ensure alignment with their own strategy. This strategy needs to resonate with the VLIR-UOS vision towards change (= the generic Theory of Change as set out in this document). Because in the long term, all ICP Connect projects combined, should 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.

8.3.2 How do projects deliver on their outcomes: domains of intermediate change/outputs

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. It is possible that ICP Connect projects focus on one or more additional project domains (outreach and policy support; research programmes and methods; systems, policies and infrastructure). If this is the case, promoters are invited to clarify their focus on one of these additional domains.

The table at the end of this document presents a non-exhaustive and indicative list of deliverables and activities that individual projects can undertake within the six domains through partnerships between HE&SIs and other local, national, or global stakeholders. The deliverables, processes, and changes in these domains are inter-linked and not mutually exclusive. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that expectations in relation to these domains should vary for ICP Connect projects in view of their distinct scope (in terms of time and budget).

ICP Connect ⁵			
Domains of change	Principal project change	Project outputs/activities	Linkages VLIR-UOS outcomes
Education programmes & methods	A high quality networked international educational programme with improved, innovative, and inclusive teaching methods, didactics, and digital approaches. Improved curriculum content with integrated global perspectives to support knowledge co-creation and equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure their employability after graduation and their ability to tackle global challenges from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective.	<p>A high quality International educational programme is organised, with relevant content, appropriate didactics, and innovative approaches and methodologies. It focuses on the transfer and exchange of state-of-the-art knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be applied in a professional context and society after graduation.</p> <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative curricula and teaching methods are developed in co-creation with partner institutions   New content is created with improved integration of concepts of equity and equality, e.g. gender concepts, intersectionality, inclusion, (implicit) bias.   Non-academic study goals are built into the international study, such as leadership development, intercultural competency and exposure to civic participation.  A supportive, dynamic, interactive, and multi-faceted e-learning environment is developed. A balanced mix of in-person, online, and hybrid learning is provided (tutoring, mix papers, and classroom teaching). Curriculum components that shift away from a 'classical classroom' constellation and introduce students to fieldwork, groupwork, collaboration with non-academic actors, are developed in collaboration with partner institutions and alumni.  Virtual collaborations expand perspectives in classroom discussions and sensitise students to other forms of knowledge production and modes of conducting scientific research. 	<p>This contributes to the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'higher quality and inclusive education' 'individuals co-creating and applying newly acquired knowledge and skills' 'higher quality and needs-oriented research'

⁵ The symbols indicate when one of the underlying SDG-principles is at play: Leaving no one behind & inclusiveness: ; Interconnectedness & indivisibility: ; Multi-stakeholder partnerships: 

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Activating students are valuable resource persons as to global challenges and/or their home countries and their challenges with an impact on education and research in Flanders.</i> • <i>A continuous check to see if the graduates align with labour market and societal needs</i> • ... 	
<p>Networks & partnerships</p>	<p>Equal partnerships between HEIs, researchers, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders in society (public actors, private actors, other CSOs, communities) are built and evolve into international networks for sustainable development.</p>	<p>The programme builds partnerships with relevant educational or research institutions (first five years of ICP Connect funding - phase 1). In the longer term, this leads to a broad international thematic network of higher education and science institutions (HE&SIs) and alumni (second period of ICP Connect funding for 5 years- phase 2).</p> <p><i>For Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>(Phase 1) A number of potential partners are identified.</i> - <i>(Phase 1) A strategy is developed that aims at gradually building a network that supports and feeds into the educational programme, as well as stimulate research capacity building.</i> - <i>(Phase 1/2) Partnerships that stimulate student and/or staff mobility and exchange are in place.</i> - <i>(Phase 1/2) Equity, diversity, and inclusion in teaching and learning are promoted to professionals. 🧑🏫</i> - <i>(Phase 1/2) Blended learning opportunities are initiated, collaboratively planned by partners, using their specific expertise when relevant.</i> - <i>(Phase 1/2) A network providing access to facilities, resources, (including funding) and ideas is in place.</i> - <i>(Phase 1/2) Steps are taken, often in collaboration with partners, to secure other funding (e.g. proposal writing, maintaining relationships with potential donors,...)</i> - <i>(Phase 2) Innovative practices are developed, tested, ex-changed, and implemented in the framework of a network of institutions, students, and alumni.</i> - <i>(Phase 2) Alliances to tackle skill gaps and foster innovation in and through higher education together with, for example, the private sector are in place. 🏠</i> - <i>(Phase 1/2) New research methods and improved data collection methods and analysis techniques are shared and used.</i> 	<p>This contributes to the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'higher quality and inclusive education' • 'individuals co-creating and applying newly acquired knowledge and skills' • 'higher quality and needs-oriented research'

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Phase 2) Collaborative research projects are developed, with the involvement of alumni. - ... 	
People	<p>Students, alumni, staff are trained/sensitised and linked in a supportive and networked learning environment to strengthen their knowledge, skills & attitudes in diverse domains (e.g. leadership, global citizenship).</p>	<p>Students (incl. individual scholarship holders) follow a relevant educational programme of high quality with supportive measures in place. Skills, knowledge, and attitudes of students are effectively strengthened during the study. The programme maintains contact with alumni and connects them to academic, scientific, thematic, or diplomatic networks and support systems, as well as provides them with or links them to additional lifelong learning options.</p> <p><i>For example</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An inclusive recruitment strategy is developed and applied. 🙌 - Scholarships are also provided to individuals (from communities) who are typically overlooked by, or unprepared to participate in traditional educational and scholarship selection processes. 🙌 - Students are supported to become change agents through a variety of practices (like case studies, field work, internships). 🌐 - Students find themselves in a supportive environment with, for example, extra-curricular activities that stimulate interaction, exchange, and networking. A buddy system can be put in place. - Additional support offers are in place, such as assistance with practical issues and additional trainings, support to the transition from education to employment. - Students are introduced to new approaches and different norms and standards, allowing for the development of certain world citizens skills and gaining of global understanding. 🌐 - Opportunities for engaging with other (domestic and international) students and European and international organisations are created. - (Phase 1) An alumni policy is in place, explicating the programme's strategy to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o follow-up on its alumni; o ensure the input and involvement from alumni with regard to e.g. programme content and approaches, research topics ; o content provision and lifelong learning opportunities for alumni; 	<p>This contributes to the outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'individuals co-creating and applying newly acquired knowledge and skills'

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>supporting alumni to find their way on the labour market and for identifying innovative ways of supporting alumni as actors of change in their environment;</i> ○ <i>create a strong network of alumni (and others), allowing for cross-sectoral collaboration.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>(Phase 2) An alumni network is created, linked to the broader programme's network. 🧑🏫</i> - <i>(Phase 2) Alumni make use of supportive measures/initiatives like mentorships, useful training resources, acknowledging articles/publications by using e.g. award systems, support in writing articles, access to a research network.</i> 	
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9. Project formats, call annexes, and background information

9.1. Project formats

[Formats](#) available on [our website](#) and which have to be submitted:

Format for a project proposal (offline working document)	<i>This format is to be followed when drafting the project proposal and includes the guiding questions for the narrative sections. All information in this working document will need to be included directly in the online tool for project submission.</i>
Annex 1: Format Project proposal	<i>This Excel format is used for the input of general project info and details about student data, team members and partners. The general info will need to be included directly in the online tool for project submission, whereas the details on student data, team members and partners are to be entered in the Excel format and imported in the project submission tool.</i>

Mandatory annex, as a free format / no template available:

Annex 3: CVs of the promoters	<i>Please add the CVs of all promoters in the excel format (via an online link if possible) or upload a pdf version of the short CV.</i>
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9.2. Call annexes

The following [annexes](#) are essential background information when formulating a proposal, and can be downloaded from the VLIR-UOS call page:

Call Annex 1 Introduction to the formats and formulation guidelines ICP Connect 2025	<i>A guiding PowerPoint is provided with an introduction to the formats and main formulation guidelines.</i>
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9.3. Background information

Looking for inspiration? Check out our website with the links to [Community talks](#), the publication [20 years of Impact - Sharing Minds, changing Lives](#), the [current ICP Connect Projects & their mid-term evaluation](#) and the [Theory of Change for ICP Connect projects tutorial](#).

The [Framework for Scholarships in Belgium](#) has been renewed with revised reference amounts and goes hand in hand with the [conceptual framework of VLIR-UOS' scholarship strategy](#).

Links to country reference framework documents per project partner country : These documents provide (i) an overview of ongoing VLIR-UOS projects; (ii) summary info on a partner country's approach towards Agenda 2030 and the SDGs; and (iii) general info on the higher education sector and on proposed activities of Belgian cooperation actors, with a focus on the non-governmental cooperation.

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

Abbreviations

ANGC	Belgian Actor of Non-Governmental Cooperation
ATP	Administratief en technisch personeel (Administrative and Technical Personnel)
DGD	Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid
FYP	Five-Year Programme
GEO	Global Engagement Officer at level of a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts
HE&SI	Higher Education and Science Institution(s)
HEI	Higher Education Institution(s)
HES4SD	Thematic Joint Strategic Framework “Higher Education & Science for Sustainable Development (HES4SD)” of VLIR-UOS, ARES, and ITG
ICOS	Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation
ITP	International Training Programmes
IUC	Institutional University Cooperation
JSF	Joint Strategic Framework
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
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)