

# Corona / COVID-19

## Guidelines (2021-07-01)

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# Who to contact with a COVID-19 related question

First contact point for specific inquiries concerning your project, programme or scholarship activities, please consult the responsible academic (the project promoter) and institutional coordinators for development cooperation at the Flemish university (**ICOS**) or university college (**GEO**) first.

The ICOS and GEO will refer to institutional policies and liaise with VLIR-UOS (respective programme manager) when necessary. In this way VLIR-UOS can involve all stakeholders and streamline communication.

The Flemish universities have also created specific webpages with information regarding Corona:

- <https://www.kuleuven.be/coronavirus/english/Coronavirus-ENG>
- <https://www.ugent.be/en/news-events/coronavirus-updates.htm>
- <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/organisation/in-the-spotlight/faqs-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.vub.be/en/coronavirus#updates>
- <https://www.uhasselt.be/coronavirus-en>

## Mobility and visa applications

### Travel from Belgium

**Travel is permitted but still strongly discouraged. Always follow the measures applicable in the country of destination and the measures upon your return to Belgium.** Please consult <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/travels/> for

- an overview of the types of travel that are regarded as essential;
- the measures that have to be taken into account.

### Travelling from outside the EU or Schengen Area

#### General rule

**Essential travel from a third country to Belgium applies to travellers who do not have the nationality of a country of the European Union or the Schengen zone, and who have their main residence in a third country not listed on [this list](#).**

Please consult <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/travels-outside-eu-schengen/> for

- an overview of the types of travel that are regarded as essential;
- the measures that have to be taken into account.

#### Arrival after staying in a very high risk area (“variants of concern”):

There is a ban on entry for non-Belgians who do not reside in Belgium and who have been in a very high-risk area at any time during the past 14 days: <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/countries-with-high-risk/>

## Visa for Belgium

Even though 'essential' travel is in principle allowed, visa services at Belgian Embassies and visa application centers (VFS, TLS) in some countries do not provide short term visa. This depends on the local Corona-situation and the risks assessment made by the Embassy.

Overall, students can make an appointment to apply for a long-term study visa.

**If you would want to apply for a short term visa, please contact the Embassy or visa service directly to check whether this is possible and under what conditions.**

Country	Visa address
Benin	<a href="#">Embassy Benin</a>
Bolivia	<a href="#">Embassy Lima</a>
Burundi	<a href="#">Embassy Bujumbura</a>
Burkina Faso	<a href="#">Embassy Burkina Faso</a>
Cambodia	<a href="#">Embassy Thailand</a>
Cameroon	<a href="#">VFS Cameroon</a>
Cuba	<a href="#">Embassy Cuba</a>
DR Congo	<a href="#">Centre européen de visa</a>
Ecuador	<a href="#">Embassy Lima</a>
Ethiopia	<a href="#">Embassy Addis Abeba</a>
Guatemala	<a href="#">Embassy Panama</a>
Guinea	<a href="#">Embassy Senegal</a>
Haiti	<a href="#">Embassy Cuba</a>
Indonesia	<a href="#">Embassy Indonesia</a>
Kenya	<a href="#">Embassy Nairobi</a>
Madagascar	<a href="#">Embassy Nairobi</a>
Mali	<a href="#">Embassy Mali</a>
Morocco	<a href="#">TLS Morocco</a>
Mozambique	<a href="#">TLS South Africa</a>
Nicaragua	<a href="#">Embassy Panama</a>
Niger	<a href="#">Embassy Niger</a>
Palestine	<a href="#">Embassy Jerusalem</a>
Peru	<a href="#">Embassy Peru</a>
Philippines	<a href="#">VFS Philippines</a>
Rwanda	<a href="#">VFS Rwanda</a>
Senegal	<a href="#">Embassy Senegal</a>

South Africa	<a href="#">TLS South Africa</a>
Tanzania	<a href="#">Embassy Tanzania</a>
Uganda	<a href="#">VFS Uganda</a>
Vietnam	<a href="#">VFS Vietnam</a>
Zimbabwe	<a href="#">TLS South Africa</a>

## Flights to and from Belgium

### Booking a flight

Flights can be booked (if available/possible) but it is required to book **tickets that can be changed for a minimum surcharge / fee**. Please always **check travel restrictions / bans** (more info <https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/international-travel-document-news/1580226297.htm>) before planning any travel.

We do not allow tickets (and subsequent costs) purchased between 12 March 2020 and 1 July 2020 but cancelled due to the Corona crisis, to be imputed on your programme, project or scholarship budget.

Costs for tickets for repatriation flights that were organised after March 12th can be reimbursed.

### Flights booked in 2020 for 2021

The cost of a ticket purchased and paid in 2020 for a flight that will take place in 2021, is accountable to activity year 2020, as the ticket delivery is the service of the travel agency that was rendered in 2020. When reporting on these 2020 attributed costs in reporting year 2021, the actual use of this purchase is to be proven.

### Repatriation flights

In a number of countries all commercial flights are suspended until further notice. Some authorities however organize repatriation flights for which nationals can register (e.g. Vietnam, Uganda, Peru, Cuba...). All scholars who are still in Belgium are advised to contact their embassy in Belgium/Schengen as soon as possible and register for repatriation flights (if available). The costs of these flights (and possible additional transportation costs e.g. train tickets to travel to the place of departure in another Schengen country) can be refunded based on receipts. If the departure of a repatriation flight is foreseen in another Schengen country, please make sure to check the validity of the visa/resident cards in Schengen area.

## Specific costs related to Covid-19 measures

### Covid-19 tests in home country – before traveling to Belgium

Most air companies and some insurance companies in Belgium require the submission of negative Covid-19 test results before boarding a plane coming to Belgium. **The costs of such a Covid-19 test can be refunded** upon arrival in Belgium, on top of the 150 EUR indirect travel costs, up to a **maximum of 150 EUR**, and only if students provide:

- a communication from the airline, local authority or insurance company stating that a test is required;
- a receipt / proof of payment.

## Covid-19 test in Belgium

### Coming from a red zone

Travellers coming from a red-zone country will have to undergo a Covid-19 test in one of the test centers. The test is free of charge for persons who are insured by one of the health insurance funds (called “mutualiteit” in Dutch) (i.e. costs are settled directly with the health insurance). Persons who are not insured (yet) will have to pay for the test. The costs for a standard test can be refunded upon submission of receipt/proof of payment. A second test has to be done on day 7. If both the first and the second test were negative, there is no need for continuing quarantine. The costs for a second standard test can be reimbursed based on receipts/proof of payment.

**Please note that the consultation fee for a general practitioner for a Covid-19 test in Belgium cannot be refunded separately. These costs will have to be covered by the scholar him/herself. The costs for the actual standard test can be refunded.**

### Before traveling to home country

For most local authorities and/or some air companies, a negative Covid-19 test result will have to be provided before boarding a flight to one of the partner- or scholarship countries. If a Covid-19 test is required by national regulations / air companies, the costs of such a test can be refunded, based on receipts and with provision of documents proving a test is required.

## Covid-19 test in home country – after travelling from Belgium

In a number of countries an additional Covid test is required upon arrival/ a few days after arriving from Belgium. If a Covid test **upon arrival** is required by national regulations, the costs of such a test can be refunded based on receipts and with provision of documents proving a test is obligatory.

## Quarantine in Belgium

Everyone coming from a red-zone outside the European Union and arriving in Belgium has to quarantine for in principle 10 days (and get a PCR test on day 1 and day 7, see above) unless you have an European or Belgian recognized vaccination certificate or recovery certificate and a negative PCR test on the day of arrival.

“Quarantine” and “self-isolation” are defined here: <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/quarantine-isolation/>.

All universities and university colleges have quarantine guidelines/protocols in place for students and staff. Make sure to check these first.

No additional costs are expected related to these quarantine requirements. Additional costs need to be kept as low as possible and quarantine does not necessarily lead to an extension of the training nor to the approval of said costs.

In cases where an ITP needs to be prolonged due to certain quarantine requirements, we ask the promotor to request a pre-approval from VLIR-UOS. These additional costs will have to be justified and advanced by the relevant ITP program, but will then be settled with the Flemish HEI institution at the final settlement of the scholarships programme of the institution (all ICPs and ITPs together).

## Quarantine in partner country or scholarship country

In some of the partner and scholarship countries, quarantine measures are in place. Persons arriving will have to go in quarantine in facilities that are appointed by the government, for a specific period of time (from 1 day – 14 days). These accommodation costs can be refunded if:

- **proof of the necessity** of the quarantine as imposed by the government is provided by means of a **local attestation/document** stating the quarantine requirements and indicating which facilities are to be used, for how long and what this would cost. Overall, this document is provided by the ministry of health/specific Covid-19 task forces or embassies.
- the respective government is not intervening in the costs.
- **proof of payment** / receipt of the quarantine facility is provided.
- **cost-effective** options are booked as much as possible.

For ICP and ITP scholarship holders, these costs should be settled with the Flemish HEI institution at the time of the final settlement (reporting) of the scholarships programme (encompassing all ICP and ITP scholarship costs) of the institution.

## Taxi costs in Belgium

**For scholars, transportation costs for taxi services from the airport to the university city, can exceptionally be refunded in addition to the indirect travel costs on the condition that its necessity can be motivated on the basis of Corona measures making it very difficult or impossible to use public transport.**

This exception also applies retroactively for 2020 taxi expenditures that can be motivated in this manner.

## Costs to send personal belongings

For those students who were in their home country during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, in the framework of an internship / thesis research as part of a VLIR-UOS supported master program and who were unable to return to Belgium because of the health crisis and related travel bans, costs related to sending their personal belongings to them can be refunded. In any case the most cost-effective solution has to be sought.

## Vaccination in Belgium

In Belgium, vaccination against the coronavirus is voluntary and free to everyone residing in Belgium.

For the indicative timing of the vaccination campaign and for more information on the vaccine and vaccination process, please consult <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/vaccination/>.

For VLIR-UOS funded scholars and project related visitors, “residing in Belgium” is to be understood as “as initially foreseen in the framework of the scholarship / study programme / visit”. In other words, the effective timing of the (first and/or second) vaccination against the coronavirus can by no means justify a claim for prolongation of the scholarship / stay in Belgium.

# Project and programme activities

## Cancellation costs

Costs related to cancellations due to the corona crisis (force majeure) that are non-refundable by insurance / travel agency etc. can in principle be imputed on the project/programme budget. Cancellation costs can only be imputed on your VLIR-UOS project budget after written motivation that there is a direct link between the cancellation and (one of the) Corona crisis linked policies concerned (on the basis of the planned date of the activity) and proof that the insurance does not cover these costs.

## Project extensions

Given the extraordinary situation and delays with the Corona Crisis, the possibility was awarded to extend ongoing projects until the end of 2021 (end of the current formal framework with DGD (Belgian Development Cooperation)).

End of March 2021, we were able to take it a step further and we were pleased to inform ongoing projects that the Belgian minister for Development Cooperation, Mrs Meryame Kitir, had agreed to extend the implementation period of the current FYP to 31 Augustus 2022 instead of ending it on 31 December 2021.

What does this mean? All projects which had previously received an extension until 31 December 2021 are now extended until 31 August 2022. Consequently, FYP 2022-2026 will not start on 1 January 2022 but on 1 September 2022. This prolongation provides project partners with more time to realize the envisaged project results.

Current status and what's next? VLIR-UOS discussed the implications of this extension with the Minister's administration (DGD) and the Flemish institutions.

The decision of the Minister will need to be formalized by a number of modifications in the formal framework, and by a new Ministerial Decree, on the basis of which VLIR-UOS will need to draft addenda to the current project agreements. Meanwhile VLIR-UOS will start communications on the processing of the extension (projected budget 2021 and 2022-8m) per intervention type as soon as possible in order to prepare contract addenda in the last trimester of 2021.

## International training programmes: postponement / cancellation

ITPs that were selected for organization in 2020 but had to be cancelled due to the Corona-crisis could be postponed to 2021. For those programmes that were selected for organization in both 2020 and 2021, this meant that in 2021 there could be two editions for 12 scholars each or one edition with 24 scholars.

However, as the Covid-19 crisis appears to be continuing well into 2021, ITPs that were postponed to 2021 may still have to be cancelled. In this case, the above paragraph [Cancellation costs](#) applies.

## Flexibilisation of rules on spending ratio

The Bureau UOS has decided that the original spending rates for 2020 have been adapted as such that there is no minimal spending ratio, and as is already the case for TEAM-SI-JOINT projects within this FYP, all unspent budget of activity year 2020 is transferable to activity year 2021. However, we do advise to reschedule project activities as much as possible given the exceptional circumstances. This

measure is adopted for activity year 2020 only; budgets unspent in 2020 can only be spent in the remaining year 2021.

## Overview

Type of intervention and start-up year per period (in chronological order) – A. measures and B. measures	Extension subject to justified request		Spending ratio 2020	
	Contractual possibility	Flexibilisation Bureau UOS 2020-04-24	Contractual obligation	Flexibilisation Bureau UOS 2020-04-24
<b>B. Before current FYP</b>				
TEAM 2016	Extension with Year 5 activity year (2020) up to max. 12 months after prior agreement of DGD	Extension with Year 5 activity year (2020) until end date 31/12/2020, after prior agreement of DGD.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>A. Current FYP: partner country programmes</b>				
TEAM 2017	1 year	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
JOINT 2017 ending end of 2020 ('projet transversal RD Congo')	6 months	<b>1 year (simplified request)</b>	n.a.	n.a.
SI and JOINT 2018 and SI 2019			n.a.	n.a.
IUC and NETWORK	n.a.	n.a.	100%	<b>no minimum</b>
IUC activity year 10 (2020) (UCB and UNIKIS-DRC; UB-Burundi)	n.a.	<b>1 year (budget Y 10 added to Phase Out Y11)</b>	100%	<b>no minimum</b>
IUC Phase Out contracts (2020-2021, case of UNALM-Peru and UL-South Africa)	n.a.	n.a.	100%	<b>no minimum</b>
<b>A. Current FYP: Belgium programme</b>				
Scholarships programme (ICP, ITP and phasing out ICP PhD)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Get Together Night	n.a.	n.a.	100%	100%
ICP	n.a.	n.a.	90%	<b>no minimum</b>
ITP	n.a.	<b>postponement (to 2021)</b>	n.a.	n.a.
GM	n.a.	n.a.	90%	<b>no minimum</b>
PSR	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>A. Current FYP: costs outside the country programmes</b>				
ORG	n.a.	n.a.	90%	90%
<b>B. Next FYP</b>				
As the current FYP programme 2017-2021 is extended by DGD until August 2022 (included), the next FYP programme will start in September 2022 and end in August 2027.				

# Scholarship guidelines

## General principles

### Financial issues

All financial issues related to scholars / grantees are dealt with by the Flemish HEIs, not by VLIR-UOS directly.

### Mobility

Existing planning implying outgoing mobility from Belgium to the home country can be pursued after the outgoing mobility ban ends or in case repatriation flights are organised, and in any case by verifying home country policy (via home country embassy/consulate in Belgium) and the availability of effective travel options.

VLIR-UOS scholarship holders who left Belgium before the end of the period for which they had already received a scholarship payment, are obliged to repay the part to which they are not entitled.

VLIR-UOS scholarship holders and short term allowance grantees staying in Belgium, are also requested to consult their Flemish university promoter and/or the ICOS/GEO, before planning any mobility or altering existing mobility plans by which costs would be incurred.

### Scholarship extensions due to force majeure

Proven inability to leave Belgium due to Corona and subsequent policies (governmental and or airlines) can be qualified as force majeure; costs of forced prolonged stay will be refunded, in principle on the basis of the VLIR-UOS guidelines and pro rata until the day of departure. We repeat that **prior consultation** is required by the scholar with the **Flemish university promoter and/or the ICOS/GEO** and by the latter with the respective **VLIR-UOS programme manager**.

Please note that scholars might have to extend **their resident card** or visa if they have to stay here longer than foreseen. In that case, they should contact the city administration and provide them with a number of documents.

### PhD sandwich ratio

If, due to the Corona crisis (force majeure), a PhD-scholar had to stay in Belgium for a longer period of time than initially foreseen, the sandwich ratio of the scholarship can exceptionally be exceeded given motivation is provided and given there is **approval of the promotors, project-leaders and programme coordinators (if relevant) and the respective VLIR-UOS programme manager**.

### Local allowance ICP students

If ICP-students are unable to travel to Belgium (due to travel restrictions/bans) they are allowed to follow the master programme online during a limited period of time, until the deadline set by the programme (depending on the programme). All students are entitled to their full allowance of 12/24 months and will receive the allowance latest upon arrival on campus. The logistical allowance can also be paid for. **It is up to the programme/university to decide how the payment will be organized**. If relevant, additional banking costs can be submitted as part of the scholarship financial report 2020.

# Travel grants (Reisbeurzen)

## Travelling to a country of the VLIR-UOS scholarship country list

Authorization to travel to a VLIR-UOS scholarship country must be obtained on 4 levels:

- (1) The **governmental** ban on non-essential trips outside Belgium (Schengen Area and the United Kingdom) remains in force until further notice. This means that students are in principle allowed to travel to any of the scholarship countries for an internship or thesis research work, as student travels can be considered essential (<https://www.info-coronavirus.be/nl/faq/>).
- (2) However, the **Flemish university (college)** might prohibit this or impose restrictions or conditions. Each Flemish university (college) is expected to take the necessary precautions when authorizing travels. All students are obliged to contact the ICOS/GEO responsible for the travel grants at their institution in order to receive more information the travel regulations in general and the travel policy of the respective institution in particular, (postponement of) travel grant calls, selection, alternatives etc. In any case, flights can only be booked (if available/possible) on the condition that tickets can be changed for a minimum surcharge / fee.
- (3) Moreover, one needs to take into account the **destination country's policy** in this respect, even if the Flemish university (college) policy allows a student to travel. Whether a student will be able to obtain a visa entirely depends on the embassy of the destination country, which must be contacted. And besides that formal element, no student will want to face quarantine measures upon arrival in the destination country and upon return in Belgium. There is no general information to be provided on this matter however, so one needs to consult the official governmental information for the country in question. This can be done via [https://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/Diensten/Op\\_reis\\_in\\_het\\_buitenland/reisadviezen](https://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/Diensten/Op_reis_in_het_buitenland/reisadviezen) and/or via the destination country's embassy in Belgium.
- (4) Finally, one must not forget to take into account **the policy of the receiving institution** in the destination country. This institution might not be willing to accommodate an internship in times of Corona, for various reasons.

## Expenses made, but unable to travel to the country of destination

Students who were still in Belgium and could not travel due to travel bans / flight cancellations but who already made expenses, can be reimbursed by the Flemish university (college) up to a maximum of 1.000 EUR – or lower: see your Flemish university (college) regulation. These expenses need to be accounted for, and a written motivation is to be provided in the reporting (in any case: insurance disclaimer). Students should also provide their university (college) with documents/communication proving that they have taken all steps required to request a refund of the flight ticket. In case vouchers are provided, the university (college) cannot refund the original ticket.

## Return to Belgium earlier than planned

Students who were **already in one of the scholarship countries** but were forced to abort their stay and return to Belgium, are entitled to a maximum of 1.000 EUR – or lower: see your Flemish university (college) regulation as a lump sum contribution to the overall cost of travel and subsistence –, even if their stay abroad was shorter than 28 days. In case of premature return to Belgium, a written motivation is to be provided in the **reporting**.

