

# Content

**IUC blueprint management structure and adapted procedure for IUC team composition (partially updated version of June 2024, will be further updated with the IUC 2026 Call – Stage 2 Call for Concept Notes)..... 2**

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# IUC blueprint management structure and adapted procedure for IUC team composition (partially updated version of June 2024, will be further updated with the IUC 2026 Call – Stage 2 Call for Concept Notes)

## 1. Introduction

The success of an IUC will depend upon the development of a **strong partnership** between the local partner institution and the involved Flemish HEIs. The partnership is jointly managed by the partner institution and the Flemish coordinating university according to the blueprint management structure for an IUC governed by a tripartite contract agreement clarifying the main contractual responsibilities, further outlined in this document where it concerns the overall management structure for an IUC.

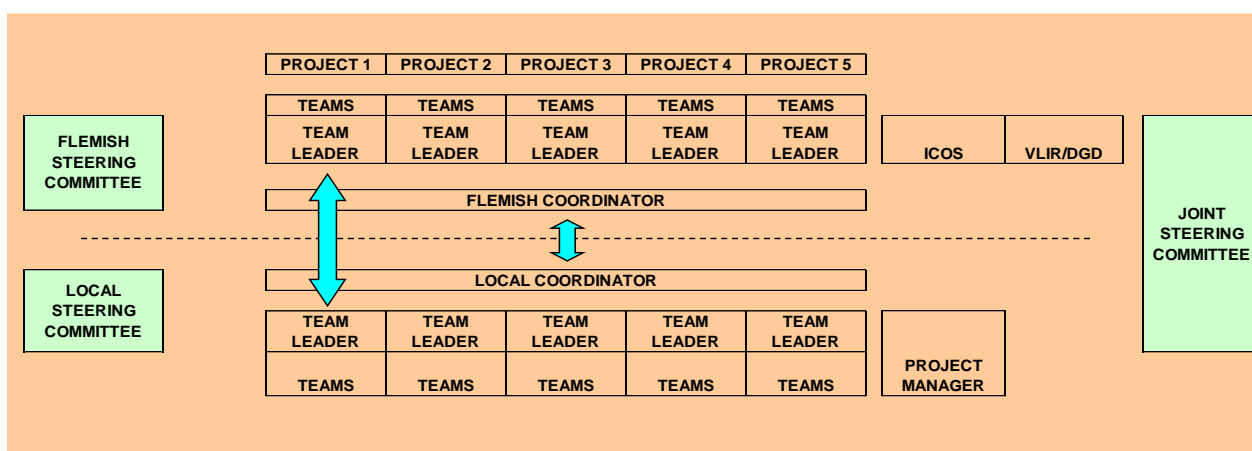
**A sound management structure**, with as much as possible alignment and integration into local systems and procedures, is key to success. Therefore, it is important that the involved institutions –and not only the coordinators in person- know each other very well. In particular at the local level, involvement of the university leadership / management (decision making structures in the university) in the formulation and implementation of the successive IUC partnership phases is crucial. This also implies that vertical linkages between the IUC partnership management and the decision-making structure of the local partner institution should be foreseen.

The IUC management system is based on the following distribution of roles and responsibilities:

- **VLIR-UOS** is responsible for the overall management of the IUC Programme Cycle - including the organisation of partnership Calls, the disbursement of funds to the Flemish coordinating universities, the follow-up and methodological support of ongoing IUC partnership projects and the organisation of the monitoring and evaluation framework. VLIR-UOS is accountable to the Belgian government through coordinated financial and progress reporting to DGD;
- **VLIR-UOS** appoints **Flemish coordinators (of the IUC partnership)** and **Flemish team leaders (of the subprojects)**, taking into consideration the advice of the partner university.
- The coordination at Flemish level is delegated to the **Flemish university** of the appointed Flemish coordinator, thus acting as the Flemish coordinating university of this institutional university cooperation (IUC) partnership between Flemish universities and university colleges with the partner university in a VLIR-UOS partner country;
- the university of the Flemish coordinator and the partner university are jointly responsible for the day-to-day management of the IUC partnership based on the terms of execution and expected commitments (e.g. making available facilities, deloading of staff for research, ..) as explained in a tripartite agreement signed by the Flemish coordinating university, the IUC partner university and VLIR-UOS.
- the Flemish coordinator receives as part of the IUC management structure at the level of the Flemish coordinating university the support of an institutional coordinator for development cooperation (ICOS).

- the **partner university** appoints a local IUC coordinator (of the IUC partnership) -who represents the institution- and appoints the local team leaders (per subproject), after consultation of the Flemish coordinator;
- at the level of the **partner university** a **full time manager (IUC project manager)** is to be appointed in order to support the local coordinator in the various management duties associated with the implementation of the IUC partnership project;
- both in Belgium and the partner university a **steering committee** is established to coordinate the implementation of the IUC partnership project. Both committees meet at least annually in the form of a **Joint Steering Committee Meeting (JSCM)**. Given the new practice of online meetings, more participative approaches in these two types of meetings can be used.

Blueprint structure of the IUC partnership



The IUC Partnership structure is to be seen as a partnership broad institutional university cooperation project consisting of a number of subprojects contributing to the overall IUC process of institutional change.

## 2. Mandates in an IUC partnership

### 2.1. Flemish IUC Coordinator

For each IUC partnership VLIR-UOS appoints a Flemish coordinator of the cooperation with the partner university. The Flemish Coordinator is proposed as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage in the IUC Intake 2026, the Expression of Interest and Commitment, and in case of continuation towards a successful final IUC Fully Fledged proposal, the mandate will be formally confirmed/awarded by VLIR-UOS after the final selection decision in May/June 2026.

A Flemish coordinator represents and is accountable towards the Flemish HEIs in general, and the Flemish coordinating university he/she is affiliated with more in particular. He/She ensures overall leadership and strategic issues with VLIR-UOS and the local partner/coordinating university.

Main tasks of the Flemish coordinator are:

- o responsibility for the overall coordination, management and implementation of the partnership phases, ensuring also adequate monitoring and reporting
- o creating broad inter-institutional embedding and support at level of the Flemish HEIs
- o to lead together with the local coordinator, and assisted by the full-time manager for the partnership and ICOS, the core team of the IUC partnership. Locally this support structure is organised via the Project Support Unit (PSU); together with the local coordinator and project manager;
- o to chair the Flemish steering committees and co-chair the Joint steering committees and implement its decisions;
- o to strive for follow-up of VLIR-UOS policy priorities such as reinforcing the IUC partnership concept and the fit within the VLIR-UOS theory of change, as also alignment with transversal and priority themes, identification of possible synergies, networking and external funding opportunities.

#### **Formal requirements for the Flemish coordinator**

When submitting a project proposal, a coordinator 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 an IUC coordinator **from a Flemish university** to submit a proposal are the following:

- o *professor at a Flemish university with a ZAP statute (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum appointment level of 10%, and a 80% employment status;*
- o Postdocs cannot submit;
- o have authorisation from his / her university to enter into financial undertakings on behalf of the institution;
- o have the appropriate academic and managerial competence and experience to coordinate the partnership;

- o be affiliated with the Flemish institution at least for the coming 7 years as of 2024, as long as the duration of an IUC Phase 1 (5 years; 2026-2031) preceded by the phase in as of 2025, and preferably for the entire IUC project cycle (10 years + Phase in and Phase Out).
- o *emeriti cannot apply, and in case the emeritus status will be reached before the end of a first phase of cooperation a successor must also be proposed. This successor is to be identified as part of the IUC proposal, and can be included as a deputy coordinator that will be able to take over full responsibilities when the proposed coordinator retires. This deputy coordinator needs to fulfil the same formal requirements.*
- o *the position of IUC coordinator cannot be combined with team leadership of a subproject within the same partnership in order to avoid conflict of interest and increase chances of interinstitutional teams at the Flemish level, considering that it is mandatory that at least 2 other Flemish institutions should have team leader mandates in an IUC and also university colleges should be part of the IUC partnership team. IUC coordinators can take part as academic team member in one or more IUC subprojects (e.g. in particular in the transversal institutional strengthening projects connecting with institutional policies and procedures) and be promoter of PhDs.;*
- o an academic can only coordinate 1 ongoing IUC partnership. An overlap with a team leader position in another IUC partnership is possible. This means that a current IUC coordinator in case he/she applies for a new IUC coordinator position, will not be able to continue the current mandate, a situation which is also to be avoided, if so possible.
- o members of the Bureau UOS cannot apply for the position of IUC coordinator

The coordinator 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.

## **Required competences and expertise of Flemish coordinators**

### Required skills & experience

- o Relevant experience with leadership 'People's manager' (coaching, motivating teams and individuals, teambuilding, conflict remediation), and effective and intercultural communication skills;
- o Relevant experience with Institutional planning and management;
- o Relevant experience with higher education cooperation for development or international cooperation in general;
- o Relevant experience in working in the partner country where the IUC partnership is to start is recommendable but not mandatory
- o Academic excellence in related domains as proposed in the Expression of Interest and Commitment, and future Concept Note proposal is recommendable but not mandatory;
- o Ample availability to take up a mandate of IUC coordinator, or have the guarantee of the own university that administrative and lecturing support will be given.
- o Each year a compensation lump sum is foreseen for the academic unit of the Flemish coordinator

Along with the management skills and policy experience as listed above, a coordinator needs to have a range of interpersonal soft skills.

### Ideal profile of an IUC coordinator/expectations:

On the basis of the input from the IUC review events of 16/4 and 23/4, an 'ideal profile' was identified:

he/she needs to be:

- empathetic and curious, open and patient
- willing to learn and involved/committed
- communicative, transparent (without overload in communication) and trustworthy
- close to the university authorities esp. for the partner coordinator, Flemish and partner coordinators need having a shared vision and leadership, need to share the vision with PM, ICOS and TLs
- willing to move between roles and positions and keeps an overview
- neutral in the subprojects management/coordination
- someone who does not compete for funds or competes with TLs and team members (perhaps someone at the end of his/her academic career, also timewise)

he/she needs to know:

- how to identify opportunities
- how to coordinate the TLs, PM and ICOS in getting the work done but who can also let go, who knows when to intervene and when not (including activities and (not) spent budget)
- the context beyond IUC

he/she needs to have:

- sufficient authority to take decisions (being decisive but also humble)
- sufficient intrinsic motivation to be a driving force and have affinities with the partner country and partner university
- networking skills, with fostering synergies – internal & external
- management competencies, who has an eye for managerial practical issues and who can help with budget and financial reporting, who can manage/ prevent conflicts, is able to put difficult issues on the table
- intercultural sensitivity and a sense of humor
- awareness of (financial) power imbalance

## 2.2. IUC Partner Coordinator

A Partner coordinator *represents* the local partner university.

Main tasks of the partner coordinator are:

- o Together with the Flemish coordinator, he/she forms the core team of the IUC partnership
- o To be accountable to respectively VLIR-UOS and partner university
- o To ensure high level communication (internally with management, and externally with policy makers and others as required), including the contacts with the Flemish coordinator and VLIR-UOS
- o To ensure overall leadership, coordination, management, monitoring and reporting, together with the Flemish coordinator
- o To co-chair the Joint steering committees together with Flemish coordinator and implementing the decisions
- o To chair the local steering committee meetings, and facilitate decision making and team building among local team leaders at all stages of project design and implementation
- o To ensure that the IUC partnership is continuously linked with the strategic priorities of the partner university
- o To represent the management and to act as spokesperson on behalf of the partner university
- o To identify possible synergies, networking and external funding opportunities

### Skills & experience

- o Leadership and effective communication
- o Motivation of the teams and conflict remediation => 'people's manager' and necessary intercultural skills
- o Team builder with experience in institutional planning and management
- o Affinity with the core content of the IUC partnership proposal
- o Experience with N-S cooperation

### Institutional Position/ formal requirements

- o (Academic) Position that allows direct access to top management
- o Executive charged with institutional planning or other aspects of institutional management
- o Appointed academic staff member
- o **Minimal formal requirement: professor, with at least an 80% employment status at the partner university involved**

### Appointment procedure

- o The partner university proposes a candidate, as part of the Expression of Interest and Commitment.

- o In principle, VLIR-UOS confirms the position together with the Phase In proposal based on the collaboration experience between both coordinators during the concept note development
- o The local coordinator is an appointed academic staff member and remuneration is provided by the local partner university which might, if considered appropriate, provide incentives from the overhead budget E2

### 2.3. Project Manager

To be appointed by the IUC partner institution.

Main tasks:

- Coordination of the Project Support Unit (PSU) team:
  - o financial officer, accountant, clerks, drivers
  - o administrative support
- Guarantee adequate managerial, administrative and financial follow-up of the IUC partnership at level of the local institution, in support of the local IUC coordinator
- Act as a resource person towards the project leaders and provide a general technical, methodological and management support
- Provide administrative support for the local and Joint steering committee meetings, provide follow-up and implementation of its decisions
- Coordinate and facilitate compilation of proposal, planning and reporting documents at the local level
- Prepares and facilitates the mobility for scholars from the partner university to Belgium, and in case of other international missions. In the case of mobility from Belgium to the partner country he/she will also facilitate where needed.

### 2.4. Local coordination tasks versus operational management tasks at local partner institution level

Position	Core task	Position	Appointment and/or recruitment process	Remuneration/IUC budget
Local IUC Coordinator	Overall academic leadership and coordination.  Operational management is not his/her principal task	Existing academic staff member (management or faculty level).	Local authorities of the partner university with advice from Flemish coordinator and VLIR-UOS	Incentives provided by the partner university. (own co-funding or coordination costs E2)



Manager of the Partnership (Project Manager)	Management of the IUC and PSU. Provides methodological facilitation organises support and administrative structures of the IUC  This position is in principle full-time.	New position; newly recruited or existing staff that is assigned to the IUC partnership.	Partner university with advice from Flemish coordinator (and VLIR-UOS, if requested)	Remuneration as per the local salary scales. Fundable by the IUC budget.
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## 2.5. ICOS

The Flemish coordinator receives as part of the IUC management structure at level of the Flemish coordinating university the support of an institutional coordinator for development cooperation (ICOS) and depending on the institution also other financial and administrative staff provide support to the IUC Partnership.

The ICOS tasks for an IUC Partnership consist of:

- Administrative and managerial support of the IUC Partnership within the coordinating Flemish university, in support of the Flemish IUC coordinator
  - Administrative and logistic support (including procurement procedures)
  - Mobility, including link with student affairs in the context of scholarship mobility
  - Financial follow-up in close collaboration with the financial department of the Flemish coordinating university
  - Provide methodological support with the proposal, planning and reporting documents, theory of change, intervention logic, etc.
  - To organise the communication and to prepare Flemish steering committee meetings, and provide follow-up and implementation of the decisions taken
- Direct counterpart at the Flemish level of the IUC project manager

## 2.6. Composition of IUC project teams

An important part of the IUC Phase in, symbolising the preparation phase of an IUC partnership, is the composition of the Flemish (sub)project teams.

In the 3-step intake procedure for this IUC Call 2026 there will be no 'open call' for **Flemish Team Leaders**, but instead the IUC coordination teams are expected to come up with a proposal of Flemish and partner team leaders for the IUC partnership Phase 1. A first proposal is to be included as part of the IUC Concept Note proposal, and further developed during the Stage 3 of IUC Fully Fledged proposals, meeting a number of requirements (which will be further detailed in the Stage 2 IUC Call for Concept Notes), and with a justification as to how expertise in Flanders has been looked for and mobilised, and why the suggested persons are best placed for these mandates.

The requirements as to the composition of the team of team leaders consist -next to the general requirements related to the profile of Team Leaders (see below)- of :

- An IUC project adopts a Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP) set-up, involving multiple teams of academics and specialists from the partner institution, as well as multiple Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts. A minimum set up for an IUC project involves minimally Five Flemish HEIs (including the coordinating university), of which minimum 3 universities and 2 university colleges of applied sciences and arts (included as part of the team, not necessarily in the condition of team lead).
- At least 3 different Flemish HEIs have a mandate, being 1 university with the mandate of coordinator + at least 2 other institutions with a mandate of team leader.
- VLIR-UOS strives for diverse teams and highly encourages the teams to have attention for minimum 1/3 gender balance in project teams (incl. team leaders and members). In case this is not possible to achieve, an explanation on the reasons why it is difficult should be provided.
- Justification is to be provided as to the process followed and the persons proposed.
- The provided templates for team leader composition and related motivation of the proposal of FTL will be revised and provided as soon as possible

### 2.6.1. Team Leader (general profile)

The team leader is in charge of the implementation of an IUC subproject (academic theme based or transversal institutional strengthening) within an IUC partnership phase.

#### Main tasks:

- Academic team leadership, coordination of the Flemish project team
- Sourcing of required Flemish expertise at level of universities and university colleges, composition of team of experts (in view of PhD/Master promotorship, lecturing, expert visits, etc.)
- Facilitate relevant networking and linkages
- Project management (mainly contents but also budget follow-up in collaboration with the PSU)
- (Co-)promoter of PhDs/Masters, if applicable

- Participation in steering committee meetings at Flemish level and together with LTLs act as spokesperson for project team members at the Joint Steering Committee meetings
- Facilitating communication within the team (local/Flemish), and with the IUC coordination level

## **Formal requirements, skills and policy priorities**

### Formal requirements

- o Professors, researchers and lecturers, who are affiliated with a Flemish university or university colleges. For certain projects of transversal strengthening also technical staff (ICT, library) from universities and university colleges can apply;
- o Academic/technical competence needed to carry out and/or guide the project.
- o Be affiliated with the Flemish institution at least as long as the duration of an IUC phase I (5 years; 1 Sept 2026- 31 August 2031)

### Skills & experience

- o Leadership and effective communication
- o Team builder and necessary intercultural skills
- o Academic excellence in the field proposed in the project (in case of technical projects related technical expertise)

### Availability and return

- Expected availability to take up a mandate of IUC team leader:
  - o the Flemish and local Team Leader interact on a regular basis -on average bi-weekly/monthly follow-up- and take up leadership for the content preparation and implementation of an IUC subproject (academic theme based or transversal institutional strengthening).
  - o During the Phase In year efforts will focus on the scouting for other suitable Flemish team members in coordination with the local team leader, participation in the formulation mission and editing of the sub-project documents.
  - o Once the project starts, the level of implication on the Flemish side is rather guiding, advisory since the projects take place locally, but it does include regular follow-up meetings with the team (once a month or per trimester) during project implementation, selecting and jointly supervising students with other team members, participating in the annual steering committees, reviewing and discussing the annual progress reports prepared by the project team, etc. This also includes on average one travel per year to the partner country.
- In return, you are part of a highly challenging international and multidisciplinary partnership which strengthens professional networks and hopefully brings rewarding benefits for the academic/professional career. A limited project leader allowance is foreseen for compensation of basic expenditure.

### Policy priorities

- The mandate of member of the Bureau UOS is not compatible with the mandate of IUC team leader

- IUCs are interesting interventions to include new/young (Flemish) academics as team leaders and team members within a supportive environment, so that these can be introduced in higher education cooperation for development, in an enabling context (in the presence of more experienced academics; management system already in place);
- Combining an IUC coordinator position with that of team leader within the same partnership is not advisable as it could lead to conflicts of interest and limits the chances of creating broad interinstitutional teams at the Flemish level. Some exceptions might occur, in particular for the transversal (institutional) project within IUCs considering the focus on the improvement of organisational processes and structures closely linked to the partnership goals. However, a coordinator can definitely be scientifically involved and take a role as academic team member in one or more projects and also be the promoter of PhDs.
- Gender policy: in the light of promoting diverse, gender-balanced teams, it is important to clarify the workload for a Flemish team leader, duties and expected mobility to the project partners since good knowledge of the local context and partners are crucial factors for successful collaboration. The expectations should especially be discussed with young academics who are interested in becoming a team leader but are still doubting about the workload and mobility that come with it.

### **2.6.2. Team Members (general profile)**

Local and Flemish teams are to be constituted according to the project objectives defined during the formulation process. As opposed to the team leaders, the team members are not formally appointed by VLIR-UOS.

The process of matchmaking and team composition will facilitate the first mapping of the interest of academics/lecturers/staff in collaborating as team member in IUC subprojects. This will also assist the appointed team leaders in mapping the other existing interest and expertise at the level of the Flemish universities and university colleges when composing a relevant Flemish team. As such, a pre-formulation mission team composition will be available, which is to be confirmed after the formulation missions. The appointed Flemish team leader will aim at composing a team of academics and technical specialists to take part in an IUC project for the course of project duration. It is the responsibility of the appointed project leader to compose his/her interinstitutional -Flemish HEIs represented- team.

Possible tasks and profile of team members in an IUC subproject:

- Responsible for at least 1 activity contributing to the achievement of project results & goals (lecture, expertise input, staff development through master & PhD promoters, etc.)
- Academics and other relevant university staff (ICT, library, management personnel,...), but also staff of a variety of organisations (NGOs, government representatives and in some cases consultants...) and if relevant also academics from non-Flemish/Belgian universities or ITM can join as team members, as long as similar conditions prevail (no fees are paid)