

6TH CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS (2022-2026)

GUIDELINES FOR NEW APPLICANTS

DEADLINES

The **Declaration of Intent** for a new International Thematic Network has to be submitted electronically before Fri 12/11/2021 12:00h.

Full proposals – to be submitted when the declaration of intent was selected – have to be submitted electronically before Fri 18/02/2022 12:00h.

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1 PREAMBULE - SCOPE OF THE CALL

Ghent University's ITN portfolio currently comprises 12 International Thematic Networks, covering a wide and diversified range of interdisciplinary themes and involving partner networks from all continents across the globe.¹

The ITN portfolio is dynamic in two ways: (1) Each individual ITN has been given the opportunity to evolve within the chosen interdisciplinary theme and develop the most efficient structure for cooperation. (2) As a whole the ITN portfolio is not static: with a dynamic portfolio Ghent University wishes to adapt to new emerging themes for cooperation in our changing global and social context, as well as to explore new cooperation and new partners to increase its visibility and impact on the international stage.

In order to stimulate the further development of the ITN portfolio, a new call for International Thematic Networks (2022-2026) with a total budget of 180.000 € is open to support both the renewal of existing ITN (at the end of their first 5-year period) and the startup of new ITN proposals:

- 1. Existing International Thematic Networks** can apply for extended funding. Existing ITN who are at the end of the first 5-year funding period can re-apply for a second funding period with reduced (50 %) UGent funding support. In case of non-selection, one re-application is possible in a next call. An application as new ITN on the same topic is not allowed.
- 2. Proposals for new International Thematic Networks.**

This document only contains information about the call for new International Thematic Networks. There is a separate document containing the guidelines for applicants who wish to apply for a renewal.

2 CONTEXT: THE INTEGRATED POLICY PLAN FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

In the framework of the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization, Ghent University intends to make **effective and strategic choices with regard to international cooperation and qualitative partnerships.**²

Three models for strategic international cooperation have been put forward: (1) International Thematic Networks; (2) Regional Platforms and (3) Institutional Strategic Partnerships.

The goals for Ghent University's strategic international cooperation activities are:

- To strengthen the link between research, education and services to society, within an international context;
- To enhance visibility and impact of Ghent University in the international environment, by coordinating long-term partnerships in order to consolidate the leading role of Ghent University;
- To seize opportunities (networking, funding...) within the international environment to enhance the impact of Ghent University.

¹ <https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles/internationalisation/thematicnetworks.htm>

² (see <https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles/internationalisation/policy.htm> and the policy paper 'Strategic Initiatives for International Cooperation', approved by the Board of Governors on 13 March 2015)

Special emphasis is put on collaborations that:

- Focus on networking with high level and/or high potential partners;
- Focus on networking with countries, regions or around themes of strategic importance for Ghent University;
- Focus on strengthening the collaboration with partners in the Global South;
- Align themselves with the overall strategic goals of Ghent University and ethical framework for sustainable development and internationalization.

Further, with the strategic international cooperation the Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalization 2019-2023 aims to contribute to the university-wide policy choices of Ghent University: (1) Activating learning, (2) Diversity, (3) Talent management, (4) Sustainability, (5) Enhanced alumni activity, and (6) Strengthening of Ghent University's social identity.³

3 GHENT UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS

3.1 Definition and Role

An international thematic network is a body for support, cooperation and advice consisting of Ghent University staff members and international partners concerning a specific topic of excellence in education and research at Ghent University with societal relevance and impact.

The **network of international partners offers an added value through synergy** by strengthening the existing capacity and expertise within Ghent University, and/or strengthening the capacity of partners in the South.

The network offers support to members of the Ghent University community in the chosen disciplines to engage internationally. It supports the development of new initiatives in mobility, research, education and service to society. It strives for an increase both in the quality and in resources for the work done within Ghent University around this theme as well as in international visibility.

Further, the network promotes the excellence of the institution in this field, thus contributing to the position as an important partner in education, research and service to society and to the international Ghent University brand in general.

According to the main focus of interest several **types of ITN** can be identified (e.g.):

1. ITN with objective of **strengthening the existing excellence at Ghent University**. For this category a main criterion is to prove the own international excellence and the added value of adding international partners to exploit and to promote this excellence;
2. ITN with the objective of **strengthening collaboration with partners in the Global South**. For this category a main criterion is to prove how collaboration between all partners involved contributes to a mutual exchange of knowledge and capacity building and to international excellence and impact.

³ See <https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles/universitywidepolicychoices.htm> and <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/ubk.htm>.

3. ITN with the objective of **strengthening Ghent University's own capacity** through the network. For this category, the main criterion is to prove the importance of the theme for the international position of Ghent University and how the excellence of the international partners will contribute to realize this international position.

In the proposal the coordinator has to indicate the main focus of the ITN project, but this does not exclude other objectives or a combination of the above objectives.

3.2 Structure and Responsibilities

Each international thematic network is composed of an interdisciplinary group of at least 3 Ghent University professorial (ZAP) and/or post-doc staff members, preferably from different faculties, and professorial/post-doc staff members of minimum 3 different non-Flemish higher education partner organizations.

Ghent University staff members are, at the moment of the deadline of this call, associated with Ghent University either as:

1. a member of the tenured academic staff (Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel; ZAP);
2. a visiting professor with at least a research assignment;
3. a senior assistant, senior lector, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor or senior full professor within the integration framework at Ghent University who holds a PhD degree;
4. or they have an appointment at Ghent University (including "FWO postdoctorale onderzoekers" and "IWT onderzoeksmandaten"), the University Hospital, VIB Ghent, IMEC Ghent, iMinds Ghent and/or Vlerick Gent Management School or at one of the Universities of Applied Sciences ("hogescholen") from the Ghent University Association and hold a PhD degree.

The network is coordinated by a Ghent University professorial staff member (ZAP) as chair of the steering committee with representations of Ghent University and the international partner organizations. The coordinator is responsible for the development, the implementation and the organization of the network's initiatives and acts as the **sole authorized person for the granted budget**.

The coordinator actively looks for opportunities internally and externally to broaden the impact of Ghent University.

3.3 Support and Funding

Ghent University supports International Thematic Networks with funds for coordination, earmarking of internal education and research funds, and free use of available facilities for institution-wide dissemination activities (e.g. conference rooms).

The ITN allowance is considered to be start-up financing and/or seed money with the aim of creating the structure and capacity to initiate coordinated cooperation actions, to generate new project funding, and eventually to become sustainable in the long term.

New International Thematic Networks receive a funding amount of 60.000 € per year for a period of 5 years for coordination (including but not restricted to personnel costs, operational costs, travel etc.). Upon completion and successful evaluation of a first 5-year period, existing International Thematic Networks can re-apply for a second 5-year funding period with reduced funding support of 30.000 € per year. The max. funding duration for ITNs is limited to 10 years. After two 5-year funding periods the

ITN cannot apply for further renewal, but may further benefit from the general and technical support from the central internationalization services upon agreement. The funding period for proposals selected in this call is 2022-2026. In case of non-selection, one re-application is possible in a next call. An application as new ITN on the same topic is not allowed.

Co-funding

The network is required to contribute and demonstrate co-funding in addition to the Ghent University allowance, so that the total turnover of the ITN amounts to min. 120.000 € per year (or min. 600.000 € for the full duration of the 5-year funding period). This implies that the ITN have to demonstrate a co-funding of 60.000 € per year during their first 5-year funding period, and 90.000 € per year during their second 5-year funding period.

The sort of co-funding is undefined, but the amount of co-funding must be real and verifiable. It may result from external sources (obtained from national and international funding programmes), and/or be contributed by the partner universities themselves to demonstrate and/or ensure a sustainable commitment to achieve the goals of the ITN. Examples of such co-funding contributions are consortium membership fees (free of overhead), travel costs, organizational costs (workshops, summer schools ...), wages for well-defined verifiable tasks (PhD, visiting staff, supporting staff), ...

The co-funding may be unequal between partners (both the involved Ghent University groups as the external partners), but the full proposal must be clear in how the co-funding is realized and which partners contribute. The application should also show how in the long term full self-financing could be realized.

4 PROCEDURE

The selection procedure for new International Thematic Networks is divided into **two phases**.

In the first phase, applicants for **new ITN** are asked to submit a **Declaration of Intent (DoI)** which is conceived as a brief pre-proposal focusing on a project concept.

In this first phase, the Declarations of Intent (DoI) will be evaluated by a designated selection committee, composed of faculty representatives and representatives of the central departments⁴.

After a decision has been made on the Requests for Renewal, the selection committee will evaluate the Declarations of Intent (DoI) that have been submitted by new ITNs and decide which proposals can work out a full proposal for the second round, thereby giving an indication of the maximum number of new ITNs that can receive funding (taken into account the success rate in the renewal group). The Expert Group on Internationalization will validate this pre-selection made by the selection committee.

In the second phase,

The Full Proposals will be evaluated of those ITN that received a positive evaluation of their Declaration of Intent in the first phase. The Full Proposals will also be evaluated by the designated selection committee that evaluated the declarations of intent. The Expert Group on Internationalization will then validate the selection made by the selection committee, after which the Executive Board of Ghent University will formally confirm the selection.

⁴ Taking into account the rules concerning potential conflicts of interest during selection procedures without the involvement of international peer reviewers as installed by the Research Council of Ghent University: see article 10 in: <https://www.ugent.be/intranet/nl/reglementen/onderzoek/reglementen/onderzoeksraad-huishoudelijk-reglement.pdf>

Deadlines:

- **First phase:** Declaration of Intent (new ITN) has to be submitted electronically by Friday 12/11/2021, 12:00h
- **Second phase:** Full proposal (new ITN) has to be submitted electronically by Friday 18/02/2022, 12:00h.

5 APPLICATION

5.1 FIRST PHASE – DECLARATION OF INTENT

For new ITN proposals, a **Declaration of Intent** has to be submitted that includes:

1. Personal details of at least 3 Ghent University promoter(s)
2. Personal details of at least 3 network partners
3. Description of the proposal
 - a. Main focus of the ITN according to main objective
 - b. Explain the choice of the theme/topic of the network, the main focus of interest (type of ITN) and the selection of the network partners – *max. 500 words*
 - c. Explain the societal relevance and impact of the ITN – *max. 500 words*
 - d. Project pitch: How will the ITN reinforce the international reputation of Ghent University in view of branding? – *max. 500 words*
 - e. Describe and explain the impact and added value for the Ghent University community – *max. 500 words*
 - f. How will the ITN contribute to the university-wide policy choices? – *max. 250 words*
 - g. Describe the role of the Ghent University coordinator of the network, and the planned (or existing) interactions between the network partners (with emphasis on the interaction between education, research and services to society) – *max. 750 words*

5.2 SECOND PHASE – FULL PROPOSAL

The **Full Proposal** should include:

1. Personal details of the Ghent University promoter(s)
2. Personal details of the network partners
 - a. List
 - b. Indicate which partners have joined/left the network since the Declaration of Intent (1st phase)
3. Description of the proposal
 - a. Consortium - Explain the choice of the specific theme / topic of the network, taking into account the goals set within the policy content – *max 1500 words*
 - What are the Ghent University strengths for the thematic approach for this International network ?

- What are the reasons for choosing the particular partners within the thematic network?
 - What are the long term goals you hope to achieve by coordinating the thematic network?
- b. Activities - Describe the planned cooperation and roadmap of activities between the network partners (in education, research and services to society) during the funding period of 5 years – *max. 1000 words*
- What type of activities will be developed by the consortium in education, research and service to society?
 - What will be the specific role and the added value of the different partners in the development of these activities?
 - What will be the role of Ghent University as the coordinator, and specific responsibilities of the partners?
 - Which dissemination activities are planned?
- c. Impact - Describe the impact and added value of the ITN – *max. 1000 words*
- What will this international thematic network add to the existing cooperation between the partners and to the academic quality of the partnership (cf. joint activities in international research and educational projects, ...)?
 - How will this network contribute to the academic quality of the individual partners?
 - How does the network aim to have an impact within Ghent University?
 - How does the network aim to have societal impact?
4. Organizational structure: describe the proposed management structure, the process of decision making and role division between Ghent University and the partner institutions – *max. 750 words*
5. Budget
- a. Describe the overall financial break-down (allowance + co-funding) by personnel costs, main actions, dissemination, and resources – *use table template*
 - b. Demonstrate how the ITN will realize the co-funding and total turnover of 120.000 € per year – *max. 250 words*
6. Short CV's of Ghent University promoters and participating partners – *max. 1 page per person*)
7. A signed individual, personal letter of endorsement by each of the international partners – *After selection a letter of endorsement on institutional level is required by each of the partners to formalize their commitment to network.*

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The selection will be based on the following specific evaluation criteria, in addition to the overall goals for the Ghent University strategic international cooperation:

PHASE 1 – DECLARATION OF INTENT

- Justification of the proposed theme and selected partners of the network and added value of working with these partners internationally
- Added value of the ITN for Ghent University: how will the ITN reinforce the university-wide policy choices and international strategy of Ghent University? How will the ITN contribute to the international reputation and visibility of Ghent University and its branding strategy?
- Societal relevance and impact of the activities and the network
- Interaction between education, research and services to society within the network

PHASE 2 – FULL PROPOSAL

- Overall quality of the proposal with
 - the clear links between research, education and services to society
 - the implementation of the main objective(s) of the ITN
 - the opportunities for the Ghent University community in the international environment
 - feasibility of the proposed activities
 - networking plan, collaboration among partners and added value of acting as a network
- Expected outcomes (co-publications, gradually approach to joint PhDs, jointly organized educational programmes, capacity building projects,...)
- Proposed management structure (with emphasis on the role of the partners, with special emphasis on the importance for Ghent University)
- Proposed financial plan

7 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

The Declaration of Intent and the Full Proposal for new ITN need to be written in English within the prepared template. The text needs to be written in font Arial 10, spacing 1.15.

The requested documents need to be submitted electronically via e-mail before the deadlines mentioned in these guidelines. The e-mail should be send to Marieke.merckx@ugent.be.

Upon submission a proof of receipt will be sent via e-mail, containing the reference number of the proposal. This number will be used in all communication regarding the proposal.

Any failure to comply with the above-described guidelines will lead to in-eligibility of the proposal.

8 SELECTION RESULTS

1. First phase:

- Selection committee selects new ITN for second phase - 26 November 2021⁵
- Expert Group on Internationalization validates of the pre-selection of new ITN - 10 December 2021

⁵ Tentative date

The Ghent University promoter will receive a notification from the Director for Internationalization with the selection result of his/her application after the meeting of the selection committee.

2. Second phase:

- Selection committee selects the new ITN based on the Full Proposal - 4 March 2022⁶
- Expert Group on Internationalization validates the selection of the new ITN - 11 March 2022
- UGent Executive Board takes a formal decision on the new ITN - 1 April 2022

The Ghent University promoter will receive a notification from the Director for Internationalization with the selection result of his/her application after the meeting of the selection committee. The motivation of the decision of the selection committee will only be provided after the formal decision of the Executive Board.

9 REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Learning network of ITN: yearly cycle

As soon as possible after the confirmation of the new ITN by the UGent Executive Board, a startup meeting will be organized by the International Relations Office for the newly approved ITN. After this startup meeting, the newly approved ITN will join the existing ITN in a yearly reporting cycle within a learning network of all ITN. This cycle consists of the following elements:

- June 20xx – work meeting for all ITN, where at least the following topics will be addressed:
 - Short introduction of the newly approved ITN
 - Progress report of the existing ITN + discussion among peers
 - Transversal topics / questions with relevance to all ITN
- October 20xx - work meeting for all ITN, where at least the following topics will be addressed:
 - Presentation of action plan by the new ITN
 - Final evaluation of ITN in their final year of funding (Y5 / Y10) + discussion among peers
 - Transversal topics / questions with relevance to all ITN
- December 20xx – Networking moment for all ITN, Regional Platforms and SIPs

Reporting and evaluation

Besides the yearly cycle of the learning ITN-network, every ITN is also expected to provide the director for Internationalization with a short yearly report for which a template will be provided by the International Relations Office. The yearly report will be kept as 'light' as possible and the overlap between Global Minds reporting and the general ITN reporting will be kept as minimal as possible.

The director for Internationalization will evaluate the yearly reporting and provide feedback to the ITN. In case problems are detected, the director for Internationalization will ask the selection committee for advice. The selection committee can then decide to formulate a proposal for remediation for the ITN or formulate an advice regarding the discontinuation of the ITN. The advices of the selection committee

⁶ Tentative date

will then be presented to the Expert Group on Internationalization for validation, after which the Executive Board will formalize the decisions taken.

At the end of their funding period (Y5 or Y10), every ITN will have to submit their final evaluation, regardless whether the ITN will apply for a renewal. When the ITN is applying for a renewal, the final evaluation will be discussed and evaluated by the selection committee in the scope of the new call for renewals. When the ITN is not applying for a renewal, the final evaluation will also be discussed by the selection committee, after which the final evaluation and conclusions of the selection committee will be sent to the Expert Group on Internationalization for information purposes.