

10 Questions and Answers



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-CRIS

Institute on Comparative
Regional Integration Studies

1 When Was the United Nations University (UNU) First Established?

In his 1969 Annual Report to the United Nations General Assembly, UN Secretary-General U Thant proposed the creation of a “United Nations University, truly international in character and devoted to the Charter objectives of peace and progress”.

The panel submitted a report to the UN Economic and Social Council in September 1972, and in December 1972 the General Assembly adopted the decision to establish the United Nations University (UNU), thereby formally establishing the world’s first international university.

It was through the generosity of the Government of Japan, which offered to provide headquarters facilities in Tokyo and to contribute US\$100 million to establish an endowment fund, that UNU was able to launch its academic work in September 1975.

In 1975 UNU’s first priority programme areas – world hunger, natural resources, and human and social development – were framed. These priority areas have been refined and built upon over the ensuing four decades to form the three thematic clusters that UNU pursues today:

Peace and Governance
Global Development and Inclusion
Environment, Climate and Energy

Since official commencement of its academic activities in 1975, UNU has worked to live up to its role as an international university by expanding partnerships with academic institutions around the world.

During the tenure of the University’s second Rector, Dr. Soedjatmoko, the first UNU research and training institute – UNU-WIDER – was established in Helsinki, Finland, in March 1985.



The United Nations University Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan



U Thant was the third Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1961 to 1971, holding office for a record 10 years and one month



Dr. James M. Hester was the first Rector of the United Nations University from 1975 to 1980

2 What Does UNU Stand For?

The mission of the UN University is to contribute, through collaborative research and education, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations, its Peoples and Member States.

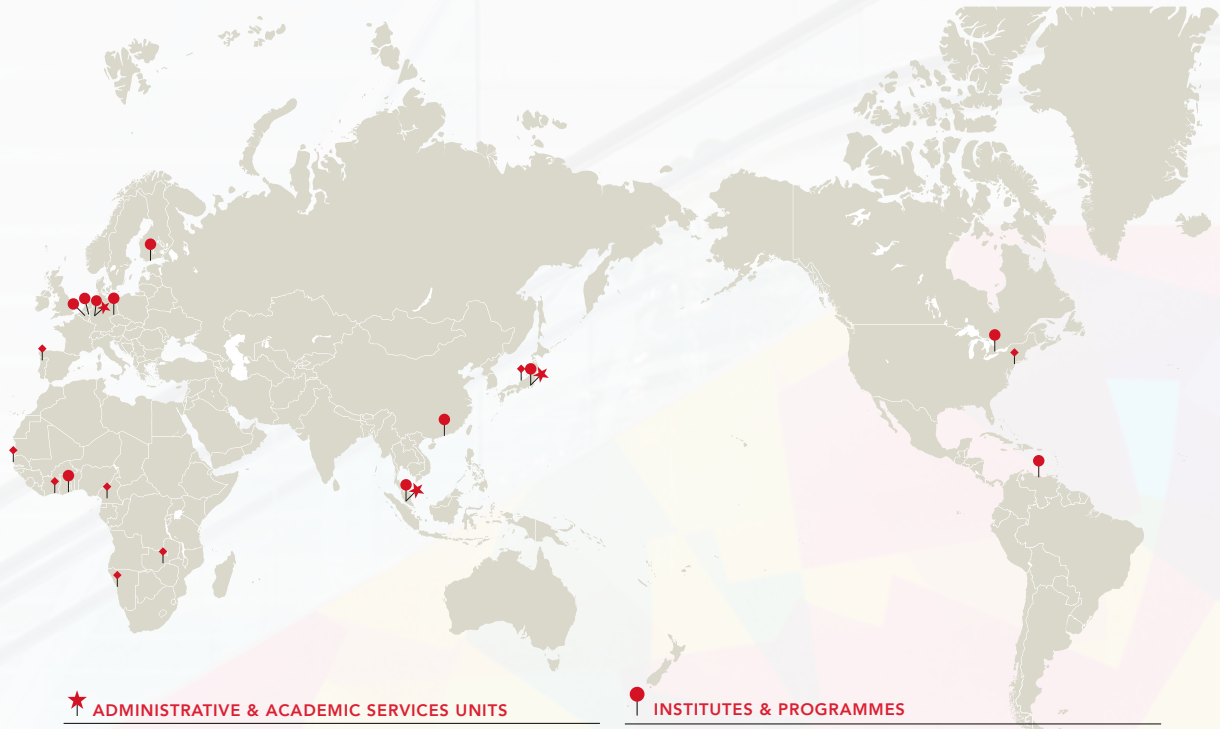
In carrying out this mission, the UN University works with leading universities and research institutes in UN Member States, functioning as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations system.

Through postgraduate teaching activities, UNU contributes to capacity building, particularly in developing countries.

Currently, the network consists of 15 institutes, programmes and units worldwide, engaging in research and capacity development in order to support the universal goals of the UN.

As part of the UN family of organisations, the University maintains close working relationships with other UN agencies, programmes, commissions, funds and convention secretariats.

UNU System Map



★ ADMINISTRATIVE & ACADEMIC SERVICES UNITS

UNU Centre – Tokyo, Japan
 UNU Centre – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 UNU Vice-Rectorate in Europe, Bonn, Germany

◆ OPERATING & SPECIAL UNITS

UNU-CPR New York, NY, USA
 UNU-EGOV Guimarães, Portugal
 UNU-IAS Kanazawa, Japan
 UNU-INRA Yaoundé, Cameroon; Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Henties Bay, Namibia; Dakar, Senegal; Lusaka, Zambia

◆ INSTITUTES & PROGRAMMES

UNU Macau Macau, China
 UNU-BIOLAC Caracas, Venezuela
 UNU-CRIS Bruges, Belgium
 UNU-EHS Bonn, Germany
 UNU-FLORES Dresden, Germany
 UNU-IAS Tokyo, Japan
 UNU-IIGH Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 UNU-INRA Accra, Ghana
 UNU-INWEH Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
 UNU-MERIT Maastricht, Netherlands
 UNU-WIDER Helsinki, Finland



Current UNU Rector David M. Malone (right) in conversation with SCAN's Jeremy Farrall.

3 When Was UNU-CRIS Established?

UNU-CRIS' origins are founded in an international non-profit association called BRIOSS: Bruges' Research Initiative for Opening the Social Sciences, established in 1997 by a number of academics and members of the College of Europe Board of Directors.

One of BRIOSS' projects consisted of establishing a research and training initiative concerning regional integration, in cooperation with the College of Europe and UNU.

After a positive feasibility study and a successful pilot phase, UNU-CRIS was established in March 2000 during the 47th UNU Council in Macau.

The original mission of UNU-CRIS was to contribute towards achieving the universal goals of the UN through comparative and interdisciplinary research and training, through better understanding of the processes and impact of intra- and inter-regional integration.

This has evolved over time to now include a broader focus on the patterns of regional and global cooperation, governance, and decision-making, and on multi-level governance.

UNU-CRIS was originally partnered with the College of Europe in Bruges, but since October 2016 has formed a trilateral partnership with Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

UNU-CRIS Leadership



Luk Van Langenhove
2001 - 2015



Anthony Antoine
2016 ad interim



Madeleine Hosli
2017 - 2019



Luc Soete
2019 ad interim



Philippe De Lombaerde
2020 - 2021 ad interim
2022 - present

4 What Does UNU-CRIS Do?

UNU-CRIS generates policy-relevant knowledge about new forms of governance and cooperation on the regional and global level, and about patterns of collective action and decision-making.

UNU-CRIS is built around three research programmes:

Regional Integration Knowledge System (RIKS)

Regional Public Goods (RPGs)

Migration and Social Policy Cluster

Economic Interactions Cluster

Digital Governance Cluster

Nature, Climate and Health Cluster

Regions and Cities Governance Lab (Re-LAB)

Unit on Non-traditional Diplomacy (UNTRAD)

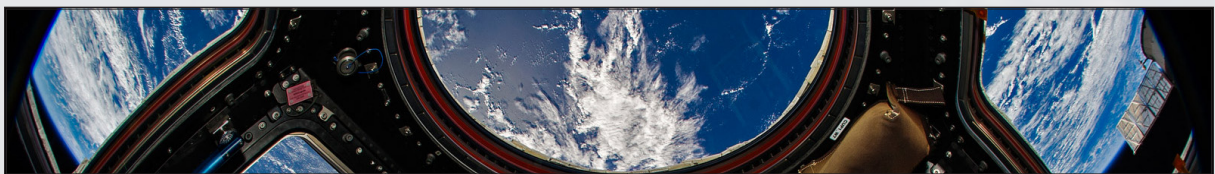
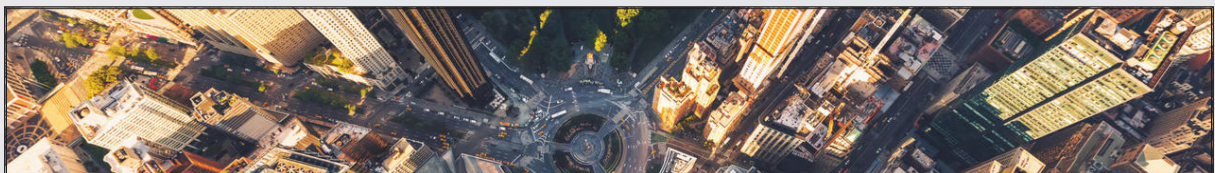
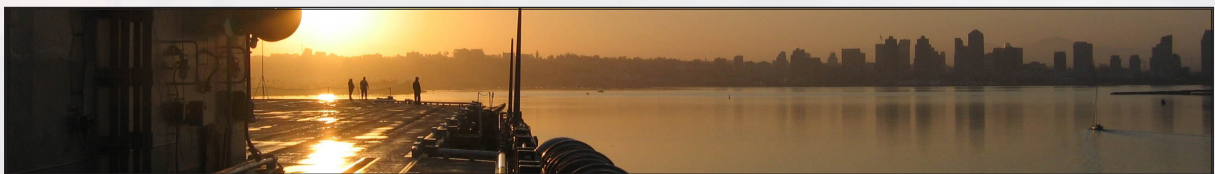
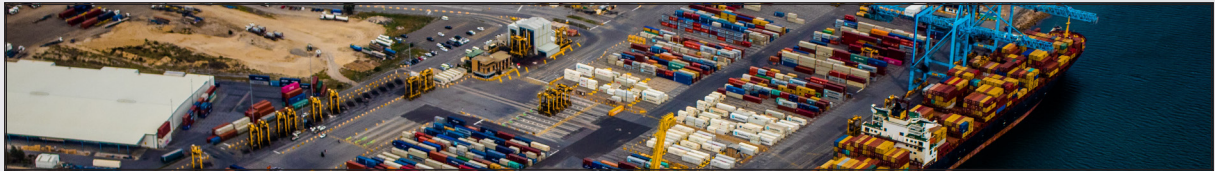
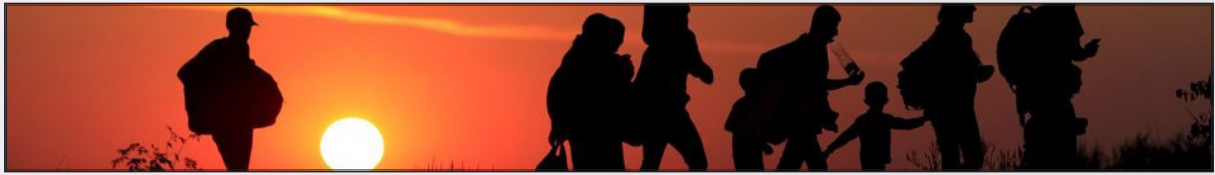
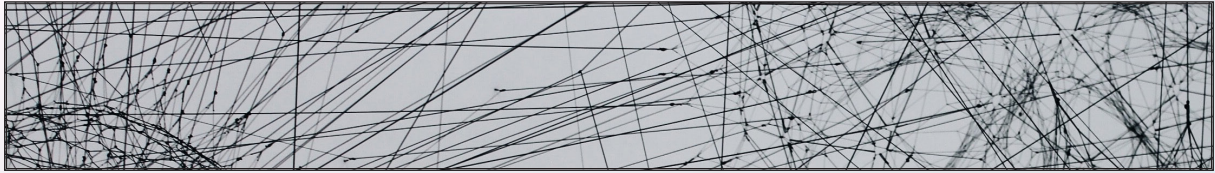
These research programmes and clusters utilise the expertise of UNU-CRIS and its network to address current and emerging challenges of governance and cooperation, underpinned by the understanding that these challenges are often multi-level, ranging from the supranational to the nation state, and to subnational entities such as regions and cities.

The interaction between these levels of governance, in terms of their coordination, their congruence and their conflicts, is often a key factor in the success of their policies.

The interplay between these challenges – climate-induced migration, pandemic-induced recessions, cybersecurity, cities and regions operating in the international sphere, to name just a few – demonstrate the need for an interdisciplinary approach, working across themes and forming a diverse community of expertise from various backgrounds.

This is what UNU-CRIS offers. It pairs academic excellence across fields to produce policy-relevant research that forms the foundation of strong and effective policy addressing some of society's most pressing challenges.

Additionally, UNU-CRIS uses this knowledge and expertise to train the next generation via its capacity building programme, which includes its School of Modern Diplomacy and its Doctoral School on Latin American, European and Comparative Regionalism, as well as through the hosting of numerous public events each year.



5 What is the Relevance of UNU-CRIS?

In more and more policy areas, national governments are no longer able to pursue an autonomous and effective policy that can cope with cross-border challenges, leading many to look to regional organisations to provide regional answers.

The Covid-19 crisis is an excellent illustration of this: uncoordinated policies by different countries within the European Union, for example, are not optimal and not the most efficient and effective way to tackle a problem that flows freely across borders.

This is also the case regarding trade, migration and refugees, the climate, the Internet, to name just a few. There are a whole series of challenges that are difficult to tackle solely at a national level. Regions, states and local entities must work together.

“Knowledge is nothing if not shared” goes the old adage, and UNU-CRIS understands the importance of ensuring its expertise is put to good use, both locally and internationally.

On the local level, as the sole UN agency based in Flanders, it has a duty to bridge the work of the United Nations, and the UNU, with the local population and actors. It does so through organising regular events on-site in Bruges, bringing world-class minds and knowledge to town and making it accessible for the local population.

It engages with the local administration to work towards attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and its experts give lectures at local high-schools on the pressing issues of the day, such as climate change and Brexit.

Within Flanders, UNU-CRIS acts as a bridge between other actors in the Flemish academic and research communities and the UN system, with numerous collaborations on research and events.

As a subject of study, Flanders is an interesting case for UNU-CRIS as one of the predominant sub-national regions, which feeds into the Re-LAB cluster’s focus on interactions between the various levels of governance.

Internationally, UNU-CRIS is recognised as a true hub on the study of regional and global cooperation and governance, with an international network that extends to all corners of the globe.

Its researchers regularly publish in high-ranking peer-reviewed journals, placing them at the forefront of academia in their respective fields, and are often invited to share their research at conferences and events all over the world.

UNU-CRIS researchers have sat on task forces for the United Nations Network on Migration and the Think20, the official engagement group of the G20 that serves as the ‘ideas bank’ of the forum, to name just a few.



UNU-CRIS Director Philippe De Lombaerde chairing the high-level policy link panel "EU and the UN: Shared Challenges, Same Vision" at the 2021 European Union in International Affairs conference in Brussels.



Policy and Communications Officer Andrew Dunn and PhD Fellow Els Bekaert presenting the work of UNU-CRIS for final year students at Sint-Lodewijkscollege in Bruges.

6 How Does UNU-CRIS Fit In the Broader UN System?

As one of the think tanks of the UN system, UNU-CRIS provides policy-relevant research that informs other UN agencies and stakeholders, to guide them in developing their plans of action in their work towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNU-CRIS works closely with the UN Brussels Team, a family of UN agencies operating in the European capital forming the first point of contact between the UN and the European institutions.

Beyond the EU institutions, UNU-CRIS and its researchers engage with various UN agencies such as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The research at UNU-CRIS is multi-disciplinary and, accordingly, has relevance for a number of SDGs, including:

SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, through its work on regional and global governance and institutions.

SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, through its work in the Economic Interactions cluster on, for example, multistakeholderism in international trade governance, the effects of economic integration agreements, and regional tax policies.

SDG 13 - Climate Action, through its work in the Nature, Climate and Health cluster on, for example, the energy transition, deforestation and water-related conflicts.

SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, through its Re-LAB research programme that focuses on how cities are interacting on a regional and global level to provide a better quality of life for their residents and sustainably manage their growth.



7 Who Are the People of UNU-CRIS?

UNU-CRIS is made up of a diverse group of over 90 academic and administrative personnel, coming from over 30 countries, and consisting of the Office of Director, Professorial Fellows, Research Fellows, Associate Research Fellows, Visiting Research Fellows, Interns and Trainees.

As part of its trilateral partnership with Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, UNU-CRIS shares expertise with both institutions, hosting a number of researchers from them in a variety of capacities.

UNU-CRIS prides itself on its interdisciplinary research team, one of its key strengths, which includes social scientists, political scientists, economists, environmental scientists, health experts, engineers, and more - all the pieces of the expertise puzzle needed to tackle the major intertwining challenges facing humanity today.

Given the global nature of its work, UNU-CRIS counts a number of Associate Research Fellows amongst its ranks, drawn from a pool of experts worldwide, allowing UNU-CRIS a global presence while providing viewpoints from on the ground.

In supporting the next generation, UNU-CRIS offers a world-class remunerated internship programme for current or recently graduated Bachelors or Masters students, attracting promising researchers from all continents. Students that have recently graduated from a Flemish university can benefit from a stipend to support their internship as part of the Flanders Trainee Programme.



8 Where Are the Students?

First and foremost, UNU is a research institute and a think tank.

Initially, the University did not have any students, but that changed in December 2009, when the UN General Assembly decided to grant UNU the right to award diplomas.

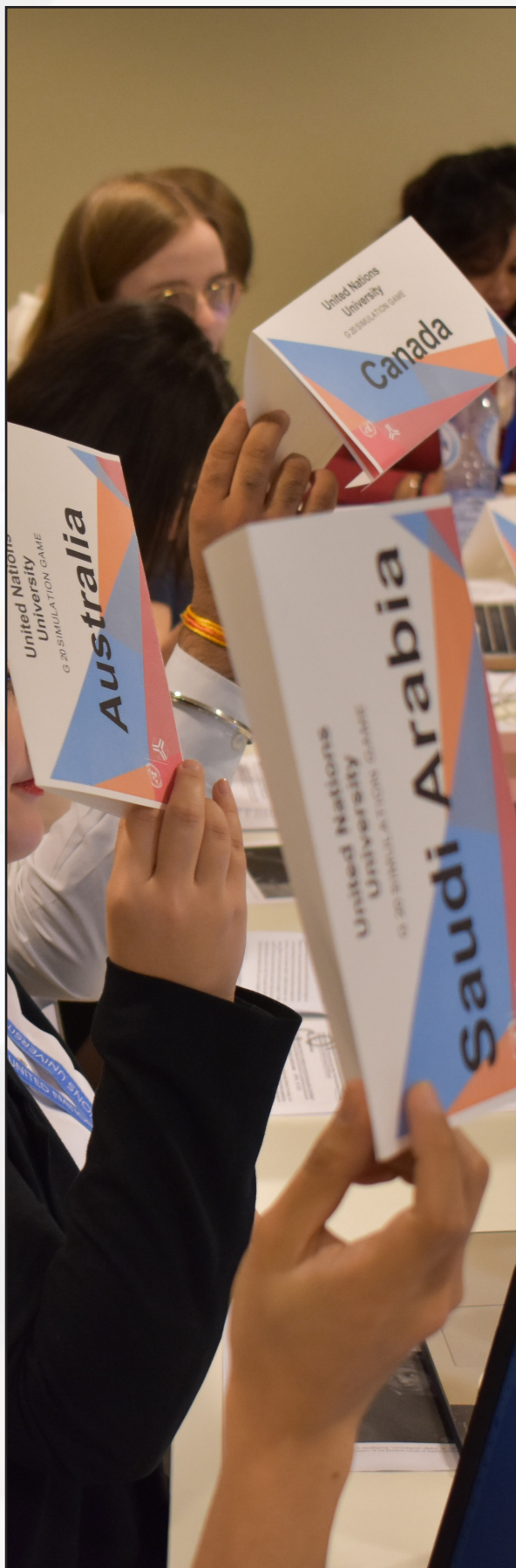
During his tenure, former Rector, Prof. Dr. Konrad Osterwalder, took steps (including amendment of the UNU Charter) to provide the University with the ability to confer postgraduate degrees.

The first of these degree programmes was launched by the UNU Institute for Sustainability and Peace in September 2010, and the University graduated its first master's degree students in July 2012.

UNU-CRIS does not organise such programmes autonomously, but has been involved in the teaching of its sister institute, the United Nations University - Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT), teaching in its MSc in Public Policy and Human Development: Specialization in Regional Integration & Multi-Level Governance.

UNU-CRIS, together with UNU-MERIT, the UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), and the UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), runs an annual two-day simulation game for its students, simulating different UN decision-making bodies, with several places reserved for Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel students to represent UNU-CRIS.

Furthermore, various UNU institutes have developed a broad portfolio of short-term training programmes. At UNU-CRIS, such capacity building programmes include the School of Modern Diplomacy, in collaboration with the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna; the Doctoral School on Latin American, European and Comparative Regionalism, in collaboration with the Universidad Andina; and the Summer School on Comparative Regionalism, in collaboration with the Universitas Airlangga and M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University.



9 Where Is UNU-CRIS Located?

UNU-CRIS is located on the premises of the Grootseminarie at Potterierei 72 in Bruges. The use of the premises has been kindly donated by the Province of West Flanders, with the UNU-CRIS offices located on the second floor.

This beautiful location has been the home of UNU-CRIS since 2004, with the Institute previously housed at Dijver 11 at the College of Europe and later on at Ridderstraat 12.

ABOUT THE GROOTSEMINARIE

The Abbey of the Dunes, or “Ten Duinen”, was established in 1128 in Koksijde, in the hospitable Flemish coastal region, and grew into one of the most prestigious Cistercian abbeys in medieval Europe. For centuries it remained closely associated with its two fellow establishments: Clairmarais (founded 1137) near the town of Saint-Omer in Northern France, and Ter Doest (founded 1175) in Lissewege.

From as early as the 13th century, Ter Doest and Ten Duinen also had a firm foothold in Bruges, which was a metropolis at the time. The refuge of Ter Doest was located on this site, on the stretch of water connecting the port city of Bruges with the sea. Due to the wars of religion, the 16th century signaled a reversal of fortune. The Community of Ter Doest ceased to exist and that of Ten Duinen was forced to give up its ruined abbey.

In 1624 the Abbey of the Dunes took over the Ter Doest estate, and thus also the site of the refuge at Potterierei, and immediately chose this as the site on which to erect a completely new abbey. Building got under way in 1628, and the first phase of construction ran until 1642.

It was a monumental baroque building that was almost completed in the late 18th century. Due to the consequences of the French Revolution, the Abbey of the Dunes was closed down in 1796 and in 1833 was given a new vocation, as an Episcopal Seminary. Two decades ago the authorities of the Province of West-Flanders used the second floor of the main building as its archive. In 2004, when the archive moved to new premises, this opened the way for UNU-CRIS to be located here.



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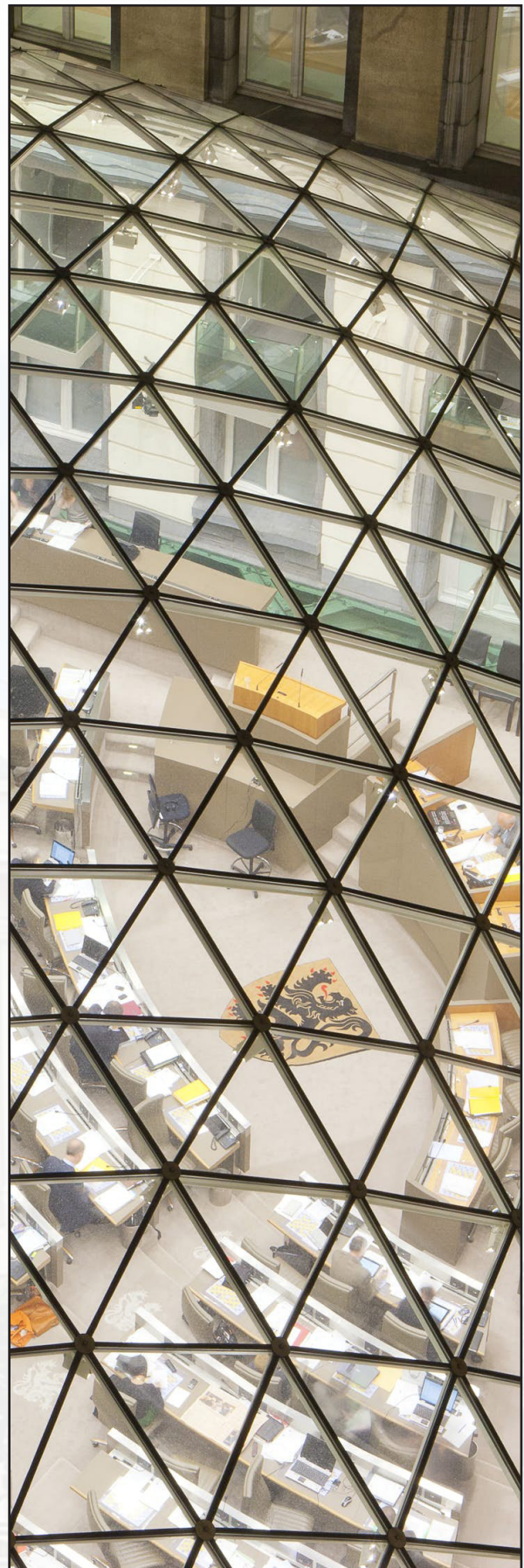
How Is UNU-CRIS Financed?

The core funding of UNU consists of voluntary contributions from UN Member States, with UNU institutions financed by their host countries.

The case of UNU-CRIS is unique, however, as its core funding is provided by the Flemish government, as opposed to the federal Belgian government. UNU-CRIS falls under the mandate of the Flemish Department of Economics, Science and Innovation (EWI).

As part of its trilateral partnership structure, both Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel contribute resources to UNU-CRIS in various forms, such as project funding, funding for PhD researchers, and secondment of other research staff.

Additionally, UNU-CRIS sources external research and project funding from a variety of sources, such as regional organisations like the European Union, national governments, other UN agencies, foundations, and the private sector.



The United Nations Family



United Nations
Development Programme



United Nations
Environment Programme



United Nations
Population Fund



United Nations
World Food Programme



United Nations Human
Settlements Programme



United Nations
Children's Fund



Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations



International Maritime
Organization



International
Telecommunication Union



United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural
Organization



United Nations Industrial
Development Organization



World Tourism Organization



Universal Postal Union



World Health Organization



World Intellectual
Property Organization



World Meteorological
Organization



World Bank



*Joint United Nations
Programme on HIV/AIDS*



*United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees*



*United Nations Institute for
Disarmament Research*



*United Nations Institute for
Training and Research*



*United Nations
Environment Programme*



*United Nations Relief and
Work Agency for Palestine
Refugees in the Near East*



*United Nations
System Staff College*



UN Women



*Preparatory Commission
for the Comprehensive
Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
Organization*



*International Atomic
Energy Agency*



*International Organization
for Migration*



*Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical
Weapons*



*United Nations Framework
Convention on Climate
Change*





World Trade Organization





International Trade Center



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Version 2

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Flanders
State of the Art

