



EVALUATION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE ON  
COMPARATIVE REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION STUDIES  
(UNU-CRIS)

Executive summary | June 20, 2014

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(EWI)



## Executive summary

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### Context of the evaluation

In 1973 the United Nations (UN) established the United Nations University (UNU). UNU is a global network of institutes and programmes engaged in research and capacity development to support the universal goals of the UN. Its headquarters are located in Tokyo, Japan.

In 2001, a unit of UNU was established in Belgium: the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies – UNU-CRIS. This institute focuses on the study of processes of regional integration and cooperation and their implications. It acts as a resource for the UN-system, with particular links to the UN-bodies dealing with regional integration, and works in partnership with institutes and initiatives throughout the world that are concerned with issues of regional integration and cooperation.

UNU-CRIS receives its core funding from the Government of Flanders on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Flemish Community on the one hand, and UNU and the College of Europe on the other. In accordance with Article 18 of the current MoU which covers the period 2010-2014, the conclusion of a new Memorandum will be subject to an external evaluation. The evaluation should focus on the performance of UNU-CRIS in the context of the current MoU<sup>1</sup>, but should also be a "meta-evaluation", discussing the development and performance of UNU-CRIS over a longer period<sup>2</sup>. The department of Economy, Science and Innovation (department EWI<sup>3</sup>) of the Flemish government assigned this evaluation of UNU-CRIS through a public procurement procedure<sup>4</sup> to IDEA Consult.

In order to answer the evaluation questions, a mix of methods was used, both quantitative and qualitative in nature: desk research, 30 interviews, a focused international benchmark with 2 other UNU-institutes as well as 2 other research institutes, a bibliometric and a webometric-analysis and 2 online surveys. We complemented our own evaluation results with the outcomes of an evaluation by a team of four international experts who visited UNU-CRIS on April 10 and 11, 2014.

### Evaluation of UNU-CRIS' performance

#### *Position of UNU-CRIS*

**The "multiple identity" of UNU-CRIS is a challenge.** In terms of activities, UNU-CRIS is both a research and training institute, with the mission to undertake research (and capacity building activities) as a function of policy preparation and advice towards the UN (policy think tank). While we understand the interest of having all three roles, it is definitely the case that all three trajectories cannot be pursued with the same intensity with the current budget. The previous evaluation report mentioned the same challenge.

**UNU-CRIS operates in a complex institutional context.** UNU-CRIS is bound by the mission, principles and priorities of UNU, from which it derives its mandate to engage in research and training in the field of comparative regional integration studies. But aside from being an international institution, UNU-CRIS is financially and physically embedded in the Flemish context. Furthermore, UNU-CRIS is supported administratively by the College of Europe (Bruges) because it has no national legal status.

**The expectations from UNU towards UNU-CRIS have shifted with the arrival of the new UNU-Rector, while the Flemish government didn't formulate explicit objectives specific for the Flemish context.** In December 2012, a new UNU-Rector was appointed. His entry in office has prompted a significant shift in strategic direction for the University and therefore for UNU-CRIS as well, which makes the quite extensive efforts that UNU-CRIS spent on the realisation of the priorities of the former Rector, less effective.

Content wise, the Flemish government did not formulate any objectives in addition to the UNU-CRIS Strategic Directions 2010-2014, and specific to the Flemish context. While the department EWI is responsible for the administrative follow up of the MoU, the research area of regional integration is, in fact, more relevant to the Flemish department of Foreign Affairs (department iV<sup>5</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Hence covering most of the evaluation topics mentioned in the MoU.

<sup>2</sup> In order to go beyond the evaluation topics mentioned in the MoU and look into the performance of UNU-CRIS over a longer period of time, thus obtaining for instance a more comprehensive view of its scientific impact.

<sup>3</sup> EWI is the abbreviation in Dutch of Economy, Science and Innovation.

<sup>4</sup> Public procurement procedure and assignment (Overheidsopdracht) entitled "Specifieke opdrachten in het kader van de evaluatie van (de investering van de Vlaamse overheid in) de United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) – Terms of reference with nr. EWI-2013-10

<sup>5</sup> iV is the Dutch abbreviation of the name of the department (iV = internationaal Vlaanderen).



### *Research activities and results*

**The number of academic publications rises above the EWI-targets<sup>6</sup>.** In the period 2010-2014, UNU-CRIS has produced increasing numbers of published works in comparison to the previous period (2005-2009) for all different types of scientific output<sup>7</sup>, though the most recent KPIs show that the annual dynamics of the institute's outputs appear to be levelling out. Books are an exception, as the number of books published by UNU-CRIS has increased considerably in recent years.

**Associate researchers make a considerable contribution to the institute's published research results.** UNU-CRIS manages to exceed the current target values for scholarly outputs when overall research outputs produced by staff, visiting and associate researchers are taken into account. Looking at the institute's publications in 2013, we observed that the number of books and articles strictly attributable to UNU-CRIS' staff is just above the EWI-targets, while the corresponding number of working papers falls below the EWI-targets.

**Moderate visibility of articles and open access publications, but much higher visibility for books.** Looking at the general impact of the UNU-CRIS publications, we observed that the institute's works published in open access (such as working papers and policy reports) received relatively less citations (measured by Google Books and Google Scholar) than books, which are cited quite intensively. Also, UNU-CRIS books are widely present in the world's libraries. Judging by the number of the institute's publications which are referenced in syllabi and reading lists, the relevance and visibility of UNU-CRIS in the field of education is good.

**There is a (stable) group of researchers/users (around 10 to 15 per day in 2013) of the RIKS database** on regional integration which indicates the existence of a community of researchers/practitioners whose activities necessitate them to make regular use of these data.

**Key UNU-CRIS researchers have a visible publishing impact in the period 2005-2013 with a number of very prominent researchers among the associated researchers.** The publishing impact of the key UNU-CRIS researchers is about comparable with the average impact in the relevant social sciences fields. In the network of associate researchers of UNU-CRIS, there are also a number of very prominent researchers with a very high h-score<sup>8</sup> which further strengthens the publishing impact of UNU-CRIS as a whole. In quantitative terms, the contribution of a small but productive group amongst the associate researchers to UNU-CRIS' output is considerable and comparable with (and slightly exceeding) the output produced by UNU-CRIS' own staff.

**UNU-CRIS participates actively in international networks and collaborative projects** both at the European and the wider international level. These partnerships take place in rather high profiled networks and events which serve as an indirect indication of their high quality. But we also note the rather limited participation of Flemish universities in these collaborations. This finding demands a broader look at the factors influencing such collaborations, such as the interest and readiness to collaborate with UNU-CRIS on the part of the Flemish researchers themselves.

It was further observed that the number of regular co-authoring partners in the ISI listed peer reviewed academic articles is smaller than the number of regular co-authoring partnerships in the other kinds of publications, such as books, book chapters and open access papers.

### *Education and capacity building activities*

**Limited success in aligning with UNU-strategy.** Changing UNU-priorities have posed a considerable burden on resources deployed in the domain of capacity building and education. The efforts of UNU-CRIS to align with the UNU-strategy of developing into a full-fledged university with its own academic programme have had only a limited success. The development of Master's programmes has resulted in a specialisation provided by UNU-CRIS within a Master's Programme at the University of Maastricht. Furthermore, attempts have failed to set up twinnings with institutes in developing regions, which was also part of the UNU-strategy.

**UNU-CRIS has maintained a stable and acceptable number of (co-)organised and attended capacity building events, as well as of organised training courses in line with UNU-priorities.** Since 2011, the organisation of training courses seems to be based more strongly in structural relationships with a limited number of partners.

<sup>6</sup> In the last MoU, EWI specified quantified targets for the scientific output, which was not the case for the previous governance period of 2005-2009. For the latter period, there were targets defined in the UNU Biannual Plan.

<sup>7</sup> In the governance period of 2005-2009, all the UNU Biannual Plan's target values for scientific output were reached, except for working papers.

<sup>8</sup> According to the definition used by Thomson-Reuters (<http://www.pnas.org/content/102/46/16569.full>), a scientist has index h, if h of his/her N papers have at least h citations each and the other (N - h) publications have not more than h citations.



**Capacity building in Flanders is rather limited.** There is regular cooperation with Flemish universities (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Universiteit Gent, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), but it is project-based and dependent on personal networks. There are no ongoing structural partnerships as is the case with the Maastricht University. In light of requests made by Flemish universities, UNU-CRIS considers new options of strengthening the collaboration.

**UNU-CRIS is increasingly successful in attracting visiting students and researchers** to work temporarily within the research programmes. The increase in the number of visiting students and researchers from developing countries up to 2012 is remarkable. The visiting researchers value their stay at UNU-CRIS, but do not appear to be fully involved in the organisation as a whole.

**The Netris project resulted in a direct outreach towards the developing world.** Until 2011, UNU-CRIS coordinated the *Network for Regional Integration Studies* project (NETRIS), and organised a total of 8 multiple day capacity building events aimed at researchers and policymakers in ACP<sup>9</sup> countries on issues related to regional integration.

**After the NETRIS project, there has been a lack of structural direct outreach activities towards developing regions.** Although they appear interesting and well-organised, the training courses and other short-term events oriented at those regions have an ad hoc character, and their number remains relatively limited. Furthermore, capacity building towards developing countries seems to be separated from research activities in the case of UNU-CRIS. The 2 benchmark UNU-institutes integrate these two components more strongly, as their research projects often explicitly aim at also strengthening local capacities in the target regions.

**UNU-CRIS is exploring new capacity building activities.** UNU-CRIS has taken several initiatives to perform capacity building in and towards developing countries. UNU-CRIS' network and outreach in the south has certainly expanded since 2008 as a result of NETRIS, the new Summer School initiative and even the failed twinnings. The expert panel acknowledges UNU-CRIS should continue its efforts to further consolidate its role as a knowledge platform for organisations and actors in developing regions. It regards the summer school as an interesting instrument to achieve this.

#### *Policy and societal impact*

**UNU-CRIS has established structural relevance at the international stage,** mostly through direct interactive meetings and presentations towards governmental bodies. UNU-CRIS favours network based policy advice over formal, structural provisions of policy input. Policy briefs and formal membership of advisory bodies are less important in its policy oriented activities.

**Real policy impact is difficult, if not impossible, to measure, certainly in the case of UNU-CRIS.** Nevertheless, as an institute engaging in policy relevant research, UNU-CRIS would benefit from a better translation of its results into policy relevant outcomes, especially towards the UN.

**Former researchers remain informed about and involved with UNU-CRIS.** Another channel to create impact is through former UNU-CRIS employees/researchers, that deploy their competencies gained at UNU-CRIS in new positions. 70% of the surveyed former UNU-CRIS researchers indicate that they have been in contact at least once with UNU-CRIS or used its results/information in 2013. This implies a lasting interest and involvement of former researchers with the institute, which also impacts on their current job.

**UNU and its institutes are undertaking efforts to deepen their integration into the wider UN-system,** including the regional organisations, but there is currently a lack of channels and links for UNU-CRIS to feed its policy relevant results into this system. UNU-headquarters and institutes are therefore renewing the UNU New York office to strengthen their presence near the UN-offices and to facilitate the take-up of the relevant UNU research output into the UN policy cycles.

**Since 2009, there are little to no direct policy interactions between UNU-CRIS and the Flemish government, implying little to no policy impact.** The current and former UNU-CRIS researchers perceive the contribution of UNU-CRIS to policymaking and its societal added value to be highest at the EU- and UN-level and lower at Flemish/Belgian level. The institute is looking for niches where its input could have added value for Flanders, and has attempted to link up with Flemish policymakers, mainly in the field of international relations and affairs. However, if increased valorisation of UNU-CRIS' output in the Flemish policy context is aimed for, a more pro-active approach along with mutual outreach efforts between the two sides appears to be necessary.

**Increasing local embeddedness and efforts towards providing value added to society.** UNU-CRIS works to strengthen ties with civil society, mainly in Europe. In Flanders, too, the institute has increased its local embeddedness through participation in socio-economic organisations (RESOC,...) and societal events (like Open Monuments day).

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<sup>9</sup> ACP = African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.



### *Financial policy*

**Financial uncertainty has been generated as a consequence of the delay in signing the MoU and of government budget cuts.** The amount of the annual grant remained about the same on average in the periods 2005-2009 and 2010-2013, though the variability in the amount across the years was much greater in the later period. The government budget cuts on top of the delay in signing the 5th MoU, created quite some uncertainty both for UNU-CRIS as for its personnel. This uncertainty is also the major reason mentioned by UNU-CRIS for the substantial surpluses that are booked each year.

**The external funding is much larger than target ratio of 25% but the new UNU-Rector aims for greater ambitions and there are no guarantees for similar success in Horizon 2020.** The amount of external funding (which was mostly obtained through EU R&D-funding such as the Framework Programmes) is much larger than the target ratio, also compared to the previous evaluation period, but the percentage is still quite low compared to the other benchmark UNU-institutes and also falls well below the ambitious targets of the new UNU-Rector. But because of the strong orientation of Horizon 2020 on natural sciences research, it will be challenging for UNU-CRIS to remain equally successful in attracting EU research-funding, as confirmed by the expert panel.

**The lack of a (clear) legal status hampers UNU-CRIS' attempts to attract (more) external funding.** UNU-CRIS was recognised as a United Nations Institution in 2002 by the federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, but it has no national legal status and, more specifically, it is not recognised as a higher education institute which hampers UNU-CRIS to attract external funding (both in Flanders as on the international level). The latter "legal entity" form would be most appropriate in light of the objectives and expectations towards UNU-CRIS.

**UNU-CRIS lacks critical mass to realise its ambitions.** In contrast with its overall limited size, UNU-CRIS has ambitious objectives in many different areas. But it was stated by many interviewees, as well as by the expert panel, that UNU-CRIS lacks the critical mass to deliver both top quality academic research and high quality policy input. They are too small to be so ambitious, or too ambitious for their size.

### *Communication policy*

**Website and newsletter are useful instruments, but insufficient to engage audiences with the institute.** The monthly number of UNU-CRIS website visits and subscriptions to the newsletter has both grown substantially in the evaluation period, to 4,800 website visitors and a stable 4,300 newsletter subscribers in 2013.

The newsletter has a wide and potentially global reach towards relevant UNU-CRIS audiences. However, the limited response to the survey included in the UNU-CRIS newsletter indicates that the subscribers do not actively read the newsletter, or are at least not sufficiently interested/involved with UNU-CRIS to contribute to its evaluation (through the survey). It appears that the newsletter is a potentially useful instrument to inform a substantial readership about UNU-CRIS' activities, but that it does not increase their direct involvement with the institute.

Recently, UNU-CRIS has started experimenting with social media as a complementary communication channel to reach new and younger audiences, outside of the boundaries of its own regular networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, as well as Academia.eu and ResearchGate). Furthermore, UNU-CRIS has invested substantially in increasing its visibility towards the local community in Bruges.

**Stronger communication, but a well-developed strategy is still lacking.** UNU-CRIS has devoted more attention to communication as compared to the previous governance period (2005-2009), and invested in strengthening and broadening the instruments at its disposal. Two current staff members (interns) have communication as a dedicated task. On the other hand, UNU-CRIS has not developed a real black-on-white communication strategy until now, apart from mentioning a number of key audiences in its draft strategic plan 2015-2019. Both the expert panel and UNU emphasised the need for a more structured and professional approach towards communication.

### *Human resources policy*

**UNU-CRIS looks bigger than it is with a mix of many different personnel categories.** In total there are 13 people on the UNU-CRIS payroll. This is exactly the same number as was mentioned in the previous evaluation report. But UNU-CRIS looks much bigger because of the large number of visiting researchers, interns and trainees, about 13.7 FTE's in total, thus doubling the size of UNU-CRIS.

**The researchers appreciate the dynamic context at UNU-CRIS.** UNU-CRIS is a professionally and well managed organisation, with an entrepreneurial spirit and an excellent support staff. The researchers, in particular, appreciate the more dynamic nature of the organisation, as compared to universities.



**The role and commitment of non-resident associated research fellows is unclear.** In principle, there is an internal liaison between resident and non-resident researchers through research collaboration and a regular exchange of information. But in practice, it does not always work out like that and so UNU-CRIS could benefit more from the fact that most associate research fellows are experts in regional integration and are connected to various educational and research institutes from all over the globe.

**Fixed term UNU-contracts have both advantages and disadvantages.** The advantages are that with the regular inflow of new people, chances are higher for new innovative research fields to be developed. There is also a smaller risk that researchers settle into a comfortable position of a well-paid job. The main disadvantage is that the fixed term character makes the job offer less attractive for high level researchers, particularly if they need to move from abroad.

**Leadership changes at UNU-CRIS in 2015-2016 pose threats and opportunities for UNU-CRIS.** As a consequence of the stricter enforcement of the UNU personnel policy rules with contracts that are strictly limited in time, the contracts of the current Director and Associate Director will end in 2015 and 2016 respectively. In the same period, another contract with a senior research fellow will also terminate. Today UNU-CRIS is highly dependent on its Director and Associate Director. If they cannot be replaced by someone of the same calibre, this may be a threat for UNU-CRIS' future operations. On the other hand, the change in UNU-CRIS leadership may offer new opportunities with fresh ideas and a new management style, which may subsequently create fresh momentum for UNU-CRIS.

## SWOT

### *Strengths*

- ▶ UNU-CRIS is a professional, well managed organisation, with an entrepreneurial spirit and an excellent support staff.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS has a strong reputation in the field, particularly thanks to its Director and Associate Director, who are strong pillars of the institute. This reputation is furthermore also the result of the specific interdisciplinary approach and the geographical focus which goes beyond the EU, including Africa and Asia mainly.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS has demonstrated its ability to mobilise external project funding, particularly by attracting a number of EU-funded research projects.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS is a very productive organisation when it comes to its academic output. The quality and the visibility of the institute's published work have, on average, increased as well compared to the previous governance period.
- ▶ The institute has access to a strong network of research partners. Among its associate researchers there are a number of very prominent researchers in the field, though their role and commitment needs to be clarified.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS (co-)organises a stable number of short term capacity building/educational events and contributes to many more. The Doctoral Summer School in Latin America is a much appreciated initiative.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS has a substantial network with international and supranational organisations and actors in developing countries which allowed UNU-CRIS to establish a position as a UN-advisory think tank organisation.
- ▶ Through various communication channels, UNU-CRIS is able to reach a substantial audience, both in Flanders and internationally.



### *Weaknesses*

- ▶ UNU-CRIS lacks the critical mass to deliver both top quality academic research and high quality policy input. The need to attract extra money diverts time away from academic research.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS is very dependent on the directors of the institute. They are the UNU-CRIS researchers with the greatest publication impact and they have a strong influence on the institute's visibility and agenda as well.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS is not (yet) recognised as a higher education institute which limits its possibilities to attract external funding. Similarly, it cannot apply for funding in Flanders from sources like FWO, IWT or Hercules<sup>10</sup>.
- ▶ There is a lack of structural channels through which UNU-CRIS can deliver its messages towards the UN and other international organisations.
- ▶ Both capacity building and policy advice towards Flanders are limited. UNU-CRIS does not have any structural partnerships with Flemish universities and/or policy organisations. Membership in policy advisory bodies has decreased when compared to the previous governance period. As a consequence, the returns towards the Flemish government (core funder) and civil society in Flanders are limited. Moreover, the interest of the Flemish government and administration in UNU-CRIS' activities is limited.
- ▶ The organisation's location in Bruges limits the possibilities to meet with officials of international organisations or with other scholars.
- ▶ UNU-CRIS has not yet developed a real communication strategy until now.

### *Opportunities*

- ▶ Regionalism remains a hot topic.
- ▶ The bottom-up strategic planning approach as applied by the new UNU-Rector, provides more opportunities for the UNU-institutes, like UNU-CRIS, to develop their activities according to their strengths.
- ▶ The strategic priority of the new UNU-Rector to realign UNU's core activities with its mission - which is to serve as a think tank for the UN-system - corresponds better with the strengths of UNU-CRIS compared to the strategic priorities of the former UNU-Rector (i.e. the development of an education programme and of a twinning policy). The topic of regionalism, however, seems to be of less importance to the UN and its leadership than before.
- ▶ The change in UNU-CRIS' leadership may offer new opportunities with fresh ideas and a new management style.
- ▶ UNU undertakes efforts to integrate its institutes more strongly into the wider UN-system, including the regional organisations. UNU-headquarters and institutes are attempting to breathe new life into the UNU New York office in order to strengthen their presence near the UN-offices.
- ▶ The summer school initiative and the development of a Master's programme specialisation in Maastricht opens new opportunities for capacity building and education.

### *Threats*

- ▶ Because regionalism is a hot topic, it attracts new entrants in the field, some of whom have more available funds.
- ▶ The almost simultaneous change in UNU-CRIS leadership which will take place in 2015 and 2016, and which will, most likely, result in a new Director, Associate Director and senior researchers being appointed, may cause problems because of their strong reputation and the institutional memory of the current leadership.
- ▶ Horizon 2020 seems to offer less research project opportunities in the areas covered by UNU-CRIS. The need to secure EU research project funding, regardless, may shape the institute's research agenda away from its core fields of interest.
- ▶ Considering the current economic and budgetary situation, there seems to be little room to raise the Flemish core funding for UNU-CRIS at the moment.
- ▶ The reorientation of the new UNU-Rector towards contracts that are strictly limited in time may make the recruitment of seniors more difficult.

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<sup>10</sup> FWO (Research Foundation Flanders) provides grants for PhD-researchers, post-doc researchers and research projects. IWT (agency for Innovation by Science and Technology) helps Flemish companies and research centres in realizing their research and development projects. Hercules is a structural funding instrument for investments in research infrastructure.



## Evaluation of the draft Strategic Plan 2015-2019

**The draft strategic plan may require fundamental changes** when the uncertainty about the strategy of the new leadership, the implementation of the vision of the new UNU-Rector and the impact of the outcome of the elections in Flanders on the overall science and innovation (support) policy has been cleared.

**The renewed vision of the draft strategic plan takes into account the challenges of increased competition and the need for focus in research agenda** by shifting it from regional integration to regional governance and reducing the number of research programmes from 4 to 3 areas (while there were 5 research programmes during the period of the 4<sup>th</sup> MoU).

**The strategic ambitions and main action lines are also more focused and take into account the vision of the new UNU-Rector** because the strategic ambitions no longer refer to the establishment of twin institutes or to an emphasis on PhD-training.

**The reduced ambitions in terms of educational activities**, focusing on the involvement in the MSc Public Policy and Human Development organised by the UNU-Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, the organisation of "Doctoral Summer Schools" and the workshop for students at the College of Europe, **are welcomed by the expert panel.**

**The streamlined organisation will support the realisation of UNU-CRIS' own research agenda** with each of the three research programmes headed by one senior UNU staff member, who will also define two-year research projects for which UNU-CRIS will attract post-doctoral researchers.

**The number and role of associated research fellows are reconsidered in a smart way** with a maximum number of 5 scholars per programme, who need to play a (more) active role as advisor, supervisor or contributor to on-going research projects.

**The draft strategic plan is not very precise on how UNU-CRIS will contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the UN**, proposing only a limited number of concrete actions that will be undertaken, particularly when compared to the suggestions UNU-CRIS makes in relation to improved local networking and academic collaboration.

**UNU-CRIS is eager to strengthen its local impact but will need to be more pro-active.** Being "available to" requires another party approaching UNU-CRIS with a specific request. This may not happen spontaneously.

**The three funding scenarios illustrate ambition but leave room for more consistency in terminology** (like for the names of the scenarios) **and elaboration** (to deal with issues such as the span of control for the senior researchers heading their research programme and the likely increase of the support staff and operating costs).

**Overall, the draft strategic plan tackles a number of important weaknesses and threats**, such as the need for prioritisation, the role and commitment of the associated research fellows and the challenge to increase the returns towards Flanders, **but does not provide a convincing response to some other challenges**, like the difficulties in attracting external funding because of the lack of a clear legal status, the need for a comprehensive communication strategy, and the actions to be taken in light of the management change at the institute.

## Recommendations

UNU-CRIS has performed remarkably in the last management period and also in the preceding periods. The main overall recommendation towards the Government of Flanders supported by both the evaluation team and the expert panel, is to **continue funding UNU-CRIS as an excellent research centre with clear international visibility and value.**

Below we list a number of more detailed recommendations, most of which are addressed to UNU-CRIS. The recommendations towards UNU or the EWI department/the Flemish government are presented in italics.



### *Strategic positioning*

1. Prioritise between the three identities because UNU-CRIS cannot perform equally well as a research centre, a training institute and a policy think tank given its current budget and staff size.
2. Provide a more explicit attribution of time and resources to each of the various identities.
3. Develop a more institutionalised working relationship between UNU-CRIS and its Flemish counterparts, including not only the department of Economy, Science and Innovation, but also other actors such as the (Flemish) department of Foreign Affairs.
4. Consider moving to Brussels as a better potential location for UNU-CRIS in order to reach the main international stakeholders (UN and EC).

### *Research*

5. Pro-actively pursue opportunities for joint publications with regional organisations (within the UN, the EU and other frameworks).
6. Strengthen cooperation with Flemish universities on relevant research themes and formalise these contacts.
7. Formalise contacts with key network partners stretching them beyond the relationships between individual researchers.

### *Capacity building*

8. Consolidate the role as a knowledge provider/platform for regional organisations, thus allowing these organisations to learn from each other and to share and compare their experiences.
9. Consider holding Doctoral Summer Schools in other regions besides Latin America, preferably in coordination with organisations in the regions themselves.
10. Undertake efforts to attain (funding for) longer term projects directly oriented towards developing countries and integrating research and capacity building.

### *Policy and societal impact*

11. Consider introducing a more systematic and professional approach towards the publication of briefing papers and notes.
12. Undertake continued efforts to become more integrated into the wider UN-system, including the regional organisations.
13. Pro-actively continue outreach activities at the local level to strengthen UNU-CRIS' local anchorage.

### *Financing*

14. Explore alternative sources for external funding, apart from the project-based public research funding for which UNU-CRIS currently applies most.
15. *The Flemish government could support UNU-CRIS to solve the issues in relation to its legal status allowing UNU-CRIS to compete for EU-funding. The Flemish government could also consider giving UNU-CRIS access to other channels for external financing on a competitive basis in Flanders.*

### *Communication*

16. Develop a professional communication strategy to contribute to policy-making within both UN(U) and Flanders and to increase the societal impact of UNU-CRIS.
17. Carry out a critical review of the current publication and communication channels regarding their impact and visibility, and consider a publication and dissemination strategy favouring more visible and higher impact media/journals.

### *Human resources*

18. *For the future, UNU could consider managing the contract lengths of the management positions at UNU-CRIS in such a way that these contracts do not end all at around the same time.*
19. *EWI could consider discussing with UNU the job profile and requirements for the new Director and Associate Director position from the perspective of safeguarding Flanders' interests.*
20. Ensure the transfer of network contacts and thematic leadership duties in view of the upcoming personnel-related changes.



*Performance indicators – general recommendations<sup>11</sup>*

21. *EWI could consider partially shifting the evaluatory focus on "quality" to the end of the MoU period for those indicators where quality cannot be easily measured and evaluated on a yearly basis.*
22. *EWI could consider to keep only those performance indicators which can be reliably measured.*

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<sup>11</sup> The specific recommendations are included in the main report.