

# Vietnam Ireland Bilateral Education Exchange (VIBE) Programme

## 1. Background

Investment in human capacity development is a cornerstone of Vietnam's national development policy. Needs assessments of the country's socio-economic development priorities consistently point to education and training at all levels as key areas for investment and reform. In particular it is recognised that tertiary education in Vietnam is facing greater demand for improved soft skills training to meet the needs of the private sector and the fast-changing and more internationally integrated economy.

Ireland has been supporting successive Vietnam Socio-Economic Development Plans since 2005. Ireland's first Vietnam Country Programme 2007-10 included a commitment to support bilateral experience exchange links between the two countries. This commitment reflected an expressed Government of Vietnam request that, alongside financial support, Ireland share its development experience and expertise with Vietnam in such areas as third-level education, economic policy making and enterprise development.

To give effect to this objective Ireland established the Irish Development Experience Sharing Programme (IDEAS) with Vietnam in 2009, and this has operated successfully since then. It has included provision of over 180 dedicated post-graduate Fellowships to Vietnamese students to study at Irish universities and Institutes of Technology, exchange links between economic research and policy institutions and collaboration in regard to enterprise development. A core theme has been facilitation of Irish experience sharing with peer institutions in Vietnam.

Ireland has also supported education and research in other parts of its Vietnam country programme. For example, Irish Aid supported the establishment of the joint Ireland Vietnam Blood Borne Virus Initiative (IVVI) which involves ongoing collaboration between the Vietnam National Institute for Hygiene and Epidemiology and University College Dublin. Furthermore, in partnership with UNDP and Ireland supported a number of post Graduate Fellowships as part of a national programme on poverty reduction.

Ireland's third level education sector places an emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship and global collaboration and is creating opportunities for the future leaders and entrepreneurs which society needs and is a core engine for growth. Irish third level education institutions build soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and creative- and critical-thinking skills which are vitally important in today's competitive economy and consequently Irish graduates are in high demand from employers. Because of the high quality of Ireland's education system, Ireland has become a magnet for international corporations. Ireland is European headquarters to 9 of the top 10 global software companies, and 9 of the top 10 US technology companies. The World Bank lists Dublin as one of the top 10 places in the world to do business.

Wider economic and trade links between Ireland and Vietnam have been growing from a previously low base. Increasing numbers of Vietnamese students are undertaking self-financed third level education courses in

Ireland; trade between the two countries is expanding; and investment in each other's economies is commencing. These trends reflect increasing awareness of Ireland as an English speaking, modern, high-tech, dynamic partner for Vietnam.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland's Department of Education and Skills and Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training was signed in November 2011 which provides a framework for enhanced cooperation in the third level education sector.

As part of the implementation of this MOU and to further progress embryonic education and research links between Vietnam and Ireland, the Irish Embassy in Hanoi through the Irish Aid programme, piloted the Vietnam-Ireland Bilateral Exchange (VIBE) programme in 2015 and 2016 under the IDEAS programme framework to stimulate co-operation between universities and research institutions in Vietnam and Ireland. A total of five projects were funded under the pilot period. Given the success of the pilot programme, the Embassy of Ireland initiated a new phase in 2017.

## 2. VIBE Programme Objectives

The overall objective of the Vietnam Ireland Bilateral Education Exchange (VIBE) programme is to contribute to Vietnam's socio-economic development priorities by encouraging mutually beneficial development links between the two countries, with particular reference to third-level education and research cooperation.

The specific objective is to act as a catalyst to encourage and deepen third-level education **linkages**, build capacity and research capability by supporting the commencement of a number of new partnerships between Irish and Vietnamese education and research institutions.

"Linkages" here refer to new cases of two-way co-operation between Vietnamese and Irish third level institutions across a broad range of academic and research activities and can include:

- Staff and student exchanges that contribute to collaborative innovation/learning projects, digital Innovation and creativity
- Joint curriculum design and development
- Joint teaching programmes that contribute to capacity/systems strengthening
- Development and sharing of quality assurance/certification systems
- Exchange that contributes to building skills and institutional management capacity
- Joint work on student enterprise development and innovation
- Joint research focussed on creating opportunities for sustainable research collaboration<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As this funding is catalytic, the scale of available resources is unlikely to support major research but can contribute to research planning, sharing and joint funding identification and stimulating initial links between and supporting capacity building among, early career researchers.

### **3. Disciplines**

The disciplines of VIBE programme should reflect the overall objectives of contributing to sustainable socio-economic development in Vietnam and the Government of Vietnam's sectoral priorities for overseas education and research collaboration.

For 2018, the VIBE Call for proposals is focused on a select number of themes:

- Information Technology and Data analytics
- Environment and climate change
- Science innovation

### **4. Eligible Applicant Institutions**

Eligible Vietnamese institutions include higher education academic and research institutions and vocational colleges that have a registered legal status in Vietnam. Eligible Irish institutions include recognised Irish Higher Level Institutions (public and private).

The applications must be submitted by the Vietnamese partner but should be jointly prepared by the Vietnamese and Irish Institutions based on an agreed partnership. Other stakeholders can be part of the partnership (e.g. private sector engagement).

### **5. VIBE Funding**

Awards is up to a maximum of €70,000 per annum depending on the proposed project activities. The maximum project duration allowable under the VIBE programme is two years. Funding for year two will be subject to satisfactory performance of year one and availability of funding.

Applicant institutions must possess the organisational, governance and financial structures necessary to receive, manage, account for and report on external funding in a transparent and efficient manner. Irish Aid will conduct a preliminary organisational capacity assessment of successful applicants before awarding the grant.

In general, eligible areas of focus are those listed in Section 2 above. UN-EU cost norms 2017 for development projects in Vietnam will be applied – see below link for further information.

[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/un\\_eu\\_costnorms2017\\_2.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/un_eu_costnorms2017_2.pdf)

Specific expenditure eligible will include project-specific costs, travel costs, accommodation and subsistence. Further instruction on preparation of a detailed project budget will be provided to the shortlisted applicants.

**Non-eligible expenditure:** Professional fees for academic staff are not eligible. Salary, allowances, honorarium for the project personnel and academic staff from the partner institutions involved in the project are not allowed under the VIBE programme and should be borne by the partners' own contribution. Grants for researchers and academics to undertake PhD studies in Ireland or Vietnam are also not allowed.

Costs in kind can be factored into the proposal budget to demonstrate the commitment and cost-sharing of the applicants.

## 6 Application Process

### Stage 1: Submission of Concept note

A concept note following the Embassy of Ireland's format must be submitted in English, by the Vietnamese partner to the Embassy of Ireland, Hanoi by **12:00 hrs local time on 31 May 2018**. The concept note should not exceed four A4 pages, excluding Annexes. Emailed applications are required.

### Stage 2: Submission of full technical proposal

Applicants who are successful in the concept note stage will be invited to submit a full technical proposal. The format for technical proposal and further instruction will be provided to the shortlisted candidates.

## 7. Time Line, Award, Contract

The tentative time line is as follows:

- Call for proposal : 10 May 2018
- Submission concept note : 31 May 2018
- Concept note assessment and notification of full proposal: 8 June 2018
- Submission of full proposal: 30 June 2018
- Notification of final results: 7 July 2018
- Contract signing : July 2018
- Project commences: in the fourth quarter of 2018

Appraisal and selection will be undertaken by the Embassy of Ireland Hanoi.

Key selection criteria include:

- Feasibility and organisational capacity
- Project relevance
- A clear and practical co-operation plan and activities
- Clear milestones, planned outputs and eventual outcomes.
- Innovation of project approach
- Likely sustainability beyond the Irish Aid's funding
- Contribution of own resources.

Upon final selection, an agreement will be signed by the Embassy of Ireland and the successful Vietnamese partner institution. The Vietnam partner will be entirely responsible for oversight of the project budget. A more detailed work plan, and a letter of re-confirmation from the Irish partner, will be required at this stage.

## **8. Submission of applications**

Concept note and full proposal should be emailed by no later than the deadlines specified in Section 6 to:

Ms. Vu Thi Minh Thuy  
Programme Officer  
Embassy of Ireland  
Floor 2, Sentinel Place  
41 A Ly Thai To Street  
Hanoi, Vietnam  
Tel: +84-4-3974-3291  
Email: vuthiminh.thuy@dfanet.ie

## **9 Forms**

Concept note format (attached)

Full proposal format will be sent to applicants who are successful in the concept note stage