UNIC is a European Universities alliance, connecting ten European universities in cities encountering post-industrial transition. The partners work collaboratively on shared teaching and learning innovation, student and staff mobility, city engagement and more. The UNIC university partners are Erasmus University Rotterdam, Koç University Istanbul, University of Deusto in Bilbao, University of Liège, Ruhr University Bochum, University of Oulu, University of Zagreb, University of Lodz, Malmö University, and University College Cork.

THIRD CALL

This fund aims to incentivize faculty members of UNIC universities to include virtual collaborative international educational activities (Virtual/Blended Exchange) into the regular curriculum (e.g. within existing or new courses). The fund provides support to design, coordinate and implement those activities.

1 Purpose of this call

UNIC wants to support virtual international educational activities within the UNIC consortium. We consider virtual international collaboration as an innovative mobility format and as an addition to traditional student exchange formats. Virtual international educational activities are part of Internationalization at home strategies and can at best serve to internationalize the curriculum.

The fund aims to support virtual international educational activities across UNIC university partners. Initiatives may bring individuals together for a first-time collaboration and new activity, or they may consolidate, deepen or transfer an existing engagement; both categories are eligible.

All activities should be inclusive for all learners of the respective courses, e.g. provide accessible documents for visually impaired students, if necessary, or use tools that are accessible for all students and do not require special individual resources, respect care obligations by not having the course after childcare times, etc.

2 Formal conditions

- Format: Virtual international educational activities (Examples: Virtual exchanges; Blended exchanges with a predominant share of virtual teaching, Virtual collaboration on challenge-based learning…) (see application form: question 1.d, 2.1.c).
- At least two UNIC university teachers from two different universities design the learning activity collaboratively (see application form: question 1.e).
- Students of all participating partner teachers are involved in collaborative virtual international learning activities (see application form: questions 2.1.a, 2.1.b, 2.1.c).
- ECTS recognition for the activities through each participating university (see application form: question 2.2.a).
- Intended integration of the activities in the formal curricula of the participating universities (see application form: question 2.2.a).
- Dissemination/visibility activities are included in the general activity plan (see application form: point 3).

Who can apply?

The call is open to all staff members of all ten UNIC universities (part- and full-time professors, educators, lecturers etc.) involved in teaching.

All faculties of UNIC universities and all topics and disciplines are welcome.

Please note that "UNIC Thematic Line" (TL) activities financed by other parts of UNIC budget cannot be financed through this fund but academics active in UNIC Thematic Lines with further activities are invited to apply.

Each university can only support costs related to their own institution and/or own staff members, independently of their role in the activity. Costs for staff members of other partner universities cannot be supported, unless collaborators in the partner universities seek funding within their own institutions.

Additional Information for applicants:

Persons from different universities designing an activity together can apply individually for funds at their local universities.

Applicants from the same university working together in an initiative with international partners can only submit one application form together at their local university. (Maximum two involved applicants per university and per application).

The same cost cannot be covered by two partners.

The selection of applications is criteria-based. Even if the technical assessment criteria are met, funding of all partners in the proposed activity is not guaranteed. Only one partner might receive the funding if there is no more budget available at another university.

All applications must meet the minimum quality criteria of 8 marks to be eligible for funding. New applicants receive automatically one additional assessment mark in the case that they reach the basis criteria line of eight marks. Funding can only be awarded while local budgets are available. If more than one eligible application is received at a time when only one can be funded, the application with the higher overall assessment will be funded. If two eligible applications receive the same assessment score, priority will be given to the application that was submitted first. It depends on internal local regulations, if the same applicant can receive several grants during the three funding rounds.

Funding decisions will be given continuously, always within the four weeks following the respective local application (see point 4.1).

3 Criteria of selection

Criterion	1 (weight in marks)	2	3	Related questions
Extent of international collaboration between the teachers during the activity.	One-off	Several times	Continuous	1.d, 1.e
Extent of virtual international collaboration between the students.	Superficial, one-off	Several times, no fixed groups	Regular collaboration with common goal	2.1.a, 2.1.b, 2.1.c
All students' active learning is promoted.	To a small degree	To a medium degree	To a high degree	2.1.a, 2.1.b, 2.1.c, 2.1.d, 2.1.e
The learning experience is well aligned with learning objectives.	To a small degree	To a medium degree	To a high degree	2.1.a, 2.1.b, 2.1.c

4 Organisational information

4.1 Timeline

The Call is open on a continuous basis; there are no fixed submission deadlines. However, please note that the available funding varies between the UNIC universities and may change over time, depending on the number of applications received.

Before submitting an application, applicants are asked to consult their local annexes and contact their local UNIC team to confirm whether local funding is currently available.

Local decision and notifications are normally issued within four weeks after the local submission.

The activity may start once the application has received local funding notification.

All activities must be completed, and all budgets must be fully spent by 31 July 2027. Preliminary reporting may be requested earlier if required for European Commission reporting.

4.2 What is supported?

The exact funding/compensation mechanism might vary depending on local administrative frames. The funding should support the design and implementation of your collaborative teaching activity in a way which support your work. Depending on your university's payment and compensation mechanism, awarded funds might be used for following costs:

- **Salaries of students** who assist the activity: teaching assistants, tutors, student assistants (we especially encourage this option to improve students' participation in UNIC)
- **Salaries of regular staff**: research assistants, teaching assistants
- **Materials**, software e.g. licences required for the activity
- **Honorariums**
- **Travel costs**

4.3 Funding amounts

Based on institutional differences and different salary rates within the consortium, the grant amounts vary between 1700 and 5000 Euros. Please read the local application annex or ask your local UNIC team about the exact level of funding at your university.

4.4 Reporting and Dissemination

Successful applicants are required to complete a short report including evaluation questions, for submission no later than two months after the end of the project.

The following aspects should be considered in the report:

- Number of students and teachers from each participating university
- Reflection on the activity: strengths and difficulties of the pedagogical design, co-operation between universities and teaching partners, results of the students' evaluation.
- Recommendations for future activities.
- Impact on applicant's teaching practices.
- Comment on the potential for scalability and transferability of the activity to other disciplines/areas of the faculty/university.
- Teachers' evaluation of the programme

Additionally, you choose at least one option of dissemination of your experiences and learnings from the activity. (See the application document)

5 Guidance and How to Apply

Based on local administrative frames, there are differences between the UNIC universities concerning the required information in the application form. Please contact first the UNIC team of your local institution for local guidance in financial questions. The final application documents should be submitted as **a single PDF file at your local university**.

Please check the details for your local contact on UNIC call page: https://unic.eu/en/unic-vip-fund

Would you like to know more?

What is Virtual Exchange?

Virtual Exchange is a form of virtual mobility characterised by particularly intensive interaction between teachers and students involving at least classrooms in two countries. Virtual Exchange is characterised by the following features:

- Collaborative learning in small internationally mixed teams
- Communication is realised (only) via online tools
- The collaboration of the involved teachers is crucial
- The learning activities are designed by the involved teachers
- Professional learning objectives and intercultural learning objectives are followed
- The learning activity is embedded in the regular curriculum (as part of a regular course)

More information on Virtual Exchange: UNIC Handbook on Physical and Virtual Mobility

What is Blended Exchange?

Blended exchange formats combine online and on-site learning and teaching phases for all participants. One part of the course takes place online, based on methodological principles of Virtual Exchanges (see above), one part takes place as a group activity on-site at one of the partner universities. All participants engage in the online and on-site activity that take place one after the other for the whole group.

Within the Erasmus (KA 131) programme, the EU offers funding for costs related to the organisation of blended exchanges and grants supporting the mobility of the participating students. These Erasmus Blended Intensive Programmes (BIP) must involve at least three universities. Please ask the Erasmus coordinator at your university if BIP funds are available.

A format that combines online learning and on-site learning at the same time, where a part of the group is participating online whereas another part of the group is participating on-site, is not considered a Blended Exchange, but a hybrid setting.

What is Challenge-based-learning (CBL)?

In Challenge Based Learning (CBL), students should test their theoretical knowledge by working on actual problems that need to be solved in dialogue with non-university partners. The problems to be worked on are called "challenges". CBL is characterised by the following features:

- Work in (preferably heterogeneous, interdisciplinary) groups
- Working on actual problems ("real-life problems")
- Collaboration with non-university partners
- Teachers act as learning guides (coaches)
- The focus is on the learning process (not the product for the client).
- Students' active learning is promoted.

To link your CBL activity with local challenges of your city, please check the City Future Roadmaps of the UNIC Centre for City Futures (CCF). The City Futures Roadmaps showcase challenges identified by your local authorities, especially in the context of UNIC.

Please ask your local UNIC team for the City Futures Roadmap of your city.