

ITM receives support for new insectarium to combat emerging infectious diseases

The Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp receives 1 million euros for the construction of an insectarium from the Flemish Minister of Economy, Innovation and Science Hilde Crevits.

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Dit is de omschrijving

The Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp receives 1 million euros for the construction of an insectarium from the Flemish Minister of Economy, Innovation and Science Hilde Crevits. The insectarium will ensure that tropical diseases including those linked to climate change can be investigated even better. From 2021 onwards, the Institute will also receive one million euros extra annually to maintain and strengthen the Institute's international position in research of tropical diseases.

A thorough evaluation gave a very positive image of the operation of ITM and emphasized the important international position that the Institute holds in the field of research and education in tropical medicine, infectious diseases and global health. The Flemish government decided on Friday 19 December to conclude a new covenant for further support between 2020-2024. Within the framework of this new agreement, the Institute will receive a subsidy of 2,946,000 euros in 2020, as in previous years. From 2021 up to and including 2024, this will increase to 3,946,000 euros per year. ITM will also receive a one-off investment subsidy of 1 million euros for an insect research area.

The new insectarium houses a wide range of insects such as tiger mosquitoes, malaria mosquitoes, tsetse flies and sand flies. These insects can transmit infections such as zika, dengue, chikungunya, malaria, sleeping sickness, leishmania, among others. The interactions between pathogen, insect and the environment is still heavily underexplored. The new insectarium gives ITM scientists the opportunity to close this gap and gain new insights into infectious diseases. With this research area, ITM will be one of the few institutions in Europe where this range of insects is studied.

"Thanks to this increased support, ITM can strengthen its role as a global leader in infectious diseases. Our expertise is crucial in times when infectious diseases are becoming increasingly global due to climate change, among other things, and are now on the rise in Europe. We will conduct ambitious, innovative and ground-breaking research to combat infectious diseases effectively and proactively. This can help prevent epidemics starting in the tropics and help protect Belgium and Europe against these rising threats. We will also focus on vaccines and strengthen our clinical trials unit and the epidemic research team with new research talent," says Dr Marc-Alain Widdowson, ITM Director.

"ITM is known and renowned around the world for its research on, for example, HIV, malaria and tuberculosis. The Institute has played a crucial role in the intervention during the Ebola crisis outbreak and in scientific research on tropical diseases and the health of the world's population. After a positive evaluation of ITM's operation, the Flemish Government decided to increase the annual support by 1 million euros as of 2021. Moreover, the Institute now also receives 1 million euros for the construction of an insectarium. This will enable diseases linked to climate change and disrupted ecosystems to be studied and combated," says Flemish Minister of Economy, Innovation and Science Hilde Crevits.