



**Call for Experts
Membership of
VLIR-UOS
Selection Commissions**

5 September 2024

Call open until 9 October 2024

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Call for Experts for VLIR-UOS Selection Commissions

1. Object of the call for experts

The object of this call is to receive membership applications for the following VLIR-UOS selection commissions:

- The **IUC Selection Commission**, responsible for the assessment and selection of Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) project proposals.
An IUC project is a long-term institutional cooperation project between a university in a partner country and Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts, that lasts 12 years. An IUC project strategy is steered by the partner university's strategic plan and focuses on (i) enabling a change process within the partner university that leads to improved institutional performance via transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects, and (ii) strengthening educational and research capacities via different academic theme-based sub-projects,
- The **Accelerate Selection Commission**, responsible for the selection of Accelerate projects aiming at policy and policy implementation support (incl training) to the VLIR-UOS community, both in Belgium as well as in all partner and scholarship countries, in a limited number of strategic themes:
 1. Accelerating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 2. Accelerating Uptake, Use and Impact
 3. Accelerating Higher Education Management
- The **regional Selection Commissions** for Africa, Asia, and Latin America, responsible for the selection of short- and medium-term projects (Short Initiative and TEAM projects) aimed at exploring, building, and deepening academic and scientific collaborations among diverse teams of academics and researchers, all focused on sustainable development challenges. At this moment we are only looking to enlarge our pool of potential experts for these commissions, with no active commitments expected for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Each commission consists of 4 permanent members, except for IUC, which will have 5 members. For IUC or Accelerate, a new commission will be established, and current members of the VLIR-UOS commission pool are welcome to re-apply. Next to the permanent members, VLIR-UOS is also looking to expand its pool of potential experts and will therefore select a larger group of experts.

We are looking for **high-profile international experts with relevant expertise, bringing diversity in terms of higher education and scientific backgrounds, geographic expertise, working environments, origin, age, and gender.**

2. Background

Established in 1998 under the umbrella of VLIR, the Flemish Interuniversity Council, VLIR-UOS is the leading platform for Flemish higher education to collaborate in the context of Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development.

With funding from the Belgian federal government, VLIR-UOS serves as the primary funding body for partnerships and scholarships concerning sustainable development between academics from Flanders and from its partner countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

We envision a world where higher education and research are translated into practical solutions and evidence-based policies, empowering critical, resilient global citizens to take meaningful action in society. Education and research drive local and global equitable and sustainable development, ensuring a better future for all.

As grant manager, VLIRUOS designs and oversees innovative grant programmes aimed at fostering equitable partnerships between Flemish higher education institutions, academics, their peers in the Global South, and other stakeholders.

As platform, we bring together a network of diverse stakeholders that interact and collaborate to achieve common goals, initiate new partnerships, empowering them to act as drivers and agents of change.

As knowledge hub, we create and mobilise knowledge about themes linked to Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development.

3. Mandate and functioning

As grant manager, VLIR-UOS designs programmes and funding schemes, and oversees the full grant cycle: launching competitive calls, selecting projects, overseeing the projects' implementation, monitoring, and evaluating projects, scholarships, and programmes, and taking reporting and accountability responsibility towards the funding government.

Project proposals are assessed by independent international experts who make an assessment on the basis of peer review. Members are selected on the basis of their expertise but also their impartiality towards the Flemish higher education institutions, academics and their networks.

Selection Commissions are organised by programme to assess proposals based on their alignment with the VLIR-UOS vision and the respective programme's conceptual framework. Each commission aims to achieve a balance across various perspectives: thematic expertise, geographic expertise, discipline, gender, age, origin, working environment, etcetera. For Short Initiative and TEAM projects, we work with regional commissions: Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Due to the high amount of project proposals for Africa, two separate Africa commissions are organised.

3.1. The IUC Selection Commission

This commission is responsible for the selection of new IUC partner universities and the assessment of proposals for specific IUC project phases.

What is IUC about?

An IUC project is a long-term institutional cooperation project between a university in a partner country and Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences and arts, that lasts 12 years. Given their duration, budget, multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder partnership design and impact, IUC projects are regarded as the flagships of the VLIR-UOS model.

An IUC project strategy is steered by the partner university's strategic plan and focuses on:

- enabling a change process within the partner university that leads to improved institutional performance via transversal institutional strengthening sub-projects;
- strengthening educational and research capacities via different academic theme-based sub-projects,

This approach capacitates the partner university to operate as driver of change for global sustainable development in its country, region, and globally.

An IUC project targets partner universities that have already collaborated with one or more Flemish higher education institutions. This ensures trust among project partners and provides experience with each other's governance and management, enhancing results and efficiency. An IUC project aims to take an already existing partnership to the next level – one that is long-term, multi-institutional, and multi-stakeholder, with a strong focus on institutional capacity building. Therefore, access to this programme is limited.

3.2. The Accelerate Selection Commission

This Selection Commission is responsible for the selection of Accelerate projects.

What is Accelerate about?

Accelerate aims to support three projects that foster thematic networks, which are both innovative in their set-up and governance while also being inspiring and accessible to the VLIR-UOS community and the broader Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (HES4SD) sector. The themes have been identified by VLIR-UOS due to their overall importance for all VLIR-UOS stakeholders. Through Accelerate, we want to identify, connect, deepen, and mobilise the relevant expertise within the VLIR-UOS network in order to strengthen Flemish and partner institutions and their staff, while enhancing academic and social impact through exchanges with policymakers and experts. The programme has three pillars: (i) policy development, (ii) policy implementation (iii) capacity building and networking. The programme emphasises a co-creation process within multi-institution and multi-actor collaborations, valuing equal partnerships at all levels. The Accelerate projects are considered pilot initiatives, aiming to create thematic networks and communities of practice that can be sustained beyond 2027. The themes identified for this call are:

1. Accelerating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
2. Accelerating Uptake, Use and Impact
3. Accelerating Higher Education Management

3.3. Regional Selection Commissions

Multiple regional commissions are responsible for the selection of Short Initiatives (SI) and TEAM projects: Africa, Asia and Latin-America. Depending on the number of proposals, additional regional commissions may be organised, such as having two commissions for Africa. In previous intakes, the organisation was structured as follows:

- Africa 1: Benin, Burundi, DR Congo, Morocco, Rwanda, Uganda
- Africa 2: Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania
- Latin America: Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru
- Asia: Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam.

What are SI and TEAM projects?

SI and TEAM projects aim to explore, build and deepen academic/scientific collaborations among diverse teams of academics and researchers. SI and TEAM projects focus on a sustainable development challenge and aim to strengthen the research and educational capacities of higher education and science institutions in partner countries. In addition, these projects are expected to create the conditions for uptake of new and relevant knowledge, applications and/or services by academic, civil society, private and public actors.

A Short Initiative (SI) is expected to produce short-term results within the **duration of maximum two years**. TEAM projects have a maximum duration of **5 years** and allow for medium-term capacity building through PhD research, curriculum development, network building, etcetera.

3.4. Functioning of the VLIR-UOS Selection Commissions

Each selection process follows a similar structure. Prior to the selection process, VLIR-UOS organizes an online training or briefing. Next, selection commissions receive all eligible project proposals that were submitted in response to a VLIR-UOS call at least 8 weeks prior to the selection commission meeting, through e-mail or a digital platform. Project proposals sent to the Selection Commission members have already been screened for eligibility by VLIR-UOS.

Each commission member reviews, comments, and scores each proposal individually and submits their assessment to VLIR-UOS prior to the meeting.

During the Selection Commission meeting (online or in Brussels), the assessments are discussed, and a consensus score is agreed upon for each proposal. At the end of the meeting, the commission identifies and justifies:

- the selected proposals
- the fundable but not selected proposals (good quality but outside the available budget)
- the non-fundable projects (insufficient quality)

For Accelerate and TEAM, VLIR-UOS currently works with a two-round selection process:

- Stage 1 - Concept note
- Stage 2 - Fully fledged proposal

For SI projects, there is only one selection round.

For IUC, there are multiple selection and assessment rounds,

- Stage 1 - Expression of Interest and Commitment: focus on fit for purpose for IUC of the project partners and project vision
- Stage 2 - Concept Note: focus on fit for purpose for IUC of the partner university, project strategy & content, and consortium development (MIP and MSP)
- Stage 3 - Phase-In: focus on fully fledged proposal, operational and management modalities/set-up & support structure

Selection Commission meetings are prepared and coordinated by the VLIR-UOS team and chaired by a member of the VLIR-UOS Board (Bureau UOS).

3.4.1. Selection criteria

All Selection Commissions function on the basis of a generic set of 4 selection criteria. These criteria are translated into descriptors which vary according to the respective programme. These descriptors serve as an objective interpretation of the criteria, adapted per programme.

Criteria	Definition
Relevance and coherence of the project	<i>The extent to which the proposal responds to beneficiaries' global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies (relevance) and fits with the programme Theory of Change (ToC) and within the institution/context (coherence).</i>
Quality of the project design	<i>The extent to which a proposal presents a convincing project strategy.</i>
Implementation set-up of the project	<i>The extent to which the proposal presents a strong plan and partnership for the execution of the project.</i>
Potential impact and sustainability	<i>The extent to which the project is likely to produce positive long-term effects (impact) and benefits which will be continued after the project duration (sustainability).</i>

3.4.2. Scoring system

All individual proposals are assessed by the commission members, guaranteeing equal treatment and triangulation. After the individual assessments, the selection commission during its meeting discusses the various proposals and comes to a conclusion.

The **scoring** of each of the criteria is done using a qualitative interval scale:

- A: Very good (no revisions are needed)
- B: Good (minor revisions might be needed)
- C: Weak (major revisions are needed, hence the proposal cannot be selected. The proposal can be remediated towards a next submission)
- D: Very weak

4. Profile and assignment

4.1. General

The VLIR-UOS commissions are composed of **international experts** with **no affiliation** whatsoever to a Belgian higher education institution (HEI) or research institute, ensuring impartiality and integrity. This means commission members cannot be affiliated with a Belgian HEI or research institute, nor have had any kind of structural collaboration with a Belgian HEI or research institute over the past five years, counting backwards from 2024. This restriction applies only to the individual commission member, not to their entire institution or organisation.

VLIR-UOS strives to include experts from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and fields (alpha, beta, gamma) and encourages participation of commission members from partner countries.

Each selection commission should feature a mix of professional and cultural profiles, as well as a variety of expertise, and should include:

- international academic and development cooperation expertise;
- in-depth knowledge of the three SDG principles, including gender, diversity & inclusion for the “leave no one behind” principle, stakeholder management/governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships;
- methodological/technical expertise (OECD-DAC criteria, Theory of Change, funding/cooperation modalities, programme management, monitoring and evaluation, etcetera);
- expertise in “creating the conditions for uptake” and “science-society interface”;
- expertise in higher education policy, scientific research policy and practice;
- expertise in education development, education/pedagogy and practice-oriented research, with experience in universities of applied sciences and arts or their equivalent in other countries;
- knowledge of the Flemish higher education system;
- gender balance, with a minimum of 25-75% and preferably 50-50%;
- balance as to experts from the Global North and the Global South.

4.2. Profile/requirements for each individual member

- Eligibility: a selection commission member cannot be staff of/or be affiliated with a Belgian HEI or research institute (as mentioned earlier).
- Each selection commission member should have the following competencies:
 - an international academic background with an interest in the broader development challenges or a background in development cooperation;
 - (basic) knowledge of the Agenda 2030, SDGs and the three principles (“Leave no one behind”, “Multistakeholder partnerships” and “interconnectedness”). More in-depth knowledge is an advantage;
 - experience with interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and/or transdisciplinary approaches;
 - expertise in partner countries, preferably focusing on VLIR-UOS partner countries;a very good command of English, as all proposals are written in English and all selection meetings are conducted in English;

4.3. Specific criteria per Selection commission in this Call for Experts

- At the level of **the IUC Selection commission**, each member should have specific expertise in higher education cooperation and partnerships, ideally with experience in organisational strengthening processes. Experience in academic cooperation with VLIR-UOS partner countries in Africa, Asia and/or Latin-America is an advantage.
All Selection commissions are expected to cover a diverse range of profiles, but for IUC, particular emphasis is placed on expertise in (international) multi-institutional partnerships. Additionally, the majority of commission members (3 out of 4) should have expertise in higher education policy, management of higher education institutions, organisational development and strengthening, and scientific research policy and practice.

- At the level of the **Accelerate Selection commission**, expertise in at least one of the previously mentioned themes (3.2.), with familiarity in the other themes is required. Experience with initiatives or networks in higher education is an asset. One out of the four selection commission members should have expertise in managing similar projects and networks, ideally from one of VLIR-UOS's sister organisations, such as ARES, NUFFIC, or DAAD.
- At the level of the **regional Selection commissions**, each member should have specific expertise related to the region, preferably with a focus on VLIR-UOS partner countries in that region.

4.4. Assignment

4.4.1. Mandate and workload

The **mandate** of commission members will be limited in time to ensure sufficient dynamism, while still allowing for stability and continuity. Each new member will receive training and coaching from VLIR-UOS. The workload of selection commission members varies, and those appointed will receive a framework contract. For specific selection procedures, assignment letters will be issued.

4.4.2. Remuneration

Selection Commission members will be compensated for their delivered services. The workload is calculated on the number of days spent assessing proposals, as well as participating in training and selection commission meeting days.

A day fee of € 400 (excl. VAT) is provided for both the training and the preparation of selection commission meetings (reading and assessing the proposals), as well as for the participation in the meetings themselves.

If physical presence in Belgium is required, transport and accommodation will be arranged, and costs will be reimbursed for Selection Commission members.

A contract will be established between VLIR-UOS and the Selection Commission member, either with the individual or, if necessary, with their organisation. No overhead costs will be paid in cases where the contract is made with an organisation.

4.5. Deontological code of conduct

Shortlisted commission members will be invited to sign a code of conduct, which outlines the eligibility criteria for membership and general rules of conduct (available upon request).

4.6. Indicative planning selection commissions¹

IUC Commission

Call IUC 2026	Assessment period	Indicative number of proposals	Timing commission meetings
Stage 1 - Expression of Interest and Commitment	Mid-October – 1st week of December 2024	Approx. 15 to 20	Week 9 December 2024
Stage 2 – Concept Notes	Late June - September 2025	Approx. 10	September 2025
Stage 3 – Fully Fledged Proposals	May -June 2026	Approx. 6	June 2026

Accelerate Commission

Call Accelerate 2025	Assessment period	Indicative number of proposals	Timing commission meetings
Concept Notes	October - November 2024	Approx. 6	Week of 25 November 2024
Fully Fledged Proposals	May – June 2025	3	June 2025

Regional Commissions

Call	Assessment period	Indicative number of proposals	Timing commission meetings
SI 2025	February – April 2025	20-50	April 2025
TEAM 2026 - Concept notes	January – February 2026	25 to 55	February 2026
TEAM 2026 - Fully Fledged Proposals	May - June 2026	< 30	June 2026

¹ The mentioned number of proposals to be assessed per call are indicative, based on earlier intakes. Candidates should take into account indicated timings, and availability for following selection rounds in next years (for which the timings are to be confirmed)

5. Application modalities

Candidates for membership in a VLIR-UOS selection commission are requested to complete the following [online form](#) and send a short CV (maximum of 5 pages, highlighting relevant educational and professional expertise for this assignment) to info@vliruos.be.

The deadline for submission is **9 October 2024, by 17:00 CET**. Selection commission members will be appointed by the end of October 2024.

You can apply for multiple commissions; however, in principle you can only be a member of one commission. If applying for more than one, please indicate your preferred commission.

For more information about the programmes and the work of the commissions, please contact: Peter De Lannoy, Global Partnership Coordinator, (peter.delannoy@vliruos.be).