

Accelerate Fully Fledged proposals

Call for Projects

Directed to Selected Accelerate Concept note proposals only!



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Summary

Aim	Accelerate aims to support three projects fostering thematic networks which are innovative in their set-up and governance, and at the same time inspiring and accessible to the VLIRUOS community and HES4SD at large. The themes have been identified by VLIRUOS given their overall importance for all VLIRUOS stakeholders. Through Accelerate, we want to identify, connect, deepen and mobilise the relevant expertise available in the VLIRUOS community in order to strengthen Flemish and partner institutions and their staff, and to enhance 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 emphasizes a co-creation process in multi-institution and multi-actor collaboration, valuing equal partnerships at different levels. The Accelerate projects are considered pilots, leading to the creation of thematic networks and communities of practice with the ambition of being sustained beyond 2027.
Themes	• Accelerating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion • Accelerating Uptake, Use and Impact • Accelerating Higher Education Management
Target groups	1. VLIRUOS (Bureau UOS, ICOS/GEO, VLIRUOS team, selection commissions). 2. The institutional level of HE&SIs in Flanders and partner countries 3. The VLIRUOS community (individual promoters, researchers, professionals, support staff, students, etc.)
Who can apply?	<u>Closed call: submission is open only to selected Accelerate concept note proposals!</u> Each application should consist of at least one Flemish promoter and one partner country promoter. <u>Affiliation and statute of the promoters: (for more details, cfr. infra)</u> • Flemish promoter / member core group: professor/specialist/professional (support staff employed at a Flemish university or a professor/lecturer/professional (support staff at a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts. • Partner promoter / member core group: employed at a recognised higher education institution or a national public (not for profit) research institute, located in a VLIRUOS country (list of 30 countries). <u>Additional criteria:</u> • Members consortium group: at least one member of the consortium needs to be a staff member of a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts (UASA).
Eligible partner countries and institutions	Higher education and public (not for profit) research institutions located in 30 project and scholarship partner countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco,

	Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.
Budget and duration	Project duration from 1/1/2025 until 31/8/2027 including approximately 8 months inception phase + approximately 24 months full implementation. The end date of the projects cannot be prolonged. This 32 month period is considered a pilot-phase. The intention of VLIRUOS is to sustain the networks also in its next Five-Year Programme. The project budget for each theme amounts to a maximum of 200,000 EUR (including indicatively 40,000 EUR for the inception phase). Additional matching funds (in-kind or in-cash) are advised, e.g. through other VLIRUOS projects, through additional organisations or donors, or through participation fees in trainings or networking events.
Important dates	Submission deadline for concept notes: June 24 2025, 12h00 CEST
How to submit a proposal?	Project applications are submitted via the VLIRUOS online submission tool.
Assessment procedure	The submission of a fully-fledged proposal and subsequent process, finalises the selection and quality assessment procedure for Accelerate. This step is a quality assessment/validation, not a selection. The same commission which has evaluated the concept notes, will assess and advice the fully-fledged proposals. The possible outcomes of the assessment commission are: - Immediate full start - Full start with minor adjustments to be reported upon by Y1 reporting - Major adjustments required before full start
Start of the project	The quality assessed projects will be able to start the fully-fledged phase around October 2025.

1. Introduction & context

1.1. Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development

There is an increasing consensus on the importance of strong higher education and science institutions (HE&SIs) and systems in addressing sustainable development challenges. Higher education and science institutions play a key role in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim to end poverty, protect the planet, foster gender equality, defend and promote cultures and cultural understanding, and ensure prosperity for all. In this respect, the Global Sustainable Development Report calls upon all stakeholders to facilitate multidirectional collaboration in science and (transfer of) technology to achieve the SDGs. It considers academic and scientific capacity strengthening and partnerships as one of the four main levers to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It implies a strengthened link between higher education institutions, governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Higher education institutions offer disciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching and research as they generate and contribute to developing new and innovative approaches to global, regional, and local issues.

Through research, HE&SIs play a unique role as drivers of change by producing new knowledge and innovation to address global challenges, by transferring knowledge through training, by providing evidence for informed (public) policy and implementation, and by knowledge mobilisation. Through their teaching, universities and universities of applied sciences and arts (UASA) empower generations of new leaders and skilled professionals to drive sustainable development. Today's students are the decision-makers and professionals of tomorrow who think both critically and ethically, who have learnt to cope with ethical dilemmas, and who can apply systems thinking approaches to complex societal problems.

HE&SIs have also taken up a central role in providing global citizenship education to nurture a global understanding and a more profound intercultural awareness. Through service delivery and community engagement, HE&SIs work with a rich variety of stakeholders – including governments, the private sector, and civil society – for local, national, regional, and global impact.

1.2. A new programme: Accelerate

VLIRUOS outlined new ambitions for its Five-Year Programme 2022-2027 (FYP2), in which the Agenda 2030 serves as the main reference point. Core principles include Leave No One Behind, Interconnectedness, and Multi-stakeholder partnerships, integrated across policies, programmes, and partnerships. Aligning with Agenda 2030's emphasis on impactful partnerships, FYP2, "Connect4Change", prioritises collaboration, learning, and societal impact. The project selection criteria now prioritise leveraging past projects, fostering multi-institutional partnerships, and engaging non-academic stakeholders. VLIRUOS aims to mobilise new academics, teaching and support staff from Higher Education & Science Institutes (HE&SIs), particularly focusing on youth, women, and underrepresented disciplines.

Within this context, a brand-new **innovative programme** supported by VLIRUOS, **Accelerate**, has been developed. The name "Accelerate" was chosen, given that its projects will serve as (particle) accelerators and will "accelerate" three strategic themes within the VLIRUOS community and VLIRUOS itself:

- Accelerating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Accelerating Uptake, Use and Impact
- Accelerating Higher Education Management

Accelerate projects will run until August 2027, although VLIRUOS considers the 3 Accelerate projects as pilot projects with the ambition to sustain them after August 2027, as they have the potential of becoming innovative, vibrant networks and communities of practice. As such, we consider the Accelerate projects to be the start of a broader ambition. Accelerate projects have the potential to embed strategic themes within the VLIRUOS community, and in a later phase beyond the VLIRUOS community, as a catalyst for these themes. Accelerate projects will start with a budget of 200,000 EUR in this first pilot period, but matching funding from other actors are aimed for, such as via ITM or ARES or European sister organisations as part of the project, or via other VLIRUOS projects as participants in the training.

Accelerate is part of the Bridging Science Society (BSS) programme. BSS is unique in VLIRUOS, as the initiative for projects comes from third parties or VLIRUOS itself, while for most VLIRUOS projects the initiative is taken by individual academics (SI, TEAM, ITP, ICP Connect, IUC projects) in reaction to competitive VLIRUOS calls or Flemish institutions (e.g. Global Minds). As such, the focus here is less on competition, but on **connecting available expertise and collaborating**. BSS has connection, valorisation and collective learning as ambitions. To materialise this ambition BSS has **two global objectives**:

- a) strengthening the platform function of VLIRUOS, and **strengthening connections within and outside the VLIRUOS community**, optimising and upscaling access to and use of academic expertise (uptake of knowledge, applications, services) and facilitating collective learning;
- b) **enhancing the capacity** of the Belgian government and other actors, including VLIRUOS, in the field of sustainable development and cooperation by demand-driven scientific and policy support.

The BSS strategy focuses on **facilitating connections on two levels**:

BSS within Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (HES4SD), primarily focusing on higher education and science actors, with a distinction between what can be improved within VLIRUOS in terms of connections, knowledge sharing and uptake, and collective learning, and what can be upscaled to the level of the thematic Joint Strategic Framework (tJSF) "HES4SD".

BSS beyond HES4SD, focusing on facilitating connections between HES4SD actors and non-academic public, private and civil society actors, including the Belgian government. The outcome will boost synergy and complementarity and collective learning and will provide projects with evidence as base and facilitate mainstreaming transversal and priority themes of development actors, including DGD, but also respond to specific emergencies or opportunities. While Accelerate is developed based on needs expressed within the HES4SD community, projects will also interact beyond HES4SD as societal impact is key to future Accelerate projects.

The framework of the "BSS" programme already consists of the Policy Supporting Programme (PSP), which provides policy support to the Belgian government, and presently, the Accelerate initiative. Both initiatives share a comparable structure and procedural framework, encompassing matchmaking, formulation, and selection processes. One of the main differences lies in the beneficiary scope: Accelerate targets the VLIRUOS community rather than the Belgian government administration, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD).

Our objective is to foster a diverse array of connections between existing projects and Accelerate. Naturally, the themes proposed within Accelerate embody broad, collective challenges or fields of action necessitating interdisciplinary approaches and engagement with diverse stakeholders. Through Accelerate, VLIRUOS endeavours to ensure that no project is left isolated in dealing with these strategic themes, in line with the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB). This entails interlinking all projects within our network, recognising the impossibility for any single project to encompass all requisite expertise, and thus facilitating the sharing of relevant essential knowledge and experiences. By doing so, we make optimum use of the uniqueness of VLIRUOS being an expertise network.

1.3. About this call

Accelerate projects are selected in a 2-stage selection process, preceded by an 'Expression of interest'. For each theme, maximum one project and its corresponding core **group of experts** (see 4. Governance) was selected based on concept notes. Projects are contracted and start an inception phase during which fully-fledged proposal development takes place.

The fully-fledged proposal stage is therefore a closed call only open to selected concept notes, i.e. the projects contracted to implement an inception phase. This call is not accessible for other participants.

The inception phase is implemented in close consultation with VLIRUOS in order to:

- 1) clearly **define the expectations, priorities**, and realistic action plan from the beginning, starting from and elaborating on the ToRs, as defined in this call.
- 2) build **constructive relationships between the members of the core group**.
- 3) **establish a broader consortium** to implement the Accelerate project; Throughout the different stages and for each of the three selected themes, **a broad 'consortium'** needs to be incrementally developed, as the number of people involved in the projects will grow steadily (see box below).
- 4) develop **implementation mechanisms** (roles & responsibilities, governance, in line with the basic VLIRUOS governance for BSS) & **design a solid uptake approach** (communication & outreach, etc.).

2. Objectives & features of Accelerate

2.1. Objectives & target groups

Accelerate aims to provide policy and policy implementation support to the VLIRUOS community, both in Belgium as well as in all partner and scholarship countries, in a limited number of strategic themes. Accelerate will identify, connect, deepen and mobilise relevant expertise available in the VLIRUOS community, supporting the acceleration of these themes within the VLIRUOS community. These strategic themes can evolve over time.

In the first pilot phase, Accelerate will be organised into three projects, with one project per theme:

- **Accelerating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**
- **Accelerating Uptake, Use and Impact**
- **Accelerating Higher Education Management**

These three strategic themes are identified as relevant to the entire VLIRUOS community, with clear pathways to impact society. Terms of Reference have been developed for each theme, with input from the VLIRUOS community, to describe the context and required deliverables.

Accelerate aims to enable the VLIRUOS network to deepen and expand knowledge through exchange with the VLIRUOS community, policymakers, practitioners, and field experts, strengthening Flemish and partner institutions' capacities and social impact. The programme emphasises a co-creation process in multi-actor collaboration, valuing equal partnerships at different levels. Diverse and gender-balanced project teams are encouraged, as research shows that diversity and interdisciplinarity strengthen teams and research relevance. While VLIRUOS and its community members are the primary beneficiaries, the programme fosters mutual benefits and contributes to a community of practice which is also open for the entire HES4SD community.

With Accelerate, VLIRUOS focuses on strengthening connections within and beyond its community. This involves fostering exchange platforms, networks, and projects to facilitate collective learning and multi-institutional and/or multi-stakeholder partnerships. By enhancing access to academic expertise and providing scientific support, Accelerate aims to empower both Higher Education and Scientific Institutions (HE&SIs) and individuals to drive sustainable change: enabling HE&SIs to act as Drivers of Change and empowering individuals to become Agents of Change.

VLIRUOS identifies following outcomes/objectives for Accelerate:

- **Individuals apply co-created knowledge, skills, and attitudes.** This outcome indicates the co-creation and transfer of state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to individuals who then apply these in their own organisation. The skills and knowledge also include critical thinking, global citizenship skills and attitudes, leadership skills, etc. This is particularly relevant for Accelerate as it will focus on strengthening the capacities of individuals in thematic areas.
- **HE&SIs improve organisational systems and structures, enhancing institutional performance.** It encompasses improved organisational processes (e.g., ICT/digitalisation), support systems (e.g., quality assurance, doctoral training), and structures as well as human capacities that contribute to HE&SIs' enhanced institutional performance. This is particularly relevant for Accelerate as it will focus on strengthening the capacities of HEI in integrating the Accelerate themes.
- **HE&SIs create conditions for uptake of new knowledge, applications, or services, promoting stakeholder engagement and dissemination.** This is a crucial element in Accelerate as the projects will translate scientific and pedagogical results into policy implementation tools/practical tools and a training programme to ensure uptake and use.
- **HE&SIs and stakeholders engage in knowledge-driven science-society interactions, fostering collaboration between academia, policymakers, NGOs, and the private sector.** It reflects VLIRUOS' ambition to support networks, partnerships, or platforms that can constitute an ecosystem where academic (HE&SIs' staff, students, and alumni) and non-academic stakeholders interact. This is crucial as Accelerate is establishing emerging networks and communities of practice.

To achieve these objectives, Accelerate will work on 3 levels or “pillars”. These operational approaches are needed for Accelerate projects to realise their objectives:

- 1) **policy development:** developing policies, among others, at the level of VLIRUOS, supported by studies, benchmarking, policy advice notes, etc.,

- 2) **policy implementation:** translation of policy into practice, in the form of instruments/knowledge products, such as action plans, toolboxes, manuals, curricula, etc.,
- 3) **capacity building** and exchange through training (with a Training of Trainers approach) **and networking.**

The Terms of Reference for the three strategic themes provide more information on how the three pillars could be developed. Depending on the specific theme and deliverables, a more important focus might be placed on one or two of the three pillars, but all pillars need to be covered in every Accelerate project. Policy development should be concurrent with policy implementation, capacity building, and networking to ensure interaction and enrichment between policy and practice.

The Terms of Reference per theme need to be considered as a starting point for project formulation, in particular during the phase-in period. A co-creation process should emerge, benefiting both the VLIRUOS community and the society as a whole. This co-creation will take place in a multi-actor collaboration, whereby VLIRUOS values **equal partnerships at different levels.**

2.1.1. Target groups

The primary target groups of Accelerate projects are:

1. The VLIRUOS community (individual promoters, researchers, professionals, support staff, students, etc.)
2. VLIRUOS (Bureau UOS, ICOS/GEO, VLIRUOS team, selection commissions)
3. The institutional level of HE&SIs in Flanders and partner countries.

Next to the target groups mentioned above, we have identified a number of (potential) secondary target groups: Académie de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur (ARES), The Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp (ITM), EU peer organisations of VLIRUOS, Enabel, EU university alliances, etc.

VLIRUOS and its community members are the **first beneficiaries** of the policy support, but the benefits are mutual. As an outcome, Accelerate would lead to a community of practice within which networking and training activities are open to all other VLIRUOS projects and beyond.

2.2. Basic set-up

In section 3, it is explained how the project team is to be developed throughout the entire process, from a core group in the concept note stage, to a broad consortium in the fully fledged stage. An important expectation for every project is that VLIRUOS requires it to be a **Multi-Institutional Partnership (MIP)**. While this is a policy priority for all calls, it is a clear criterion for Accelerate projects.

MIPs are about structural collaborations between several Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at Flemish and/or partner level within the framework of a project, with the aim of leveraging collective expertise to achieve better outcomes. Given the multidimensional nature of each theme, VLIRUOS expects the development of broad consortia, including experts from HEI in Flanders and from partner HE&SIs. As to Flanders, we deliberately aim for MIPs, with experts from different fields of expertise and affiliations. By pooling the diversity of available expertise, Accelerate can strengthen its impact on the chosen thematic areas.

In the fully-fledged stage, a proposal should set-up a broader consortium including multiple HEI in Flanders (including at least 1 university of applied sciences and arts). Additionally, going beyond Flemish HEI, the ITM and the members of ARES, the umbrella organisation of francophone HEIs in Belgium, are potentially strategic partners. Both actors have been informed about Accelerate and have been invited to join Accelerate projects with additional (in kind) funding. Their involvement in Accelerate is encouraged and can be facilitated by the VLIRUOS focal points.

Support in developing MIPs:

VLIRUOS will contribute to the development of MIPs through active support of the selected projects by linking them up to existing initiatives and partners, both within as well as outside the VLIRUOS portfolio.

Through the “associatieve projecten”, each Flemish university commits to offer, in principle and as far as possible, the same or comparable services in the context of HES4SD to the lecturers of the UASA that are associated with the university, as is offered to the academics of the university, e.g. support when looking for project partners, when submitting project proposals etc. In addition, the “associatieve projecten” aim at strengthening cooperation among the university and the UASA. The scope of the “associatieve projecten” is primarily focusing on the UASA of the university’s association, but ideally extends to include and also focus on all Flemish UASA, regardless of the association they are affiliated to.

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) & Accelerate

MSPs concern structural collaborations with at least 1 non-academic actor (= multi-stakeholder; civil society, private sector, governmental actors, etc.) within the framework of a project, in which this actor plays an active role during the project implementation. Especially during the fully-fledged consortium phase, a multi-stakeholder partnership is highly recommended.

3. Governance

The fully-fledged proposal explains the internal governance of the specific project. The overall governance of Accelerate is as follows:

Core Group: The core team consists of members from at least one Flemish higher education institution (HEI) and one HEI from a partner country participating in the formulation phase. The team is composed of experts with:

- a) the relevant expertise regarding the specific theme,
- b) the capacity to mobilize a network,
- c) the capacity to create the conditions for uptake of results and to generate change and impact.

The core team plays a central role in the development and implementation of the project. The frequency and way the core team meets is their own responsibility.

The core team consists of at least two members (promoters) and preferably up to six members. Ideally, the team is composed of a mixed group of researchers, lecturers, and professional (support) staff from both Flemish and partner country HE&SIs (higher education & science institutions). In case of matching in-kind contribution, participation of experts from the networks of ARES and/or ITM staff is possible within the core team.

The project identifies a Flemish lead promoter and a Flemish coordinating institution. The coordinating institution (via ICOS) supports the project administratively and financially. VLIRUOS will communicate systematically to all members of the core group when it comes to the progress and implementation of the project. However, the Flemish lead promoter will serve as the primary contact towards the VLIR-UOS focal point for the consortium.

Flemish Lead Promoter:

The lead promoter leads and manages the Accelerate project, with responsibilities such as:

- Serving as the primary contact point for the consortium towards VLIRUOS focal point,
- Maintaining internal and external communication with all involved parties,
- Ensuring alignment with VLIRUOS's strategic priorities,
- Overseeing scientific, administrative, and financial execution,
- Coordinating planning, monitoring, and reporting,
- Approving financial transactions and preparing an annual budget.

Consortium: As part of the startup phase, a broader consortium is established per project to address the needs and priorities within the VLIRUOS community. A consortium must include a broad range of experts from different higher education institutions and **at least one expert from a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts**. The consortium will execute the Accelerate project. This consortium is proposed as part of the fully developed proposal. Where relevant for the project, Belgian, European, and partner country non-governmental and higher education-oriented organisations working on similar topics may also be a team member of the consortium (e.g., ARES, ITM, etc.).

VLIRUOS Focal Points and overall Accelerate programme Lead:

For each Accelerate project/theme, responsible contact persons - focal points - are appointed. The focal points have the following specific tasks:

- Providing guidance to the promoters, research groups, and fellows regarding the conceptual, operational, content, and financial framework of Accelerate.
- Ensuring that the execution aligns with the Accelerate concept and project proposal.
- Ensuring the maximum utilization of broad expertise, with an emphasis on the multi-institutional aspect.

- Facilitating connections with other ongoing and new VLIRUOS (or other) projects and learning paths within the thematic GSK.
- Following up with steering committees to ensure effective project monitoring.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on narrative and financial reports and schedule

A staff member will function as overall **VLIRUOS Accelerate programme lead**, providing general oversight at programme level and being responsible for follow-up and learning at this level.

Project steering committee

A project steering committee meets at least once a year to discuss the progress, results and functioning of the Accelerate project and, if necessary, proposes adjustments. The group consists of representatives from VLIRUOS (primarily the focal point & Accelerate lead) and the 'core group'. The steering group is responsible for monitoring the Accelerate projects. The lead promotor and core group members remain responsible for implementation. Meetings are organised annually (physically or online), with additional meetings as needed.

Important agenda items include the evaluation of the past year, cooperation within the consortium, financial overviews, project updates, planning, communication and monitoring. The yearly project steering committees are held in December.

Joint steering committee

Every year, VLIRUOS organises a joint steering committee meeting, bringing together core groups and stakeholders from different themes. This serves two purposes: (1) sharing progress made, sharing successes and challenges to learn from each other, and (2) exploring collaborations and synergies between the projects and beyond (Connect-Learn-Inspire).

VLIRUOS prepares the agenda together with the members, with topics such as project overviews, achievements, challenges, best practices, synergies and stakeholder feedback.

Participants include the core team of each Accelerate project and VLIRUOS representatives (lead, focal point, and one or more members of the VLIRUOS Management Team). In addition, the steering committee is also open to participants from the project consortia, DGD, Enabel, ITM, ARES, etc. The annual joint steering committee meeting takes place in June.

4. Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria define whether a proposal meets the minimum criteria to be accepted to enter the selection process. Each call for proposals defines its clear eligibility criteria, using the following sections where applicable. This practice is common within the academic community.

In case of VLIRUOS calls for proposals, the following eligibility criteria apply:

4.1. Eligibility of applicants: who can apply?

Closed call: submission is open only to selected Accelerate concept note proposals!

The proposed core group always includes at least one promoter from a Flemish HEI and at least one partner promoter of a recognised higher education institution or national public (not for profit) research institute located in a VLIRUOS project or scholarship partner country. **These institutions are contracted by VLIRUOS upon selection.** All institutions who will manage funds have to be identified in the contract.

4.1.1. Affiliation and statute of the promoters

Flemish institutions

When submitting a project proposal, a promoter must meet both the internal criteria and regulations as to project promotorship of their institution and the minimum conditions set by VLIRUOS.

The minimum conditions set by VLIRUOS for a lead promoter **from a Flemish university** to submit a proposal are the following:

- one must be able to be an account holder within one's own institution;

- one must have a ZAP statute (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum appointment level of 10%;
- postdocs can also submit, depending on the Flemish institution's internal criteria and on condition that a ZAP member with at least 50% appointment of the institution with whom the contract will be signed is included in the project team as co-promoter;
- ATP members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, depending on the nature of the project and provided they can be account holders within their own institution, without a ZAP member with minimum 50% appointment as co-promoter being part of the project team.

The minimum conditions set by VLIRUOS for a lead promoter **from a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts** to submit a proposal are the following: one must be professor, lecturer or professional support staff member. ATP members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, provided they can be account holders within their own institution. In case the participating staff member does not have permission to be budget holder, another person (e.g., the director, research coordinator, unit manager) can be assigned as budget holder for the project.

The lead promoter will be invited to confirm, when submitting the proposal in the VLIRUOS tool, to meet both the internal and VLIRUOS eligibility criteria and regulations. In case the promoter is to retire during the project implementation, the promoter must already indicate who will succeed them.

Partner institutions

A partner promoter is employed at a recognised higher education institution or national public (not for profit) research institute located in a VLIRUOS project and scholarship partner country (list of 30 countries, see below). For research institutes this implies the institution has a national mandate from its government.

The main signatory of a project agreement is always a recognised higher education institution or national public (not for profit) research institute.

4.1.2. Additional criteria

- A promoter can submit proposals for more than one theme.
- At the level of the partner institutions, no restrictions apply for present and former IUC (Institutional University Cooperation) and NETWORK partner institutions. These institutions are fully eligible. However, one IUC institution, UMI-Morocco, is currently in an IUC transition stage. Therefore, it was decided that the institution is not eligible in this call.
- Multiple partner institutions can be part of the core group. If important budgets are to be managed by multiple partner institutions, including personnel costs at the partner institutes, one partner promoter per institution needs to be identified and these partner institutions and the respective promoters will be integrated in the VLIRUOS agreement.
- At the Flemish level, the application is submitted via one of the Flemish promoters, member of the core group, and their affiliated institution. This institution will also become the coordinating institution.

4.1.3. Roles and responsibilities as to eligibility

It is up to the submitting promoters to confirm their compliance with the eligibility criteria in general, and their statute in particular.

Next to it, the eligibility check is also the responsibility of the Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation (ICOS) of the Flemish universities or Global Engagement Officer (GEO) of the Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences & Arts.

It is up to the Flemish associations to decide whether to mandate only the ICOS or both the ICOS and GEO to check and submit project proposals to VLIRUOS. Please contact [your ICOS and GEO for more information](#).

They are responsible:

- to check whether the Flemish promoter is allowed to act as a project promoter and as budget holder within their own institution. They do so by performing a check of the respective relevant internal regulations;
- to check whether the proposal is complete and in line with the eligibility criteria (format, budget, countries, deadline);
- to do the final submission of the proposal.

However, given the diversity in staff statutes at the different Flemish HEIs and given the time constraints to perform checks, the lead promoter will be invited to confirm to meet both the internal and VLIRUOS eligibility criteria and regulations when submitting the proposal in the VLIRUOS tool. In case of a postdoc submitting, they also have to confirm that the ZAP member taking up the role of co-promoter meets the criteria as well.

The importance of transparency of the respective roles and responsibilities of the main actors in the project is key. At the level of the Flemish institutions, the distinction is always made between a promoter (and 'main' Flemish institution via which a proposal is submitted) and co-promoters (linked to the same or multiple Flemish HEIs), whereas at the level of the partner institutions in the partner countries, the promoter role can be taken up by multiple people and institutions. Next to the role of promoters and co-promoters, a variety of experts can be part of a project team as team members.

It is the responsibility of promoters or co-promoters who are not only affiliated to a Flemish university or university of applied sciences and arts, but also to an institution that is eligible for DGD funding (e.g.; ITM) on a project or structural basis, to assess and confirm that the selection of the proposal by VLIRUOS would not contain a conflict of interest or overlap with DGD funded projects and hence imply double funding by DGD.

4.2. Eligibility of budget and implementation period

The maximum total budget, including the inception phase budget, is 200,000 EUR. The implementation period of the fully-fledged stage will end on 31/08/2027. The budget for the implementation phase is 200,000 EUR minus the foreseen budget for the inception phase.

Please ensure that your proposal stays within this budget and timeframe.

4.3. Eligibility of countries

Accelerate is organised in Belgium and in one or more of the VLIRUOS project and/or scholarship partner countries. Given that BSS aims to connect and pool all possible expertise, the broad list of 30 countries is used. Partnerships can be developed with HEI in the following countries:

Country list	
1. Benin	2. Burkina Faso
3. Bolivia	4. Burundi
5. Cambodia	6. Cameroon
7. Cuba	8. DR Congo
9. Ecuador	10. Ethiopia
11. Guinea	12. Haiti
13. Indonesia	14. Kenya
15. Madagascar	16. Mali
17. Morocco	18. Mozambique
19. Nicaragua	20. Niger
21. Palestine	22. Peru
23. Philippines	24. Rwanda
25. Senegal	26. South Africa

27. Tanzania	28. Uganda
29. Vietnam	30. Zimbabwe

Activities financed by other partners (e.g., ARES and ITM) can take place in their respective partner countries following their own rules and regulations.

4.4. Eligibility of submission

The proposal must meet the submission requirements as described below:

- **What?** A project proposal is only eligible when submitted via the project submission tool (online platform), via which all requested sections are filled in, and mandatory annexes (see also sections on 'Application modalities' and 'project formats') were uploaded as prescribed by the call. Without this, a proposal cannot be accepted. VLIRUOS provides an offline format (consisting of a document format and a spreadsheet) to facilitate the preparation of proposals, but only the online proposal is accepted.
- **Who?** An application involves at least a Flemish and a partner promoter, but it is the (main) Flemish promoter who submits to the ICOS and/or GEO for quality control and check of internal regulations related to Flemish promoter eligibility. The ICOS and/or GEO will validate the proposal in the online submission tool and submit it to VLIRUOS.
- **How?** Project applications must be submitted to the ICOS and/or GEO via the [tool for the submission of project proposals](#). The tool will be available starting June 1st, however offline formats for preparing the project proposal are available upon publication of this call.
- **Deadline?** Proposals must be submitted to the ICOS and/or GEO. For specific internal deadlines at the level of the association, check with your ICOS and/or GEO. The final deadline for submission to VLIRUOS by the ICOS/GEO is **June 24, 2025 at 12h00 CEST (Central European Summer Time)**.

5. Budgetary framework and implementation

5.1. Available budget

The available budget for this call is **€600,000**. Three projects will be selected, with a maximum of one per theme.

The maximum amount for each project is **€200,000**. The indicative distribution of the budget per theme (i.e., per project), over the entire implementation period is as follows, with the flexibility that possible balances at the end of a phase/activity year can be transferred to the next year (except for the final year):

Inception phase (ca. 8 months)	€40,000 (indicative maximum)
Implementation phase (ca. 24 months)	€160,000 (indicative amount, 200,000 minus expenditures inception phase)
TOTAL	€200,000 (total maximum)

5.2. Financial guidelines for fully-fledged proposal

The Accelerate budget consists of two parts, with a corresponding different funding scheme.

Part 1: Pillars 1 & 2:

Only (wo)man-days with a fixed amount of 1,000 EUR per day including:

1. Overhead;
2. Remuneration of staff members;
3. Operational costs as travel costs, per diem, training, reports

Activities and results to be developed under pillars 1 and 2 have policy development or implementation as primary objective and lead to clear deliverables or (intellectual) outputs. Every work package and underlying deliverables are delivered through a number of (wo)man-days, divided over the respective institutions.

Part 2: Pillar 3:

Activities and results to be developed under pillar 3 have as primary objective to develop the capacities of stakeholders (training activities) or to organise networking activities (incl. dissemination activities). Pillar 3 follows the VLIRUOS budgetlines: A. Investment Costs, B. Operational costs, C. Personnel costs, D. Scholarship costs, E. Coordination costs. More information can be found in the VLIRUOS financial framework.

For all pillars, it needs to be clear which partner will be assigned which budget, following the division of roles and responsibilities, as described in the project and the multi-institutional agreement.

Co-funding from other participating parties and income generation

Next to the project budget, all projects are encouraged to mobilise additional resources, and to transparently report on this. Resource mobilisation may include:

- Anticipated co-funding through contributions by other (VLIRUOS) projects for participation in activities (e.g. paying for costs such as scholarships)
- Co-funding by other parties (e.g., ARES, ITM ...) (in budget or staff time)

In case of any co-funding and/or income generated by the project, e.g. enrolment fees, these need to be accounted for and included in project report.

6. Application modalities and support

The fully-fledged proposals are elaborated in English. A fully-fledged proposal needs to be submitted in the VLIRUOS tool. The Institutional Coordinators for Development Cooperation (ICOS) are the contacts of VLIRUOS at the Flemish universities. The Global Engagement Officers (GEO) are the main contacts at the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts (UASA). ICOS and GEO inform academics, specialists and lecturers about opportunities for cooperation. They help with formulating project proposals and provide support for the execution of the projects.

Specifically in the framework of project calls it is to be noted that the main responsibilities related to application support rely on the ICOS of the Flemish university association (or the GEO, see section 3.1.3). The ICOS/GEO functions as liaison between the VLIRUOS team and the individual Flemish institutions and academics/lecturers. The ICOS/GEO are the first line of contact to assist the promoters with the elaboration of their project proposal (eligibility check, explanation of the financial framework, assistance in filling out the project modules, etc). As a general principle, support will be provided in a multi-stage process, in which applicants first contact the ICOS/GEO. Where needed, the ICOS/GEO will cluster and forward the questions they cannot answer to VLIRUOS. Questions related to the VLIRUOS project tool can be sent or forwarded to info@vliruos.be.

All relevant information needed to elaborate a fully-fledged proposal is included in this call document. The call document will also be available on the VLIRUOS website. The call is only open to the selected core groups / concept notes, one per theme.

6.1. Support during the application

The follow-up of the call will be organised through the VLIRUOS focal points for every project, which are:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Kathelijne Houben kathelijne.houben@vliruos.be, Global Networks coordinator
- Uptake, Use and impact: Sylvia Hoens sylvia.hoens@vliruos.be, M&E manager.
- Higher Education Management: Michaela Stubbers michaela.stubbers@vliruos.be, Head of Digital Factory

For general questions about the Accelerate programme, please contact Kathelijne Houben, who will serve as VLIRUOS overall Accelerate programme lead: kathelijne.houben@vliruos.be

For the Flemish universities

Contact	Function
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For the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts

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7. Timeline

Action	Responsible	Date
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	Launch call for fully fledged proposals	VLIRUOS team	24 February 2025
Inception phase	Inception phase + Developing fully fledged proposal	Project members	January - June 2025
	Submission fully fledged proposal	Promoters	24 June 2025 – 12h CEST
	Assessment commission fully fledged Accelerate proposal	VLIRUOS team	September 2025
Full Start	“Full start” project	Project members	September 2025
	End project		31 August 2027 (End FYP2)

8. Selection

8.1. Quality assessment criteria – fully fledged note

See below for more information about how the criteria are applied.

Criteria	Definition	Descriptors
Relevance and coherence	<i>The extent to which the fully-fledged proposal responds to the needs and priorities (relevance) and fits within the programme objectives and the broader context (coherence) that has been outlined during the inception phase.</i>	1.1 The proposal aligns with Agenda 2030 (e.g. interconnectedness of the Goals), the ToR, and the objectives of Accelerate. 1.2 The reflections and approaches of the concept note are relevant for the knowledge and capacity needs of the VLIRUOS community and (future) VLIRUOS policy. 1.3 The proposal meets relevant training needs of well-defined target groups, taking into account the LNOB principle. 1.4 The concept note is compatible/links up with, or capitalises on other related initiatives in the same context or topic (in the EU & the partner countries; including projects funded by similar organisations).
Quality of project design	<i>The extent to which the fully-fledged proposal presents a convincing, solid project strategy</i>	2.1. The proposal presents a convincing project strategy, with a clear and realistic flow between impact level, the outcomes expected from the project, and the envisaged deliverables with due attention for the involvement of VLIRUOS and its stakeholders, identifying clear deliverables and milestones. 2.2 The proposal is original, creative, innovative (scientifically, academically, or pedagogically) in terms of approach in policy development, policy implementation, capacity building and/or networking. 2.3 The proposal elaborates an appropriate and feasible (scientific, academic, or pedagogical) methodology or approach that recognises/addresses the interconnectedness of the sustainable development challenges (e.g. multidisciplinary or systems approaches). 2.4 The proposal presents a convincing strategy to effectively multi-institutionally mobilise expertise during the implementation of the project, making use of existing/emerging networks. The proposal demonstrates the ability to attract a diverse group of professionals.

Implementation set-up	<i>The extent to which the fully-fledged note presents a strong plan and partnership for the execution of the project.</i>	3.1 The fully-fledged proposal introduces a consortium with an appropriate mix of partners (people and organisations) with the required profile, experience, and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project (quality of the partnership). The consortium demonstrates team diversity in gender, origin and academic disciplines in so far as relevant for the core theme. 3.2 An adequate and equitable distribution of the roles and tasks for all partners involved, demonstrating the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations. The fully-fledged proposal demonstrates joint ownership by all experts and institutions involved. 3.3 The fully-fledged proposal presents a clear and realistic activity plan with sufficiently detailed work packages and a realistic, cost-effective budget for the entire project. 3.4 It is mandatory that the consortium consists of different HE&SIs (Multi-Institutional Partnership). Participation of a Flemish University of Applied Sciences and Arts in the consortium is mandatory. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are highly recommended.
Potential impact	<i>The extent to which the project is likely to produce positive long-term effects (impact).</i>	4.1 The fully-fledged proposal has potential to effectively respond to the needs of the VLIRUOS community and contribute to policy support, policy implementation, capacity building and/or networking. 4.2 The proposal provides a convincing and targeted approach towards creating the conditions for uptake, including various dimensions of knowledge uptake (stakeholder engagement, dissemination, capacity strengthening, etcetera). 4.3 The proposal has potential to contribute to applications/policies/services in the VLIRUOS network and responds to the needs of direct and indirect beneficiaries, while paying attention to gender, and vulnerable people (LNOB).

8.2. Scoring of the criteria

All concept notes are assessed by all commission members, guaranteeing equal treatment and triangulation. During the selection commission meetings, the commission members will – on the basis of individual scoring – formulate an agreed-upon score for each criterion.

The **scoring** of each of the criteria (Relevance and coherence, Quality of the project, Potential impact and sustainability, Implementation set-up) 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. Proposal can be remediated towards a next submission)
- D: Very weak

More details about the selection system can be found [on the VLIRUOS website](#).

8.3. Assessment commission

8.3.1. Composition

An assessment commission for Accelerate was established and is composed of 4 independent international committee members: three content experts (one per theme) and one generalist profile from a like-minded organisation.

8.3.2. Procedure

The selection will be based on the submitted proposals, in combination with an oral defence per project. The defence will take place during an online meeting. Each of the projects will be given the opportunity to explain the submitted proposal, after which the selection commission will be able to ask questions.

To represent and defend their project, each project delegation may consist of up to 3 delegates. This delegation may consist of Flemish and/or partner members. There can be only online participation. Every project has a maximum of five minutes to pitch their proposal. Questions will not be provided beforehand.

After the oral defence and discussion between the project and the commission, the experts will – on the basis of individual scoring – formulate an agreed-upon score for each criterion and formulate a final decision and recommendations. The possible outcomes of the assessment commission are:

- A. **Immediate full start:** the project implementation starts as foreseen. If there are any recommendations, those can be discussed in regular follow-up with the VLIRUOS focal point.
- B. **Full start with minor adjustments** to be reported upon by Y1 reporting: a series of adjustments are requested by the validation commission. The adjustments operated throughout the first year of implementation are to be reported back in the Y1 reporting, to proof the adjustments have been operationalized.
- C. **Major adjustments required before full start:** in this case, the fully-fledged proposal will first have to be updated before full start can take place. An additional 2 months period will be allocated, and the validation commission will reassess the resubmitted fully-fledged proposal. In the event the proposal will be cleared for immediate start or start with minor adjustments, the implementation phase can start. However, the end of the project in August 2027 cannot be prolonged and the total available budget (200k euro including inception phase) cannot be exceeded. In the case of a second negative advice i.e. request for major adjustments from the validation commission, the project will be terminated.