

Announcement of Opportunity: “Working with 15 YEARS OF SPOT-VEGETATION – A PhD Thesis topic”

The VEGETATION programme is the result of a space collaboration between various European partners: Belgium, France, Italy, Sweden and the European Commission. In 1998, it was grafted onto the SPOT programme, founded by Belgium, France and Sweden in 1978.

The programme consists of two observation instruments in orbit, VEGETATION 1 and VEGETATION 2, as well as the necessary ground infrastructures.

The first of the two VEGETATION instruments in orbit is aboard the SPOT 4 satellite, launched on 24 March 1998. The second is aboard SPOT 5, which was placed into orbit on 4 May 2002.

In 2013 the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO), will have been hosting the user segment of both SPOT-VEGETATION instruments uninterruptedly for 15 years. This activity includes the continuous processing, correction, archiving and distribution of the VEGETATION data and added-value products to scientific and commercial customers.

Obviously we will not let the occasion of this 15th anniversary pass unnoticed We will, amongst other activities, organize a contest to employ a PhD student at our Institute to work on the extensive VEGETATION (VGT)-archive for a 4-year period. The PhD candidate selected in this contest will be fully funded by VITO. The research will be conducted in close cooperation with a University, which will also act as promotor of the PhD thesis, whereas the Scientific Coordinator of the Remote Sensing Unit (TAP) at VITO will act as co-promotor. Please find hereunder a non-limitative list of subjects that can be proposed for the PhD study:

- 1/ sensor / platform properties, such as drift or viewing angle and their effects on the quality of derived products such as biophysical parameters,
- 2/ advanced ICT-techniques, such as cloud- and grid-computing to improve User-interaction with the user segment,
- 3/ improvement of data products, such as an albedo or phenology product based on VGT,
- 4/ accuracy of the data products in terms of metric measures by means of techniques such as error propagation,
- 5/ synergy of the VGT products with related products from disciplines such as hydrology to develop new methods or improved products.

General information & modalities of VITO PhD's can be found at:

<http://www.vito.be/VITO/EN/HomepageAdmin/Home/Vacatures/doctoraten/doctoraatsmandaten>

We are planning to start the PhD early 2012. This timing is driven by two facts: the VGT2 instrument will only be operational till the end of 2013 and its follow-on mission PROBA-VEGETATION (PROBA-V) is planned for launch in spring 2013. Presently, VITO, as part of an industrial consortium, is developing the user segment of the ESA PROBA-V mission. Therefore testing of the new methods or improved products based on Proba-V can be part of the PhD research. The latter is certainly encouraged, however, it is not a prerequisite.

A tentative timeline for the contest described is as follows:

- September 2011: Publication of the announcement of opportunity
- December 2011: Deadline for proposal submission
- March 2012: Contractual issues and start of the PhD activities at VITO.

Taking part in this contest is exclusively possible via the VGT website. The process is self-explanatory, but if in doubt, please contact the VGT helpdesk.

A Scientific Committee monitors the application process, basing its decisions on the assessments by a board of experts in the field of the applicant's proposal.
