

VITO's Strategic Advisory Council (SAC) is a team of external high level persons that advises VITO's board of directors on strategic issues for specific research domains. This board was first installed in 2002, succeeding previous similar external boards (1993-2002). On regular basis, these external boards and their organization are adapted to the changing roll VITO plays within Flanders' innovation landscape

Actually, five research programmes have been defined at VITO all with the focus on sustainability and the transition challenges to reach this sustainability: Health, Materials, Chemistry, Energy and Landuse. It is the intention to continually increase the focus of the research, to improve the international excellence of VITO's research and to increase the industrial/economical relevance of VITO's research.

The SAC consists of a core group of 5 people to preserve the continuity of the evaluations across the full SAC-cycle (all programmes) that comprises three working years. This core group is extended with a group of international experts depending on the particular topic. In selecting these specialists, attention is paid to their independence from VITO, their vision and ability to make and formulate strategic choices within and across their respective expertise areas. Also operational relevance in industry or in a similar research centre is a necessary prerequisite for some of these specialists.

The core team of the SAC consists of De Groof Christiaan (*General manager -Strategy, Regulatory Affairs, Grids and Sustainable Development- at Electrabel until 2016, Emeritus Professor of Finance at University of Antwerp*) acting as chairman, Caroline Ven (*CEO of pharma.be*), Prof. dr. Nele De Belie (*Faculty of Engineering, Ghent University*), Paul Matthyssens (*Emeritus Professor of Strategic Management University of Antwerp, former Dean Antwerp Management School*) and Egbert Lox (*Senior Vice President Government affairs, Umicore until 2020*).

In practice, an overview of the research programme is thoroughly prepared by the VITO researchers. The resulting documents include situation analyses (Flanders, Europe and world), strength/weakness analyses, strategy proposals and a roadmap to reach the proposed goals. The actual meeting takes 1.5 days. During the first day the programme is discussed with the VITO research team. After these discussions and conclusions all the experts are asked to formulate their personal and specific recommendations and send it to the chairman of the SAC. In a separate half day meeting the next day the SAC integrates the different recommendations into formal recommendations. These recommendations refer to the achievability of the proposed strategy, the strategic importance of the activity or specific milestone that should be reached in order to successfully implement the strategy.