

Call for Submission

Invitation to submit a proposal for a Volvo Research and Educational Foundations (VREF) study: “Informal and Shared Mobility – status, challenges, and opportunities in Southeastern Europe and Central Asia”

We invite you to submit a proposal for a study contributing to the ongoing VREF research program “Informal and Shared Mobility in Low- and Middle-Income Countries” (ISM). The focus of this study will be on Southeastern Europe and Central Asia.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Volvo Research and Educational Foundations (VREF) is to inspire, initiate and support research and educational activities that can contribute to strengthening sustainable mobility and transport for equitable access in urban areas. VREF aims to nurture processes of change and transformative capacity in cities as well as in businesses and other organizations.

Through the “Future Urban Transport – How to deal with complexity (FUT)” program, VREF carries out activities within research, education and communication for the purpose of contributing new ideas and solutions for the design of sustainable transportation systems in cities. An important goal is to identify urban transport solutions that will provide accessibility for all individuals and groups while at the same time radically reducing the negative local and global environmental impacts of transportation.

The FUT Program has three thematic profiles:

- [Mobility and access in African Cities](#) (MAC program)
- [Walking](#) as a mode of transport (WALKING program)
- [Informal](#) and shared mobility in low- and middle-income countries (ISM program)

The new study which is the focus of this Call is intended to contribute to the [ISM program](#), which was launched in 2022. With its ISM program, VREF seeks to contribute to strengthening equity and sustainability in urban transport by supporting research that creates new knowledge among both scholars and various stakeholders who govern, design and/or develop informal and shared mobility.

In summary, the ISM program is characterized by:

- a geographical focus on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)
- comparative studies of ISM systems in different urban contexts

- collaboration and exchange among researchers in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) as well as in high- income countries (HICs)
- interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge building, education and learning

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study is part of a series of regional studies regarding status, challenges and opportunities related to ISM, where the following three reports have been commissioned and published by VREF in recent years:

- [Song, Susan, et al. \(2022\) "Status and Opportunities of Shared Mobility Systems in China". Produced in collaboration with World Resources Institute \(WRI\).](#)
- [Joshi, Rutul, et al. \(2023\). "Informal and Shared Mobility: Status and Opportunities in India."](#)
- [Saksith Chalermpong, Apiwat Ratanawaraha, Yosuke Uchiyama \(2025\): Informal and Shared Mobility - Status, Challenges, and Opportunities in Southeast Asia](#)

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STUDY

To further extend in-depth knowledge regarding the current status, challenges or barriers, and opportunities of ISM in different regions in the world, we invite you to submit a proposal for a study in this area, which should result in the delivery of two reports/outputs:

- State-of-the-Art Knowledge on Informal and Shared Mobility in Southeastern Europe/Central Asia
- Current research activities on ISM topics and issues in Southeastern Europe/Central Asia

We would like to see the following countries covered in the study on the role and status of informal transport in Southeast Europe and Central Asia:

- Southeast Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia.
- Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

For 3 to 4 countries, we request your proposal for more in-depth work. In your proposal, please briefly share your justification for choosing those specific countries. The justification should consider factors such as the significance of informal transport in the country's mobility landscape, the availability of data, the presence of unique challenges or innovative solutions, and the potential for policy impact.

Options for regional focus

Although a study covering both identified regions is preferred, the substantial regional differences may pose a challenge for applicants to cover SEE and CA simultaneously. Therefore, applications focusing on one of the regions are also welcome. The expected outputs will remain the same. Please indicate on the cover sheet and in the accompanying email whether your proposal covers both regions or only one (and specify which one if applicable).

Output 1: State-of-the-Art Knowledge on Informal and Shared Mobility in Southeastern Europe/Central Asia

- The purpose of this report is:
to describe state-of-the-art knowledge on the current status/conditions, challenges, opportunities and latest innovation regarding ISM in urban areas in Southeastern Europe/Central Asia. Among else, this work should present existing data on shared/new mobility systems,
- based on a research literature review and select expert interviews to summarize the latest trends and patterns regarding use and operation of ISM systems in various urban areas,
- to highlight key policies and challenges for strengthening ISM systems in the region, including examples of both current approaches and new approaches that might be considered.

Suggestions by proposers on further important and relevant topics which will be discussed in the report are encouraged. The study should complement the previous studies regarding ISM in China, India and South East Asia (as noted above), as well as current activities under the [International Research Program \(Partnership for Research on Informal and Shared Mobility\) led by Columbia University](#).

The outcome should be a report which includes an executive summary of the main findings, a description of the methodology that was used in the study, as well as a full reference list of the identified publications and data sources.

Output 2: Current research activities on ISM in Southeastern Europe/Central Asia

This study should provide the following:

- an overview of existing research activities in the area of ISM which are currently being carried out at Southeastern Europe/Central Asia research institutions and universities,

- an overview of current directions of research on ISM. The study can make use of information collected through a [bibliometric study](#) contracted via this same program and carried out by the [University of Cape Town](#).

It is envisaged that the two reports will be published in one document of approximately 60 - 80 pages, depending upon the scope of the work.

RESEARCHER PERSONNEL: WHO CAN APPLY

VREF plans to commission an experienced researcher (or team of researchers) in the field of informal and shared mobility in Southeastern Europe/Central Asia who also has extensive knowledge of the regional research landscape, as well as experience in carrying out and writing research studies.

Period of assignment

The study is expected to start mid of June 2025 and be finalised by the end of December 2025.

Structure of the proposal

The structure of the proposal must correspond to the structure of the tasks as indicated above. A key part of the proposal should be a description of the methodological approach that will be used in the study. The proposal should also clearly indicate the project leader and other participating scholars (e.g. affiliations, areas of expertise, roles in carrying out the study).

As mentioned earlier, please specify on the cover sheet and in the accompanying email whether your proposal covers both regions or only one.

The complete proposal must not exceed 4 pages (excluding CVs, each of which must not exceed 3 pages). Furthermore, the proposal should include a cost per task, based on daily rates or costs for the participating scholars. The budget for the study is a maximum of 25,000 EURO. If submitting a proposal with a focus on only one region, please adjust your budget accordingly.

The proposal must be written in English and clearly formulated (font size 11 or larger).

Submission

The submission date for the proposal is April 30th 2025 at 17:00 CEST. The proposal should be submitted as a pdf file, by e-mail to the VREF Administrative Secretary Ms Fabienne Niklasson, fabienne.fn.niklasson@consultant.volvo.com

The final selection will be made by June 20th after an evaluation of the highest rated proposals. The candidates should make themselves available for a final interview taking place between May 30th and June 15th.